

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Wednesday, 6 May 2015

(Extract from book 6)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

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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, 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:

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The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn	Polwarth	LP
Batin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio	Melton	ALP
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ²	Gippsland South	Nats
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Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
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Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
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Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
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Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

¹ Resigned 2 February 2015

² Elected 14 March 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Wednesday, 6 May 2015

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Tabling of documents

The SPEAKER — Order! Yesterday in question time the house sought clarification about when documents can be tabled by leave. I refer members to Speaker Smith's ruling from 2011 which confirms that documents tabled by leave should be tabled at the same time as other documents. Previous speakers have also requested that documents only be tabled where sufficient stock copies are available for distribution to members. I make this ruling to provide additional information in relation to the tabling of documents.

Most documents tabled in Parliament are presented in accordance with the requirements of an act, such as the Financial Management Act 1994 or the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003. At times they are documents that a member, usually a minister, wishes to bring to the house even though there is no legislative requirement for that to happen. Standing order 176 enables a member to bring such a document to the house and table it by leave. Regular examples of this are the annual reports of the Legislative Assembly and the Office of the Public Advocate.

All documents, whether they are committee reports, petitions, documents tabled under acts or documents tabled by leave, are tabled in formal business or at a break in business when there is no question before the Chair. Tabling documents at a regular time each day or when there is no question before the Chair ensures that documents are tabled transparently and at a time that members can predict. It is therefore not appropriate to table documents during question time, statements by members or at any other time when there is a question before the Chair.

Hard copies of tabled documents are available from the procedure office for distribution to members, and electronic copies are loaded onto the tabled documents database. Tabled documents then form part of the Parliament's original records that are stored in perpetuity. All documents are checked in advance by the Clerk's office. This is particularly important in the case of reports requiring absolute privilege.

Sometimes members may wish to make a document available to other members and circulate it in the house. They do not have to formally table a document for this

to occur; members may simply advise the Chair during the course of debate that they have a document to make available for other members to inspect. They then hand this document to the Clerk at the end of their speech, and the Clerk makes some copies for members to review. In fact when members quote from a document and another member asks to see the material, this is the process that is followed. Such documents do not form part of the Parliament's original records and are not stored.

I remind all members with documents to table by leave that they are to do this when other reports are being tabled and they are to ensure that the required number and format of copies are provided to the Clerk's office in advance.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I thank you for your guidance and ruling. With that now cleared up, I ask whether or not the report that was referred to in question time yesterday will be made available by the Deputy Premier to the Parliament as a result of what has resulted in this ruling and guidance you have given us this morning.

Mr Merlino — On the point of order, Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition had even bothered to read *Daily Hansard* as he came into the chamber this morning, he would realise that I said 'documents' — okay? I said 'documents'.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Merlino — The day after we handed down the biggest education budget — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier will resume his seat.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House!

Mr Guy — Speaker, I ask again by way of a point order: is the Deputy Premier going to — —

Mr Merlino — Here is the *Hansard*.

Mr Guy — You're an angry little fool, aren't you?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have provided guidance to the house in relation to seeking to table documents as distinct from providing a document or making a

document available to the house. I remain confident that the Deputy Premier and the Leader of the Opposition understood my ruling. If the Deputy Premier wishes to make the document available to the house, he can do so.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a further point of order, Speaker, could you advise me and other members as to the status of a document which is made available as opposed to being tabled. Does it attract parliamentary privilege in the same way in which a document which is tabled attracts parliamentary privilege?

The SPEAKER — Order! I am advised that it does not.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked whether the Minister for Education would make a report available. Without regard to the conversation that was had yesterday, which you have given very good guidance to the house on, the Leader of the Opposition has asked, on a separate matter, whether the Minister for Education will make the report available to the house. I would say that the house is none the wiser as to whether that will happen. We would appreciate some response from the Minister for Education on whether or not he will actually make that report available to the house.

Mr Merlino — On the point of order, Speaker, the document that I sought leave to make available to the house yesterday, I remain committed to show the house, so that all members can see the \$800 million shortfall — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General:

Occupational Violence Against Healthcare Workers — Ordered to be published

Tendering of Metropolitan Bus Contracts — Ordered to be published

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

Melbourne — C212

Moreland — C153

Yarra — C176

Victoria Planning Provisions — VC119

Statutory Rule under the *Architects Act 1991* — SR 28

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 28

Victorian Law Reform Commission — Trading Trusts — Oppression Remedies — Ordered to be published.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College and De La Salle College

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — Grease is the word at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in Bentleigh. The school has teamed up with De La Salle College and put on a fantastic production of the musical *Grease* at Monash University's Alexander Theatre. It was a pleasure to be at the opening night last week with principal Anne O'Loughlin. My personal favourite scene in the show was when Teen Angel floated down from the sky to tell Frenchy to go back to school.

Congratulations to all involved, especially director Andrew Murrell and the main cast, including Liam Gava, Gillian Lantouris, Matthew Mottola, Callan Gately, Henry Prendergast-Kruger, Luciano Murray, Mitchell Treleaven, Tanis Van Laake, Young Sohn, Will Wright, Alishia Francis, Lara White, Aviva White, Sarah Jones, Laura Halliday, Lauren Quintal and Laura Webb.

International Guide Dog Day

Mr STAIKOS — Last Wednesday was International Guide Dog Day. That morning I was joined by the Minister for Agriculture at Paseo Del Prado cafe in Bentleigh to launch the 'Welcome' campaign. Too often people with guide dogs are refused access to public places. A survey by Guide Dogs Victoria found that taxidivers are refusing or questioning the right of access of guide dogs 47 per cent of the time. In Bentleigh last year a volunteer carer of a guide dog puppy was refused access to a local cafe.

Whether you are visually impaired and have a guide dog or you are a volunteer carer of a guide dog puppy at the crucial socialisation stage, you should not be treated with the indignity of being refused access to public places. The 'Welcome' campaign is about informing the community that denying access to a guide dog is in breach of the federal Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Domestic Animals Act 1994. I thank Guide Dogs Victoria and Vision Australia for their support of this campaign.

Road Safety Week

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I rise on behalf of the coalition to support Road Safety Week. Road Safety Week is a global initiative and one that Victoria as a community has most certainly embraced. Road safety is one area that affects all of us and all of our constituents. It should be an ongoing concern for everyone in this Parliament and everyone in the community.

With the exception of freak medical events, every death on our roads is preventable. If we all drive safely and courteously, keep our vehicles properly maintained and drive on good roads, traffic accidents should never happen. We must aim to reduce the road toll to zero. This is one area where near enough is never good enough, because every number in the road toll is a life lost needlessly.

However, the good news is that road safety is an example of how societies can implement positive generational change. In 1987 Victoria's annual road toll was 705. Since then we have more than halved that figure, and that is to the great credit of the people of Victoria. Some of that change has been brought about by programs and penalties imposed by government — greater fines, proper use of speed cameras, better methods of blood alcohol testing and other measures — but the reality is that the most effective form of discipline is always self-discipline. In the last generation we have brought the road toll down because individuals have chosen not to speed and not to drink and drive.

Victoria has a lot to be proud of in relation to road safety, but the sobering reality is that in 2015 alone there have been 96 deaths on our roads, and that is up from 88 at the same point last year. This is 96 deaths too many. In this week my commitment is that the coalition will always listen to any idea that might reduce the road toll, whoever suggests it. It is a given that this should be above politics. I hope we can all work together with the community to reduce the numbers further and save lives.

Lyndale Secondary College

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I recently visited Lyndale Secondary College in Dandenong North to meet the 2015 school captains — Lara Nguyen, Ali Jaffari, Ali Khan and Flabia Orison. These young people impressed me enormously with their intelligence and passion for their school and their community.

Each of them had a particular vision for the future but were united in their desire to create a better world for

their generation and those who follow. These young leaders show themselves to be engaged and passionate about issues facing local youth today, both in their school and in their wider community. Our discussion on these issues included, very importantly, finding ways to further encourage young people in policy and decision-making. It cannot be stressed enough how essential it is for the future of our communities that we hear the voice of our youth, who are crying out to be heard and desperate to have input. I left Lyndale Secondary College confident that our young leaders are on the right path and will no doubt make substantial contributions to society in the future.

I am proud that the students at Lyndale will soon have the facilities they deserve thanks to a \$7 million investment by the Andrews government in the school's redevelopment. This is not just an investment in infrastructure; it is an investment in our young people, an investment in their future and by extension an investment in the future of this fine state.

Budget

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — While it was pleasing to see the Andrews government honour the coalition commitment to invest \$500 000 to build a roof on the Wangaratta saleyards, the good news stops there. Country Victoria feels abandoned by the lack of investment in our country towns and communities. If this is the largest education budget in history, members opposite need to take a long, hard look at themselves. They need to govern for all Victorians. The Ovens Valley is disappointed the Premier, who grew up in the region, has really let it down in his first budget. Sadly he is now comfortable in the suburbs, and it seems country Victoria does not matter anymore.

Bright Autumn Festival

Mr McCURDY — I was delighted to open the Bright Autumn Festival on the weekend. An enormous crowd gathered to enjoy the day and watch the floats, which had an Anzac theme. Overall winner was Wandiligong Primary School. Other category winners included Bright Garden Club, Alpine View Children's Centre, Bright United Men's Shed and Tour of Duty Bright. Congratulations to all those who put many hours into making the more than 25 floats and made the day an overwhelming success. Well done to festival president Arno van Winden, secretary Mike Dealy and the entire committee for putting this festival together.

Anzac Day

Mr McCURDY — I was thrilled to see the support for the Anzac Day parades. I attended the dawn service at Cobram, where numbers swelled to nearly double that of previous years. I also attended services at Eldorado, Everton and Wangaratta. Australians vowed to never forget our Anzacs, and going by the sheer numbers present at all ceremonies I can definitely say, 100 years on, we remember them.

Dirrawarra Indigenous Network

Mr McCURDY — It was refreshing to have three tiers of government meet with the Dirrawarra Indigenous Network group in Wangaratta. Darren Moffitt convened a terrific meeting in which we discussed many things. The main issue is the need for a local meeting room for this group. I look forward to supporting Darren in this quest.

Anzac Day

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I would like to congratulate the RSL members across my electorate who put in many volunteer hours to ensure that Anzac Day 2015 and the centenary of Gallipoli were events that not only attracted record attendance but also fitted the solemnity of the occasion. The Kangaroo Flat sub-branch, headed by president Charlie Martin and secretary Craig Chilvers, did an outstanding job in organising and leading both the dawn and morning services. In addition I congratulate the Kangaroo Flat sub-branch on achieving its goal of having official recognition of a strip of trees as a World War I avenue of honour memorial. Each one of these trees is dedicated to the 65 men who are not mentioned anywhere in Victoria on any memorial. All 65 men signed up in Kangaroo Flat. Congratulations also to Cliff Richards and the Bendigo RSL for their outstanding efforts in making this Anzac Day such a memorable one.

In Maldon I was honoured to attend the 99th commemoration and flag-raising ceremony on Anzac Hill on Anzac Day eve. Maldon was just the second town in Victoria to establish its own commemorative place. Anzac Hill is a very special and spiritual place, and it was adorned with special wooden crosses made by the Maldon Men's Shed and decorated with handmade poppies. The crosses were placed to mark the location of the 35 original trees planted on Anzac Hill. Parks Victoria staff also painted a big 'V' on Victory Hill, which is a remnant of the anti-conscription movement. The handpainted rocks spelt 'Vote No', but after the war it became a 'V' for

'Victory'. In every community across the electorate the centenary of Anzac was widely acknowledged. Thank you to all involved.

Mornington & District Historical Society

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I rise this morning to congratulate the Mornington & District Historical Society, and in particular its vice-president Valerie Wilson, on the recent publication of her book on the young men and women whose names are recorded on the Mornington Honour Roll 1914–18. One hundred years on from the commencement of the Gallipoli campaign it is fitting that not only the names but also the lives behind the names are recorded for future generations. There are 120 names that appear, with only one remaining unaccounted for. Of those 119 people, 21 died of war-related injuries or diseases and 95 men and 4 women made it home, but 5 of the men died soon after. A total of 26 lives were lost, which is a considerable number for what was then a very small town. Some went on to live long and successful lives, but too many did not make old bones.

The book brings the names to life. Each has a short biographical note, and many are accompanied by letters from the front. While the laconic humour of the time is much in evidence, the letters paint a picture of the rough conditions and dangers they faced. John 'Jack' Russell, a 26-year-old from Mornington, reported to his mother, 'Every time I feel a little bit nervous something seems to tell me, "It's all right; you are not going to be killed"'. Later in the same letter he wrote, 'The gas is not as bad as the papers make out, as you are quite safe if you put the helmet on quickly'. Jack was right; he was not killed — but he did not survive the war unscathed. He died at the early age of 54. The book is a timely reminder that those who fought and died and those who supported them at the front were not just names on a plaque but living, breathing people with wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, and sisters and brothers who shared the hopes, dreams, fears and excitement of their generation and its ambitions for our nation.

Bus services

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — It was a great relief to hear the Minister for Public Transport recently quash Public Transport Victoria's proposed butchering of Melbourne's orbital SmartBus service. The three SmartBus routes that run around the middle and outer Melbourne suburbs have been extremely popular and have helped boost bus patronage by 50 per cent in the last 10 years. The 902 Chelsea to Airport West bus service runs right through my electorate, from the

Greensborough shops and along Grimshaw Street and Settlement Road, Bundoora. Buses currently run every 15 minutes on weekdays, meaning people practically do not need a timetable.

The introduction of the successful SmartBus initiative by the previous Labor government provides a potent symbol of Labor's longstanding commitment to public transport. That is why I was horrified to hear media reports just two days after the state election at which our new government was elected that Public Transport Victoria was proposing to cut the SmartBus service in my area back to a 20-minute service and split the 902 route into two separate bus services terminating at Doncaster.

We learnt that the previous government had been working on this proposal for some time and that while bus services in the northern and western suburbs were to be cut back, services in Melbourne's eastern suburbs were to be increased. That is a clear case of robbing Peter to pay Paul, and another reason that people in the northern suburbs should never trust Liberals with public transport. I commend the new Labor minister for putting these changes into the shredder, investing in new services and committing to genuine consultation on ways to improve our bus services.

Doncaster Road, Greythorn, speed limits

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — The Greythorn shopping centre is a popular local shopping strip that runs along both sides of Doncaster Road in the north-east of my electorate. At present this section of Doncaster Road operates with a 60-kilometre-an-hour speed limit. I am advised by the City of Boroondara that in a five-year period between 2008 and 2013 there have been eight reported casualty crashes, with three resulting in serious injury. These figures demonstrate a clear need for safety upgrades to be implemented around this shopping precinct.

The City of Boroondara has sought unsuccessfully from VicRoads to have this section of Doncaster Road speed limited to 40 kilometres an hour. The VicRoads response to the City of Boroondara request was to say that because the shopping strip runs for approximately 350 metres, not 400 metres, a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone will not be considered. This is bureaucratic nonsense. The crash statistics, as well as anecdotal evidence from traders and local residents, clearly indicate that there are safety issues facing pedestrians and drivers along this section of road. I note that the implementation of a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone has the full support of the Greythorn Traders Association. I call upon the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to review

this nonsensical attitude of VicRoads bureaucrats and ensure that a 40-kilometre-an-hour zone is implemented along this busy section of Doncaster Road.

Sunshine College

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — Prior to 2010 the Bracks and Brumby state governments funded Sunshine College to prepare a master plan to consolidate the school sites from five to three and provide a standard of physical buildings to meet the educational standards already being met by the school in what is a very disadvantaged area. In 2010 Labor promised \$10 million to start stage 1 of that process. The Liberals won the election in that year but did not honour the commitment to this disadvantaged community and put politics ahead of the needs of young Victorians. As a result, for four years the school has languished, waiting for a government to set up and fund the master plan.

This government in its first budget has committed \$10 million to fund the master plan as the school envisaged it and as was promised in 2010. The school will have its master plan. It will have the school buildings it wants, built in the stages it wants. As members of the Andrews government we are committed to making education the no. 1 priority, making Victoria the education state and ensuring that our children, no matter where they live or what their family's income is, have access to a good-quality education. They are getting good education outcomes at this school, and now they will have good facilities.

Transpacific partnership agreement

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I use my member's statement today to draw the attention of the people of Victoria to some of the potential impacts for Australia if we as a nation enter into the transpacific partnership (TPP) agreement. This agreement is being negotiated between Australia, the United States and 10 other Asia-Pacific rim countries. Very little factual information has been provided about the long-term impacts of this agreement, and concerns are being raised about a number of issues. For instance, the TPP agreement could threaten our ability to place health warnings on the labels of food, tobacco and alcohol products. It could affect our food labelling laws.

It is thought that the TPP agreement may restrict the ability of governments to preference local products and services over imported ones, including sustainable locally grown food. This could have serious implications for our desire to market our food on the basis that it is a premium clean, green product.

Multinational companies are likely to have access to a process called investor state dispute resolution, which allows them to go before special tribunals to challenge domestic policies and practices. For instance, Philip Morris has challenged antismoking packaging measures in Australia and Europe based on the argument that its intellectual property is being endangered. The risk is that multinationals may sue and achieve huge damages awards against governments that enact, for instance, health promotion and protection laws.

If investor state dispute settlement is included in the TPP agreement, then local, state and federal governments would be vulnerable to legal challenges from foreign companies, including large tobacco and food processing companies.

Sue Douglas

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — It is with a heavy heart that I rise to offer my condolences and those of the community in the Ivanhoe electorate to the mighty Macleod Football Club. I quote from this week's *Heidelberg Leader*:

MacLeod's win against Bundoora on Saturday was overshadowed by the sudden death of coach Garry Ramsay's sister-in-law at a pre-match luncheon.

Sue Douglas collapsed just before the Mother's Day lunch, organised by her sister Melinda, was due to commence at De Winton Park.

Club trainers attempted to revive her with a defibrillator after she collapsed shortly before noon.

Several family members were present, including her mother and another sister.

...

Club president Damian Hurley said on Monday that the death was 'extremely confronting'. 'It was tragic', he said. 'The family are absolutely distraught.'

He said the club would offer all the support it could to the Ramsay family.

Melinda is well known at the club not only through her husband but also through her work as a leisure services officer at Banyule City Council.

The decision to go ahead with the division 1 game was taken by the players, and they were joined by Bundoora players in a pre-game tribute.

I am very proud to be associated with this great club. Its players, committee and supporters are widely respected across the Northern Football League for the way in which they conduct themselves both on and off the field. My heart goes out to Garry and his family and the Kangaroos family at De Winton Park. While we might

sit atop the ladder, as president Hurley said, the football is insignificant on such a tragic day.

Korumburra Business Association

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — Small business is the heart of local communities, and so it was that I had great pleasure in attending a relaunch event for the Korumburra Business Association (KBA) last night in the magnificent surrounds of the old Korumburra train station. The roaring log fire was very nice, given the cold weather outside.

The Korumburra Business Association put in a lot of effort to attract a good crowd, but I think even the organisers were surprised that 120 local business owners turned up to hear a couple of guest speakers and to network with each other. It was a great show of faith by the business community, and I have encouraged all those who attended to join the KBA to ensure that they have a strong voice in local affairs. As I said on the night, the world is run by those who turn up; if you are not at the table, you are probably on the menu. Congratulations to KBA president, David Amor, secretary, Lucy Mertens, and the committee for a great night. I look forward to working with them on issues into the future.

Two important issues in Korumburra are the redevelopment of the secondary college and the northern towns water project, which would augment Korumburra's water supply and that of neighbouring towns. Unfortunately the Melbourne Labor government failed to fund either of them in the budget yesterday. The coalition government delivered \$5.6 million last year for the school upgrade and during the election campaign committed a further \$9 million for a complete rebuild. These projects are badly needed, and I look forward to working with the Korumburra Business Association and the school community to deliver them and others for Korumburra.

Trentham Spudfest

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — On Saturday I had the great pleasure of attending the Trentham Spudfest. Now in its 8th year, Spudfest celebrates Trentham's rich history as a renowned potato-growing region and celebrates all things potato. Music, food and art were all part of the day, with children from Tylden and Trentham primary schools displaying their potato print designs and their spud sack outfits. Renowned local artist and Archibald finalist Rose Wilson was in charge of the face painting tent, and of course potato sack races were held.

Students from the Sacred Heart College Show Band and Bullarto Primary School entertained the crowds, and Guy Grossi of Florentino fame was a special guest, demonstrating how to cook perfect gnocchi. To my mind, however, nothing tastes as good on a chilly Trentham morning as some hot chips from the Trentham Country Fire Authority.

It was my pleasure to be a sponsor of this event and to attend a special morning tea and VIP tour. As members know, community events like these only happen because of the passion and commitment of volunteers, and so I acknowledge Jacinta Carboon; Janine Bryant; Nicola Stockton and her parents, Margaret and John; Jacinta Burke; Dianne Caithness; Corina Sabo; Bernie White and the more than 100 volunteers who made it all happen. I congratulate each of them. They make Trentham the wonderful community it is.

It was also my pleasure this morning to present the Premier with a couple of kilos of Nicola potatoes straight out of Trentham. They are perfect for roasting and are grown by third-generation potato farmer, Mr Bernie White. He is a local icon and, believe it or not, a relative of the Premier.

Clunes Booktown Festival

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Last weekend was the Clunes Booktown Festival. Over the two days 18 000 people turned up to buy books, hear author talks, eat, drink and be merry, and come together to further cement Clunes' status as the only book town in the Southern Hemisphere and an internationally recognised centre of literature. I attended the Creative Clunes dinner on Saturday night at the showgrounds, where the full gamut of the volunteer effort in Clunes was on display. Omar Musa, the slam poet from Queanbeyan, energised the crowd with his full force poetry of the streets and the burbs. I regret I cannot do his work justice by repeating it here.

Lake Goldsmith Steam and Vintage Rally

Ms STALEY — Last weekend was the 105th Lake Goldsmith Steam and Vintage Rally. Held on the ever-developing site outside Beaufort, this is Australia's premier steam rally. Breaking the pattern of, it seems, a lifetime, the weather was kind and delivered a glorious weekend for the crowds who flocked to see the grand parades, the permanent displays and the huge variety of steam and vintage machinery and vehicles on-site. The Lake Goldsmith Steam Preservation Group is again to be congratulated on hosting this great event, and I look forward to attending the next one later in the year.

Coburg Historical Society

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I rise today to acknowledge the ongoing and important work of the Coburg Historical Society. This enthusiastic band of local people ensure that our local treasures are kept alive for generations to come. They also provide the invaluable service of connecting the local community with our rich history.

I recently had the privilege of visiting the Bluestone Cottage Museum on Bell Street, Coburg. This quaint cottage used by the Coburg Historical Society is home to an impressive array of artefacts and documents. I was accompanied on this tour by three of the society's longstanding and passionate members, president Malcolm McIlvena, secretary Dr Cheryl Griffin and treasurer Ken McLeod.

As I moved through the cottage I was transported back in time, with each room of the cottage representing a different theme from a different period in the history of Coburg and the broader Moreland community. The cottage is a visual delight, containing old sets of scales and original doors from Pentridge Prison as well as memorabilia from local sporting teams, both past and present. These collections help us to imagine what life was like in times gone by and remind us of the essential role our forebears — from the Indigenous people to our migrant communities — played in forging so much of what we enjoy today in the Moreland area.

My visit to the Coburg Historical Society occurred in the days leading up to the 100th anniversary of the Anzac landing in Gallipoli, Turkey. The museum includes a special display of the uniforms worn and the medallions awarded to our brave servicemen and women. The collection also provides an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as a nation and a community in the past 100 years.

Waverley RSL

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise to congratulate the Waverley RSL on organising both the Anzac commemorative ceremony on Sunday, 19 April, and the dawn service on Saturday, 25 April. These services aptly commemorated the enormous service and sacrifice of Australians and the allied forces during times of war. I give special thanks to the Waverley RSL sub-branch president, Neil Slaughter, the dedicated RSL committee members and members of other service organisations who put so much time and effort into organising and preparing these events. Lest we forget.

Rotary Club of Monash

Mr GIDLEY — Today in Parliament I acknowledge the Rotary Club of Monash for organising its annual Anzac schools commemoration service at the original World War I cenotaph in Glen Waverley to recognise the sacrifice and service of Australians and the allied forces during times of war. The Rotary club's Anzac service provided a unique opportunity for schools throughout Monash to be involved in such a ceremony through the laying of wreaths and participating in other aspects of the service. This is a wonderful event, providing a unique opportunity for students to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who fought for our freedom and liberties. I want to thank the Rotary Club of Monash, including the club committee and president, for its ongoing efforts in organising and undertaking this special event.

Huntingtower School

Mr GIDLEY — I also recognise Huntingtower School for its moving Anzac dawn service, held on Friday 24 April. The service commemorated the enormous service and sacrifice of Australians and the allied forces who fought to defend our freedom and liberties during times of war. I thank all involved in organising the Huntingtower School Anzac dawn service, including staff, teachers, parents and school support groups.

Budget

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — I have been overwhelmed by the positive responses I have received from my constituents in St Albans in relation to the state budget. Issues of interest include the removal of both the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings, the commitment to build a new women and children's hospital in Sunshine, the widening of the ring-road and particularly the \$6.1 million to fix the intersection of Kings and Taylors roads. In the last 24 hours I have received over 1300 likes on my Facebook page and over 900 comments, and the number continues to grow.

This roundabout is the seventh most dangerous in Melbourne, and we are one step closer to removing it and making sure it is safer for the pedestrians and the motorists who use it. We saw no funding for it in the last four years, and I am happy and excited on behalf of my constituents to finally see this dangerous roundabout now being removed. Clearly this is a very important issue for the constituents of St Albans.

Leadbeater's possum

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — I am extremely alarmed at recent comments in the *Age* by the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water regarding the creation of a Great Forest National Park. The minister makes it very clear that it is her desire to establish a new national park in this term of government, and she also suggests that the park is the only long-term solution for the protection of the Leadbeater's possum.

The minister is completely undermining the future of the native forest timber industry in Victoria and jeopardising any new investment by totally trashing the confidence and security of the industry. She has chosen to completely ignore recent survey work undertaken by the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, which found 27 colonies of Leadbeater's possum over 66 locations. The minister has not recognised the work of the coalition government and the timber industry for implementing all the recommendations of the Leadbeater's possum advisory group. These included \$11 million for a range of initiatives, including captive breeding programs, which are proving very successful, and the timber industry donating another 5 per cent of its diminishing resource base to the protection of the possum. The best evidence is that the possum population is doing okay, with estimates that there are still between 4000 and 11 000 individuals — a base that provides opportunity if action is taken, which it is, for the recovery of the species.

It is unacceptable for the minister to pre-empt the outcome of her government's task force, but worse still she is threatening tens of thousands of jobs, including over 1200 jobs at Australian Paper Mills and at least 200 jobs in Heyfield. I call on the Premier to pull his minister into line or face the prospect of his promised focus on jobs looking even more farcical.

Anzac centenary

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — This year, 2015, marks the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign commencement on 25 April. Anzac Day is a day for us to commemorate and remember the Anzacs — the Australian and New Zealand troops who fought for their countries motivated by love to protect families, friends and comrades, many making the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives. While the main focus for the centenary has been on Gallipoli and the battle waged on 25 April, and rightly so, there is a lesser known story connected with the Gallipoli campaign.

The island of Lemnos in Greece was provided by the then Greek Prime Minister to the Allied forces as a supply base. It hosted makeshift military hospitals, provided much-needed respite for soldiers resting from the front and of course provided food, water and other essential supplies. Australian soldiers mingled with the local people and relied on their support. I was fortunate to participate in an Anzac parliamentary tour to Greece during the Anzac commemorations.

Every year people on Lemnos commemorate the Anzacs and the bond between Australia and Greece. That strong bond continues today, with Melbourne being the third largest city by population of those with a Greek background. Many people of Greek background also live in the Thomastown electorate, and to visit the places where many friends were born and lived previously, including Odessa, Thessalonica, Salonika, Florina, Lemnos and Athens, gave me a greater appreciation and understanding of that beautiful country and its culture.

Highett Community Bank

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I congratulate the Highett Community Bank for the extraordinary achievement of returning to the Highett district some \$2 million for a wide range of community programs. It is a wonderful accomplishment underpinned by a wise vision, diligence, good management, local customers and hard work. I acknowledge the contributions of Les Heimann, Ian Orchard and Ross Newton, among others, who have worked with great endeavour to bring about this result.

Beaumaris Primary School

Mr THOMPSON — I pay tribute to the Beaumaris Primary School on the celebration of its 100th birthday at the weekend. The values of the school include respect, resilience, responsibility and relationships, involving teamwork and tolerance between all school members. I pay tribute to the principal, Sheryl Skewes; school council president, Tony Falkingham; and the organiser of the anniversary celebration, Ellie Hilton, and her committee.

Mentone Public Library

Mr THOMPSON — I pay tribute to the Mentone Public Library as it approaches its 90th anniversary. Some excellent talks have been delivered on a wide range of subjects promoting local writers and literature.

Model United Nations Assembly

Mr THOMPSON — I pay tribute to Rotary district 9810 on the holding of the Model United Nations Assembly in this chamber at the weekend. An outstanding job was done by the Rotary committee, and the students had an opportunity to discuss issues including violence against women, small arms control and the situation in Russia and the Ukraine, among other matters.

Essendon Keilor College

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — After being elected in March 2012 I said in my inaugural speech that my immediate task was the implementation of the Essendon Keilor College master plan. Yesterday I kept my word and delivered on that commitment. I appreciate the support of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Education.

The \$10 million commitment will transform this school. In 2011 the school was described in the *Herald Sun* as having more than 1300 items needing attention. The former Minister for Education visited the school and publicly stated in the *Age* newspaper that it was ‘disgusting’ and ‘not safe’, yet it was never redeveloped. Only the Andrews Labor government is prepared to invest in this school. Indeed we had to bring a door from the school to the former minister to get his attention. That door is currently in the Premier’s office. I intend to get the door back and return it to the school when the redevelopment starts. This school has three wonderful campuses and has been around for 100 years.

The Andrews Labor government, led by the Deputy Premier and the Premier, yesterday provided the state’s biggest investment in education. Why? Because education is the single most important investment we can make in our communities. I am very proud to be a part of this government, which is going to invest in education and provide for our future. I am going to make sure that my legacy in my electorate is that Essendon Keilor College is here for another 100 years and that under my watch it will never again be referred to as ‘disgusting’ and ‘not safe’.

Mr Katos — Acting Speaker, I did not raise this point of order during members statements because I did not want to interfere with members’ time, but during members statements it appeared that the member for Frankston was taking photographs on his iPhone in the chamber. *Rulings from the Chair 1920–2014*, page 59, states that:

Members should not take photographs in the chamber.

I ask that the Acting Speaker consider this matter and, if any photos have been taken in the chamber, that she request that they be deleted.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I have conferred with the member for Frankston and he confirms that he did no such thing. I think the opposition's obsession with raising spurious points of order with regard to the member for Frankston is getting beyond a joke.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! I did not see the member for Frankston taking photos so I do not uphold the point of order.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the normal practice would be to ask the member for Frankston himself to respond in relation to this matter. It is all very well for the Attorney-General to say he has conferred with the member, but I think the appropriate practice would be for the honourable member himself to declare to the chamber whether or not he has been taking photographs.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! I ask the member for Frankston to advise if he has taken any photographs in the chamber.

Mr Edbrooke — I am happy to inform the chamber that I have not. Texting is one thing and holding the phone up in the air is another, but what was seen was not me taking photos. I have no worries if you want to try to prove that, but you will not be able to.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! I have heard from the member for Frankston. There is no point of order.

COURT SERVICES VICTORIA AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the charter), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Court Services Victoria and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015.

In my opinion, the Court Services Victoria and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2015, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Human rights issues

The bill engages the right to privacy and reputation as a consequence of the amendment to be made by clause 9 to the definition of relevant principal officer in the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 (IBAC act).

As a result of the amendment:

the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) will be empowered to disclose any information it has acquired by reason of, or in the course of, the performance of its duties and functions or the exercise of its powers under the IBAC act or any other act to the chief executive officer (CEO) of Court Services Victoria (CSV) if the IBAC considers that the information is relevant to the performance of the duties and functions or the exercise of powers of the CEO of CSV; and

the CEO of CSV will be permitted to notify the IBAC of any matter that the CEO believes on reasonable grounds constitutes corrupt conduct, despite any duty of secrecy or other restriction on disclosure.

A disclosure by the IBAC, or notification by the CEO, may involve the disclosure of personal information.

Human rights protected by the charter that are relevant to the bill

Privacy and reputation (section 13 of the charter)

Section 13(a) of the charter provides that individuals have a right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. The right to privacy concerns a person's 'private sphere', which should be free from government intervention or excessive unsolicited intervention by other individuals.

An interference with privacy will not be unlawful if it is permitted by law, is certain, and is appropriately circumscribed. An interference will not be arbitrary provided that the restrictions on privacy are reasonable in the particular circumstances and are in accordance with the provisions, aims and objectives of the charter.

Are the relevant charter rights limited by the bill?

I do not consider that clause 9 provides for the unlawful or arbitrary interference with privacy. Accordingly, clause 9 places no limitation on the right to privacy under section 13 of the charter.

The interference with privacy will not be unlawful in that it will be clearly and expressly permitted under the IBAC act and will be limited to situations where the information relates to either:

the performance of the duties and functions, or exercise of the powers of, the CEO of CSV; or

conduct reasonably believed to be corrupt conduct.

The interference with privacy will not be arbitrary in that it is necessary to facilitate the investigation and prevention of corrupt conduct. The aim of the charter is to protect and promote human rights by ensuring that public powers and functions are exercised in a principled way and that public

power is not misused. Ensuring that corrupt conduct can be investigated and prevented is in accordance with this aim.

The Hon. Martin Pakula, MP
Attorney-General

Second reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

The Court Services Victoria and Other Acts Amendment Bill makes amendments designed to improve the legislation governing the operation of Court Services Victoria (CSV). The amendments respond to issues identified during CSV's first six months of operation. They are largely machinery amendments or clarifications to existing provisions.

The bill amends the Financial Management Act 1995 to provide CSV with the same budget flexibility and management mechanisms as generally apply to other Victorian public sector bodies that, like CSV, receive a direct parliamentary appropriation. These include mechanisms that will allow CSV to:

take advantage of opportunities that arise in a current financial year to acquire benefits that will accrue, or continue, in the following financial year;

better manage expenditure across financial years; and

better manage cash flow within financial years.

The amendments are consistent with the existing framework under the Court Services Victoria Act 2014 (CSV act) for the management of CSV's finances and with the provisions that apply to Victorian public sector agencies, generally.

The bill amends the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act (IBAC act), to codify the authority of the chief executive officer (CEO) of CSV in relation to complaints and investigations under the IBAC act concerning CSV and CSV staff.

The bill also amends the Judicial College of Victoria Act 2001 to codify the role of the board of the Judicial College of Victoria (JCV) in appointing, setting the terms and conditions for, and (if necessary) terminating the employment of, the CEO of JCV. The amendments will also formally record the duty of the CEO of JCV to act at the direction of the JCV board.

Finally, the bill will amend the CSV act to repeal a redundant definition of State Services Authority. The definition is not used elsewhere in the CSV act and, in any case, the State Services Authority has now been replaced by the Victorian Public Sector Commission.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 20 May.

WRONGS AMENDMENT (PRISONER RELATED COMPENSATION) BILL 2015

Statement of compatibility

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the 'charter'), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Wrongs Amendment (Prisoner Related Compensation) Bill 2015.

In my opinion, the Wrongs Amendment (Prisoner Related Compensation) Bill 2015, as introduced into the Legislative Assembly, may be partially incompatible with the human rights as set out in the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview

The bill will insert a new part VBAA into the Wrongs Act 1958, that will apply to awards of damages for non-economic loss for psychiatric injury in relation to the injury or death of a prisoner in custody.

The bill provides that in such a case the court or jury must consider whether the claimant has criminal convictions, and, if the claimant does have criminal convictions, must reduce the award of damages with regard to a range of factors, including: the number and severity of offences, the relationship between the claimant and the injured prisoner, and whether the offences of the prisoner and the claimant were related in some way. Where a claimant has been convicted of a 'profit motivated offence', the award of damages must be reduced by no less than 90 per cent.

The new part VBAA will only apply to convictions for offences that occurred when the claimant was an adult, and will operate retroactively, so that it will apply to proceedings that have commenced but not yet been determined at the time the bill commences.

Human rights issues

Right to equality

Section 8 of the charter contains three distinct rights:

section 8(1) provides for the right to equality before the law;

section 8(2) provides for the right to enjoy one's human rights (that is, the substantive rights protected by the charter) without discrimination;

section 8(3) provides for the right to equal protection of the law without discrimination.

Section 8(1) of the charter requires the recognition of the entitlement of every person to exercise his or her lawful rights to commence, defend and participate in legal proceedings. Bell J. held in *Lifestyle Communities Ltd (No 3) (Anti-Discrimination)* that 'equality before the law is the principle of the general application of the law and equal treatment of all persons who come before the law ... [i]t is

directed to the application and administration of the law, not the content of the law’.

Accordingly, the bill does not engage the right to equality before the law, because the bill alters the content of the law regarding certain claims of damages for non-economic loss in respect of mental harm, but does not alter the administration and application of the law. The provisions inserted into the Wrongs Act by the bill will apply to all current and future claims, notwithstanding that they will only (potentially) affect those claims brought by persons with a criminal conviction.

In relation to the rights to freedom from discrimination, section 8(2) and (3), ‘discrimination’ is defined in section 3 of the charter as discrimination within the meaning of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, on the basis of an attribute set out in section 6 of that act. In the case of the bill, it is sufficient to note that the attributes set out in section 6 do not include a person’s criminal record, criminal history or prior criminal activity. Accordingly, although it proposes to treat certain claimants unfavourably on the basis of having criminal convictions, this does not constitute discrimination under the charter.

Right to privacy

Section 13(a) of the charter provides that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

This is relevant to the fact that new part VBAA will only apply to claimants who have been convicted of a criminal offence, and to new section 28LAG which empowers a court to order the production of a claimant’s criminal record for the purposes of the part to new section 28LAF(2), which sets out the factors to be considered by a court in reducing an award of damages in the relevant circumstances.

A claimant’s criminal record, and the other factors to be considered under section 28LAF(2), concern personal information about the claimant for which he or she may have some reasonable expectation of privacy. However, any interference with a person’s privacy under the bill will not be unlawful or arbitrary because:

the disclosure of information as to the claimant’s conviction or convictions is circumscribed and confined to the purpose of determining whether the claimant’s entitlement to damages should be reduced;

a person who brings a claim to which the bill applies does so on the understanding that all — matters relevant to their statutory and common law entitlements may be scrutinised and assessed;

the court hearing the matter will possess the power to regulate the hearing, and may regulate the disclosure of information about the claimant’s criminal history (for example, through the use of closed sessions and suppression orders).

Right to a fair hearing

Section 24(1) of the charter relevantly provides that ‘a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the ... proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing’.

The fair hearing right mandates the judicial determination of what civil rights and liabilities exist as a matter of substantive law. It does not prevent the state from altering the content of those civil rights in the substantive law.

The bill affects the substance of certain claims brought under the Wrongs Act, but does not affect the determination of such a claim. Moreover, the exercise of the court or jury’s discretion to reduce an award of damages occurs in accordance with the procedural guarantees of the court process. This includes (but is not limited to) the court’s obligation, pursuant to section 6(2)(b) of the charter, to enforce and directly apply those charter rights that relate to court proceedings.

Therefore, the bill does not limit the right to a fair hearing under section 24(1) of the charter, even in circumstances where a court or jury exercises its discretion to make a 100 per cent reduction of the award of damages.

Property rights

Section 20 of the charter provides that ‘a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law’.

‘Property’ is not defined in the charter; however, relevant jurisprudence suggests it would be interpreted to include a cause of action for a Wrongs Act claim which has already accrued. To the extent that the bill permits a substantial reduction in the award of damages of up to 100 per cent for pending claims brought by a claimant who has been convicted of an offence, and requires the reduction of damages of at least 90 per cent if the claimant has been convicted of a profit motivated offence, the bill permits (or requires) a deprivation of property.

The requirement under section 20 of the charter that any deprivation of a person’s property be ‘in accordance with the law’ requires (but is not limited to) legal authorisation for the deprivation. Victorian judicial and academic commentary suggest that the law authorising the deprivation of property must be adequately accessible and formulated with sufficient precision to enable a person to regulate his or her conduct accordingly.

In the present case, any deprivation of property occasioned by the bill, including a 100 per cent reduction in damages, will be ‘in accordance with law’ for the following reasons:

the provisions of the bill clearly identify the types of claims to which the Bill applies, including those proceedings commenced prior to the enactment of the bill;

the bill clearly specifies the factors which must be considered in determining a reduction in the award of damages, and obliges the court or jury to specify the percentage by which the amount of damages is reduced;

the determination of the reduction in the award of damages under the bill occurs in accordance with the procedural guarantees of the court process. This includes the court’s obligation to give effect to the right to a fair hearing (and rights relating to court proceedings) under section 6(2)(b) of the charter.

Double jeopardy and freedom from imposition of retrospective penalties

Section 26 of the charter provides that a person 'must not be tried or punished more than once for an offence in respect of which he or she has already been finally convicted or acquitted in accordance with the law'. Section 26 reflects the longstanding common law principle of 'double jeopardy' in Australia, namely that a person who has already been acquitted or convicted cannot be prosecuted subsequently on an identical charge, or for a different charge where the essential elements of the offence charged are identical to the offence of which he or she has been acquitted.

Section 27(2) of the charter provides that '[a] penalty must not be imposed on any person for a criminal offence that is greater than the penalty that applied to the offence when it was committed'.

The application of sections 26 and 27(2) to the bill is uncertain; questions that are considered determinative are outlined below.

Does the bill impose a 'penalty' within the meaning of section 27(2) of the charter?

There is no relevant definition of 'penalty' under the charter or other Victorian legislation. The ordinary meaning of the term is a sanction or punishment imposed in consequence or as a result of wrongdoing. On one view, which is the view that I prefer, a reduction in an award of damages in accordance with the bill will not be a penalty imposed for an offence, but will be a further consequence of conviction for an offence, in a separate civil proceeding.

However, it could be argued that the bill imposes a 'penalty' for the offence for the purposes of section 27(2) of the charter:

a measure may be said to be a 'penalty' if it 'follows' a criminal conviction, that is, it is applied in respect of the conviction. Though the provisions of the bill only operate in circumstances where a person brings a claim for damages to which the bill applies, they 'follow' a criminal conviction in the sense that the discretion to reduce damages is triggered by, and is based largely upon, the claimant's criminal conviction;

the bill permits — and in the case of a claimant convicted of a profit motivated offence, requires — a significant reduction in the damages to which they would otherwise be entitled;

it could be argued that a key purpose of the bill is punishment of an offender.

Does the bill impose a 'punishment' within the meaning of section 26 of the charter?

'Punishment' is variously defined as a sanction or penalty assessed against a person who has violated the law. There is disagreement between courts and tribunals in different jurisdictions as to whether to adopt a broad or narrow interpretation of 'punishment'.

For example, Canadian courts have generally favoured a narrow interpretation of what constitutes 'punishment', and have restricted application of the double jeopardy right to 'criminal and penal matters'.

By contrast, the European Court has favoured a broad interpretation of the protection against double jeopardy, and has focused on three criteria in determining whether or not there is a criminal charge or criminal proceedings:

the legal classification of the proceeding; the nature of the offence;

the repressive or deterrent character of the penalty; and

the nature and severity of the applicable penalty.

In light of this disagreement, it is uncertain whether the reduction of damages for a person who has been convicted of an offence would constitute a 'punishment' for the purposes of section 26 of the charter.

Applying the broader interpretation employed by the European Court, the severity of any potential reduction could be used to support the argument that it constitutes 'punishment'. However, a narrower, formalistic interpretation of 'punishment' would emphasise that the bill applies only to civil proceedings in which the person convicted is the claimant, and is thus distinct both from the criminal justice (and related civil) process for the claimant's offending. Moreover, the rationale for the double jeopardy protection is to ensure finality in the criminal justice system, and the reduction of an award of damages in a civil claim neither affects the claimant's criminal conviction or sentence, nor does it subject the claimant to further criminal punishment.

In my opinion this narrower interpretation is the one that should apply in Victoria. However, it would be open to a court to find that the bill imposes a 'punishment' for the purposes of section 26 of the charter.

If sections 26 and/or 27(2) of the charter are limited, is the limitation permissible under section 7(2) of the charter?

Section 7(2) of the charter allows any of the rights protected by the charter to be subject to justifiable limitations, taking into account a range of factors:

the nature of the right (section 7(2)(a)): the protections against double jeopardy and imposition of retrospective penalties are fundamental rights recognised in Australia's common law, and are important aspects of the rule of law;

the importance of the purpose of the limitation (section 7(2)(b)): the purpose of the bill is for the state (and through the state, Victorian taxpayers) to reduce its liability to compensate a claimant for non-economic loss in relation to a claim of pure mental harm arising from the death or injury of a prisoner in custody, in circumstances where the claimant has previously wronged the state, having been committed of an offence or offences. This is an important purpose which reflects the community's interest in not having to fully compensate claimants who have previously profited at the community's expense, in the relevant circumstances;

the nature and extent of the limitation: a reduction in damages, to the extent that it limits the rights under sections 26 and 27(2), does so to a far lesser degree than the imposition of criminal law sanctions. Although the bill permits a reduction of up to 100 per cent, and in some circumstances mandates a minimum reduction of 90 per cent, the type of case envisaged by the bill is

highly unusual and therefore the number of affected claimants is very small;

the relationship between the limitation and its purpose, and any less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve (section 7(2)(d)): the bill is carefully targeted to achieve its object, and applies only to a very narrow class of claimants and, within that class, to a very narrow class of claims. There is no discernible alternative to the provisions of the bill that would achieve the same object and that would not be equally or more restrictive. For example, one alternative would be to legislate to provide that there is no cause of action in respect of pure mental harm arising from the death or injury of a prisoner in custody, or to provide that no damages for non-economic loss are payable in such a case. However, these alternatives would detrimentally affect the rights of potential claimants who do not have a criminal record.

In light of the above analysis, and in particular the potential limitation of the rights under sections 26 and 27(2) of the charter, I consider that, while there are strong grounds for concluding that the bill is compatible with the charter, the bill may be partially incompatible with the charter.

Nevertheless, I consider that the object of the bill justifies its enactment. In particular, I consider that it would be unjust and contrary to the public interest for the Victorian community, which has suffered as a result of a claimant's prior actions, to have to compensate such a claimant in the same way that it would compensate any other claimant. The government considers that this is an important public purpose and that the bill's provisions are sufficiently targeted to achieve that purpose.

The Hon. Martin Pakula, MP
Attorney-General

Second reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speech as follows incorporated into *Hansard* under sessional orders:

In October of last year, the Premier made a commitment to the Victorian people that, if elected, the Labor government would review the Wrongs Act 1958 to see if it could be amended with respect to claims by the relatives of offenders who are injured in custody. The Wrongs Amendment (Prisoner Related Compensation) Bill 2015 (the bill) seeks to give effect to that pre-election commitment.

The bill will amend the Wrongs Act 1958 in a very targeted way so that a court, when awarding damages to a claimant for mental harm that arises in the context of the injury or death of a prisoner, must consider whether the claimant has criminal convictions. Where a claimant has criminal convictions, the court must reduce the award of damages. In making the reduction, the court must have regard to a range of factors including the number and severity of offences, the relationship between the claimant and the prisoner, and whether the offences of the prisoner and the claimant were related in some way. Similar considerations are used by the Victims of Crime Tribunal when awarding compensation to victims of crime, to ensure that persons who choose to engage

in criminal behaviours are not then compensated by the state when they are injured.

Where a matter is being heard before a judge and jury, the jury must decide the amount of the reduction. A jury, which considers matters of fact, is well placed to consider the factors set out in the bill, which include the claimant's criminal record. Similarly, in personal injury matters where contributory negligence is in issue, it is the usual course for the jury to determine the amount by which the claimant's damages should be reduced.

The bill requires a greater reduction in damages for those claimants who have been convicted of a 'profit motivated offence'. Where a claimant has been convicted of a 'profit motivated offence', the damages must be reduced by at least 90 per cent. 'Profit motivated offences' are defined by reference to the list of automatic forfeiture and civil forfeiture offences in schedule 2 of the Confiscation Act 1997. All of the offences in schedule 2 relate to profit driven criminal behaviour which is often associated with organised crime. The offences in schedule 2 include drug trafficking, extortion, deceptive recruiting for commercial sexual services, blackmail, armed robbery and handling stolen goods. The property offences in schedule 2 are subject to monetary thresholds of property worth \$50 000 or more, so that minor convictions for theft or handling stolen goods are not within the scope of 'profit motivated offences'.

These are crimes committed by people who have made deliberate choices to break the law for material gain. While there might be some commentators who suggest that the bill's amendments are unfair, and seek to penalise those who have been convicted of crimes, the bill's amendments reflect community concern that people who have profited from criminal activity should not expect the state to compensate them to the same extent as others, especially where they have engaged in criminal activity with the prisoner in question.

It is important to note that the bill will not affect claims brought by minors or children. The bill only relates to criminal convictions of an adult, and a court will not consider whether a claimant has juvenile offences.

Where a conviction is for an offence that is not a profit motivated offence, a court has a wide discretion about how much weight should be given to the offence in reducing any damages.

The provisions only relate to mental harm arising from injuries or deaths of prisoners. The provisions do not apply to people who are being held on remand or in police cells.

In short, the bill will reflect community concerns about compensation that might otherwise be required to be paid by the state to claimants who are in this small category of offenders, but it will not otherwise diminish the responsibilities of the state.

This legislation will operate retroactively, so that any claims that were already on foot before the legislation commences will be subject to the bill's amendments, unless the claim has been finally determined prior to commencement of the legislation.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 20 May.

**SENTENCING AMENDMENT
(CORRECTION OF SENTENCING ERROR)
BILL 2015**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 5 May; motion of
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — Before debate was adjourned last night, I was reflecting on the importance of the Sentencing Amendment (Correction of Sentencing Error) Bill 2015, particularly in relation to clerical and minor errors and amendments. If the member for South Barwon had his chance again and there was an ability in this house to correct minor errors, he would not bring this place into absolute disrepute with his comments about the member for Frankston.

Yesterday in my contribution I was reflecting on the importance of this legislation in building efficiencies, in saving court time and in saving Victoria Legal Aid time. I was also reflecting on my local Peninsula Legal Community Centre and some of the fantastic work it does. Unfortunately people at that centre are both time and resource starved, and some of the minor errors that might come up in sentencing across the board can lead to significant time delays and significant costs for the centre's lawyers and volunteers in trying to prepare for these cases if they are going to a higher court. It is very important that the legislation builds those efficiencies.

It is also worth reflecting on the challenges that we confront in terms of sentencing appeals. I found an interesting summary paper from a couple of years ago issued by the Sentencing Advisory Council, which states:

Sentencing appeals comprise a substantial proportion (approximately 60 per cent) of the Court of Appeal's workload.

This is not to say that all those appeals to the Court of Appeal relate to minor errors. It is very hard to quantify how many such errors occur. In particular, there may be times when there is a disagreement between the two major parties in our adversarial system about whether an error has occurred. But it is worth reflecting that appeals relating to such errors make up a portion of the total number of appeals, and that any way in which we can build efficiency while also maintaining natural justice and achieving finality for defendants is important.

The two key elements of this bill in terms of removing some of those impediments are the 14-day time limit

and the amendments under section 104A of the Sentencing Act 1991. It is important to reflect that this time limit is sometimes quite arbitrary, and a minor error may only be discovered later. More than 14 days have elapsed and the relevant sentencing judge is not able to recall the sentence, which leads to an inefficiency months down the track when a defendant or individual then has to take that forward to a higher court. It is also important to reflect on the principle of finality and of giving certainty to an individual who has been sentenced. I also note that the bill states that if a sentence has been given — for example, a community correction order — the sentencing judge will take into consideration the time already served by the individual and its impact on them, and I welcome that.

The other key element of the bill is that which relates to penalties that are contrary to law. This is the second part of the amendment under clause 7. The new provisions will enable a court to correct errors such as the imposition of suspended sentences for offences that cannot receive such sentences. A suspended sentence may be imposed in error in circumstances where a suspended sentence is not allowable. That is a key thing. The bill also addresses jurisdictional errors. For example, a sentencing judge may make an error in law rather than in the minor details of their reasoning. It is important to distinguish between an error in the reasoning of the sentencing judge and how they came to that decision from making a jurisdictional error, which may make a sentence contrary to law. That is another important point to make.

I welcome the fact that this bill, and its speedy passage through the house, is supported in a bipartisan way. However, it is also important to acknowledge why these powers are so necessary. We need to identify efficiencies in our court system. In particular, I think of the challenges that community legal centres face. I note the work the federal shadow Attorney-General has done in highlighting this. Some legal centres have been crunched in the last two years. They have significant challenges in terms of resources, and they were affected by cutbacks in the last budget. That has put huge pressure on these centres, and when these other efficiencies are considered, they have great challenges.

I also want to acknowledge the work done by the state Attorney-General and the significant community consultation that has been undertaken, particularly with Victoria Police. The Office of Public Prosecutions has done some great work. A lot of bills have come from the Attorney-General during the last few weeks, and a significant amount of work has been done. This bill is all about common sense, which is the approach the Andrews Labor government takes to all bills and all

proceedings. It comes in a week when a wonderful budget has been put forward. I would like to offer my strong support for this bill and its speedy passage through the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SPENCE (Yuroke).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed from 15 April; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — I am pleased to be able to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 this morning. I can advise that the coalition will not oppose this bill. We accept that it is a bill that contains relatively minor and consequential amendments to legislation. We believe those amendments are necessary, and with the assurances we appear to have been given in the second-reading speech and accompanying materials we believe they will achieve the purposes for which they are being introduced.

On the question of omnibus bills generally, it is a very common experience that governments use omnibus bills to deal with a lot of technical and administrative matters that would be unwieldy were they to be pursued individually, and that is a very sound approach. I say for the record that it is important that omnibus bills deal only with technical and administrative matters and do not introduce questions that could potentially engage matters of principle or policy. They should be contained and confined to the administrative and technical matters they are intended to deal with.

On my count there are some 30-plus acts being amended by this omnibus bill. Whilst I said that the coalition does not oppose the bill, we would not want to see too many more bills that deal with so many acts because it is a fairly cumbersome process to go through, examine and assess the potential impacts of all the amendments that are contained in such a bill.

I am not going to deal with every act that is proposed to be affected by this bill. I will deal with six bills in particular — the Confiscation Act 1997, the Control of Weapons Act 1990, the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998, the Working with Children Act 2005 and the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014. I

will deal with those at a fairly general level, and I am sure other speakers will pick up on other acts that are affected by today's bill.

The first act I will refer to is the Confiscation Act 1997. I note that the bill proposes to amend the Confiscation Act 1997 to allow a court to order that a prescribed person in the Department of Justice and Regulation can take control of property that is subject to a wealth restraining order. That is a fairly sensible move. At the moment I think the processes and structures around that are unnecessarily limited. To enable other officials within the department to take control of property is very important, particularly as we anticipate that confiscation procedures will be more common in the months and years ahead in dealing with crime syndicates and other dimensions of the organised criminal underworld.

The bill before the house also amends the Confiscation Act 1997 to allow the Director of Public Prosecutions to more easily register interstate forfeiture and restraining orders to ensure that people cannot frustrate a confiscation action by holding assets in other jurisdictions to thwart the action of the jurisdiction that has taken proceedings against them. That is a very important measure, and it complements other measures that the previous government took and, I am sure, measures that the current government is taking to foster greater collaboration between jurisdictions in order to wrestle with the great challenges posed by organised criminal syndicates.

We know that motorcycle gangs and long-established crime syndicates are at the heart of that and that those who engage in the nefarious activities that criminal organisations become involved in are unfortunately rather agile and gifted at frustrating the attempts of law enforcement agencies to stymie their activities, so interstate cooperation is a very important objective of policy in this area. We certainly support that and want to see more of it. As I said, the previous government did a lot in that space, and I trust that the current government will act similarly. If it does not, it certainly should.

Moving to the Control of Weapons Act 1990, I note that this act is to be amended in two principal ways — firstly, to remove the ban on the sale to children of disposable knives designed for eating. As we know, the sale of any knives to children has been banned since 2010, and it has been proven, certainly according to the advice we have been given, that that restriction or prohibition can be a significant inconvenience to consumers and retailers. Importantly, Victoria Police has advised that there is no evidence that the knives that are the subject of this prohibition are being used to

either threaten or commit acts of violence. We are assured by the second-reading speech and other materials accompanying it that the amendment has been drafted in a way that will ensure that only those plastic knives designed for eating can be sold to children. That is a very important assurance on which the coalition relies.

We also note that the Control of Weapons Act 1990 is affected in relation to the chief commissioner's powers. This is an important administrative change that is intended to ease the administrative burden on the chief commissioner and Victoria Police's resources and time. The current system in relation to the designation of areas that are to be subject to random weapons searches is fairly convoluted, which is understandable but which we can address.

At the moment the act requires that when a designation is issued notice must be published in the *Government Gazette* and a daily newspaper, with a map of the designated area. We would all accept that this requirement is costly, and it is clearly not the best use of Victoria Police's resources. As we understand it, the bill will provide that Victoria Police will no longer be required to include a map in the newspaper notice, which will avoid enormous expense. In place of that, Victoria Police will be able to publish a map online and include the online address in the newspaper notice. We understand that the notice will still have to contain a written description of the area to alert people to the designation of the area, and that strikes us as a very sensible change which will ease the administrative burden on our chief law enforcement agency.

I turn now to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004. We note that the bill will amend that act to allow the Chief Commissioner of Police to arrange for CrimTrac to host the Victorian sex offender registry database within the national child offender system. We note that in 2011 the Victorian Law Reform Commission recommended moving the existing database in relation to sex offenders to the national child offender system to enable Victoria Police to manage registrants' personal information more securely, effectively and efficiently. We are satisfied that the bill follows through on that recommendation and will achieve that aim. We accept that transferring the database to CrimTrac is expected to provide greater data security, stability and functionality and should reduce the current need for costly maintenance of the database.

Before I leave the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 I use this opportunity to call on the government to address the issue of child-related employment in that act. We have seen from an incident earlier this year that

there appears to be a loophole in the definition of child-related employment. We hope that the government will take that matter up. I understand that the government is investigating that matter now and obtaining advice. The change will be necessary, and the sooner the government is able to bring a bill before this house to deal with that matter, the better.

I turn to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998. I note that the bill amends that act in various ways to expand the principal registrar's powers in relation to fees. I note that the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) is currently reviewing its fee structure with a view to designing a new set of tribunal fees. We do not see any issues with that; however, we rely on the government's assurance that the existing provisions regarding fee waiver are limited and constrain the tribunal's capacity to modernise that structure. We also rely on the government's assurance that part 7 of the bill will deliver the flexibility the tribunal needs to waive, reduce, postpone, remit or refund fees in appropriate circumstances to improve access to justice. We certainly would not want to see these changes become an opportunity for fees to increase for applicants before VCAT. In our view that would defeat the very purpose of trying to improve access to justice.

I turn to the Working with Children Act 2005, and I note that the changes there are very sensible. The bill amends the Working with Children Act to ensure that the offences the coalition government introduced — namely, failure to protect a child from a sexual offence and failure to disclose a sexual offence committed against a child under sections 49C and 327 of the Crimes Act 1958 — are included as category B offences for the purposes of working with children check assessments. It is of course the case that under the act a person who has committed a category B offence is presumed to pose an unjustifiable risk to the safety of children and will be refused a working with children check unless the secretariat of the Department of Justice and Regulation is satisfied that the applicant does not pose such a risk. Again, we think that is sensible, and as with my comments relating to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, I call on the government to look at the changes necessary, accompanying any changes to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, to deal with the child-related employment loophole I referred to before.

Finally, I refer to the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014. We know that the bill amends that act to allow courts to include finalisation conditions in interim family violence intervention order matters. Where a finalisation condition is included it means that

the order becomes automatic unless the respondent takes the step to contest that in the court. That is something the coalition government embraced, and it is a sensible change here. What we would say, however, is that the default commencement date of this change should be deferred from 18 September, as I understand the date to be, to 1 July 2016 or after the Royal Commission into Family Violence reports. We will not take this opportunity, as I said at the outset, to oppose the bill. I reserve our position on that issue and express a concern about whether that is strictly necessary, but as I said, we will not oppose that aspect of the bill.

Other speakers will, I am sure, address other aspects of the bill before the house now, but we think that the bill is uncontroversial for the most part. I have expressed some residual or tangential concerns, but they do not change the fact that the coalition does not oppose this bill.

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Police) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As the member for Hawthorn said at the outset, this is a bill that deals with a range of technical and administrative matters. As such, what we are working our way through here is an omnibus bill in every sense.

I will speak about a number of small amendments to a number of pieces of legislation relating to my areas of responsibility. The amendments are aimed at improving the operation of existing legislation and correcting a number of errors. Some of the more significant errors being corrected that cover my portfolio include those in the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, the Control of Weapons Act 1990 and the Corrections Act 1986.

The former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, contacted the government early in its term requesting that changes be made to the Control of Weapons Act. We have also been contacted by retailers such as Woolworths, which have raised their concerns that at present an unintended consequence of the act is that nobody under the age of 18 can purchase a plastic or bamboo knife. These are the sorts of knives that are by and large used at picnics and by fast-food outlets. This unintended consequence has placed a compliance burden on retailers, particularly large retailers, which have had to check the age of those purchasing plastic or bamboo knives. This issue was identified by the red tape commissioner, who recommended that the age restriction on the sale of plastic cutlery and knives be removed.

From memory, this was raised when Labor was in opposition in relation to a bill that I think did not come

on for debate but lapsed with the previous Parliament. I am pleased that the government is moving to ensure that this restriction is removed. In every way it seems to be a sensible change. Obviously it will allow minors to purchase harmless knives for use at picnics and the like, and the government is happy to embrace that.

Last year I received a letter from Woolworths. While the details seem minor, it gives the Parliament a sense of the magnitude of some of the minor and technical changes made to legislation. The letter states:

Woolworths estimates that this regulation adds costs of \$128 000 per year to the operations of its supermarkets. This estimate does not include costs incurred in other stores (e.g. Big W) or the wider retail sector. Applied across all retailers the costs will increase. These estimates do not include the inconvenience caused to Victorian shoppers.

That came from Woolworths last year when Labor was in opposition. I received a separate letter on 21 July 2014 from the Australian National Retailers Association. Its chief executive, Margy Osmond, stated:

As you would be aware, in 2010 the Control of Weapons Act 1990 was amended in response to community concerns about escalating knife violence in Victoria. While retailers did not object to the overall intent of the legislation, concerns were raised that poorly worded definitions within the amendments meant that it became an offence for retailers to sell any type of knife to a minor — even plastic picnic-style knives that could clearly have no role in the type of knife violence the changes were aimed at addressing.

It is a sound amendment in that regard. Tragically in our community too many people carry weapons that can be used to harm or kill Victorians and others. Under section 10D of the Control of Weapons Act police can provide notice of an intention to undertake random weapons searches. The chief commissioner can make this declaration if he or she is satisfied that: (i) more than one incident of violence or disorder has occurred in the area in the previous 12 months that involved the use of weapons; or (ii) an event is to be held in an area that has previously seen weapons-related violence.

Currently police must give notice by way of publication in a newspaper and the *Victoria Government Gazette* of the locations for random weapons searches. The proposed amendment in the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill will give police the flexibility to simply publicise the notice and a map via the internet rather than in a newspaper. With the growing popularity of handheld devices, this will provide the public with the opportunity to review notices regardless of whether they are at a train station, sports oval or walking down the street. It is a common-sense amendment that uses new technology to deliver the same message to the community.

The bill will correct another oversight through the changes it will make to the Mental Health Act 2014. The amendment will fix an error that means that currently transportation of patients by contractors is allowed only from a mental health facility to a court or police jail, but not back again. The amendment retrospectively covers the holding and returning of such patients since 1 July 2014, when the Mental Health Act 2014 commenced. That is an important act that we have spoken about in this Parliament.

I need to place on the record an important commitment to the Thomas Embling Hospital that the Labor government made in the budget that was brought down yesterday. There will be an investment of \$9.5 million — which I know the member for Hastings is very interested in — for the Thomas Embling Hospital. This will deliver the first new beds inside the facility since it opened in 2000. Those beds are there to treat prisoners and other people who are not fit for trial on the basis of their mental health. It is worth mentioning the important commitment that the government has made in the context of this bill, given that the budget handed down yesterday provided \$9.5 million to open those eight new beds there.

Moving to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004, the current Victorian sex offender database is 11 years old and has considerable limitations. The Victorian sex offender database, as defined under the Sex Offenders Registration Act, enables Victoria Police to maintain watch over those people who have been placed on the register. The proposed amendments will allow Victoria Police to use the CrimTrac service to host the Victorian database. This will allow for enhanced information sharing and ensure that information from Victoria is included on the Australian national child offender register. As it stands, only Victoria and New South Wales are not part of the national system. Most importantly, from a functional point of view this change will give Victoria Police a more powerful capacity to search and analyse its database, ensuring better intelligence.

This change follows recommendations of a 2011 Victorian Law Reform Commission report which noted that the present act does not expressly authorise the Chief Commissioner of Police to disclose details on the Victorian register to CrimTrac. These changes will ensure that police have a modern database with enhanced functionality while also achieving the government's policy intent to work as part of the national system.

Finally, I turn to the amendments to the Crimes Act 1958. Under the act a person who takes a motor

vehicle or aircraft without permission is regarded as having intended to permanently deprive the rightful owner of possession. This ensures that joyriders can be charged for theft as they intended to permanently deprive the rightful owner. These important amendments will extend the same principle to someone who takes a vessel for a joyride in the same way you might take a car. Like many of the amendments made by the bill, this takes a common-sense approach to align the treatment of those who take a vehicle, a boat or even a plane.

There are many other aspects of the bill, and I am sure others will speak on them during the course of the debate. The bill makes many common-sense amendments. I have chosen to speak on a number of amendments that are covered by both the police and corrections portfolios and are important to justice in this state. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I am pleased to rise to make a short contribution on this omnibus bill, which makes a number of amendments to various pieces of legislation to make our courts and justice system work better. This is one of those bills that will receive no publicity — it will not be on the news tonight, and it will not be in the newspapers tomorrow — but it demonstrates the good work the house does in tidying up legislation and fixing minor issues to improve the operation of our justice system. I am pleased that the coalition will not be opposing the legislation, as the member for Hawthorn indicated, because it makes a number of common-sense changes.

The bill amends the Confiscation Act 1997 to allow a prescribed person in the Department of Justice and Regulation to take control of property that is subject to an unexplained wealth restraining order. That is simply common sense. As I understand it, the current situation restricts the people who can take control of unexplained wealth. This is a useful change to allow the department more flexibility. It also makes amendments regarding assets that are held interstate. In effect it allows enforcement authorities to take control of unexplained wealth that has been transferred interstate or that is interstate at the time of an arrest or conviction. Most importantly, it reduces the ability of criminals to hide their assets interstate. That is a problem we see with organised crime, and in particular, as the member for Hawthorn outlined, criminal bkie gangs, which often have chapters interstate and around the country. This small change will allow authorities to ensure that they cannot simply move their assets to another jurisdiction.

I am particularly pleased about the change to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to remove the ban on the

sale to children of disposable knives designed for eating. I may be wrong, but I believe this was discussed in the upper house last year before the election and the change of government. This is a common-sense response to something that was perhaps not considered at the time. I do not have any issue with the ban on the sale of knives to children, but if little Johnny is sent down to the supermarket to get some knives and forks for mum and dad's barbecue on the weekend, he should be able to buy plastic, bamboo or wooden knives. This is another example of the bill taking a common-sense approach.

Although it is a slightly different issue, I was reminded of the minor furore caused in 2005 by then federal Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Amanda Vanstone, who belled the cat, as it were, on the absurdity of plastic knives on planes, at some cost to herself, I suspect, and certainly some embarrassment to the then Howard government. She highlighted some of the absurdities of measures relating to security. However, this is a common-sense amendment. We are assured that the change will not allow dangerous knives to be sold to children.

Likewise, the bill reduces red tape for the declaration of designated areas to be subject to random weapon searches. This is a small change that simply allows the Chief Commissioner of Police to include in the notice published in a newspaper a website address at which a map of the designated area can be found, rather than requiring the map to be printed in the newspaper. This is a cost issue, and it is a small change.

The bill makes amendments to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 to allow the CrimTrac agency to host the Victorian sex offenders register. As the member for Hawthorn has outlined, that appears to be a common-sense measure.

The bill also amends the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998. In my short time in Parliament, I have had little to do with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, but I have had some feedback from my constituents about the tribunal, and it is not all good. It is important that we give the agency some flexibility. I hope the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal will take advantage of the flexibility but will not use these amendments to increase fees and charges. This is a good bill, and I look forward to its passage through the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Thompsons Road duplication

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise the house where in the budget papers exists the \$175 million that Labor promised the people of the city of Casey to duplicate Thompsons Road?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to repeat the question for the benefit of the Treasurer.

Mr GUY — I wonder if the Treasurer could advise the house where in the budget papers exists the \$175 million that Labor promised the people of the city of Casey to do the much-needed duplication of Thompsons Road.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I apologise to the house for my lateness. Of course there is so much good news to spread around that my time is under considerable pressure. For the people of Casey there is good news of course. We are building and upgrading hospital facilities right across the state, and the people of Casey will be satisfied to know that this government is making a very real and considerable investment in upgrading their facilities.

This is a budget for all Victorians. This is a budget that delivers on our promises — 96 per cent of all the commitments we took to the people of Victoria at the last election are in place. The only projects we committed to that are not being funded and advanced through this process and this budget — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, with respect, I did ask a very specific question about where in the budget papers exists the commitment that was made for \$175 million to duplicate Thompsons Road. Where in the budget papers is it?

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Treasurer to be responsive to the question.

Mr PALLAS — Let me be very clear: in the budget papers is a story of achievement and delivery, where every promise that was to be delivered in time is being delivered in time. Of course the commitment we have made is that to the extent that there are funds in respect of particular projects not identified, which funding is kept in contingency while we go through an appropriate

tender process to ensure that the people of Victoria get value.

Those opposite might not understand what probity and extracting value for the people of Victoria are, but they are there; make no mistake. The people of Casey, like the people of all of Victoria, know this.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition will come to order.

Mr PALLAS — They know that this government honours — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition asked a question, and the Treasurer is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr PALLAS — Before the last election we made a very clear commitment to the people of Victoria. We told them that we would spend \$1 billion on outer suburban roads. Of course the roads in Casey and the roads right across outer metropolitan Melbourne will be proud recipients of this government honouring its commitments. Be assured that the funding is there. The funding is in contingency. Do members opposite understand what unallocated capital looks like? It is there because we are protecting the people of Casey's interests and the taxpayers interests, and we are delivering for Victorians.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, I direct you to sessional order 11(2), which says:

The Speaker may determine that an answer to an oral question without notice ... is not responsive.

Given that the Treasurer did not even say the words 'Thompsons Road' in his response, and neither did he direct the house to where the funding of \$175 million was in the budget papers, simply saying 'It's there' is certainly not enough for the house. I ask you to direct him to provide a written response.

Mr PALLAS — On the point of order, Speaker, I do not know how clear I need to be, but if those opposite understand how to read budget papers, they will go to capital contingency in the budget papers, as I said, where they will find there is appropriate contingency provided for all our commitments.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members and opposition members, especially the members for Gembrook and Warrandyte, will allow the Leader of the Opposition to ask a supplementary question.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Given that the Treasurer cannot show where in the budget the words 'Thompsons Road' and '\$175 million' are, and noting that the member for Narre Warren South said that not duplicating Thompsons Road costs 'local families and businesses both time and money', I ask the Treasurer: why did Labor deceive the people of the city of Casey?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — In the spirit of consensus, let me make this very generous offer to those opposite: I will ask the Department of Treasury and Finance to provide courses in how to read budget papers so that those opposite can actually understand what a capital contingency looks like. The reason we have a capital contingency is so that we do not disaggregate our allocations and the people of Victoria can extract value. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to hear the words 'Thompsons Road', the people of Casey can be as confident as every Victorian that when we say something we mean it and will deliver it.

Ministers statements: budget

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am pleased to inform the house of the strong positive reaction to the budget delivered yesterday, which provides a surplus in this coming financial year and every year thereafter and, what is more, then invests the proceeds of that sound financial management, as Labor always does, in better services for Victorian families — better hospitals, better schools, better roads and public transport, and of course a safer community as well.

Let us have a listen to what commentators have said. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (IPA) said, 'This is a strong, ambitious and — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional order 7, which provides that ministers statements are for the purpose of advising the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements. The Premier opened his remarks by saying that he intended to inform the house about reaction to the budget, with emphasis on the word 'reaction'. I gave him the benefit of the doubt at that point, but he is now proceeding to embark on a litany of responses. That is not advising the house about new government initiatives, projects and achievements. He

is not entitled to talk about press commentary; he is supposed to be providing his own information to the house.

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

Mr ANDREWS — As I was saying, an Infrastructure Partnerships Australia press release says:

‘This is a strong, ambitious and positive infrastructure budget’, said IPA chief executive Brendan Lyon.

‘The progress on Melbourne’s Metro rail is particularly welcome given need has increased in the seven years since it was first proposed ...

Four of those years were years of inaction from those opposite. The RACV general manager of public policy, Brian Negus, said this is a strong transport budget that addresses congestion on roads and public transport in Melbourne and commits to a number of regional projects in Victoria.

The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry said these commitments have a strong focus on jobs and are closely aligned to the priorities for reform — —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, with regard to sessional order 7 and the Premier talking about — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will allow the member to raise his point of order.

Mr Watt — The Premier has been speaking for a minute and a half. Sessional order 7 does not say the Premier is able to talk about commentary. It is not about commentary. Sessional order 7 is about new government initiatives, not about commentary on whatever the government likes to talk about. Talking about the media and what they or other people are saying about the government and how fantastic or how bad it is not — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr ANDREWS — There are many new government initiatives in this budget, in full delivery of the commitments we made to the people of Victoria, and a strong surplus and strong investment in better services. Is it any wonder that commentators are out there saying this delivers, because it does in full, on the commitments we made. There are big boosts to health, education, roads, public transport, a safer community

and more jobs. It is what we promised, and it is what we are delivering.

Yan Yean Road duplication

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My question is to the Treasurer in relation to infrastructure in the city of Whittlesea. Can the Treasurer advise the house where in the budget papers is the \$95 million that Labor promised to the people of the city of Whittlesea to upgrade Yan Yean Road?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I thank the member for his question. I refer him to budget paper 4. If he would like to go to page 18, he might like to look at the fourth item down ‘Yan Yean Road duplication’, and, heaven forbid, there is the money.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, it does not say \$95 million.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The Treasurer will continue, and the member for Warrandyte will remain silent.

Mr PALLAS — Yan Yean Road is in Nillumbik, but we are not going to stand on people getting stuff right. The people of Victoria are used to those on the other side of the table getting things wrong. I keep getting this incessant prattle — it is a whispering going on in the back of my head — ‘Where’s the money?’. I will tell you where the money is: the money has been committed to get these projects underway.

Of course capital contingency is there for a reason. Just to give further edification to those opposite, Thompsons Road also appears as an allocation in budget paper 4 on page 18. It is there as well. There we see \$20 480 000 in total estimated investment. What a bunch of clowns they are on the other side. If you need help reading budget papers, Treasury and Finance will help you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members, including the three amigos on my right, will remain silent.

Supplementary question

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — As someone who has been in financial markets for 18 years, I know how to read a budget paper, and this is not a budget paper.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order. The Chair would be very happy to implement standing order 124 and suspend members from the chamber, should it be required. The Chair should be able to hear questions and statements. The public is entitled to that and so is the media. I ask members to cooperate.

Mr R. SMITH — Given that the Treasurer has failed to detail where in the budget the promised \$95 million for Yan Yean road is, can he now advise the house where in the budget papers is the funding for Labor's other city of Whittlesea road promise, the \$40 million, fully funded amount for O'Herns Road?

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question does not conform with the requirements of sessional orders for the supplementary to build on the substantive question that was asked. This supplementary introduces new material about different projects, and I would ask you to rule the supplementary question out of order.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, the substantive question related to a range of infrastructure projects of which the nominated example of Yan Yean Road was one. The supplementary question also asks about infrastructure projects in the same region.

Ms Thomson — On the point of order, Speaker, the first question that was asked was very specific, and the supplementary question brought in a totally new road project in a totally different municipality.

Mr Pallas — On the point of order, Speaker, I am happy to answer the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat. I have not yet ruled. I uphold the point of order advanced by the Leader of the House. However, I will give the member the opportunity to rephrase the question and to make it relevant to the substantive question.

Mr R. SMITH — Can the Treasurer confirm there is no full funding in the budget for Yan Yean Road or indeed O'Herns Road?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I note, having had a career in the financial markets, that we have money for reskilling in this budget as well. If the member would care to look at budget paper 3 and go to page 109, he will see reference to O'Herns Road 'Asset election commitments for which funding is held in contingency'.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, in reference to the Treasurer's answer, that page also says that that amount is not yet ready for inclusion in the 2015–16 budget.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte is fully aware that that is not a point of order.

Mr PALLAS — That is what contingency means. The reason it is held in contingency in this case is that there are negotiations with the federal government going on about what share it should put in. We will make our contribution. We will deliver this project. We are honouring each and every commitment we gave to the Victorian people.

Ministers statements: education funding

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — Yesterday the Treasurer handed down a budget that detailed the biggest increase in funding to Victorian education in our state's history. I would like to outline some of those new initiatives. This budget repairs the damage, delivers on our election commitments and sets us on a path to make Victoria the education state.

This is the biggest budget Victoria has ever seen, with almost \$4 billion going into our education system for early years education, schools and TAFE. This is the single biggest boost of additional funding into our schools ever — \$2.9 billion — and the biggest investment in school infrastructure in the state's history, with \$730 million.

This means that for the very first time Victoria will be fully acquitting its commitment to the Gonski agreement for 2015, 2016 and 2017. For the first time ever schools will see a Gonski line item in their indicative budget when they receive it in September this year, and we will pursue the federal government to fund years 5 and 6 of the agreement.

Mr Wakeling — On a point of order, Speaker, I have been listening intently to the Deputy Premier's statement regarding Gonski, and there was no commitment from this government to the years 2018 and 2019. I just want to put it out there that I think it is important that he explain to Victorians whether the government will commit that money.

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

Mr MERLINO — Through the budget the Andrews Labor government is supporting Victorian families to give their kids the best chance of reaching

their potential. Through our \$148 million Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund 200 000 students across the state will receive assistance so they get the very same opportunities as others. There is \$13.7 million for breakfast clubs, glasses for kids, music in schools and mentoring scholarships. We will work with our schools, teachers and communities, not against them. Schools were left to rot under those opposite. We are going to make Victoria the education state.

Mernda rail extension

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise the house where in the budget papers is not the \$9 million but the \$600 million Labor promised the people of the city of Whittlesea to extend the railway line to Mernda?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — You would reckon that when you are whipping a dead horse you would give it up after a while. I am going to go down this path: those opposite might not understand the value of planning before you build. You should plan before you build. That is a very important lesson for life. Importantly here, regarding the Mernda rail link commitments, the \$9 million that we have committed appears in budget paper 3 on page 37, just for the member's edification. Why is all of the money not there? Because we are planning it first. The rest remains safe and secure in capital contingency. Why? Because we are not going out to the marketplace putting dollars around a project and therefore being unable to extract value for the Victorian taxpayer. You would have to be a plonker or a Liberal to do that.

Supplementary question

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — Given that Labor distributed campaign material that stated that if the member for Yan Yean was elected, work — not planning — would begin on the Mernda railway in 2015, I ask the Treasurer: why did Labor deceive the people of the city of Whittlesea?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — The observation would be that that is \$9 million more than those opposite invested. Let me also make the point that the people of Mernda accept the process that we are going through. Andrew Lund's Twitter feed says:

Mernda Rail Alliance says they are 'very happy' with \$9 million committed for planning and 'Look forward to construction funding next year'.

This is a clear illustration.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition asked the supplementary question and will allow the Treasurer to continue.

Mr PALLAS — We also have, just in case, government asset contingencies not allocated to departments. These are critically important because we are protecting the interests of the taxpayer. The people of Mernda can be assured that, unlike those opposite, we will deliver on our promises. The people of Mernda can be assured of that.

Ministers statements: budget

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I am back by popular demand. I rise to update the house on new information on the Andrews Labor government's progress on fulfilling its election commitments. We began delivering on our commitments on day one. Every single new initiative that we promised the Victorian people would be delivered in this budget has received funding — every single initiative has received funding. This budget is about education, health, transport and jobs.

Ninety-six per cent of the output funding committed in Labor's financial statement has been funded in this budget. This includes \$2.1 billion in Victoria's health system, almost \$4 billion in education and skills, and \$22 billion in infrastructure, because we are the party of infrastructure. The remaining 4 per cent of commitments will start in future years, in line with our commitments before the last election.

This government is getting on with it, in stark contrast to those opposite. Their first budget did not even mention jobs at all — that is right, not once — so do not believe the crocodile tears of those opposite, who saw unemployment rise from 4.9 per cent to 6.8 per cent, pretending they care about jobs. And let us remember the lack of funding on education and TAFE. Those opposite barely funded their election commitments.

Their first budget gave funding to less than a third of the schools they promised it to — that is right, less than a third were funded in their first budget. Victoria now has a government that delivers on its commitments. The people of Victoria can be assured of one thing: we are getting on with it.

Regional and rural road funding

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — My question is also to the Treasurer. On 24 January, 2014 in the *Camperdown Chronicle* the now Minister for Roads and Road Safety promised an exclusive and additional

\$1 billion fund for regional road projects. I ask: where in the budget papers is this exclusive and additional \$1 billion for country and regional roads?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — Before the last election we made it clear to Victorians in our *Project 10 000* document that we would identify \$1 billion over eight years to deliver regional roads for regional Victoria. If those opposite were to read the material, the policy, we put forward, perhaps we would get a better informed class of question than the ones we are getting across the table. There is \$1 billion for regional roads, which is a commitment that this government is honouring. Let me be very clear: what we said at the last election, we will honour — \$1 billion for regional roads, \$1 billion for outer metropolitan roads over the eight year-period.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very specific — that is, for the Treasurer to show where in the budget papers is the additional and exclusive \$1 billion for regional roads. Where in the budget papers?

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

Mr PALLAS — When we said we would put in \$1 billion over eight years to provide for regional roads, we did not say that the money would be there on day one — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS — No, we did not, because that would be financially irresponsible. Those opposite would know all about that. What we said was that \$1 billion would be directed out of the Better Roads Victoria fund for regional roads and for outer suburban roads over the eight-year life. The member should go back and check the budget papers. He will see that the allocations to regional roads in Victoria more than acquit our commitments.

Supplementary question

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — My supplementary question is obviously to the Treasurer. In addition to failing to honour this commitment for country roads and also cutting the highly successful Country Roads and Bridges Fund, why is the government reducing funding for country roads by 10 per cent?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — Quite frankly, the only thing that is at 10 per cent is the credibility of those opposite. Let us go through budget paper 4, because if the member for Murray Plains wants to know where the money is, I will tell him, line by line. Under the heading

‘Better Roads — Rural arterial roads projects’ it shows the Bellbrae tourism precinct, \$2.5 million; the Kilmore-Wallan bypass, \$30.4 million; the Koo Wee Rup bypass, \$66 million; the pedestrian underpass at the Great Ocean Road, \$3.5 million; the Princes Highway east, Traralgon — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer will resume his seat.

Mr Pakula interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General will come to order.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, we will need extra time for the Treasurer to get enough projects to add up to \$1 billion, because it is not there.

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

Mr PALLAS — By the way, we will not need all that much time. There is \$260 million for the Princes Highway east; \$12 million for the Princes Highway west; \$662 million for the Western Highway duplication from Ballarat to Stawell; and \$50 million for a Western Highway upgrade. I do not think it is going to take us all that — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer’s time has expired.

Ministers statements: health funding

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I too bring good news to the house. I rise today to update the house on new budget initiatives contained in our massive investment in health as announced in yesterday’s budget.

A massive \$2.1 billion has been invested in health and human services. We have invested \$1.38 billion in our hospitals, in our ambulance services and in our health programs. That investment will provide support for an extra 60 000 patient admissions to our hospitals. It will support an extra 40 000 emergency department presentations. In addition, we are investing \$560 million to build and expand our hospitals. That is three times more than what was invested by those on the other side in their last budget.

I will run through the list. This investment includes \$200 million for a new Western women’s and children’s hospital. It includes \$106.3 million for a major expansion of Casey Hospital. It includes \$85 million to redevelop and expand the Werribee

Mercy Hospital; \$16.2 million to expand the Moorabbin Hospital; \$10 million to expand and equip a new cath lab at Ballarat; \$15 million for early planning works for the new Victorian Heart Hospital at Monash University; and a number of other capital commitments right across the state. We have committed \$99 million to respond to the demands and challenges that our ambulance services have been under.

I am extremely proud of these commitments. They have been welcomed with open arms by our stakeholders. This stands in stark contrast to the \$1 billion ripped out of our health budget by those who sit opposite. A Labor government is repairing the damage.

Honourable members interjecting.

Public sector agency dividends

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer advise the house how much more motorists, public hospitals and new home buyers will have to pay as a result of the government stripping \$502 million more in dividends from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and stripping \$420 million in dividends from the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA)?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — The answer to the member for Malvern is: nothing.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members and opposition members will allow the member for Malvern to ask a supplementary question.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — I thank the Treasurer for his answer. Given that answer, will the Treasurer now guarantee that as a result of his gouging over \$900 million from the TAC and the VMIA there will be no premium increases for homebuyers, motorists or public hospitals?

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — Not since Gordon Gekko have we had a greater asset-stripper from that side of the house upon the people of Victoria. Those opposite sought to reduce expenditure down to 2.5 per cent. They never explained to Victoria how they were going to fund those surpluses in reduced services. Let me assure those opposite that on this side of the house we are committed to continuing to run a stable budget and to continuing to run healthy surpluses — —

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer answered the substantive question very quickly. I simply asked him for a guarantee that his actions would have no impact on premiums for homebuyers, public hospitals or motorists. I just asked for that simple guarantee — yes or no? The Treasurer has not addressed those matters at all in his supplementary answer. It is just a simple yes or no.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Treasurer to come back to answering the question.

Mr PALLAS — I can assure the member for Malvern, and I can assure the people of Victoria, that having discussed these issues with the TAC minister, any decisions we have made will have no adverse impact on premiums.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer's answer has expired.

Ministers statements: public transport funding

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — If you travel by train, bus or car, the first budget of the Andrews Labor government will get you to work sooner and get you back home to your family and friends quicker. I am delighted to provide the new information that was contained in the budget papers released yesterday about how we are creating jobs and supporting public transport infrastructure. That is because this budget kickstarts investment in our level crossing removal program.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, sessional order 7 clearly does not talk about new information. I ask you to have the minister sit down if she is only going to talk about new information.

The SPEAKER — Order! I remind the member for Burwood that making frivolous points of order is disorderly.

Ms ALLAN — Our budget kickstarts the level crossing removal project. It provides a whopping \$1.5 billion for Melbourne Metro, unlocking the gridlock in the city that will allow us to run more trains for metropolitan passengers and regional Victorians as well. It also commences the Mernda rail line, putting in place the vital planning that is needed now and a commitment to deliver the project. These are projects that our state so very desperately needs after four years of neglect.

We are also investing \$50 million in Homesafe and \$100 million in buses — services to support local communities as those local communities grow. We

understand the power of how when we invest in public transport we can create and support jobs — something not understood by those opposite. That is why we are investing in job-creating projects like the Murray Basin rail project. It is about backing our food and fibre exporters and giving them better access to markets.

There is our 10-year rolling stock strategy with a down payment of \$2 billion in our first budget to buy more metropolitan trains, to buy more regional trains and to buy more city trams. The minimum 50 per cent local content requirement provides certainty for local manufacturers and those 10 000 jobs that rely on this industry.

We have a plan to invest in better public transport services and to create jobs at every single opportunity, and we are determined to deliver on this. We have started that in our very first budget.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Warrandyte electorate

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — (Question 179) I rise today to highlight to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water an important opportunity that exists in relation to the Warrandyte State Park. Recently a parcel of 2.5 hectares of private land abutting the park has become available for sale. This land at 133 Webb Street in Warrandyte has been in the hands of what I understand to have been absentee owners, and as such it has been managed by local volunteers with support from Parks Victoria.

The land has important environmental values, such as the presence of the wine-lipped spider orchid, and there is an environmental significance overlay that recognises these values. It would be a fantastic win for both the local environment and my community to see this land purchased by the state and incorporated into the Warrandyte State Park. I ask the minister to consider the environmental value of this parcel of land and instruct her department to purchase the land so that those environmental values can be protected into the future.

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (Question 180) My constituency question is to the Minister for Sport. The Andrews government's first budget has been great news for local community sporting clubs, with \$100 million allocated to the Community Sports Infrastructure Fund (CSIF) to help local clubs upgrade tired grounds and to build the facilities they need to

keep up with increasing membership. In my electorate of Yan Yean, the Wallan Football and Netball Club is one such club that is getting on with building better facilities, including with the support of a government commitment to invest \$100 000 in netball courts. Can the minister advise what the process is for clubs such as the Wallan Football and Netball Club to access funding that the government has committed to from the new \$100 million CSIF?

Gippsland South electorate

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — (Question 181) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and relates to road funding for the major arterials in my electorate of Gippsland South. A return to wetter seasons over the past four years since the end of the millennium drought has caused havoc on local roads. A significant additional investment of \$130 million in roads by the coalition in last year's budget has delivered dividends, but there is more work to be done. I believe there is a case for additional road funding in South Gippsland, in particular due to the higher rainfall, hilly topography and the higher number of milk tankers, stock transports and logging trucks on the roads, all of which place more pressure on the road surface than in is the case in some other parts of the state. I know the minister is aware of this, because he visited the area as the shadow minister and had a lot to say about the need for more road spending. Can the minister please outline the works proposed and the total value of those works on the South Gippsland Highway from Cranbourne through to Sale, as well as works on the Strzelecki and Highland highways over the next two years?

Carrum electorate

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — (Question 182) My constituency question is for the Minister for Industry. Can the minister provide an update on the work that is being done to assist automotive supply chain companies as they face the wind-down in operations by the three major automotive manufacturers in Victoria. While a lot of the focus is on the possible impacts on businesses and jobs in the north and west of Melbourne, a large number of automotive supply chain companies are in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, which are also likely to be affected by the wind-down of the automotive manufacturers in Victoria in 2017. A number of those supply chain companies are in my electorate of Carrum or close by in Dandenong. Many people living in my electorate work for those companies.

I have received a number of queries from constituents expressing concern about what impact the winding down of the three major automotive manufacturers will have on their jobs, on their futures and on their families. I know that they, together with the automotive supply chain companies in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, are very eager to hear what steps the Andrews Labor government is taking to address possible impacts from the winding down of the three major automotive manufacturers. I look forward to receiving an update from the minister.

Caulfield electorate

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — (Question 183) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health. Many of my constituents in Caulfield have expressed concerns over rooming houses and backpacker accommodation and their tenants. The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 requires proprietors of rooming houses to register with local councils with minimum standards for prescribed accommodation set out in the Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009. Given that there are growing concerns in my electorate about profiteers establishing backpacker accommodation under the guise of rooming houses in quiet suburban streets, where in many instances tenants are causing severe disruption to neighbours, what will the minister do to improve the minimum standards of the prescribed accommodation to address this issue?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 184) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and it relates to the recent announcement of a \$2 billion of investment in train and tram manufacturing in Victoria. It is an initiative that will provide great certainty to rolling stock manufacturers in my electorate and in this great state generally. It will also ensure that Victoria can meet its public transport needs for decades to come.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and I warn the member for Caulfield.

Ms WILLIAMS — The manufacturing sector is the lifeblood of the south-east, and the recent announcement has caused much excitement locally. I had the pleasure of joining the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am unable to hear the member for Dandenong.

Mr Foley interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister at the table!

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I think you heard what I heard — the language used by the minister at the table. Not only are his comments unparliamentary but I think it is also quite obscene for a minister to be conducting himself in that way. I ask you to counsel him on his behaviour.

The SPEAKER — Order! I did not hear. I am trying to pay attention to the member for Dandenong; however, if there was any unparliamentary language, I ask the minister to withdraw immediately.

Mr Foley — I withdraw.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Dandenong, to be allowed — —

Mr Foley interjected.

Questions interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing

The SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124 the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing will withdraw from the chamber for half an hour.

Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing withdrew from chamber.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Dandenong electorate

Questions resumed.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — The manufacturing sector is the lifeblood of the south-east, and the recent announcement has caused much excitement locally. I had the pleasure of joining the Premier, the Minister for Public Transport and the Minister for Industry earlier this week at Bombardier in my electorate, and the mood was buzzing. I ask that the minister provide details of the tender process that will be undertaken to determine which manufacturers will

take part in this massive expansion of our train and tram fleet.

Prahran electorate

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — (Question 185) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. The state budget includes \$4.75 million in the 2015–16 year for the new Prahran secondary school, on top of an estimated expenditure of \$1 million in the previous year, with an estimated completion date at the end of 2019. There is no doubt that families and prospective families in the Prahran community will welcome the commitment to the new school and funding to progress its construction. As I have said previously in this house, this is the no. 1 issue in the Prahran community. Local parents and principals are very keen to be involved in the development of the new school and would welcome further details on the progress of the new state secondary school in Prahran, its location and completion date.

What is the intended use of both the \$4.75 million earmarked for the 2015–16 financial year and the \$1 million to be spent by the end of this financial year?

Footscray electorate

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — (Question 186) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. It concerns the Victorian government's commitment to turn Footscray into a preschool-to-postgraduate education precinct. It was great to see the initial funding for this project included in the budget. It is an important issue for constituents in my electorate who wish to see Footscray developed into a centre of learning so anyone, no matter what their age or background, can access lifelong quality education. This landmark plan will see a preschool, a primary school and a secondary school as well as a tertiary provider all in the one campus. Will the minister outline what the next stage will be and outline the consultation process for this project so that the constituents who have raised this issue with me can be informed?

Lowan electorate

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — (Question 187) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health, and the information I seek is regarding funding for the Wimmera cancer centre. People diagnosed with cancer in the Wimmera and southern Mallee region have the highest five-year mortality rate in Victoria. This is compounded by poor access to cancer treatment, with 40 per cent of patients with cancer in the Wimmera travelling outside the region to access treatment. These

people are unwell; suffering from the impacts of cancer and the side effects of treatment, including chemotherapy; nearing their end of life; and travelling many hours by car to Ballarat and beyond. Our people deserve to be able to access cancer treatment close to home.

In March the federal coalition government committed \$1 million toward the \$3 million Wimmera cancer centre. This funding is contingent on \$1 million funding from the state government. I therefore ask the minister on behalf of the people of the Wimmera and southern Mallee region: when will the Labor government deliver \$1 million to the Wimmera cancer centre and thereby improve cancer outcomes for our local people?

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — (Question 188) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask that the minister provide information as to what measures may be taken to reduce congestion on Craigieburn Road in Craigieburn. As the minister is no doubt aware, Craigieburn is experiencing considerable growth, and this increased population has led to significant congestion on Craigieburn Road. Also contributing to this congestion is the long-awaited Craigieburn Central shopping centre, and with the ongoing provision of community facilities and housing growth this congestion is likely to not only continue but worsen.

This issue is of great concern to my constituents, who would appreciate knowing what can be done to alleviate congestion on this important road.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Transport infrastructure

The SPEAKER — Order! I have accepted a statement from the member for Bulleen proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house condemns the Andrews Labor government for its inability to develop any sort of infrastructure agenda for Victoria to address the transport needs of a growing population, noting that:

- (1) the Tullamarine widening project was written by the former coalition government;
- (2) the western distributor project was submitted by Transurban;
- (3) the Andrews Labor government has scrapped its Hoddle Street improvements and has tendered for someone else to write it; and
- (4) the metro rail and Mernda rail projects are unfunded.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I feel like I am back in the Legislative Council, looking over here at the member for Lyndhurst.

Mr Pakula — Keysborough.

Mr GUY — Sorry, the member for Keysborough. There was a by-election. He looks a bit changed since then.

What is very clear from this government in relation to infrastructure is that there is no clear pipeline of infrastructure for our state. Members from this side of the house have on a number of occasions come to this chamber to express concern at the lack of a shovel-ready infrastructure agenda for our state. Whether it is the western distributor, the West Gate distributor, Hoddle Street, Mernda rail or arterial roads that have not been funded, we on this side of the house are genuinely concerned that the lack of investment in infrastructure is going to cost jobs and affect the way we live.

This state is going through a boom in population that we have not seen for many decades. It is not acceptable for a government to commit \$9 million to a \$600 million project and claim that it is fully funded. It is not acceptable for a government to scrap the biggest road project in Australian history and claim that government is getting on with the job of providing much-needed road infrastructure for the fastest growing city in Australia. It is not acceptable that this government scraps important infrastructure such as the possibility of an airport rail link or that it delays upgrades to the Cranbourne-Pakenham line and delays the removal of level crossings, which it solemnly promised just six months ago — all of this, I say again, for the fastest growing city in Australia.

Melbourne has not seen population growth like what has occurred over the last 10 years since the gold rush. In the last few years our population has risen on a percentage and numerical basis faster than it has risen since the 1800s. Our city is growing. But it is not good enough that our city is not having delivered to it the infrastructure that it deserves.

We can look back at the 11 wasted years of the Bracks and Brumby governments. The mirror man, former Premier Steve Bracks, promised it, reviewed it and said he would look into it, but did nothing. Steve Bracks was the Bob Carr of Victoria. Who is now advising this government on major education infrastructure upgrades? The Bob Carr of Victoria — none other than Steve Bracks. No wonder this side of the house is concerned about what is going to happen. I say again: it

is not good enough for a city that is growing at such rates to be promised everything and delivered nothing. Labor in Queensland promised everything and delivered nothing, and the same occurred in New South Wales and Victoria. Now we are seeing a budget that returns to exactly that.

Not only are we seeing a budget that returns to 10, 12 or 15 years ago, when infrastructure went missing, was back-ended or never happened, we are also seeing a budget by this government that is returning to deficit. If there is one thing we can rely on from Labor governments when it comes to infrastructure or finances, under Labor it always ends in tears — tears for the taxpayer who has to fund and pay for the damage done by Labor governments.

Do not take it from me — ask the people of Point Cook. Go and ask the people of Point Cook, who had no new road built in or out of that suburb under any period of the Bracks and Brumby administrations, during which the population went from 9000 to 40 000. It took the coalition to fund the Sneydes Road interchange, to get new connectivity back to the freeway for the first time in 15 years. That is the kind of damage we are seeing without any infrastructure agenda in this state. This state needs a pipeline of infrastructure for jobs and the way we live — for people in the construction sector, for people over 50, for people in the eastern and the western suburbs, and for people who have built a life in Melbourne. They deserve better than a government that pays \$640 million not to build infrastructure.

The east–west link stage 1 is without doubt a vital piece of infrastructure for this state. Anyone who says it is not needed is living in a flat-earth society, because it is the most-needed piece of infrastructure. Between a freeway that ends in a T-intersection and another new freeway that is planned to end in a T-intersection, there is one missing front tooth, and it is east–west link stage 1. To say it is not needed is mad; it is crazy. This side of the house believes it should be built. There is a contract that should have been honoured. They should not have paid \$640 million to trash it. It should have been built because the money was there from the state government, the federal government and the private sector. East–west link stage 2 should have been built; there is no doubt about it.

We have an unsolicited bid. You will not believe it — we have an unsolicited bid. Just a few weeks after the government trashed the concept of unsolicited bids, Uncle Fester, the Treasurer, ran around trashing unsolicited bids, but you will not believe what he accepted last week — an unsolicited bid —

Mr Nardella — On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition understands and should know by now that members must refer to members by their correct titles and not by other terms. I ask you to advise him as such and to bring him back to referring to honourable members as they should be referred to.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition to continue.

Mr GUY — I trust the member for Melton will abide by what he has just sought from me when it comes to other members. I trust he will do that, because I have heard the member for Melton speak on many an MPI where I am not sure he has upheld the same standard he is seeking from me.

I say again: east–west link stage 2 is such an important project that it should not be dumbed down — it should be built in parallel with east–west link stage 1. That was the plan. That was what was going to happen. The fact that we have Transurban submitting a proposal to a government and the Premier being nothing more than a post box for an invoice to Tony Abbott to build his own infrastructure is quite comical when we look at what this Premier has bagged, smashed apart or stopped in the way of infrastructure for this state. The Cranbourne-Pakenham rail upgrade has been rebadged and delayed and now the private sector is again being used to take credit for announcements that this government has not funded.

What on earth is happening at the port of Hastings, which is one of the most important infrastructure projects in our state? The government has still not articulated a vision for the freight and logistics capital of Australia as to whether or not we are going to have a port at the port of Hastings. Does Bay West mean we are going to blast the heads? Has someone told the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water? Are we going to build a 9-kilometre pier at Bay West, which would end up somewhere near St Leonards? It is completely and utterly crazy that we do not have a clear ports policy in this state today because this government does not have an infrastructure agenda. It is quite disturbing.

I say again: it all comes down to jobs and the way we live. There is no use gloating about jobs if you have nothing under construction or on the go. For goodness sake! Darwin has a bigger infrastructure build under way right now than Melbourne. If there is one point that indicts this Labor government more than anything else, it is the fact that Darwin — under a Country Liberal Party government — with a population of 200 000 has a bigger infrastructure build than Melbourne, with a

population of 4.5 million. That is Labor. That is what it stands for. It is completely embarrassing.

Forget O'Herns Road — that is apparently in contingencies. Forget Yan Yean Road — apparently that has gone the way of contingencies too. Forget Thompsons Road and the \$175 million promise. Again, do not take it from me, Speaker, take it from the member for Narre Warren South. She said the works would put an end to the bumper-to-bumper traffic that is costing local families and businesses time and money, and indeed she is right. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety said at the time that the duplication and level crossing removal would reduce travel time and make it safer to support our growing population. Again I say: indeed he is right, but where is the money that was promised? It was not \$9 million. It was not \$10 million. It was not even \$20 million. It was \$175 million. Do not take it from me, Speaker, these are the words of the people who are now in government.

It is not good enough to roll up to Parliament and claim that somewhere out in the never-never contingencies funds that include money from the federal government for the east–west link, which is sustaining the surplus, are somehow — maybe, possibly — going to be used to build projects that have not even got a line item in the budget with the figures promised next to them. It is completely outrageous.

Where on earth is the Mernda rail project's \$600 million in this budget? Do not take it from me, Speaker. The member for Yan Yean proudly said on her website, 'Only Labor will build Mernda rail'. She went further to say that in 2015 construction work would begin. She said that under a Labor government in the next year — that is this year, 2015 — not that there would be planning, not that there would be designing, not that there would be talking, but that 'work will begin'. She said it was a shovel-ready project. Where is the work? Is the work the member knocking on the door of the Treasurer asking, 'Why have you done me over? Why have I been done in again by this trot in trendy glasses who calls himself the Premier? Where on earth is the money for Mernda rail, for goodness sake? Only Labor will build Mernda rail'. In fact she went further. The member for Yan Yean said, 'Do not believe Liberal lies — the work will begin, starting in 2015'.

With great respect, Speaker, where are the lies coming from now? Where is the \$600 million? One point five per cent of this project is being funded over the forward estimates — that is 1.5 per cent! Do not take it from me, take it from the government, which today is trying

to convince the people of the fastest growing growth corridor in Australia that \$9 million equates to \$600 million. We know Labor members got their training from Tony Sheehan and Tom Roper, but I say again that 9 does not equal 600 — —

Mr Merlino interjected.

Mr GUY — I am glad you have come into the chamber again! The Deputy Premier is easy to get onto the hook. He is the only one I can see eye to eye with in debate. I am glad he has come in! Nine does not equal 600. I know some people do not like to lie about figures, but some people might want to go and have a look as to what exactly will be delivered for Mernda rail and exactly what was committed. If Labor is not fair dinkum about Mernda rail, it should just say that it was a lie — tell the truth — because it was a lie to the people of Yan Yean. Yan Yean Road was a lie. O'Herns Road was a lie. It was a lie because these projects were promised and the money that was promised has not been committed.

Further, when your only infrastructure agenda is to send an invoice to Tony Abbott to accept an unsolicited bid that you had bagged and then go on to accept another project for the Cranbourne-Pakenham line that was organised by your predecessors or to rebadge another project on the Tullamarine Freeway — —

Mr Merlino interjected.

Mr GUY — 45 out of 100 might be your IQ, mate, but people know that you are dudding them on infrastructure.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition should address his comments through the Chair. The Deputy Premier will desist.

Mr GUY — The man who sits there interjecting is the man who must explain to the people of the eastern suburbs why he believes the east should pay for projects in the west and why he believes that people in the eastern suburbs are second-class citizens. He should explain why he wants to pay \$640 million to cancel infrastructure in the eastern suburbs but wants to spend money in areas where the east pays and others benefit. Why does Labor hate the eastern suburbs of Melbourne? Why is there not a single new project underway under this government in the city of Manningham? Why under this government did Labor lie to the people of the city of Casey and the people of the city of Whittlesea? I will tell you why, Speaker: because it is in its DNA. The people of Scoresby were told there would be no tolls and no child in poverty by 1990 and that there would be l-a-w law tax cuts. In

Labor 'l' equals 'liar', and unfortunately that is the kind of government this state has.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to a pretty ordinary contribution from the Leader of the Opposition — a contribution that very much highlights that this is an opposition that still thinks it is a government in exile. In many ways I do not think those opposite have actually heard the message from the tribe, which very much said, 'You're the fish John West rejects, because for four years you did very little'. The former government had so long, but so little was achieved. That is very much what it is about.

This matter of public importance (MPI) begins:

That this house condemns the Andrews Labor government for its inability to develop any sort of infrastructure agenda for Victoria to address the transport needs of a growing population, nothing that:

- (1) the Tullamarine widening project was written by the former coalition government ...

This is like so many other aspects of the previous government — it was going to do something, but it did not do it. What we have is a sooky la-la approach of saying, 'We were going to do something, but we never got around to doing that'. It does not matter whether it was the east-west link or the widening of CityLink on the Tullamarine Freeway — the former government did not get anything done. All it did was sign a dirty, rotten contract which would effectively suggest to the community — and I am still to find a businessman who would support this proposition — that we would invest \$1 for 45 cents return. I have not had one businessman tell me that they would invest their money in that manner. If you are going to invest \$1, you want at least \$1 in return; you certainly do not want 45 cents.

I remember many of these businesspeople saying to me that at the end of four years they were desperate for any project because this government did not have an infrastructure program. This government had a contract — a couple of contracts — it was going to sign after four years. It was very much a government of 'going to do something', but it never got around to doing any of it. It is very much the story of how it was going to get there, but it just did not have the plan. It does not matter whether it was the east-west link, where it was going to get 45 cents return for \$1, or something else. We know the government did not go to Infrastructure Australia about the east-west link. That was just a plain embarrassment, so of course that was hidden.

If you look at the record of those opposite in government, you can see that every major project completed was a project that was contracted and put together by the prior Labor government, whether it was the regional rail link or the children's hospital. Billions of dollars were invested. All those projects were contracted and put together under the previous Labor government. They were finished under the coalition government, but at the end of the day the job was already done by the time those opposite got in. Those were the coalition's only major projects.

If you look at the budget in the first year of the Baillieu government, you see that 90 per cent of capital expenditure was for projects started under the Bracks and Brumby governments. In other words, those opposite did not have a plan. They got in and did not know what they were going to do. Opposition members do not actually see a role for themselves in government; they are just there to keep us out. They are the do-nothing specialists. Their sole reason for being in government is to keep the Labor Party out. There is nothing more for them, so I guess when they got in they figured they did not really need to do anything except spend a little less than they earned and somehow or other that would be some grand virtue in itself. 'We've spent a little bit less than we earned! We don't know what we're going to do with it — we haven't got an infrastructure program — but just tell us we're virtuous. Send us to heaven to be saints and beatified, maybe, in the future'. That is about it.

This MPI is an insult to people who look at basic facts. Look at the western distributor, which we have said to Transurban we will seriously consider. We announced the third stage the other day. I deal with the business community frequently, having come from that community. I speak to them often. I know what many of them said to me when they were trying to put together unsolicited bids and approach the previous government. They knocked on the former Treasurer's door, and there was no answer; there was no-one on the other side of the door to actually answer it. They could not find someone who would accept their unsolicited bids, so for the first two or three years of the former government no-one could make an unsolicited bid. The government was not open for business; it was closed for business. Everything was sleepy. Everything was slow. Nothing happened.

You only have to look at the former government's capital program to see that it was all contracted, funded and done by Labor. There was nothing the Liberal Party had to offer. You only have to look at the sort of embarrassing situation — and I am sure he was embarrassed — when the former Premier opened the

children's hospital with the full knowledge that the government of the day had had nothing to do with it. All it did was cut the ribbon. That was all those opposite were good at doing — cutting ribbons and not much else. That is very much the story of the former government.

There were four dark years when nothing much happened. Employment growth became anaemic. General gross state product (GSP) growth became anaemic. Debt went up — there is no doubt about that — as a percentage of GSP. And now somehow or other we have to congratulate the former government because it delivered a surplus along the way, even though it did nothing! It did not stimulate growth in the economy. It evacuated the marketplace for the last four years, and this place came to a standstill.

That is why the business community, by the end, was not even ready to properly assess the east-west link. It was so desperate for anything to happen — anything, even life — with this government. The business community wanted to make sure someone was at the other side of the door. It kept knocking at the former Treasurer's door, and there was simply no answer. That is from senior businesspeople in the community, who said to me that on numerous occasions they were trying to put unsolicited bids to the government, and they could not even get anybody to show them the way through.

Is that not an indictment of a group of people who do not believe they have anything to do but hold the purse strings of government? Their only reason for being here is somehow or other to keep the Labor Party out, because Labor might actually get in and it might stimulate the economy. We might stimulate growth. We might assist the business sector. We might stimulate those important things like skills development — and look at what skills development can do for an economy in terms of productivity and growth.

What did the former government do? It ripped and tore apart the fabric of our education system and our TAFE system. It shut TAFE colleges everywhere. You would have thought The Nationals members, of all people, would understand the importance of that. However, at the end of the day they did not; they sat silent while TAFE was absolutely decimated. The skill base of the community has been decimated. That is what this lot are good at doing. They are not good at growing the pie; the gross state product sat still while they were in government because they did not have an idea of what they wanted to do. They just sat still. It is a sad story of a group of people — who supposedly come from the business community, who supposedly understand the

economy and who are supposedly well skilled in that base — who do not really know what they want to do when they get in here. That is a tragedy. I question the purpose of their being in here.

In contrast, this government is getting on with the job. We are putting the money through. We are stimulating growth and looking at things like stronger country bridges. We have heard various comments from The Nationals about country roads and bridges, but we are getting on with the job of putting money into upgrading bridges which have been neglected for 30 to 50 years. I know the member for Morwell would be grateful for the \$9 million for the Tyers Road upgrade, and this government is doing various other upgrades. There are the upgrades for the Goulburn Valley Highway and the Hume Highway — all these things are vital for freight to get product to market quicker. I know the member for Swan Hill has various upgrades coming to bridges in his seat. This government is upgrading 48 country bridges; it is a great program. There is \$1 billion for country roads, which is another great program. There is \$87 million for road resurfacing, and I know various country bridges are being upgraded in the electorate of the member for Lowan. This is a very positive story for country roads and bridges.

I will rest for a few moments and look at what RACV said about the transport infrastructure commitments of this government. It certainly did not say we should carry on with the absolute drivel the Leader of the Opposition carried on with, suggesting that the government does not have an infrastructure program. An RACV media release headed 'State budget delivers on transport infrastructure commitments' states:

In particular we welcome the commitment to start the Melbourne Metro rail project ...

We know that went up under the former government, but it wanted to hide that one because that had a positive benefit-cost ratio (BCR), and those on that side of the house do not like positive BCRs. They like it where you can invest \$1 and get ripped off and get 45 cents back. Melbourne Metro has a positive BCR. The RACV said it welcomes the Melbourne Metro rail project and:

... the removal of 20 level crossings ...

The government is putting in \$2.4 billion for that. That is a great program, and that will be a congestion-busting exercise, like the safer country crossings program we have put together, which will provide greater safety and greater capacity on our country lines. The RACV also says it welcomes:

... a commitment to upgrade the Tullamarine Freeway ...

We know that is supported on a bipartisan basis, but the former government suggested that somehow or other it owned that project, when it was just another story of 'We're gunna do something'. It had four long years, and it was still saying 'We're gunna do something'. What a rotten government it was. At the end of four years all it could say was it had signed a rotten contract that delivered 45 cents back on the dollar. That was all it had done in four years. I would be ashamed. Its members should genuinely be ashamed of themselves that all they could do after four years was have a rotten contract with a side letter which effectively made legal everything illegal. That is a disgrace and an embarrassment for those who sit on the other side of the table that they allowed that to happen.

Let me go back to what RACV said. It said it supports:

... new trains and trams; upgrades on the M80 Western Ring Road and the construction of a new Chandler Highway bridge.

They are all great projects which stimulate construction. We want the construction sector to move in because it has been dead for four years. You only have to ask the major constructors what they think about the former government to hear that what they say is not particularly flattering. It is actually incredibly rude. Effectively they say it did nothing, sat still and watched the world go by. There were a couple of sleepy leaders of the government, then a snappy leader, and still nothing really happened.

They got a bit more aggressive on thumping the fist, and they found that there would be 80 000 to 100 000 cars on east-west. Still no-one can find where these Martians would have come from, because there would definitely not have been 80 000 to 100 000. Everybody knows that. Because it was such a winner, the government had to underwrite the whole project! If it was such a winner of a project, the public sector would have taken some risk. But we know it would not take that risk because the traffic volumes were dodgy. I can remember the then Premier banging his fist, saying that an east-west tunnel would fix a north-south issue on Punt Road and Hoddle Street. What a joke. Only Dimbo the village idiot would suggest to someone that a road going east-west would fix a north-south problem. It just does not work that way.

I was in boy cubs for only a little while — I got pushed out because I was a bit naughty — but I could tell where north, south, east and west went. I can assure members that an east-west road will never fix Hoddle Street. That was another embarrassing moment for the

former Premier, who would say anything he needed to say to somehow or other get the project over the line. It was a dodgy, dodgy project. Now as we are peeling it apart, that is pretty obvious.

Let me be clear. The RACV says the government has a good infrastructure program for transport going forward, and the government is very proud of it. We have nothing to be ashamed of. The matter of public importance tells the story of, 'We could've been champions, but we never got there. I was a legend in my own lunchbox, but I never got best on ground'. The problem was that they were going to do something but nothing ever happened, and the world sat still. That was the problem for the Victorian economy.

As we are growing with our strong population growth we need the employment growth to give people the dignity and engagement in the community they all deserve. That is pretty much what this budget delivers. The \$22 billion worth of infrastructure programs going over the next four years is great news for the construction sector. It is also great news for the unskilled people in the community who need work. There will be difficult times coming up ahead, and the government is trying to deal with those difficult times with a great infrastructure program and a great sense of purpose in how it is going about the budget.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — I am delighted to rise to make a contribution on the matter of public importance, which covers the inability of this government to have a transport infrastructure agenda for the state. We have heard already from the Leader of the Opposition about the metropolitan-based debacles, the issues that all metropolitan commuters will face and the pain they will endure over the coming years.

We have just heard a contribution from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety —

Mr Donnellan — A fine contribution.

Mr T. BULL — a speech which he is calling a fine contribution. If ever I have heard a speech trying to make strawberry jam out of horse manure, that was it, because this budget in relation to transport is horse manure for rural and regional Victoria.

I would like to touch on a couple of matters around rural and regional Victoria. Let us look around the whole state, where there has been no planning, investment or innovation of any kind when it comes to transport. Let us look at our roads funding. Page 123 of budget paper 3 — as the minister walks out the door — shows a 10 per cent reduction in road funding. It is amazing that when the government has just paid

\$640 million to not build a road there is a 10 per cent reduction in road funding.

When the opposition was in government it inherited a mess with the road network. It was one of the biggest issues of the campaign leading up to the 2010 election. There had been neglect on country roads, and people wanted action — and the former government started that. You only have to drive around the road network anywhere in rural and regional Victoria today to see that there is a lot of work underway — that work was funded by the coalition government. However, there is a lot more to be done. What do we get from this government? A massive cut — a slap in the face for all commuters and transport companies that operate in rural and regional Victoria.

Labor has also axed the very popular country roads and bridges program that was delivering \$1 million a year to every rural and regional council in this state, giving them the ability to fix their own road networks. The \$4 million cut comes at a time when there are cuts to other council programs, including the Local Government Infrastructure Fund. These funding sources are being chopped, and on top of that the government is capping local council rates and not allowing councils to fund infrastructure improvements from their own budgets. This is a mean government.

Let us look at some of the rural transport projects that need funding, starting at Echuca. The former member for Rodney, Mr Weller, and the member for Murray Plains fought very hard for the Echuca bridge. It is badly needed, and the community has been crying out for it. What did the project get in this budget? It got nothing. We see no time frame, and we have had no genuine commitment. It is very disappointing for the people of northern Victoria. They received a commitment from the coalition, but in this budget they got doughnuts.

In the Euroa electorate Labor failed to provide any funding for the Kilmore-Wallan bypass. Kilmore is experiencing enormous growth. Its population is forecast to grow to over 11 000 by 2030, and its road network was not designed to cope with that population growth. It needs upgrading. B-doubles frequently pass through the middle of town, and the heavy traffic has made life very difficult for residents. There is nothing left for Labor to do. The coalition government funded all the planning; it is ready to go. All the project needs is the funding to get the job done — and it got nothing.

Then we have the north-eastern rail line, the rail corridor between Melbourne and Sydney, which is perhaps our most important freight corridor. Businesses

rely heavily on it to be efficient and effective. It also provides an important link for the people of Euroa who need to travel by train to Melbourne, whether it be for business, family reasons, medical appointments or the like. In the past Labor botched the maintenance program for the track. It ended up making the track worse. It was done on the cheap, and it resulted in mud holes and speed restrictions on the line. The coalition government worked to fix a lot of those problems. In our term in government we saw those restrictions being lifted. The coalition also committed to extra trains as part of its \$178 million rail package. What do we now read in the budget papers? Those V/Locity carriages will go only to the Geelong line.

Moving to the west of the state, the Lowan electorate was crying out for funding for major transport projects in the lead-up to the election, including \$720 000 for the Horsham bypass review to get things moving there and funding for the passenger rail and public transport review. That review would have looked at extending rail services to Horsham and bus services to Hamilton, which are very important for those communities. But what did we get for that area? We got absolutely nothing.

Heading up further north to Mildura, we have seen much development there over recent years due to the great work of the local member. Mildura Airport needed \$4 million for a runway extension, which was promised by the coalition. Passenger numbers at the airport are growing. I am sure the Attorney-General, who is at the table, will agree with me. He has been to Mildura once or twice. It is a busy little airport, and patronage is growing. The airport needs to extend its runway to cater for bigger planes. What did it get? It got absolutely nothing. Labor's lack of interest in this project throws up a significant impediment to business confidence in this important region.

The Murray Basin rail project is an interesting one. The coalition set aside \$220 million to build it. What did Labor commit? It committed \$30 million and provided no information on when it will start, when it will finish or what will be involved in any way, shape or form. It is a vital transport link to support the horticulture, grain and mineral sands industries. These export industries are very important to the economy of Victoria. What did they get? They got nothing.

Labor has been ignoring Mildura, and it managed to get the trifecta up there. As well as the issues with rail and air services, there are problems with the roads. Many people use the Ravenswood interchange, just south of Bendigo where the Calder Highway meets the Bendigo freeway, when travelling from Mildura to Melbourne. It

is a popular transport link for both businesses and residents in the Mildura area. It is said by many to be the most dangerous intersection between Melbourne and Mildura. It is also on the truck bypass. Funds have been committed to the project, but this budget has back-ended those funds. Those are funds to address one of the most dangerous intersections in the state, and that has to put lives at risk. Passing lanes have been identified as a major issue, particularly on the Calder Highway. The cuts to road maintenance in this budget endanger the work going ahead on those important overtaking lanes.

To finish off, let us look at my electorate of Gippsland East and the Gippsland region in general. Our rail line, which was originally left out of Labor's regional rail link work, continues to be ignored. Before the election the coalition announced a \$178 million V/Line package, with a considerable amount of that to be spent in Gippsland and on the Gippsland line improving services, duplicating tracks and providing additional carriages. But what do we read in the budget papers? There is nothing at all for the Gippsland line. The budget papers even clearly state that the new V/Locity carriages that have been trumpeted by the minister are to be used on the Geelong line, not the Gippsland line at all.

Perhaps the biggest slap in the face that typifies how Labor feels about rural and regional Victoria is in the budget information paper on rural and regional Victoria. It contains quite a sparse map; it does not have a lot of positive indicators on it. On that map my electorate — which encompasses 27 000 square kilometres — is covered by the index. The graphic artist has covered 27 000 square kilometres of Gippsland East with an index that lists the limited amount of investment in other areas of the state. My electorate is covered by the index on the map because there is no investment in there — not one initiative in Gippsland East has made it onto the map. That is a disgrace, and it is replicated all around the state. Every member of this house should have a look at that map, because it typifies Labor's lack of interest in rural and regional Victoria.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — Unlike the previous speaker, I will deal with the matter of public importance (MPI). To deal properly with this MPI and the hypocrisy and cant that is at the heart of it, we need to go back to the period before the 2010 election. In the period before the 2010 election — —

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr PAKULA — Back in the time when we had a sane person as the member for Burwood, the then Baillieu opposition made only three big infrastructure commitments in the transport space. It made just three infrastructure commitments: a train line to Rowville, a train line to Doncaster and a train line to Avalon.

Mr Watt — Tell the truth.

Mr PAKULA — I am. I say to the member for Burwood that unlike him, I was at Melbourne town hall when the member for Polwarth made those commitments at a public transport forum. Unlike the member for Burwood, I remember the literature written by the former member for Doncaster, Mary Wooldridge. I remember the promises that were made to the people of Doncaster, to the people of Rowville and to the Fox family at Avalon Airport. I remember those commitments very well. When the Leader of the Opposition comes in here and talks about a government which promised everything and delivered nothing, I ask him to reflect on the promises made by the former government and whether or not they might be at least partly to blame for the fact that the opposition is currently sitting where it is sitting. The Leader of the Opposition also went on about lies told to the people of the city of Manningham. Let me say it again: Doncaster rail was the promise made to the people of the city of Manningham by the previous government.

There was one other infrastructure promise made by the then Baillieu opposition, and it was a solemn promise. It was made on Channel 9 news, if the member for Burwood wants to check, and it was a promise to not build the east–west link. It was made because the Treasurer and I got wind of the fact that the opposition was going to tunnel under Flemington, so we put it to the opposition and it denied it out of hand. It said that it had absolutely no plans whatsoever to build an east–west link. So the opposition in fact made four infrastructure commitments — to build the Doncaster rail line, to build the Rowville rail line, to build the Avalon rail line and to not build the east–west link — and it broke them all. It broke every one of those infrastructure commitments. What happened after those infrastructure commitments were made and broken? The answer is not much at all. Not much at all happened next. For two and a half years infrastructure in this state, along with the government of Victoria, atrophied.

That is why when the Leader of the Opposition comes in here with his false bravado and chutzpah and says, ‘Darwin has a bigger infrastructure build underway than Melbourne; it is a disgrace’, I ask members of the opposition to reflect on why that might be. Why might

that be? If there were any infrastructure builds underway right now, it would need to be infrastructure that the opposition had already started — but it did not start anything.

Mr Watt — How about the ones you cancelled?

Mr PAKULA — I say to the member for Burwood that even in his best case scenario none of it would be underway now. The opposition comes in here and talks about east–west link stage 2, but it was not planned to start for a decade.

Mr Watt interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Burwood!

Mr PAKULA — The former government junked its three infrastructure commitments and settled on metro-lite, which was cooked up in the Premier’s office, and east–west link, which it promised not to build. Metro-lite would have delivered nothing for Parkville, where all the hospitals are, nothing for Domain, where all the offices are, and no connection to Flinders Street, because it would have caused disruption — though this did not seem to bother members of the opposition about east–west link. What it would have delivered is a station in the Orwellian-titled Fishermans Bend, which turned out to be somewhere around the Montague self-storage depot. Even in the best case scenario that assumes development will happen there, Fishermans Bend would not be a destination station; it would be a station of origin. People would get on there, not get off, to go to the places they need to go.

As for east–west link stage 1, I simply say this: imagine what those opposite would say if the Labor Party proposed a project that we refused to submit the business case on to Infrastructure Australia because we feared that the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) would be used to dismiss it — a project that had a BCR of 0.45, that had a cost of more than \$10 billion and that had a funding gap in excess of \$2 billion. What is more, what if 87 per cent of drivers on the feeder road would not use what would be a 0.45 BCR, \$10 billion road with a \$2 billion hole? If the Labor Party put forward a project as stinky and with as little benefit to the community as that, members opposite would accuse us of economic vandalism — and they would be right.

But, not satisfied with having put this project forward — this project with a negative BCR and massive costs, and which most people would not use — members opposite, having failed in their attempt to punish the Victorian people by blackmailing them into

paying for a road they neither needed nor wanted, continued to insist as late as today that the newly elected government not just break a commitment it made to the Victorian people and go back on something Victorians voted against, but also sink \$10 billion into a project that does not stack up on any level. It does not stack up from a BCR point of view, from a funding point of view or from a usage point of view. They are so rigidly, stupidly wedded to this palaver that they come in here and continue to insist that the new government waste this money and fund a project that nobody wants and that does not stack up.

We, on the contrary, will build the infrastructure that Victorians actually need. We will remove level crossings, including on the Cranbourne-Pakenham line in Noble Park, so that people can move around more freely and more trains can run. We have a Tullamarine Freeway widening project that goes all the way to the airport, unlike the half-baked one the opposition put forward, and we will not claim that with the Tullamarine widening people will be able to get to the airport before they get out of bed in the morning, which is basically what the member for South-West Coast tried to claim when he suggested there would be a 90-minute saving in travel on a 60-minute trip. We will not be making those kinds of claims.

We will also build a proper Melbourne Metro that takes people to where they need to go and frees up the choke point at the heart of our network. We have allocated \$1.5 billion in the budget — not \$20 million or \$30 million, as the former government tried to contribute to the sorts of projects it came up with. Not only that, we have the wonderful proposal from Transurban to create a second river crossing, which the opposition's east-west link stage 1, which it would have built over the next decade, would not have done. This proposal actually crosses the river.

When the Leader of the Opposition talks about there being no clear pipeline in an environment where consortia spent the last four years packing up and leaving town, he must be joking. When he says everything is not funded in the first budget, trying to hold the current government to a standard he never held the previous government to, he must be joking. When opposition members once again use the silly 'you're asking the west to pay for the east' tactic of setting one Victorian against another, just like they did with regard to water in the years before 2010, they must be joking.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — It is my pleasure to speak on this matter of public importance. This is an important debate because we have some profound challenges facing our state. Melbourne is the fastest

growing capital city in the nation, with its population predicted to reach about 8 million people by 2050. Melbourne is growing by an extraordinary 1800 people per week. Some projections have Melbourne as the biggest city in the nation by the 2030s, with Victoria's population almost doubling from its present 5.8 million to over 10 million by 2050.

According to Public Transport Victoria there has been an unprecedented 70 per cent growth in train patronage in the last decade. Average weekly boardings on metropolitan trains are expected to more than double to 1.7 million by 2031. While tram and bus boardings will both be near 1 million per day by 2031, we have substantial issues that we have to take account of today. The Melbourne Metro business case, revealed in the *Herald Sun*, says that by 2021 demand for morning peak period train services will outstrip supply by 40 trainloads of passengers every day. Without significant investment, this will make the current public transport network unworkable by the 2030s, if not before.

In 2009 there were over 4 million registered vehicles in Victoria. By the end of last year there were over 4.4 million registered vehicles on our roads. That is an increase of 2.3 per cent per annum. If this trend continues, can you imagine the condition of Victoria's roads, with millions of extra vehicles on them but without any improvements and new linkages?

The Department of Transport submission to the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission draft report entitled *Securing Victoria's Future Prosperity*, published in 2011, says that by 2036 Melbourne's population will have reached 5.5 million. On that figure the department predicted that each new person will take an average of about 3.3 trips each day, meaning we have to provide capacity for an extra 5.2 million trips every day. On current figures 77 per cent of those trips will occur by car, 9 per cent by public transport and 14 per cent by walking or bicycle, but we do not have the infrastructure pipeline we need to deal with this massive population growth and extraordinary rise in the number of people wanting to use the public transport system and road network.

You will be interested to know, Deputy Speaker, that between 1947 and 2005–06 rail patronage over the system decreased. It is fair to say that both sides of politics over that period were somewhat guilty of underinvestment in our railway network, with the obvious exceptions of the Bolte and Hamer governments, which built the city loop. The fact remains that Melbourne was built after the war largely as a car city. We may lament that, but it is a fact of life.

However, at the moment we have a situation where there is no city-altering road project ready to go. There is nothing.

I make the observation that the government's western distributor proposal is not its proposal at all; it is a bid by Transurban, which made it clear in its media release that it is not bound by this. These are not binding terms of agreement, it is not a binding contract and Transurban is not bound to build the road — and neither is the government. Both parties could easily walk away at any given moment, and if they did that, there would be no road project at all. We have a car-centric city that is growing by 1800 people a week and predicted to be the biggest city in the nation by the mid-2030s, but there is no major road infrastructure project to show for it. That is a fact.

We have Labor's Puff the Magic Rail Tunnel before us. We all agree — there is bipartisan agreement — that we need a city-altering road project and a city-altering rail project to futureproof this great city of ours, but the fundamental issue with urban rail provision in every state in the nation, but particularly here in Melbourne, is that governments have no idea how to pay for it. Where is the \$11 billion coming from? There is nothing in the budget to give confidence to the people of Victoria that the government will actually build this tunnel. There is no way known the government will start building this in 2018 and finish it by 2026. It is an absolute pipedream.

This is no longer a laughing matter. We cannot simply sleepwalk into the population growth and public transport patronage increases of the next two decades without a substantial city-altering rail project that adds capacity into the city loop. The reason that is so important is that, without increased capacity into the core of the system, you cannot have new input lines like, for example, Doncaster. We did not go to the last election promising a Doncaster rail link; we promised to do a study, and we did. The study said very simply that you cannot have a new input line unless you increase capacity into the loop.

We all agree we need to improve the core of our rail network. The government thinks it can magically start construction in three years, but it is missing \$10 billion in funding. I do not think it will do this as a public-private partnership, so where will the money come from? Commonwealth governments of both political persuasions have been reticent to fund urban rail because there is not a sufficient freight component, and I imagine that will continue in the short term. So how are those opposite going to fund their metro rail link? I do not think they can. I think it is reasonable to

say that their signature election promise will not happen. It is unfunded, and it will not happen. It is a pipedream built on a nonsensical approach to infrastructure.

The next point I want to make is around the Chandler Highway, which runs between the seat of Northcote and the seat of Kew — my own seat. It was promised that the Chandler Highway bridge duplication would begin immediately. It has not, and it will not; apparently it will start in 2016–17. This year 2 per cent of the funding has been made available. Clearly it will not start this year. The government's press release in June 2014 said works would start immediately upon the Labor Party coming to government. That has not proven to be true. Call me a pedant, but it is not going to happen. Those opposite should be called out for that. In the seats of Kew, Northcote and Ivanhoe they made representations before the election which were simply false. That is a fact. The Chandler Highway bridge duplication issue shows just how crazy the government's ideas are with regard to that part of Melbourne. Why would you duplicate the Chandler Highway and not build the east–west link? Can somebody explain the logic of that to me? There is no logic in duplicating the Chandler Highway unless you build the east–west link.

In conclusion, the traffic management issues in and around the Chandler Highway, where the only other river crossing is Burke Road North, will be immense. I have asked the minister on a number of occasions what his traffic management plan is to allow traffic flow around Princess Street in Kew. I do not believe he has one. I do not trust this minister in any way, shape or form to be able to develop a traffic management plan that is appropriate for this project. I am very concerned about how this project is going to be developed, how it will be built and the impact it is going to have on my electorate. I did, however, call for this project during the election campaign last year. We welcome the fact that Labor is seemingly supportive of it, but we want to see it start and start now.

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — We get a sense of the importance that the Leader of the Opposition places on this issue by the fact that as soon as he finished speaking on this matter of public importance he scurried out of the chamber. He has not returned to listen to any of the debate — not even the contributions of members on the same side of the house on which he sits. He has left a handful of members of the Liberal Party in here to carry most of this debate. That sends a very clear message about the state of those opposite at the moment. They are rudderless, and it is only a matter of time before they start to consider their options in

terms of the leadership of their party. The member for Hawthorn has shown up the Leader of the Opposition on a number of occasions in this place. It is only a matter of time before we see the honourable member for Bulleen coming under a bit of pressure from those within his own party given that things are currently at rock bottom on the other side of the house.

Given the inertia of the four years they were in government, this is a very strange matter of public importance coming from those opposite. During the run-up to the last state election we had a flurry of spin and publicity about transport projects but absolutely no substance because they had done nothing for four years. They had rested on the laurels of the hard work of the previous Labor government, which had a strong infrastructure pipeline.

The regional rail project, which both sides of this house supported entirely, was a Labor project initiated under the previous Labor government. Members opposite were happy to support those sorts of projects through their term in government, but they did not initiate them. At the end of their four years the pipeline had run dry, but it was not as if they were not warned. People in business were warning us on this side of the house. They were saying to us that our engineers, designers, technicians and contractors were moving interstate because the Napthine and Baillieu governments were not investing in infrastructure that Victoria needed.

As the previous speaker mentioned, we saw studies into Doncaster rail, Rowville rail and Avalon rail which went nowhere. Members will remember the advertising signs at Southern Cross station advertising airport rail as if you could walk up the steps at that station and get on the train to the airport right there and then. I think it was after 2026 that the airport rail was supposed to be delivered.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BROOKS — It was by 2030. You would need a time machine to go forward in time to get the airport rail under this mob. It was a shallow hoax on the Victorian people. The people to whom I spoke did not take it seriously. It was an indication of the panic during the run-up to the last election when those opposite realised that the cupboard was bare and they did not have the infrastructure projects. They were trying to rush things out quickly. That led to their biggest mistake. With that sense of panic and with no infrastructure projects on the go, the former Premier — like a mug punter in the run-up to the last race, like someone who has just about done all their dough and is counting on the get-out stakes, the last race of the

day — put all his money on the east–west link. He loaded up and thought, ‘Beauty! The bookie’s given me 45 on this one’. It was not \$45.00. It was 45 cents in the dollar.

I do not think many punters in this state, let alone serious business people, would think a project that offers you a 45 cent return on the dollar is a good thing. It is an absolute disgrace that an administration would sign Victorian taxpayers up to a project that would have that sort of return. Infrastructure Victoria, a great initiative of the current government, will make sure that we have projects that measure up and that we have proper assessment of projects and their business cases. In the run-up to the most recent budget lost was the fact that the east–west link contracts that were released showed that a project that the Napthine government budget papers originally envisaged to cost \$6 billion to \$8 billion was in fact going to cost Victorian taxpayers \$10.7 billion. What is a lazy \$2.7 billion between friends?

Mr Watt — Tell us about the desal.

Mr BROOKS — Maybe the member for Burwood could explain to us where that extra \$2.7 billion appeared from, because Victorian taxpayers would like to know. It is interesting that those opposite are still wedded to the east–west link proposal and have not got the guts to admit they got it wrong.

On this side of the house we have a suite of infrastructure projects that Victoria has been crying out for. Melbourne Metro rail tunnel is an example. I take up the point of the previous speaker on the other side of the house, the member for Warrandyte, who said that Melbourne Metro could not be paid for. Bearing in mind that the business case is being updated, the figures for Melbourne Metro have an upper limit of \$11 billion at the moment. Given that I have just said that the east–west tunnel had a project cost of \$10.7 billion, it would be fair, if the member is asking how we would pay for Melbourne Metro rail, that we also ask how the previous government was going to pay for the east–west tunnel. It is disingenuous to suggest one project cannot be funded but another can.

The other project which I am very proud to have championed in the run-up to the last election was the removal of the 50 level crossings across Melbourne over eight years. Those 50 level crossings include, in my area and the neighbouring electorate of Ivanhoe, the one at Rosanna and the one at Reservoir.

There is also the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor, a great project which will remove nine level crossings,

involve high-capacity signalling and 37 new trains and move 11 000 people in the peak period. It is a great project. Our infrastructure commitment includes Melbourne Metro rail, level crossing removal, the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor and of course our commitment to invest in Victoria and rolling stock. Our commitment of \$2 billion will help to secure up to 10 000 Victorian jobs. We are not going to oversee what those opposite did — jobs that we can retain here in Victoria being sent overseas. We support Victorians' jobs, not sending jobs for building rolling stock to China.

The M80 upgrade from Sunshine Avenue to E. J. Whitten Bridge is another great project on the ring-road — one that has an extremely high benefit-cost ratio, unlike the east–west link project. It is interesting that when in government those opposite took the funding that was originally allocated for that project and applied it to the east–west project, which as we know had a negative benefit-cost ratio. The M80 upgrade is a great project which will improve efficiency for freight in particular. It will also help commuters and improve logistics and freight industry efficiency.

As for projects on CityLink, Transurban's western distributor project is at stage 3 of the market-led proposal process. It will create over 3000 jobs, according to Transurban. It will obviously improve access to the port if it occurs and provide an alternative to the West Gate Bridge. We have already heard that Transurban went to the previous government looking to pitch this proposal but the door was closed. I am pretty sure now that members opposite are wishing that the former Treasurer and the roads minister at the time were willing to listen to people instead of being off taking it easy.

There is the Tullamarine Freeway widening from the Burnley Tunnel all the way to the airport — not from the Burnley Tunnel to Moreland Road, like those opposite had proposed. These are predominantly Transurban projects, and this matter of public importance seeks to suggest that because they are not the ideas of this government they are somehow invalid. But when there are Victorian jobs, better transport services and better roads involved, this government is always going to be onside with projects like these.

Yan Yean Road and the Mernda rail line out in the north-eastern suburbs are vital projects. As for the Chandler Highway bridge duplication, I reckon constituents in the electorate of the member for Kew would disagree with his view that that bridge should not be duplicated unless you get east–west link. I think

those people will be pretty happy to see that bridge duplicated even without east–west link.

In closing, it is not just Labor that has said that the infrastructure program is a strong one. The Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said:

The budget confirms funding to progress Melbourne Metro rail and the Victorian rolling stock strategy. It also funds the level crossing removal project and identifies the first 17 level crossings to go.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition's matter of public importance. It is a very good one because it shows the difference between the views of the previous government and opposition and the views of the current Andrews government. If you look at the budget that was brought down yesterday, you will see there is no question that it will do nothing to fix traffic problems in Melbourne. There is nothing about infrastructure in this budget.

Remember what the member for Bundoora said: that the regional rail link was a Labor initiative — in other words, it was an idea, a thought being put forward. When we came to government we had a look at the regional rail link. The Department of Treasury and Finance came in and said to me, 'Treasurer, we have some significant issues with the regional rail'. I said, 'What's that?'. They said, 'For starters, the previous government forgot to put in the cost of the signals'. So there was — can you believe it? — a large rail project put forward by the previous Labor government and it forgot to put in the cost of the signals. How much was it going to cost to fix this very small oversight? It was going to cost \$500 million for forgetting to put the money in for the signals. I said, 'Okay, so we need to look for another \$500 million'. They said, 'Oh, no, there's more bad news'. I said, 'What else?'. They said, 'They haven't allowed for extra rolling stock'.

The fact is the previous Labor government was going to have a brand-new train track but not one extra new train to run on the regional rail link. When those opposite get up and talk about how good they were at building and infrastructure, I do not think they can look at even one project and say, 'We did a good job on this — it came in under budget and on time', because they did not do that for 11 years. It was the coalition government that came in and had to sort out the monumental mess that was left to it. The regional rail was the first one. The second was myki. The government employed more and more consultants, which added to the cost of the myki project, and it got worse and worse. It took a coalition government to sort it out.

Who would build a pipeline called the north–south pipeline and not have water running through it? Why would a government do it after promising never to do it? The Labor government promised it would never do it.

I turn now to the desalination plant. It is ironic that a Labor government can say, ‘We’re going to tear up the east–west link contract’. When I was the Treasurer I would have loved to have torn up the desalination plant contract; we all would. But there is a thing called sovereign risk and government responsibility. Liberal-Nationals governments respect the law, and they do not tear up contracts. The difference between the two sides of the house is that we were very strongly committed to building east–west link; it was a great project. It would have connected the Eastern Freeway with the Tullamarine Freeway so that people could head north and south on the Tullamarine Freeway, but it was not just about the city; it was about opening up the country as well. It was about Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Gippsland so people could come into Melbourne or to flow through it, including getting goods and services to the port or to the airport. It was about ensuring increased productivity.

Members on this side of the house understand what productivity is and what an increase in productivity means. I am not sure whether the message about productivity and improvements to productivity has sunk in with members of the government. Giving a massive pay rise to union mates does not mean an increase in productivity, but we will see a 7.1 per cent increase to the cost of the state’s wages bill. We will see how that unfolds. Building the east–west link would have gone towards improving productivity and moving traffic around the state. Most major cities have a ring-road, and the east–west link would have produced a ring-road for Melbourne.

It is interesting that the Andrews government is taking credit for the Tullamarine Freeway widening project. I do not think it is an Andrews government project. In fact, on 28 April 2014, over a year ago, the previous government announced the \$850 million widening of the Tullamarine Freeway and CityLink. The announcement included references to the capacity of the roadway being increased by 30 per cent and travel times being cut by 16 minutes. On 6 October 2014 the coalition government signed an agreement with Transurban to deliver the \$850 million CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway widening project. It is a great project. Members of the Andrews government have no morals or principles, and will say, ‘This is one of our big infrastructure projects, and we will claim it as one of our own’. It is about rewriting history. The

government has no infrastructure projects to claim as its own. It is relying on the good work and the hard work of the previous government.

Whenever there was a question about infrastructure projects in question time today the Treasurer got up and said, ‘Look in contingencies’. Where is the money that has been allocated to projects? We can all say, ‘We will just put that against contingencies’, but it does not mean anything until the money has been allocated to a project. That is when a project can start. VicRoads will not be able to start any projects, whether it is any planning, any studies or any work, until money has been allocated to the project.

I turn now to the western distributor. The government is spending \$640 million to not build a tunnel to go from east to west, but it will spend a truckload of money to go from west to east. The irony is that the tolls contract will be extended so that the people in the east will continue to pay tolls longer than they need to in order to build a road that they will probably never use. Toll contracts have an expiry date. In other words, the contract with Transurban for CityLink tolls is to finish in 33 years or 34 years time, but if the contract is extended, instead of the asset reverting to the government and the road being toll free, all of a sudden the tolling period will be extended. That is how the Labor government will build its western tunnel. On what logic do you say that you are looking to the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, to pay for the balance of it? Do you really run government by saying, ‘The balance will be picked up by the federal government’? That is not the way governments should work.

Another interesting point is that if the Treasurer announces a \$1.2 billion surplus but \$1.5 billion of it is underpinned by a payment from the federal government for the east–west link, and the government tears up the contract and does not use the money for the link and the federal government calls it in, then there will be a deficit. What will happen to the finances of the state if the \$1.2 billion surplus is underpinned by a \$1.5 billion payment from the federal government for the east–west link? According to the Andrews government the east–west link no longer exists, so that money from the federal government is now in doubt. If there is one thing you can rely on with an Andrews government, it is that it will not be able to manage money and it certainly will not be able to manage major infrastructure projects.

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) — The matter of public importance (MPI) says everything you need to know about the Liberal Party in opposition. Taking a look at the matter of public importance tells us so much about

the opposition. It explains why the Liberal Party and The Nationals were rejected at the last election by people in Victoria's regional cities like Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Shepparton. Only the Liberal and National parties would talk about infrastructure for Victoria and then focus on Melbourne to the total exclusion of regional Victoria. This continues a long tradition of the Liberal Party and The Nationals of neglecting all parts of Victoria outside Melbourne. I am sure each of us can remember when former Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett referred to rural and regional Victoria as the 'toenails' of the state. This attitude was continued by the recent coalition government, which neglected the needs of regional Victoria. It says so much to each of the hardworking people who live outside Melbourne that an infrastructure agenda for the Liberal Party starts and stops at the tramlines.

The Labor Party, and particularly the Andrews government, look at things very differently. The Labor government is investing for all of Victoria and for families in Victoria. What we saw yesterday was a budget that invests in the things that matter most to families. As the Treasurer said so eloquently yesterday, the budget brings us back to the basics that matter to families — that is, jobs, schools, health and transport. These are the things that Victorian families expect from a government, and it is what this Andrews Labor government is delivering.

Yesterday in response to the budget the CEO of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mark Stone, commended the government for delivering on key commitments that:

... recognise the vital role infrastructure plays in generating new jobs, strengthening livability, facilitating trade and keeping Victoria competitive.

The MPI makes reference to a number of projects, and I am going to speak on a number of them just to demonstrate how the opposition is on the wrong track.

Let us look at the Tullamarine Freeway widening. This project will create jobs; in fact it will create lots of them. It will create 1400 direct jobs. It will boost capacity and improve travel times, and it will be underway later this year in October. This is a very different project from the thought bubble put forward by the former government. The Napthine government's Tulla widening project would only have allowed motorists to drive halfway to the airport. Despite that, the opposition is claiming that the former government wrote the project plan. We know that the former government did not propose to widen the Tullamarine Freeway all the way to the airport. This is a better

project. It is a complete project that is good for Melbourne, but the opposition still complains.

Let us look at the western distributor project. This project is part of Project 10 000. It will remove trucks from residential streets in Melbourne's inner west by providing direct links from the West Gate Freeway through to Footscray Road and the port of Melbourne area. If this project goes ahead, it will provide a second crossing of the Yarra River and improve traffic flows on the M1. The project will create a lot of jobs. Transurban estimates that the project would generate 3500 new construction jobs, generate 4500 indirect jobs and cost between \$5 billion and \$5.5 billion to build. The business case and a review by external consultants show that the project would have a cost-benefit ratio of 1.6. Just a couple of days ago the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomed the western distributor proposal. On 30 April it said:

Together with the government's planned widening of the CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway, the announcement represents a major step forward in improving Melbourne's transport network. These projects will save business money, help people get to work on time, improve urban liveability and create thousands of new jobs.

These projects — projects that the opposition is desperate to criticise — will increase efficiency for business and commuters, improve transport flow, make Melbourne a better place to live and create thousands of jobs.

What will the Melbourne Metro rail project do? It will allow more trains to run to cater for 20 000 more passengers in peak hour. It will benefit every commuter in Melbourne and it will allow for more trains on every line every day, including on regional rail link lines. The future expansion of our rail network is absolutely dependent on this project. There will be five new inner city stations. The Melbourne University and hospital precinct in Parkville and the St Kilda Road precinct will have much-needed train stations. It will transform our metro system into an international-style, turn-up-and-go metro system. The Andrews government is getting on with the job. There is \$1.5 billion in this year's budget for this important project that will increase the capacity of Victoria's rail system. But from opposition members all we get is carping. Maybe they just do not understand that you need to plan a project of this size, having not planned anything in the last four years.

Investing in regional transport infrastructure is really important to the Andrews government. The government is investing in transport infrastructure right across the state. As part of Project 10 000, the Andrews Labor government has committed \$1 billion to upgrade and

repair unsafe and congested roads and bridges in regional communities. This commitment recognises that local communities and industry need to be better supported. To support this commitment, the government recently announced the provision of \$35.8 million to strengthen bridges in country Victoria and \$50 million for the Safer Country Crossings program. The government is also delivering an additional \$86.7 million in the 2015–16 budget towards road resurfacing and the maintaining of Victoria's roads.

This of course is not the only infrastructure investment happening in regional Victoria. I am really excited that in Ballarat sporting facilities will be upgraded, schools will be upgraded and planning will start for a technical school. I am excited that our hospital will get an expanded catheterisation laboratory. I am really excited that the Andrews government has invested in the Ballarat station precinct, which is an incredibly important project for my community and one that we have been waiting on for a while. Eureka! Absolutely!

I want to conclude where I began and explore what this MPI says about the opposition and its view of Victoria. Melbourne is a great city, but Victoria is more than Melbourne. Our regional cities matter; our smaller towns matter. However, to the opposition the only transport infrastructure that counts is in Melbourne. I hope members of The Nationals think long and hard about this MPI and what it says about the Liberal Party. It shows that the Liberal Party is as city-centric as ever. I am sure that members of The Nationals really want the best for their communities, but for as long as The Nationals are tied to a Liberal Party that does not even acknowledge that Victoria extends beyond Melbourne, they will be doing their communities a disservice.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I am very pleased to rise today to speak on the matter of public importance (MPI) submitted by the member for Bulleen, the Leader of the Opposition. The MPI states:

That this house condemns the Andrews Labor government for its inability to develop any sort of infrastructure agenda for Victoria to address transport needs of a growing population ...

It goes on to list four transport projects. Before I get into the specifics of the MPI, I want to outline a couple of the key aspects arising from yesterday's state budget. Firstly, I will look at the matter of surpluses. We can see in the budget papers and in the pre-election budget update that there are a range of figures included. In the 2014–15 financial year the coalition surplus is \$1.1 billion; under Labor it is a \$0.9 billion surplus. In the 2015–16 financial year the coalition has a

\$2.3 billion surplus; Labor has a \$1.2 billion surplus. In the 2016–17 financial year the coalition has a \$2.7 billion surplus; Labor has a \$1.4 billion surplus. In the 2017–18 financial year it shows a \$3 billion surplus under the coalition; Labor shows a \$1.4 billion surplus. Straightaway we can see the cumulative total under the coalition was to be \$9.1 billion of surpluses, whereas under Labor there is to be \$4.9 billion of surpluses, so we have already had a significant decrease of \$4.2 billion in surpluses.

As other members from this side of the chamber have identified, the budget includes \$1.5 billion in federal funding. If that has to be given back as a result of the slashing of the east–west link contract, then the budget will go straight into deficit, which will be a very significant issue for all Victorians.

On that subject, one of the first acts of this incoming Labor government was to scrap the east–west link, which has massive consequences for all Victorians, who will pay \$640 million not to build a road. That is an extraordinary situation given that this matter of public importance is about infrastructure. The east–west link was this state's most significant infrastructure project, so this state faced a loss of 3200 jobs at the start of this government. It was an outrageous act to come in and tear up a legitimate contract. On top of that this government has scrapped a whole range of other projects, including the airport rail link.

Coming back to the surpluses I touched on earlier, there has been significant deviation from the original commitment made by the Labor Party to deliver the coalition's surpluses. Labor has absolutely failed to do that. I refer to an article which appeared on the *Herald Sun* website on 19 November 2014 in which the now Premier says:

... we have got no intention of changing the surplus profile outlined in the pre-election budget update, which is \$1.1 (billion) in the current year out to about \$3 (billion) in the last of the forwards.

And it goes on. On 27 November 2014 on *ABC 774 Drive*, the Treasurer said:

... our commitments will have no impact on the projected budget surplus throughout the four years of the forward estimates ...

So right there we have two complete falsehoods in terms of stances taken before the election and stances taken once the Labor Party got into office.

In terms of the level of infrastructure investment in the budget papers, I have a very insightful table. It shows that in 2014–15, under the coalition, there was

\$5.8 billion of infrastructure investment; under Labor there is \$4.2 billion. In 2015–16 under the coalition there is \$7.3 billion; under Labor, \$5.2 billion. In 2016–17 under the coalition there is \$7 billion; under Labor, \$6.5 billion. In 2017–18 under the coalition there is \$6.7 billion; under Labor, \$4.5 billion. The cumulative total for the coalition over those four years is \$26.8 billion, and under Labor it is \$20.4 billion — a massive cut, a decrease of \$6.4 billion. Right away we can see that, despite what has been said yesterday and in the preceding days and weeks, the level of infrastructure spending here in Victoria is going to be significantly less under the current Labor government than it was going to be under the previous coalition government. What a shame that is for all Victorians, particularly those who might be looking for a job.

I will not get into the unemployment level because I do not have the time, but under expense growth the budget papers show very clear outcomes. It is interesting to see the way the Treasurer has put this in budget paper 2 on page 45. Chart 4.1 is headed ‘Average growth in expenses’, and the Treasurer has put the historical average of 2005–06 to 2014–15, and shows that it is 6 per cent, and then in his forward estimates it is 3 per cent. That is an absolute misleading table if ever there has been one, because if you look at the reality of it you can see that under the years 2000–01 to 2009–10, under Labor — that is, the 10 years of Labor — the annual expenses growth was 8 per cent. Talk about trying to mislead not only this place but all Victorians!

In the four years of the coalition — 2010–11 to 2013–14 — the actual expenses growth was 3.1 per cent. In the forward estimates for 2014–15 to 2017–18 under the coalition it is forecast to be 2.6 per cent. So here we have Labor coming in now for the budget for 2014–15 to 2018–19 saying that the annual expenses growth is going to be 3 per cent — that is, more than 10 per cent more than what we had forecast. Straightaway we can see that things are getting out of control on the expenses side. That is probably nothing unexpected and certainly nothing unusual from a Labor government, the members of which like to ramp up revenue and, more than that, ramp up expenses.

I note that the Treasurer states in budget paper 2 at page 45:

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

Right there is a quite laughable, almost completely comical, comment from the Treasurer. We have heard much in this place and in other places about the whole shovel-ready concept, which is really a slogan adopted

by the Labor Party. Labor members love to say it, but they have no understanding of it, because this budget proves beyond any shadow of a doubt and beyond any slogans that there are no shovel-ready projects at all.

An honourable member — No shovel.

Mr ANGUS — Yes, they have not even got the shovel. We are just talking delusion. We have got \$22 billion of projects announced but a mere \$6 billion of funding budgeted for. That again reinforces what all of us — certainly those of us on this side of the chamber and many Victorians — know, which is that Labor simply cannot manage money and does not understand how to run things.

If we have a quick but close look at history, which I think is very important when we are looking at these matters, we can see examples of the economic mismanagement of Labor governments. There is the desalination plant, which is a fixed cost to Victorian taxpayers of \$1.8 million a day for 27 years, excluding water. There is the myki overrun of more than \$500 million on that completely botched project. There is the sale of the electronic gaming machine licences that cost Victorians over \$3 billion. There is the Melbourne wholesale market redevelopment, an overrun of more than \$300 million. The project was way over time and over budget, and of course Labor forgot to get the agreement of tenants before deciding to relocate. That is fairly fundamental, but that is the way in which Labor approaches things. Labor members also forgot to include warehousing in the wholesale market redevelopment, so that was another fairly fundamental mess up. The coalition government also had to fix the regional rail link project. The HealthSMART project was another disaster. It was \$243 million over the original budget of \$323 million and was ultimately scrapped.

It is informative to look at third-party commentary on some of the previous projects of Labor. I am running out of time, but I will quickly touch on *Managing Major Projects*, a Victorian Auditor-General’s report from October 2012, which is very instructive and might be particularly instructive for some newer members in this place. Some 24 projects are analysed in this report, and as can be seen from figure 3B on pages 35 and 36, over 54 per cent, or 13 out of the 24 projects listed, were over 15 per cent over budget and 38 per cent — 9 out of the 24 — were greater than 10 months over time, almost a year over time. That gives you some sort of idea of the credibility of Labor once it gets into government, or the lack of credibility I should say in terms of managing any major projects.

That is a complete worry for all Victorian taxpayers, knowing that we have now got an incoming Labor government that has just announced its budget, which contains a whole lot of unfunded programs. Then the ones that they did get their hands on were just affected by all sorts of problems, not only financial problems but a huge number of management problems. That report goes into a great deal of detail, talking about poor cost management, poor time management, lack of planning, lack of business cases and lack of accountability by both ministers and departmental staff. There was an overarching mismanagement of money. Having said that, I commend the matter of public importance.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution to the debate on the matter of public importance proposed by the member for Bulleen. It is interesting to hear from opposition members who in government spent most of their time cutting ribbons on Labor government projects and cutting services. About the only things they did involved cutting ribbons and services. Those ribbons were on infrastructure projects started and invested in by the Bracks and Brumby governments.

In the first instance the main commitments made by the previous government that got the former member for Hawthorn, Mr Baillieu, elected were a commitment to build Rowville rail, a commitment to build Doncaster rail and a commitment to build Avalon rail for their mates out at Linfox. But we know what happened: they did not deliver on any of those projects. Such was their cheek that they also decided to commit to an airport rail project that would be delivered by the year 2026. Somehow with great arrogance they believed that they were going to get the support of the Victorian community in 2014, 2018, 2022 and 2026 to deliver this airport rail, but no Victorians believed them, because when it comes to infrastructure, members of the coalition government promised a lot and delivered nothing — no Rowville rail, no Doncaster rail, no Avalon rail and no airport rail.

Those opposite talk about an infrastructure agenda. Let us look at what the Baillieu and Napthine minority governments delivered for Victorians in the past four years. What we do know is that the significant achievement of Premier Baillieu was that he ensured that Victoria's state emblem was gold — a mineral element. That was the significant achievement of the Baillieu government — and that did a lot for Victorian families!

Mr Richardson — A game changer!

Mr CARBINES — It was a game changer, as the member for Mordialloc says. That is the sort of contempt that the previous government had for Victorian families. Those symbolic matters did nothing to improve the lives of Victorian families. Not only that, but some Liberals came to their senses and they dumped Premier Baillieu, because as Premier of Victoria he did nothing. He delivered nothing and his party got rid of him. What did we end up with, with a bit of assistance from the then member for Frankston? A minority government, which was then led by Dr Napthine, the member for South-West Coast.

What did that government deliver on infrastructure? I note that in the *Age* of 8 October 2014 there was an article headed 'Government grant to aero club raises questions'. If members opposite want to talk about infrastructure delivered by the previous government, I will quote the report of what the Labor opposition said at the time:

All paperwork associated with a \$1 million government grant to a private aero club — where the minister responsible is a member — should be made public ...

The article further states:

Victorian aviation minister Gordon Rich-Phillips is a member of the Peninsula Aero Club, which received the \$1 million grant from the government's Regional Aviation Fund.

That is the sort of contribution to infrastructure in regional Victoria that we had from the previous government. Members of the then Liberal government tried to claim that a regional aero club was benefitting from the Regional Aviation Fund. As you do when you are a member of the Liberal Party and you have your own plane and pretty much your own airport, the minister then delivered taxpayer grants to deliver infrastructure in the suburbs for the private aeroplanes to land there. It is just embarrassing. Where those opposite chose to invest infrastructure fund money in this state reflects the contempt shown by the previous government for Victorian families.

We know very well that that was a government that could not deliver a range of projects. Members of that government tried desperately to sidle up to the Queen at the opening of the Royal Children's Hospital. They were very keen to make sure that their names were on the plaques and that they were sitting in the front row at the opening, but they were not able to deliver that project. In opposition they did nothing to get behind projects. In government they did nothing more than cut the ribbons at the opening of projects and try to mask or hide the fact that they were not delivering any services.

I note also what was in yesterday's budget for the Ivanhoe electorate. It is important to reflect on your local electorate and remind yourself that those electors put you here. Talking about the previous government's infrastructure agenda for the Ivanhoe electorate, I note that the only school funding that was provided across four years was for Rosanna Golf Links Primary School, and it was provided at the death knell, in the former government's last budget. Page 33 of yesterday's budget paper 4 indicates that to 30 June only \$209 000 was expected to be expended on that project. That was funded by the Napthine government in last year's budget, which had a total investment of \$5.6 million. The contribution to education infrastructure in the Ivanhoe electorate for the four years under the minority Baillieu and Napthine governments was \$209 000, and most of that money will be spent during the term of the Andrews Labor government. Those opposite are absolutely disgraceful in their contempt for the local community of the Ivanhoe electorate.

That reminds me that members of this government got out of the blocks very early. The *Heidelberg Leader* of Tuesday, 5 May, has an article headed 'Well done, old boy', with the subheading, 'Former student helps secure \$11.5 million for college's renovation'. That \$11.5 million is for Viewbank College's new performing arts centre, music rooms and administration buildings. That is a project that I know is firmly in the hands of the people at Viewbank College, and they will deliver on that project. That project was totally ignored by the previous government, and I have been very pleased to work with the people at the college, the Deputy Premier and the Premier on delivering for that project.

That great journal of record, the *Australian*, continues to prosper while Rupert Murdoch continues to tread the boards. It is really important to highlight again that members need not take what is said about the budget from me or other members of the government but they can take it from the *Australian's* support for the budget, particularly in regard to infrastructure spending. I quote from an article headed 'Rewards for Andrews allies', which is about people who voted for the Labor government — Victorians far and wide:

Infrastructure spending totalling \$22 billion — much of it on schools — ... lie at the heart of the Andrews government's first budget.

There is also an article headed 'A plan "to put cranes in the sky"'. Members may remember that that phrase was often used by members of the Cain government who oversaw massive infrastructure investment. I remember as a much younger person seeing cranes in the sky and knowing that that was how we judged Victoria's

prosperity. I remember the contributions that workers were able to make to growing and building Victoria under the Cain government. John Cain is a constituent of mine, and I see him regularly on Hurstbridge line services. Labor has committed to providing three extra services at morning peak times on a train line that was totally ignored by those opposite when in government.

We on this side of the house have dealt very clearly with the streak of misery that those opposite ran through the public transport bureaucracy. We have rebuffed and got rid of a range of projects that they had to try to knock out bus services in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne. They were going to shove them over into the eastern suburbs instead of looking out for people in the north and the west.

I note also that the article in the *Australian* headed 'A plan "to put cranes in the sky"' states:

Industry, construction and economic groups welcomed the Andrews government's first budget, saying it would give Victoria's softening economy a much-needed kickstart.

I wonder why it is the case that we have a softening economy.

I would particularly like to quote from the following article, which I know those opposite would not. The 19 March article, written by Josh Gordon and headed 'Liberals are not better economic managers', is one of my favourites. It states:

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

The article further states:

Which brings us to the east-west link. As revealed by the *Age* of September last year, the former coalition government was so desperate to lock the deal in before the last election, it agreed to a demand by the consortium contracted to build the \$6.8 billion road —

as the member for Bundoora pointed out, it was actually a lot more than that —

to sign a so-called side letter, guaranteeing a large amount of compensation even if the contract to build it were rendered invalid by a court.

We all know that what that means is the previous government wanted to punish Victorians if they decided they did not want to support building a road that they did not vote for put forward by a Premier they did not vote for. At the death knell of their four years in government they tried to tell us that they had an

infrastructure plan. It took them four years to get to the point of even signing a dodgy contract. They would not wait until after the election so that the Victorian people could determine whether they supported it.

The article goes on to say further that:

If correct, the idea that a group of private companies might be allowed to draft a legal document exposing taxpayers to hefty financial risk for a project that probably wasn't going ahead is a disgrace.

...

... Indeed, in the case of the east–west link, the coalition was behind the wheel of the finely calibrated race car that has now crashed spectacularly.

What is very clear — and I am happy to be held to account for this for all time in *Hansard* — is that the member for Malvern will never, never be Treasurer of this state of Victoria again. Former Premier Napthine was not stupid enough to sign any side deal letter. He fobbed that off to his Treasurer at the time. Victorians are awake to this. Those opposite are damaged goods.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — I rise to speak on the matter of public importance proposed by the member for Bulleen, which condemns the Andrews Labor government for its inability to develop any sort of infrastructure agenda for Victoria. It lists a number of points. Listening to the debate, it is sad to say that I think we have returned to the dark old years and that the 11 long, dark, miserable years of Labor are upon us again. Hopefully we will not have to go through another 11 long, dark, miserable years of hard Labor.

The last election was an opportunity for the people of Victoria to vote, and when they voted a fraud was perpetrated on them by the now Andrews Labor government. Members of the now Andrews Labor government committed a fraud on the people of Victoria when they said that they would not pay one single dollar in compensation for the much-needed east–west link.

We read in the paper only yesterday that:

... the former chief executive of the Linking Melbourne Authority, Ken Mathers, has reportedly said the true cost —

of not building the road —

is nearly \$1 billion.

That is nearly \$1 billion to not build a road. I think the people of Victoria, and I certainly know the people of

Burwood, did not go to the election understanding that the incoming Andrews government would be prepared to flush \$1 billion down the drain to make sure people were travelling along the Eastern Freeway — many of those people from the electorate of Burwood.

Interestingly enough the Labor Party did not seem to grasp that concept before the last election. More than 50 per cent of my electorate would travel north to get on the east–west link, to get on the Tullamarine Freeway or to go to the airport. They would much prefer to do that than head south to the Monash Freeway. They did not go to the election and vote on the basis of knowing that the government today, the Andrews Labor government, would be willing to flush \$1 billion down the drain not to build the road, especially when before the election the member for Mulgrave, now the Premier, with hand on heart said, 'Not \$1'. He was right. It was not \$1, it was \$1000 million not to build the road.

It is amazing that government members say, 'We have fulfilled all our promises'. Apparently 96 per cent of Labor's promises, according to the Treasurer, were funded in this year's budget. It is 96 per cent, but just not the east–west link, just not metro rail and just not Mernda rail — and I note the member for Yan Yean is in the chamber, probably stewing over the fact that she has not got the funding that she was promised and that she promised to her own electorate.

It was interesting to see that at question time the Treasurer sat back and said, 'If you want to know where anything is in the budget, go to contingencies'. I do not know why we bother having five books for the budget. Why not have the Treasurer arrive with one piece of paper, with one line that says: '\$51 billion of contingencies, and if you want to know where anything is, it is in that line'? Why bother having a budget with five books with probably more than 1000 pages just so that every time the opposition asks where the funding is he can simply say: 'contingencies'? I do not know why the Treasurer's speech was not just one word: 'contingencies'. Everything is in contingencies, but I can tell members what is not in contingencies: the \$6.4 billion of infrastructure spending that was taken out over the next four years. That is \$6.4 billion less for infrastructure — and I hope members on the other side are proud of the fact that they are returning us to the dark years of hard Labor.

Government members have talked about 50 level crossings, and that was one of the things that was identified during the last election. I ask one question: how many level crossings has the government fixed in six months? If it is going to fix 50 level crossings, it had

better get on the horse and start doing some work. Find that shovel — it kept talking about shovel-ready projects. I look at the slogan ‘shovel ready, fully costed, fully funded’, but it is not in this budget, not in the first six months. They were not fully funded, not fully costed and certainly not shovel ready. If any of the projects were shovel ready, they would have been started. Can government members tell me which projects have been started? After six months, there are none.

Near my electorate there is a level crossing. The Andrews Labor government likes to trumpet the fact that it has funded the Burke Road level crossing, but unfortunately that was in last year’s budget and it was fully funded by the coalition in the previous government. Now we are six months into this government, and nothing has happened. The government talks about 50 level crossings. There was one that was funded a year ago, but it still has not started it. There is nothing.

We can talk about the West Gate distributor project, which was fully funded and shovel ready, except that the other day the government decided it is not going to build it. Now we have another project called the western distributor, which will increase tolls on a number of other roads, particularly on CityLink, for people in the south and eastern suburbs who will never use the road. During the election campaign we heard members of the now government scaremongering about tolling and saying that the former government would toll every road you could ever think of. Here we are, and the government is increasing tolls on CityLink so that people in my electorate, who will never use the western distributor, will end up paying for it.

The government has said it will never toll the West Gate Bridge, but it is going to toll right up to the bridge so that if you go on the bridge you will have to pay a toll anyway. The tolling point may not be on the bridge, so it is not actually tolling the bridge but it will toll everything up to the bridge. Those people who thought they would not be paying tolls will start paying tolls. I look at that and think that maybe it is a fraud when you go to an election and say you will not do something and then you end up doing it.

I listened to the debate, and I heard the Attorney-General talk about commitments made prior to the 2010 election. I am reticent to say it, but I think he might have misled the house. I will not go that far, but when he says — —

Ms D’Ambrosio interjected.

Mr WATT — No, he actually made stuff up. The member for Mill Park, the Minister for Industry, who is at the table, said ‘made stuff up’ — well, he actually he made stuff up. He said there were commitments at the 2010 election, which were not commitments of the Liberal-Nationals coalition when it got into government.

We did a study for the Doncaster rail project, and it was found, as the member for Kew said, that there is a need to increase capacity in the inner loop before you can do the Doncaster rail. We did what we said we would do, so when members talk about making stuff up, it is quite clear that the member for Keysborough, the Attorney-General, made it up.

I was interested to hear some of the talk about the regional rail link. I think it was the member for Rowville who talked about that. When we got into government over four years ago we discovered that the previous Labor government had had a regional rail thought bubble. Those on the other side like to take credit for a project that was just a thought bubble before the coalition got into government. There were no trains, and there was no signalling. I can remember being in this house during the last term, sitting on the other side and hearing the member for Ferntree Gully talk about the regional rail link and the fact that no trains were funded.

It is interesting that I now sit alongside the member for Ripon. During that debate her predecessor interjected and said, ‘Why would you budget for trains on a train line? You don’t budget for cars when you’re building a freeway’. That is how the Labor Party thinks. Today the member for Wendouree stood up and talked for 10 minutes about all of the things that were not happening in her electorate and nothing about things that were happening in her electorate. It was quite an interesting contribution.

Ms Green interjected.

Mr WATT — It was a fraud. When people vote at an election they expect a government to fulfil its promises. They do not expect the government to turn around and say it is doing a bunch of projects but it will provide no funding. During the term of the previous government contracts were signed and things were done. The only project that those opposite have is to spend \$1 billion to not build a road and to not fund any of the projects they talked about. There is \$22 billion of projects and no funding.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) — I congratulate the Treasurer for his commitment of \$273 million to

widen CityLink and the Tullamarine Freeway. This was an initiative that I called for during the last term to increase jobs and productivity in Melbourne's north, and it is crucial. I note for the record that in the past we have had conflicting propositions from the coalition on infrastructure issues. Infrastructure Australia dismissed the Avalon rail link when it came up for its approval of an allocation of federal funding. A board member described the rail link as 'an example of politics overriding rational economic decision making'. In the end the previous government wanted to build the rail link to Avalon ahead of the link to Melbourne Airport, and that is what is still happening now that the coalition is in opposition. Those opposite are putting politics ahead of rational decision making. They are like Rab the Ranter roaring in his despair.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time for the matter of public importance has expired.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2015

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This is an omnibus bill which will affect approximately 10 pieces of legislation, so it is an important piece of legislation in many respects. While the amendments it contains do not make significant legislative changes, in many cases they are incredibly important for the ongoing operation of the existing legislative schemes. In that respect I welcome the opposition's support for the bill and note that the shadow Attorney-General, the member for Hawthorn, put its support on the record earlier today. It is important that these changes are made in a timely manner. In particular, some of the proposed changes will fix errors identified in legislation that was passed in the last Parliament but had not yet commenced, so it is important to make these changes before the legislation commences. In my contribution I will cover quite a wide range of legislation. I will speak on an overall theme of what this legislation is about. Essentially it is about supporting Victoria's justice system. The measures we are passing today, and which will subsequently pass in the Legislative Council, will ensure that our justice system continues to operate efficiently, sustainably and fairly.

I begin my contribution on this bill with the amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 and in particular how the amendments will affect children

and make life easier for families. Essentially the legislation will remove the ban on the sale to children of disposable knives which are designed to be used as cutlery. The sale of knives of any kind to children has been banned since amendments were made to the Control of Weapons Act in 2010. The ban prevented retailers from selling to children disposable knives, such as the plastic knives that might be used at a barbecue or to consume takeaway food. In drafting the legislation the government consulted with Victoria Police as well as other stakeholders and came to the conclusion that the ban is a significant inconvenience to both consumers and retailers. Victoria Police through the Department of Justice and Regulation advised the government that there is no evidence that such plastic knives are being used to commit criminal acts or as threats of violence. This amendment was drafted specifically to ensure that plastic knives designed for eating, along with environmentally friendly utensils such as bamboo knives, can now be sold to children.

This is common-sense legislation to make life easier for families — for example, at a family barbecue on a Sunday, mum or dad might send a child to Kmart or to Coles to get some plastic knives and utensils for the barbecue. It is probably five years late, but we are now fixing it up and making sure that the Control of Weapons Act is designed to do what it is intended to do — that is, provide Victoria Police with the mechanism and the means to ensure that weapons, particularly dangerous weapons, are not sold to children. We have basically fixed that up through this legislation.

Importantly, we are now living in the age of the internet. Once upon a time when the Chief Commissioner of Police wanted to exercise the power to designate an area to be subject to random weapons searches, they were required under the act to publish notice of the designation in both the *Government Gazette* and in a daily newspaper, including a map. Through consultation with Victoria Police the Department of Justice and Regulation has found that the requirement to include a map in a published notice places a significant impost on Victoria Police.

This is the information age, and many of us use the internet, many of us have iPhones and iPads and many of us use Google Maps. The old story of putting an advertisement in a newspaper is simply not what it used to be. Accordingly this legislation will vary relevant provisions so that Victoria Police will no longer be required to include a map in a published notice. Instead it will only be required to publish the map online and include the online address in the newspaper notice. However, there will still be a requirement that the

notice include a written description of the area sufficient to alert people to its designation.

The bill also makes important amendments to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004. As I said earlier, while this bill affects a number of acts, some 10 pieces of legislation, it is intended to make existing legislative schemes efficient and sustainable.

Last week I had the pleasure of meeting with Seymour and Wangaratta police on behalf of the Minister for Police. I was able to see firsthand the intelligence-led policing those officers are doing in the area of family violence, which unfortunately is 40 per cent of their work. I note that the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence is currently in the chamber. The Royal Commission into Family Violence, which was established under the minister and is headed by Marcia Neave, will soon commence. The feedback I have received from Victoria Police is that there is wholehearted support from its members for this royal commission. I was able to see firsthand in country areas the important work being done by the police officers themselves.

Mr T. Bull — Acting Speaker, I bring your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr CARROLL — It is my pleasure to return to dealing with this important legislation. As I was saying, the members of the Wangaratta and Seymour police I met last week were very positive about where the Andrews government is going in relation to the prevention of family violence, this scourge on society.

In the remaining minutes I have I want to highlight the work of the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) and the information paper it published titled *Sex Offenders Registration*. Page 18 of that information paper outlines the role of CrimTrac. It states:

In July 2000, the commonwealth Minister for Justice and Customs and the state and territory police ministers signed an intergovernmental agreement to establish CrimTrac as a central agency for national law enforcement information systems.

The Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 will give effect to a 2011 recommendation from the VLRC that suggests moving the existing Victorian sex offender database to the national child offender system, which would allow police to manage and register personal information more securely, more effectively and more efficiently. Moving the database to CrimTrac will provide greater data security, stability and functionality and reduce the need for costly maintenance to the

current database. I thank the VLRC for its essential work.

Finally I want to congratulate the Minister for Police on the budget, which was announced yesterday. It provides some \$9.5 million to Thomas Embling Hospital. The legislation we are passing today makes important reforms in the area of mental health, and the minister should be congratulated. Thomas Embling Hospital is an important institution, and it is great to see that the government is providing it with funding for more beds. I wish this legislation a speedy passage.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This is an omnibus bill that amends a number of pieces of legislation relevant to the Victorian justice system. The Greens welcome many of these amendments, particularly those that will allow for the continuation of the assessment and referral court list in the Magistrates Court. While many of these amendments are of a minor or technical nature, we do have a number of concerns in relation to three issues, and I will go into those in detail. We will not be moving amendments in this house, but we reserve the right to move amendments in the other place if we see fit.

The first issue relates to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). The Greens seek regular reviews of the fee structure and waiver provisions of VCAT to ensure access to justice for everyone regardless of their economic or social status. In relation to clause 18 of the bill, we also seek an expansion of the amendment of section 132 of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998, which will allow the principal registrar to waive, postpone, remit or refund any fee payable not only under the act or regulations but also any other fee payable to the tribunal, such as a video link application on hardship grounds.

The second area of concern we have relates to sex offenders. We seek an urgent implementation of the many remaining recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission to improve the sex offenders register scheme. We need to be more selective about who is placed on the register, and we need to replace automatic inclusion with a process that allows for individual assessment of the offender to enhance the effectiveness of the scheme. Registration should be more closely aligned with the risk of harm to children, and it should be more targeted. We should differentiate among the large number of offenders in terms of crimes they have committed, and their risk to the community means that it is difficult to work out who the

government should be focused on in terms of protecting the community.

The third area we are concerned about is confiscations and the previous government's expansion of the unexplained wealth civil forfeiture scheme. Last year the Greens opposed amendments to the act. The former government's changes meant that the confiscation scheme applied to persons who were suspected of being involved in serious criminal activity but who had not been convicted of it. A reverse onus was also put in place for a person who had not been convicted of anything to establish a case to get their property back by proving it was lawfully acquired. While the Greens support the confiscation of assets in cases where it has been proved that they are related to criminal activity for which someone has been convicted, we should also uphold the principle of a person being innocent until proven guilty. We would like to see amendments that provide safeguards and a return to higher thresholds for the standards of proof and a removal of the reverse onus. These schemes can still be effective with those safeguards in place. As I said, we will be supporting this bill, but we reserve our right to move amendments in the other place.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill makes a range of amendments to the portfolios of the Attorney-General, the Minister for Police, the Minister for Corrections, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Minister for Emergency Services. A range of technical amendments will also be made to correct some drafting errors that have been highlighted.

I would like to focus on the amendments to the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 and the deferral of these amendments until after the Royal Commission into Family Violence concludes its work on 29 February next year. The royal commission is currently undertaking a range of community consultations, and it will begin its public hearings midyear. As members know, this will be a root-and-branch examination of a system that is clearly broken.

The response from victims and those who support victims of family violence has been tremendous. Written submissions to the royal commission close on 29 May, but I have held five stakeholder round tables in recent weeks. The suggestions and contributions that have been made by stakeholders and victims of family violence about the sorts of changes we need to see in our justice system in particular have been comprehensive and quite extensive. In that context it is our view that we need to allow the royal commission to

undertake its work to conduct a thorough examination of the justice system.

A number of MPs on this side of the house visited the Magistrates Court, where a great many of these applications for family violence intervention orders are heard. It became clear in that very short visit to the Magistrates Court that there need to be some significant changes in the way in which intervention orders are examined and issued and how they are responded to by perpetrators as well. The legal aid representatives who were there with us on the visit explained that 80 per cent of the breaches with respect to intervention orders take place when there is no legal counsel provided to the perpetrator.

Breach rates with respect to intervention orders are skyrocketing at the same rate as applications for intervention orders. The magistrates themselves explained that the system is not working for victims or perpetrators — not that perpetrators are our focus with respect to intervention orders, clearly — and what we need to see is some significant reform in this area. We need to listen very carefully to what judges, legal aid, community legal centres and the like are telling us about the sorts of changes they need to see in the justice system in order to ensure the safety of victims and hold perpetrators to account.

During that visit to the Magistrates Court I noticed one victim in particular who had her application for an intervention order granted. I saw that victim, in my view, suffer through that process, even though the magistrate was clearly doing everything she possibly could to assure the victim she was in a safe place and would be supported throughout that process. It reminded me of the words of Rosie Batty, who spoke about how the justice system itself can retraumatise victims by the approach we have traditionally taken with respect to victims of family violence.

The royal commission will no doubt look at the system from top to bottom. It will make decisions around the justice system and make reform suggestions along the way. As a consequence of the community consultations it is currently holding, the public consultations and hearings it will hold later in the year and the submissions it will receive by 29 May, I have no doubt it will make some substantive changes to our justice system.

As the Premier has said consistently, our system is clearly broken. It is consistently failing victims of family violence. The most chilling evidence of this is the fact that last year in Australia one woman a week was dying as a consequence of violence and we are

now tracking at two women a week who are dying as a consequence of violence — that is, double what it was last year. We are at a crisis point; in fact we are well beyond crisis point. That is why we have resolved to establish Australia's first royal commission into family violence, which will be a root-and-branch examination of the problems we are confronting with respect to the system so that we can do all we can to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account.

I also expect that the royal commission will look at the cultural challenges and various harmful cultural practices we have not just in ethnic communities but also in our Anglo-Saxon community. We have harmful cultural practices that reinforce some of the attitudes around violence, in particular violence towards women and children.

The royal commission is a very important and significant step in our bid to tackle family violence in Victoria. Within that context it makes every bit of logical sense to defer the amendments that have been brought before the house as part of this bill until after the royal commission has had a chance to complete its work and release its report and all of its recommendations. I feel sure that the amendments before us will be covered by the royal commission's considerations. That will then be an opportunity for this Parliament to make a range of legislative changes. I feel confident that we will have bipartisan support around those legislative changes, but that will come from a thorough examination of the issues. That is what we need to see, and that is what this royal commission will deliver. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As I am following the minister, I will go straight to part 10 rather than going through the bill methodically. Part 10 amends the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014 so that where a finalisation condition is included the interim order will automatically become a final order unless contested by the respondent.

As the minister said, family violence is increasing in Victoria. It is increasing now — today. This default mechanism could offer peace of mind to many victims. Women tend to be the main beneficiaries of these orders, as children are covered in most circumstances by child protection orders. Once the royal commission is finished there will be a lot of pressure on the Andrews government to enact its recommendations and make changes if we are to be successful.

Last week I attended the Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnership Forum in Fiji, and the focus

of that conference was on family violence and how it is increasing so much in the whole of the Pacific region. Representatives of each of the countries — and it was basically all of the countries in the Pacific region — talked about how this has commenced. We are no shining light. People tend to think that family violence is related to poverty, stress, alcoholism or drugs, but it is in every part of society. No matter what social strata and no matter what income level, there is family violence.

People are committing family violence who are not on drugs. People are committing it who are not drinking alcohol. People are committing it who are not under financial stress. It is hard for us in here sometimes to understand why this is happening. I do not understand, and I do not understand why it is increasing. It is not just violence men on women; it is men on children, women on children, and teenage children on their mothers, particularly in single-parent families.

I think we are grappling with something that is beyond the ken of many of us in the sense of why this is happening. Is it a symptom of modern life? Is it because of our exposure to the violence that is in films, in computer games and on the TV set in our lounge rooms? Is this explicit violence that is being shown becoming the norm in our society? Is it because of the lack of courtesy people show to each other or the feelings people have? If I am angry, I can express myself. Perhaps it is a lack of control over emotions and a lack of control over behaviour. I do not know, and we have spent quite a lot of time talking about it.

We have problems of attitude. We are a multicultural society. As the minister said, these issues occur across the Anglo-Saxon component of our society as well. There is no one group that is exempt from this. When we were talking in the Pacific region about cultures, the representative from New Guinea was talking about the fact that 8 out of 10 women in New Guinea are assaulted in their own homes. We also spoke about the rate of incest in many of those places. I think we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg.

Because of the changes that have been made by successive governments, because they have listened to people who have suffered family violence and because we have seen a change of attitude among the police, we are seeing higher reporting levels of these incidents. I think 68 000 is the increase in reports that we have had in a year. This is probably still only the tip of the iceberg; there is probably an awful lot more. I recognise that some people will claim family violence is occurring when it may have been an incidental thing. However, the majority of claims are genuine and

serious, whether the form the family violence takes is sexual, physical or mental. All the changes we make in this space are important. I look forward to the royal commission coming. I hope it does not just produce another document that gets put on the shelf.

I will return now to the legislation before us. Part 2 amends the Confiscation Act 1997. It improves the ability of Victorian courts to recognise restraining and forfeiture orders made under corresponding legislation interstate. This builds on the excellent work that was done by the coalition when it brought in greater powers in this area, particularly in relation to the forfeiture of property by people who are benefiting from their criminal activities. I think the more we strengthen that, the more people may think twice about committing a crime, because in may occur to them that they might lose everything. They cannot simply move their assets interstate — send them up to the Gold Coast to a holiday home or whatever. We can seize those assets, and we will have the powers to get them.

The proposed removal of the ban on plastic knives for children is a common-sense change. The ban was brought in as a reaction to things that were happening in the community, but laws should be practical and beneficial rather than cumbersome and difficult to abide by. Removal of the ban preventing the buying of plastic knives by children is definitely a sensible measure.

I turn now to clause 10, which relates to the publishing of maps. This is an interesting clause. As we look at how our technology is advancing, we see a need to inform but also a need to not inform so much if the information actually encourages people to do things we do not want them to. The high visibility of police through the promotion of planned searches can act as a deterrent for anyone actively looking for trouble. My reading of the bill is that notification will still be published in the newspapers but the maps will only be available online, and I do not think this will significantly inconvenience members of the public.

Part 5 of the bill moves the existing sex offender database to the national child offender system to allow police to manage registrants' personal information more securely. This is sensible. Again, this is an example of common sense, because system inefficiencies can lead to errors. It can be devastating if personal information is released about reformed offenders. I am sure that you, Acting Speaker, would agree with me that any sexual offences perpetrated on a minor are abhorrent, but also that there are some people who do change, who are rehabilitated and who do reform. I think it is important that the record keeping be

secure and not be available just because of inadequacies with the system.

The bill also proposes to remove the control over the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) fee structure. I have some concerns with that because the cost of legal action is very high for everyone. While I understand that VCAT wants to recover more than the 14 per cent of its costs that it is recovering at the moment — the Magistrates Court recovers about 50 per cent of its costs — I hope this is not opening a door for increased costs, because going to VCAT causes a lot of trauma, when it really was supposed to have been a people's dispute hearing forum. Now most people think they have to have a Queen's Counsel to argue their case, so it is becoming more and more expensive. I trust that a close eye will be kept on those costs.

There are also changes proposed to the Working with Children Act 2005 to ensure that two recently created offences are included in working with children check assessments. Again, I fully support this change. It is very important that we include in these assessments the failure to disclose sexual offences committed against a child. The test of appropriateness on this issue is whether our communities would be comfortable knowing that someone who deliberately ignored the sexual abuse of a child was also looking after their children or other children. In positions where minors are in the care of adults, there is definitely a duty of care and not to cause harm. This also covers a second duty — not to tolerate or permit harm. I support that. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak on this bill, and I support the comments made by the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to join the debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As previous speakers have outlined, this bill makes changes to a number of pieces of legislation, including the Family Violence Protection Act 2008, and it will ensure that interim family violence orders become final orders without a further court hearing. That is a very sensible change.

Many of us in this place would have either seen family violence directly or experienced it through close friends and family members. I remember that a few years ago a close relation of mine broke up with her husband. Under that set of circumstances, she had mentally left the marriage some time prior to that. She had decided to meet someone else and to move on with her life. She explained that to her then husband. Initially his reaction was to plead and beg and say, 'Don't leave. I know what you've done but come back, all is forgiven'. She declined the offer and he became incredibly violent. He

had not shown much propensity for violence in their relationship but he got extremely agitated and aggressive. This was compounded because he would drink heavily.

I remember an instance when one night her husband had custody of their two children. Their son and daughter at that stage would have been aged about four and seven. Her husband got drunk and put his son in the back of his vehicle. He knew that his estranged wife was out of the house that night. He drove up her driveway, smashed his way into the house and wrecked the joint. He just went berserk.

My relative had had the sense at the time to have some security cameras installed and there was evidence of what had transpired so quite reasonably she went to the police. In this case their little boy became quite traumatised because he did not know what was going on with his father. He could not understand why his dad was coming back to the family home to wreck the joint. My relative went to the police, as you would do under those circumstances. In that case the police responded and were very good, but it was a lengthy process. Ultimately there was a court hearing and I remember that my relative's estranged husband sent her a text afterwards — I think he got a good behaviour order or something like that — saying, 'Slap on the wrist'. There was this sense of him saying, 'I got away with it'. It was just appalling. When you see these things up close you realise how involved they are. My relative had taken out an apprehended violence order against her estranged husband, but it did not work particularly well.

The legislation will ensure that an interim order ordinarily becomes a final order 28 days after the interim order is served on the respondent. That is sensible. We have to try to make sure that people are not unnecessarily exposed to the lottery, the trauma, the difficulties or the challenges of the justice system, particularly people from poorer or disadvantaged backgrounds. My relative was not wealthy and could not afford a good lawyer to represent her. She is not educated and was uncomfortable dealing with the justice system. This is an important piece of legislation because it is a sensible way forward.

The Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 also amends a number of acts, including the Control of Weapons Act 1990, and seeks to remove the ban on the sale to children of disposable knives. The sale of knives of any kind to children has been banned since that legislation was amended in 2010. The ban prevented retailers from selling disposable knives to children, and the removal of that ban is sensible.

When I was preparing for this debate I was reflecting on how things have changed in 30 years. A great tradition in my family when I was a kid growing up was that every school holidays my mum would load my brother and me into the car with my grandmother and go into the city. It was a big thing. We grew up out in Wantirna so it was a big deal coming to the big smoke. Dad was a butcher for 36 years and was always working long hours. He never had time off. He had a holiday, I think, in 1983, one in 1987 and then did not have a break until 1999. My father was always the soft one. My mum was always a real tough person to deal with, but in a moment of weakness — or maybe she was away with the fairies — my brother and I convinced mum that it would be a good idea to go into Mitchells, the army surplus supply store in Russell Street, to buy some knives. This was in the mid-1980s. My brother and I bought, I think, a flick knife and some butterfly knives. We thought that was pretty cool.

My father got home at about 7 o'clock that night, and being a butcher he was very familiar with knives. He just looked at them and said, 'This is not a good idea at all. These are banned. I don't know what you were thinking'. That was a point of note because normally if you managed to convince mum of anything, dad would tend to go along with it. It was not often that my father would contradict the rulings of his wife.

The bill's other important amendment relates to the power of the Chief Commissioner of Police to designate an area to be subject to random weapon searches. Currently the act requires that when there is to be such a designation a notice must be published in the *Government Gazette* and in a daily newspaper, and the notice must include a map of the designated area. An important aspect of this bill is that Victoria Police will no longer be required to include a map in the newspaper notice. Instead it can publish the map online and include the online address in the newspaper notice. However, there will still be a requirement for the notice to contain a written description of the area sufficient to alert people to the designation of the area.

That all makes perfect sense. I remember being a staffer in this place in the 1990s, and it was all about getting page 1 in the *Herald Sun*. It was all about being the lead story on the Channel 9 news. You would get the train to work in the morning and all the punters would be reading the *Herald Sun*. I reckon one of the greatest businesses you could have had back in the 1990s was one of those little newspaper kiosks on a train station platform. It would have been a licence to print money. These days I am a frequent user of the Craigieburn line from Ascot Vale station, and I cannot remember the last time I saw someone reading the *Herald Sun* on the train

in the morning. People are talking on their phones, or they are playing games such as *Candy Crush Saga* — not that I have ever done that. We are moving to a new era where people are not solely consuming content by listening to the radio in the morning, reading the *Herald Sun* on the train and watching the Channel 9 news at night.

A few years ago the federal government did a convergence review which looked at the way in which people consumed media content. Frequently now we are playing on iPads while watching TV. That is the new reality. In my case, when you are at home after having put the kids down to bed, you plonk yourself down on the couch — on the rare nights my wife and I are home together at the same time — you have the television going and you get out your phone or your iPad.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PEARSON — That is what I do before 10.30. The reality is that the audience is fragmenting. Last week I was speaking with a broadcaster about this, and she said that revenue for the broadcasters is basically flat — there is no real growth in revenue — but the costs are rising, so it is a significant challenge. Therefore it is important that legislation reflect the times in which we live.

The bill also amends the Confiscation Act 1997 to enable Victorian courts to recognise restraining and forfeiture orders under corresponding legislation in the state. That is a good thing. As I have said before, we need to ensure we have consistency across the various jurisdictions and have a national approach with this engagement. The reality is that we are in a global economy. We have to aim for the inflow of capital from overseas markets, and having diffuse legislative jurisdictions makes it increasingly difficult to attract that capital. We have to try to make the life of businesses as easy as possible to invest. Therefore as legislators we have an obligation to ensure harmonisation across jurisdictions to improve legislation.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I recognise that many others have covered most of the clauses of the bill, or at least those that I have not spoken on, but I want to talk only about clause 8, which amends section 6 of the Control of Weapons Act 1990 to include that for the purposes of subsections (1AA) and (1AB) a disposable knife made of plastic, bamboo or wood designed for eating purposes will not be considered a controlled weapon.

Some may ask why, of all the clauses, I would choose this one. I do so because I think it is emblematic of the kind of regulations we can make in this place that are reactive to their times and are made on the advice of expert bodies. In this case, when the act was amended by the Brumby government in 2010, it probably would have been the police, along with many in this house, who made very worthy statements about the importance of these provisions. At the time there was an upsurge in knife crime, which is a terrible thing. Children should not have access to knives, so the changes made at the time in relation to real knives were appropriate, and they continue to stand. However, the addition of plastic knives brought a number of problems with it.

The first problem was that it did not meet the common-sense test, yet we all probably had some collective blindness that it was okay, with the exception of one member in the other place, who made some comments about it at the time. This is an economic regulation by stealth because the people who were impacted at the time were the big retailers. They had to train their staff that they were not to sell these items to children, and if you went into Coles and Woolworths, you would see the various packs of plastic knives and all the paraphernalia you might want for a barbecue or a picnic, without thinking about the fact that all the people on the checkouts and everyone else in the store had to receive additional training, which came at a cost to business. However, there would have been no economic impact statement or anything like that because this sort of regulation does not come under any of our criteria for assessing the cost of the regulation on business, yet, as we continue to make these regulations, we ratchet up the cost of doing business in Victoria.

I mention another act that we have recently debated in this place, and that is the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Hairdressing Registration) Bill 2015. We changed the regulations so that hairdressers' own businesses only have to pay once on registration and not every year. I went around my various local government areas — there are eight in Ripon — and only one was in any way enforcing the previous act. Therefore the notion raised by various members on both sides of the house about being safe, so that people only have to register once is not an issue in Ripon. We have not had any outbreaks of scissor crime, and most of the councils in Ripon do not enforce any charges at all for hairdressers. I draw from that a parallel conclusion that we need to think very carefully when we make economic regulations, which we often call something else. In the case of hairdressers we have called them health regulations, and in the case of plastic knives and forks, we have called them community

safety regulations. In reality they were economic regulations, and the costs were borne by business.

The second problem with the ban was the enforceability of the regulation. The police, quite rightly, have better things to do with their time than to walk around the various shops that might sell a plastic knife or fork and work out if it might have been sold to someone under 18 years of age. Unlike the sale of, perhaps, cigarettes, which is enforced by sending minors into shops to see if they can buy a packet of cigarettes, I do not believe there have been any cases of minors being sent into Coles or Woolworths to see if they can buy a picnic set.

Therefore I welcome the change to the legislation and use it as a marker to say that we need to be very cognisant when we are making regulations to not just accept what the experts might be telling us. In this place we have a right and a duty to evaluate for ourselves whether or not something meets the common-sense test of whether its costs outweigh its benefits, particularly when we are talking about issues coming from law enforcement, whether there is an imposition on or a reduction of our freedoms.

The current issue is not an imposition on our freedoms; it is a cost. However, some of the matters brought before us to think about are framed in certain ways and we should always think about how they could be framed in other ways. From my perspective I will always be thinking about the cost to business. I am very pro-business and pro the benefits that business brings to Victoria in employment and growth. It is incumbent on all of us — and I will always take this duty very seriously — to look for ways, both large and small, in which we can assist business to get on with creating jobs and the economic growth that we all want and desire in Victoria.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill contains two amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. The first is to remove the ban on the sale to children of disposable knives designed for eating. The sale of knives to children has been banned since 2010, as we have already heard. The ban has stopped retailers from selling disposable plastic knives to children that would normally be provided for takeaway food or for barbecues. The ban is a significant inconvenience not only to the consumer but to the trader. The Victorian police have no evidence that plastic knives have been used in any form of violence or threats of violence. When children are out buying takeaway food, does this ban mean that they cannot buy a knife and fork with which to eat their food?

For many years I worked in a refuge, and many of the young people there had very challenging and threatening behaviours, so one would imagine that if anyone was going to attack someone with a plastic knife, it might have been them. However in my 20 years of experience that never happened, and in fact they would probably go for a baseball bat before they would go for a plastic knife — and in any event they had access to knives in the kitchen drawer. Therefore the common-sense test around this suggests we should remove the ban. When you are in an environment of violence or threats of violence as I have been when working with young people, you do not expect to be attacked with a plastic knife. The residents at the refuge were provided with plastic spoons and knives and those sorts of things to take away to eat their lunches with during the day, and as I said the knives were freely available to them and not once was there ever an incident with a plastic knife or threats of violence.

No other state or territory has introduced similar sale and purchase bans, and after five years of operation no evidence has come to light to suggest that there is any benefit to precluding children from purchasing plastic knives or retailers from selling them plastic knives. The fact that there is no evidence to support a ban on children buying plastic knives and the fact that Victoria Police has supported the changes show clearly that this ban is not necessary.

The bill's other amendment to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 relates to the power of the Chief Commissioner of Police under the act to designate an area to be subject to random weapons searches. Currently the act requires that when such designation is made notice must be published in both the *Government Gazette* and a daily newspaper. The requirement to include a map in a daily newspaper means that Victoria Police needs to spend significant funds on advertising space. I am sure all in this place would agree that police resources are best put elsewhere.

Given that people now have greater access to the internet, this information would be better communicated to the public by publication of the map online rather than in newspapers. Victoria Police will be able to publish the map online and include the online address in a newspaper notice. As we heard earlier, many people are not buying newspapers now and are using social media to get their message across, and we have a significant rise in the popularity of smart phones, iPads and portable tablets, which many people have access to these days. Being able to electronically and conveniently access a map of an area where searches will occur is likely to be of more benefit to many people than would a newspaper-only publication of a

map of the area. There is nothing to preclude the police from publishing both a map and an internet link in a newspaper notice. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The bill contains a number of amendments to a number of acts. Some of them are certainly technical in their nature and are not contentious, as we have heard said by many speakers prior to me. Today I want to touch particularly on some of the amendments to the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014, the amendments to the Working with Children Act 2005 and the amendments to the Confiscation Act 1997 dealing with confiscation of assets of a person via unexplained wealth laws, with which I will begin.

The bill amends the Confiscation Act to allow the courts to order a prescribed person in the Department of Justice and Regulation to take control of a property that is subject to an unexplained wealth restraining order, and it also amends the act to allow the Director of Public Prosecutions to more easily register interstate forfeiture restraining orders to ensure that people cannot frustrate confiscation actions by holding an asset in a jurisdiction outside the jurisdiction that took confiscation action against them.

Some 12 months ago I was a member of a joint parliamentary committee, the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, while it investigated the supply and use of the methamphetamine ice. The other members were Simon Ramsay, a member for Western Victoria Region in the Council, who was the chair; the member for Niddrie; Johann Scheffer, a former member for Eastern Victoria Region in the Council; and the member for Ovens Valley. I would consider that that was the first inquiry of its kind, and since then we have seen lots of work done both nationally and also here in Victoria. We uncovered something that has been an absolute problem within our community.

One of the things that that committee recommended was that if you go to the heart of where the money is and take that away from those who are dealing the drugs, you go a fair way towards fixing the problem. In a lot of the evidence presented to us we saw that criminals had deliberately set themselves up with cross-border activity. They had their business based in one state and were trading in another; they were effectively shuffling money around.

When it comes to unexplained wealth it is imperative that we have the best of laws that go right across all jurisdictions and that we have the cooperation of the federal government as well to ensure that we capture

the money and the illegal activity and cut it off at the knees so we do not have the terrible problems with drugs and other criminal activity that are occurring within our community. This is an important area, and I have spoken a number of times about unexplained wealth. I am very happy that the committee looked at the horrific problem of ice in our community and made a number of recommendations around unexplained wealth, and I am sure there will be a lot more when it comes to actually capturing the dollars that go with the criminal activity.

Another element I wanted to mention relates to the amendments to the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004. These deal with the Victorian Law Reform Commission's 2011 recommendations and relate to moving the sex offender database to the national child offender system to allow police to manage registrants' personal information more securely, more effectively and more efficiently. This bill effectively flows out of the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

CrimTrac, which has done a whole lot of work across all jurisdictions over a number of years, is certainly the best place to manage this sort of information. Under the previous government, when I was Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, I was very impressed when I received briefings from CrimTrac and saw the sort of work it does, including the sorts of evidence it is able to capture, and most importantly saw that that information can be shared amongst many jurisdictions.

I remember an instance where fingerprints and DNA were obtained from New Zealand through the CrimTrac database many years after an offence was committed, and that evidence was ultimately able to convict a criminal living here. That is the sort of thing that can be achieved with technology. We have heard previous speakers talk about the emergence of technology; in fact it is mentioned here in this bill. We need to be at the forefront of it. Unfortunately in many situations those who seek to break the law tend to be ahead of us when it comes to utilising technology. Technology such as databases that have harmonisation across the states and territories and with the federal government is very important.

Finally, I want to touch on the amendments to the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014. This flows on from a lot of work that has been done over a number of years. As we have heard from speakers on both sides of the house, this is a very important issue. It is an issue we need to address as members of Parliament and as members of the

community. A number of law enforcement and support organisations have been trying to tackle this for a number of years, yet the problem continues to worsen. We need to do whatever we possibly can to fix it.

I commend the government for establishing a royal commission into family violence, and I am very keen to ensure that we get as many people involved in that as we possibly can and that we ultimately get a series of recommendations that can be implemented. The sort of work that is being done at the committee level is vitally important, but it is just as important to take that work and put it into action. Ultimately we are going to need to put the recommendations of the royal commission into action.

I want to make reference to a number of organisations that have done some work in my electorate in terms of tackling family violence and that I am sure will want to contribute to the royal commission. Firstly there is the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (NCJWA). Early last year I was involved with the NCJWA in running a family violence forum with a number of participants, including former Chief Commissioner of Police Ken Lay. That was a fantastic forum that fostered some interesting conversation around tackling family violence. Earlier this year the NCJWA organised a brunch, which I attended along with Georgie Crozier, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the other place. Fiona McCormack, the CEO of Domestic Violence Victoria, and Rosie Batty, 2015 Australian of the Year, spoke at that event. It was very confronting to hear them speak, and it was equally confronting to hear the questions that came from the 400-odd attendees in the room and to listen to their comments about some of their experiences.

I also acknowledge the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence, which has done a lot of work in this space. I am sure it will be very keen to present to the royal commission and talk about its experiences in tackling family violence. One of its initiatives a few years back was the book *Will My Rabbi Believe Me? Will He Understand?*, which was launched by former Chief Commissioner of Police Ken Lay. It gave the perspective of many women wanting to confront their religious leaders. It also helped to explain the importance of ensuring that the community takes responsibility, stands up and is educated on family violence.

When we talk about family violence and child abuse we must keep in mind that education is key. Law enforcement is also important, but we need to educate people in the very early years about what is and is not

acceptable. The sorts of things we have seen in the past cannot happen in the future. We need to ensure that we learn from those experiences and show young people what is acceptable. We need to ensure that young people and women in our community have the protection they deserve and that we all live in a happy and safe society. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As has been expressed by speakers around the chamber, this legislation is supported by both sides of the house — although I understand that whilst the Greens members are supporting the bill they are also proposing some amendments.

This bill demonstrates the amount of work that has gone into reviewing various pieces of legislation in order to ensure that they are relevant and up to date and that they reflect the changing attitudes and views of the community. That is what good legal practice is all about — government taking responsibility for the laws it makes and oversees and ensuring that legislation is reviewed regularly, no matter when it was made. Government must be open to making amendments and changes where necessary in order to ensure that legislation continues to be relevant and to protect people within the community.

Looking at this suite of amendments to various pieces of legislation, members can see that they fall within different categories. There are legislative amendments to substantial bills that need to be made because of unintended consequences or matters that have come up that make the legislation difficult for the community.

An example of that is the amendments to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. The current legislation considers plastic knives controlled weapons that might, for example, pose a danger to children, but of course plastic knives are commonly used at picnics, parties and so on. This was either an unintended consequence or perhaps the practical implementation of the law was seen to be an inconvenience to consumers and retailers alike, with no evidence that these knives were being used to commit acts of violence.

Another category of amendment is making sure that legislation keeps up with technology and different practices and processes, and this is relevant to the Control of Weapons Act 1990. Currently the act requires that when the Chief Commissioner of Police designates an area as being subject to random weapon searches, he or she must advertise it via notices in the *Government Gazette* and a daily newspaper. But with the technology that is in use by all people, be they

young or old, and in all sectors of society such as the internet and smart phones, this has become an unjustifiable cost. The legislation needed to be amended, and the bill proposes that this will no longer be a requirement of Victoria Police. Victoria Police will no longer be required to include a map in the newspaper notice. Instead it will be able to publish the map online and include the online address in the newspaper notice.

There is also a category which I will term ‘minor tinkering’. I do not use that term in a derogatory way. Rather, the amendments, though not minor in their application or nature, may just change a couple of words rather than replacing the act in full or undertaking a major overhaul of the act. Some examples of that are the changes to the database used for the sex offenders register. CrimTrac will now host the sex offenders register so that police are able to use and manipulate the data in a more effective way, and the change in database will also protect the integrity of the data and guarantee its confidentiality. It is important that the data remains confidential and that we use whatever means we can to ensure that that occurs.

Another improvement is in relation to family violence orders. The bill amends the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014 to allow for interim orders in certain circumstances to become final orders unless the respondent challenges those orders. It will make it easier for those who are affected by family violence to take out intervention orders and lead to less time spent in an adversarial court environment. My electorate of Thomastown is located in the city of Whittlesea. Family violence is a huge problem in that area, and all the statistics show that it has the highest incidence of family violence in the state. A number of forums, sessions and groupings of agencies have been formed to tackle this issue, but they have been piecemeal. It is great that the Labor government has established a royal commission which will report on responses to family violence and which should result in a much more coordinated approach to tackling this most terrible problem.

Clause 40 amends the Working with Children Amendment (Ministers of Religion and Other Matters) Act 2014. While the amendments are minor in nature, they will ensure that recently created offences are included for the purposes of working with children check assessments. Quite simply, the amendment will ensure that what the act says will occur does occur around particular dates. The reason I mention this clause is that when the original legislation was passed, people who were victims or survivors of child abuse — in many cases involving ministers of religion — were

unhappy about the amendments. The reason was that the legislation qualified the ministers of religion who required a working with children card rather than just having a broader requirement that all ministers of religion were required to have a card.

One of the recommendations in the *Betrayal of Trust* report, to which I was a contributor, was that there were to be no qualifications. The recommendation was that there should be no qualification to the effect that a card was required only if the minister was working for the major part of their time with children, as opposed to having a more general statement to the effect that ministers of religion should have a working with children card. Labor has undertaken to implement all the recommendations of the *Betrayal of Trust* report. I hope when that occurs this act is again amended to reflect the wishes of the people who were involved in that inquiry and who want to ensure that we provide the utmost protection for children in our society.

In conclusion, this legislation demonstrates the hard work of the Labor government in making sure that all laws are up to date. Of course we are in full support of the legislation.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am pleased to rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As previous speakers on this side of the house have said, we will not be opposing this bill. The purpose of the bill is to amend four or five main acts, and I will go through a few of those. The bill amends the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 to expand the principal registrar’s power to reduce, waive, postpone, remit or refund fees and to enable the making of regulations to prescribe fees with greater flexibility, including different fees for different classes of party. It also amends the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 to allow the Chief Commissioner of Police to arrange for CrimTrac to host the sex offenders registry database within the national child offender system.

Furthermore, the bill amends the Control of Weapons Act 1990 so that a controlled weapon will no longer include a disposable knife made of plastic, bamboo or wood which is primarily designed for eating purposes. That is a practical outcome.

The bill also amends the Confiscation Act 1997 to allow the Director of Public Prosecutions to more easily register interstate forfeiture or restraining orders and to allow a court to order that a prescribed person in the Department of Justice and Regulation can take control of property that is subject to an unexplained wealth restraining order. The member for Caulfield talked

about unexplained wealth when he was talking about the ice task force and the many fronts on which we will have to battle the scourge of ice. We have heard about the many instances where people are creating enormous wealth through the ice epidemic, for want of a better word, that is gripping the country and many parts of the world. Unexplained wealth is just one area that we can target to expose a few of these criminals.

As I said earlier, the amendments to the Control of Weapons Act remove the ban on the sale to children of disposable knives designed for eating. The sale of any knives to children has been banned since 2010. The ban on plastic knives can be a significant inconvenience for both purchasers and retailers. Victoria Police has advised the government that there is no evidence that these knives are being used to commit acts of violence. This is a practical outcome.

The bill also amends the Control of Weapons Act in relation to the Chief Commissioner of Police's power to designate an area as being subject to random weapon searches. Currently the act requires that when a designation is made, notice must be published in the *Government Gazette* and a daily newspaper along with a map of the designated area. Not only is this requirement costly, but it is not an effective use of police resources, and the bill provides that Victoria Police will no longer have to include a map in the newspaper notice. Instead it will be able to publish the map online and include the online address in the newspaper notice. The notice will still have to contain a written description of the area to alert people to the designation of the area.

The bill also amends the Sex Offenders Registration Act to allow the Chief Commissioner of Police to arrange for CrimTrac to host the Victorian sex offender registry database, because in 2011 the Victorian Law Reform Commission recommended moving the existing Victorian sex offender database to the national child offender system, which allows police to manage registrants' personal information more securely and more effectively. The bill is intended to follow through on that recommendation. Moving the database to CrimTrac is expected to provide greater data security, stability and functionality and reduce the need for costly maintenance of the current database.

I will not say a great deal more as there are other speakers to follow me. I am aware that there has been consultation with the Victorian Bar Council and the Law Institute of Victoria, and no major issues were raised by those groups. I again say we are not opposing this bill, and I wish it a speedy passage through the house.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak in the debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I note that the bill is receiving support from both the government and opposition benches. This is a good thing because it is an important bill that seeks to amend a range of acts by tidying them up, applying the common-sense test in some cases and making sure that we are not unnecessarily legislating when we have a bigger policy agenda at play.

The first amendment I want to talk about in this omnibus bill is to the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014. The bill seeks to defer the amendments proposed in that act until such time as the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria has completed its very important business. The royal commission is an absolutely groundbreaking and important initiative of this government, and it is something we fully committed to when we were in opposition. I commend the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence on the fantastic work she has been doing to date and on the speed with which she has got the commission up and running. We are sending a very strong message into our communities.

I note that in this country family violence is the leading cause of death and disability of women under the age of 45. It is a great national shame. I am proud to be a member of a government that is taking action with the royal commission to look at the systemic causes of family violence. We have been patching things up for too long. We need to understand and get to the root causes of this outbreak of violence within our communities.

In my own electorate I was pleased to meet last week with the CEO of Cobaw Community Health Service, one of our senior constables from Kyneton police, one of the lawyers who specialises in family violence from the Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre and with a very brave woman who is a survivor of family violence. She has worked closely with me and is working hard in my local community and with Macedon Ranges Shire Council to look at some of the reforms that we can make locally. The purpose of my meeting was to encourage those women from the organisations they represent to contribute to the family violence royal commission, and I am glad to say that they will be doing so. It is very important that we hear from organisations across the community that work with victims and indeed work with offenders. We need to hear from all sides, and we need to get those submissions in. I was pleased to be able to encourage that participation. I am also happy to report that I was recently invited to join the Macedon Ranges Local Safety Committee.

Ms Thomson — Hear, hear!

Ms THOMAS — Thank you. A key focus of the safety committee in my area is on preventing family violence. There is some good work being done by good people who are deeply committed to addressing this national shame in my electorate. In relation to the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act, it is entirely appropriate that we defer its commencement date until such time as the royal commission has had an opportunity to consider all of the evidence it is now gathering. I am sure it will make some strong recommendations to government, and I am delighted the Premier has committed to accepting those recommendations.

Our budget handed down yesterday sends a clear and strong message that this government is absolutely committed to tackling this scourge. We committed \$81.3 million to support the work of the royal commission, \$16 million to the Family Violence Fund to respond to urgent demand for services, \$3.5 million for crisis support and \$3.5 million for extra counselling services for women and children. These support services are going to be critical as the royal commission continues its work. The deferment of the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act is an important part of this omnibus bill and a reason for my commending it to the house.

The second issue I wish to talk on is the repeal of the Magistrates' Court Amendment (Assessment and Referral Court List) Act 2010. It is important that the act be repealed in order to enable the assessment and referral court list to continue in our Magistrates Court system. I understand the list is due to expire later this year and that this legislative amendment will mean that court list can continue. This list is important; it is a fantastic legacy of the previous Labor government. Our former Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, implemented many fine reforms in our legal system, including the establishment of specialist courts like the Neighbourhood Justice Centre and the Koori Court, but he also recognised that we needed to have court lists to most effectively deal with people who have special needs. The list is about supporting people with mental health issues who are appearing before a court.

I will refer to some of the things the then Attorney-General said when introducing the bill that provided for this important list. He noted that:

Research has shown that mentally impaired defendants present to court with coexisting problems, such as homelessness, substance abuse, poor social or interpersonal skills and unemployment.

That means that they have very complex needs, and they need to be dealt with in a justice system that is understanding of their particular needs. We are looking to give all defendants the best chance not only to defend themselves but also to go on to further contribute to our community. We are looking to make sure that people are receiving justice that is most appropriate to their circumstances and that they are getting the right support to get their lives back on track. The mental health list is very important, and I am pleased that it will continue as a result of being part of this omnibus bill.

They are the two issues I wanted to talk about. They are very important. I note also that it is important, as the member for Ripon noted, that we have a common-sense approach when it comes to looking at our legislation, that there is not an unnecessary impost on retailers who currently have to check the types of knives that children might be purchasing and that children should be able to purchase knives and forks to enable them to eat takeaway food. That seems indeed to be a common-sense amendment. For all those reasons I commend the bill to the house, and I thank the Attorney-General for preparing it and bringing it here.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. The Nationals in coalition are not opposing this bill, which contains a number of relatively minor and consequential amendments to legislation in the Victorian justice system. A couple of areas are of interest to me. They are the amendments to the Confiscation Act 1997 and the Control of Weapons Act 1990.

I refer first to the amendments to the Control of Weapons Act, one of which removes the ban on the sale to children of disposable plastic knives designed for eating. The sale of such knives has been banned since 2010. I recall some of the issues that arose in the last government when we were looking at more modern weapons. The ban was a difficult one because initially when we looked at plastic knives they seemed fine. Then one day when I was in the office of the former member for Gippsland South, who was then the Deputy Premier. Some police officers dropped by with a case full of plastic knives that were certainly not going to be used for eating at a barbecue. We then had to consider the definition of what was going to be used for eating at a barbecue and what was not and what was detectable through security systems and what was not. Then the police officers aptly demonstrated that a particular plastic hunting knife could certainly cut through a larger than average sized bill from this house, which happened to be on the then Deputy Premier's table at the time.

That was partly why we ended up trying to sort out what was a common-sense approach in a legislative sense. We had to decide what was the difference between a set of barbecue knives and forks and plastic hunting knives. We often struggle a little in this place to get things like that right. Here we are, a number of years later, finally having sorted it out. The term 'disposable' is key to all of this. Certainly some of what I saw in that small briefcase were not disposable knives.

The amendment gets over the issue of the inconvenience for children who are assisting their parents with the shopping — that is, those who are legally children but are certainly old enough to go to a supermarket to shop for themselves. Over time the police have helped us to sort this out. There is no evidence that the disposable knives we are now considering have been used or even been threatened to be used in any sort of violence.

That amendment ties in to the other amendment to the Control of Weapons Act — that is, the amendment relating to the power to designate certain areas for random searches for weapons that people should or should not be carrying. Currently the act requires that maps of such designated areas go through an expensive process of being published in the *Government Gazette* and a daily newspaper. Given the modern online world in which we live, this is a common-sense update. In fact most people are probably more likely to find those maps on their phone than they ever would in the *Government Gazette* or even a newspaper. These amendments reflect the fact that we are doing our job and keeping our statutes up to date.

The other amendments to which I refer are those to the Confiscation Act 1997. That act is really about confiscating ill-gotten gains from people. Much has been said about unexplained wealth, the most common form of which is from drug dealing, particularly in the country. You hear stories of people suddenly acquiring assets and wealth at a surprising rate. The police have to sort that intelligence and rumour into fact and fiction and be able to take action. Currently in my electorate the most common form of unexplained wealth is among people involved in dealing the drug ice. It has certainly become a scourge in my community and in many other communities. It is preoccupying most parents, who are worrying about how best to manage the ice scourge in our communities.

I would like to support the work done in Mildura by the people at the Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, who with Michelle Withers have produced Project Ice. That provides information about what is fact and what is fiction around ice and therefore

endeavours to perhaps deal with the problem of unexplained wealth before money changes hands. A key part is that prevention is and always has been better than cure.

I note also that the government has instigated some program funding for organisations that want to undertake education and work on drugs in our community. In coordinating that response the people at Project Ice and the primary care partnership have been invaluable to Mildura. I hope that as the minister considers the grants to community organisations that continue that work the primary care partnership will be involved. Those people are managing the vital information around Project Ice and they are updating it to keep it relevant, taking into account things that are changing. The process of trying to take away the need to be looking at unexplained wealth by taking away the demand for the drugs that are creating it is part of a stick-and-carrot approach. Legislation is the stick part, and we must have it. In this case there is absolutely no doubt that we must have a stick, but I would also like to congratulate those who are using the carrot as well, because the two together make for a better approach to any problem.

The bill has quite a number of other aspects. It is very much an omnibus bill that is tidying up a number of smaller matters. Those are the two areas of concern: how we can head off unexplained wealth, and finally solving the conundrum around kids helping out with the barbecue. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As members have heard, the bill makes a number of small amendments to legislation supporting the Victorian justice system. Although seemingly small, these amendments are crucial to keeping our justice system operating efficiently and effectively, and they are extremely important in keeping legislation up to date, ensuring that our legislation keeps pace with community attitudes, expectations and norms.

I will not run through every amendment. I think between all the contributions today we have heard about all the amendments. I will pick a few of particular interest to me. I start with part 3 of the bill, which amends the Control of Weapons Act 1990 and which we have heard plenty about today. One amendment removes the ban on the sale to children of disposable cutlery, specifically knives designed for eating purposes, whether they be plastic, bamboo or wooden. As the act currently stands, these items are considered a controlled weapon, despite being commonly used at

barbecues or picnics and despite the fact that they are readily available at fast-food outlets. The knives cannot be sold to customers under the age of 18, which has a flow-on impact for retailers. Interestingly, no other state or territory has such a restriction.

This amendment is part of red-tape reform, as recommended by the Victorian red tape commissioner. The changes are supported by Victoria Police, which has advised that there is no evidence that these plastic knives are being used to commit or threaten acts of violence. Importantly the amendment has been carefully drafted to ensure that it only applies to harmless plastic, wood and bamboo disposable knives. Obviously we are keen to see that the ban is not lifted on any genuinely dangerous items.

The second amendment to the Control of Weapons Act 1990 relates to the power of the Chief Commissioner of Police to designate an area to be subjected to random weapon searches. As it stands, when a designation is made, the notice must be published in the *Victorian Government Gazette* and in a daily newspaper. The notice must also include a map of the area, which means that Victoria Police effectively needs to purchase significant advertising space at a great and arguably unnecessary cost. This amendment removes the requirement to include a map in the newspaper notice and enables Victoria Police to publish the map online, which I think we can all agree is a sensible modernisation of process.

Part 5 of the bill amends the Sex Offenders Registration Act 2004 to allow the Victoria Police sex offender registry to be hosted by CrimTrac. This amendment gives effect to the 2011 recommendation of the Victorian Law Reform Commission, and it will provide a more cohesive and centralised database that will not only improve security but will also aid overall functionality and help in mitigating the ongoing costs of maintaining and managing the current database. It will also give Victoria Police an improved capacity to search and analyse data holdings and to develop better intelligence products. It will increase the accountability of registrants for their activities.

I now move to part 7 of the bill, which amends the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998. This amendment is essentially about improving access to justice by allowing the tribunal greater flexibility to waive, reduce, postpone, remit or refund a fee in appropriate circumstances. For the average person, our justice system can be stressful and challenging to navigate at the best of times. It is probably fair to assume that if someone needs to access a court or tribunal process, their stress levels are probably already

stretched. Like other speakers I am sensitive to the issues of costs in our justice system, but I am not sure that is the intention of this provision. I can see that there are substantial benefits to greater flexibility when applied sensibly in certain circumstances.

Part 8 of the bill is one of my favourites. It amends the Crimes Act 1958 to ensure that persons who take marine vessels for a joyride can be adequately prosecuted for theft. Quite bizarrely the Crimes Act currently covers theft for the purpose of joyriding in motor vehicles and aircraft but not marine vessels. This must be very frustrating for anybody who has had someone nick off with their jet ski when their back was turned. No-one wants to be caught in their wetsuit and life jacket with no matching transport — all dressed up, and nowhere to go. But I will move on to more serious matters.

Part 9 of the bill amends the Working with Children Act 2005 and creates two new offences: a failure to protect a child from a sexual offence and a failure to disclose a sexual offence committed against a child. These are offences for the purpose of assessments relating to working with children checks. Persons found guilty of one of these offences will be refused a working with children permit — and quite rightly — unless they can satisfy the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation that he or she does not pose a risk to the safety of children.

Finally I touch on part 10 of the bill, which amends the Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2014 and relates to one of the most serious and damaging issues in our community today — that is, the scourge of family violence. The amendment will allow interim family violence and intervention orders to become final orders without further court proceedings unless they are contested by the respondent. The commencement of these amendments is deferred until after the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. As we all know in this place, and as this side of the chamber is very proud of, the royal commission was committed to by the now Premier in the lead-up to the last election. It is a commitment which was acted on very quickly following Labor's victory, and rightly so because it is an issue we cannot afford to waste any time in resolving. We all share a hope that the royal commission will be a platform for meaningful policy development so that we can better deal with this issue and make our families and communities safer. I know it is an issue that has been discussed broadly in my electorate of Dandenong. There have been local marches to raise awareness, and sadly it is something that occurs with great prevalence in my community. Other community leaders and I find that very

distressing not only obviously because of the impacts on those concerned but also because of the impacts on families and the community fabric more broadly. We hope the royal commission will be a platform for meaningful policy development, and we hope that we can genuinely use this opportunity to make our communities and our families safer.

These amendments I have just gone through, in addition to the ones I have not raised, are all sensible and reasonably straightforward. They simply correct anomalies in the present system, and the passage of this bill will ensure a much neater, more up-to-date justice system. I am pleased to see that today the opposition is supporting these amendments. I know we often get legislation in this place which is not particularly sexy — it is not going to make news and we are not necessarily going to be reading about it in the papers tomorrow — but which is important, and that is at the core of what we do in this place in attempting to make our legislation and our government more efficient and up-to-date with what our community expects us to be doing. We should never lose sight of that goal.

On that note, again I give my support to this bill and the many provisions within it, which go a long way towards ensuring that our justice system is up to date and that the laws and details entrenched in it are what they should be and legislation is not left in the past. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I rise to speak in support of the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, which is an omnibus bill. The member for Dandenong gave a thorough account of the amendments contained in the bill and certainly pointed out its anomalies, such as marine vessel joy rides. She made a crucially important point about that anomaly, and I must say I cannot quite understand how it ever existed in the first place and how marine vessels were not covered before aeroplanes, given that there have been marine vessels around for a lot longer than there have been aeroplanes available for public use in any great number. It is an anomaly that has probably been there for some time and has finally been fixed.

The purpose of this omnibus bill is to make our legislation meet the current demands of the community. It is also an opportunity to correct legislation where either it has not quite met the intent it was meant for or the definition has not been properly addressed as it appears in practice or in the way the courts may adhere to it. Omnibus bills are important for clarifying legislation in relation to both those matters. It is important to amend the affected acts to reflect community sentiment and changes and to clarify the

intent of the legislation. Where the intent of the legislation is either not being met or where there has been an unanticipated consequence, this bill corrects that. That is what we see here. We see it in relation to plastic knives, wooden knives and bamboo knives, we see it in relation to the omission of marine vessels and we see it with a number of the other amendments in this piece of legislation.

I would like to concentrate my remarks on the parts of this bill that relate to domestic violence. Like all members, I believe domestic violence is a scourge on our community and that any action we take on this issue cannot happen too soon, but we also need to plan our action. Given that there are so many agencies, levels of government and non-government agencies involved in dealing with the issue of domestic violence, we need to make sure we have a comprehensive way of addressing the issues to ensure that there are no gaps, that to the best of our ability we are limiting the capacity for domestic violence to occur through looking at primary prevention and that, when it does occur, we are supporting those victims in a meaningful way so that they can live a life free of domestic violence in the future.

That is why, like my parliamentary colleagues on this side, I am proud that we are holding the first royal commission into domestic violence. I know there is scepticism about having a royal commission into domestic violence, but it is very important. Having spoken to a number of victims of domestic violence and to those who work in the sector, I know there are no easy fixes and that we need to have a comprehensive look not only at the way services individually work but also at how they then interconnect. We need to look at the issue of domestic violence from the individual's perspective and deal with their needs and requirements, and, importantly, we also need to look at how we might change community attitudes to ensure that it is prevented in the future.

We are providing \$81.3 million over five years to support the work of the royal commission, which is a substantial and meaningful budget allocation to try to come to grips with this issue. We have heard that family violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and injury among Australian women under the age of 45, and that is truly horrific.

I have been doing some work with the Indian community around the issue of domestic violence, looking at primary preventative opportunities in relation to changing attitudes to the way women are respected and the way relationships are respected and how we can work together to change attitudes around violence

towards women. I am also working with the Indian community on how we can deal with and support the victims of family violence. One of the key issues that was raised by that community was the notion that although the community members themselves would like to help, they do not know how to help. People do not know which agency to go to help a victim with financial needs, housing needs or counselling needs.

I am proud that the committee I am participating in is producing a manual that will give guidance to community leaders on where to go to for help. It is an easy-to-use guide, and its contents will be listed by subject so that people will be able to see which agency can help someone who is on a visa, someone who is a permanent resident and someone who is an Australian citizen. It will be a very practical measure for those community members who want to assist but do not have the expertise or knowledge to be able to. The guide will be of real assistance to them.

I am pleased and proud to be part of a group that is working with a community that wants to tackle domestic violence, and the Indian community is serious about tackling this issue within its own community. There is an active group of men and women within the Indian community working towards that end, and they are making a fantastic contribution to their own community.

This bill has a number of key components to it. As an omnibus bill it contains many important parts, and even though they are minor legislative amendments they will have an impact on the community. The amendments bring the legislation back to reflecting what was intended when it was first brought to the Parliament, without the adverse consequences that were not initially foreseen. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT VICTORIA AMENDMENT (JOBS AND INFRASTRUCTURE) BILL 2015

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 15 April; motion of
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise to lead the debate for the coalition on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. When you think about regional development,

often you think about decentralisation, one of the words that used to be used in this area. It has been talked about for decades in Victoria. You can go back to the time just after World War I and the soldier settlement scheme, where great tracts of land were carved up for returned soldiers. Farming was one of the first decentralisation or regional development programs put in place in Victoria. There have been some very good successes with that and some not-so-good outcomes with those programs. If you look at the communities of Mildura, Robinvale, Shepparton and Tatura, you realise that those former soldier settlement blocks are now vibrant communities producing a lot of wealth and employment for Victoria.

Over the decades both sides of politics when in government have talked about regional development and the various ways in which government can encourage it across Victoria. The debate has always been around how you best get value for taxpayers dollars with the programs a government runs. From the point of view of the coalition, when in government, it determined that it was important to get leverage from government investments. It was about taxpayers dollars generating additional investment, whether it be from the community or private enterprise, and most importantly that creates jobs as well.

In my time in public life and in business in Victoria, I believe that the Regional Growth Fund that the coalition government established in its term was the best model for a regional development program. It assisted country communities in their public infrastructure through the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, and it helped businesses to create employment. The former government also provided funding through the Putting Locals First Fund, the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, the developing stronger regions program and the resilient community program. The former government made 1426 targeted funding decisions over the last four years, which was a total investment of nearly \$500 million into 1800 projects, and that leveraged another \$2 billion worth of investment.

If you think about the return on investment there, for every dollar invested by the government another \$3 of investment was secured. That is a very good rate of return. The coalition created something like 23 000 jobs across regional and country Victoria, 6000 of those being direct full-time jobs, nearly 12 000 being indirect jobs and about 5000 being construction jobs, which particularly helped funding.

I am sure that during this debate members on this side of the house will mention what happened in their

electorates, because they are very proud of this fund. If you think about it, you realise that regional development should be for all communities across Victoria, not just the major regional cities, whether it be Berriwillock in the electorate of the member for Mildura, or Bendigo or Ballarat, they all deserve assistance with any regional development package that might be provided.

The keys to the former government's Regional Growth Fund and particularly the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, was that money was given to local governments so they were able to make the decisions about how it was spent. They did not have to go back to a higher authority somewhere in Melbourne to apply that funding. In addition, councils could use that money as their contribution to get additional grants. One of the things the former government looked at in developing this policy was that our smaller country communities quite often do not have enough money to make the local contribution for particular grants. The Local Government Infrastructure Fund provided an opportunity for local governments to bulk up their contribution to apply for a larger grant and a better program.

I place on the record the support provided to the then Deputy Premier's office by Clay Manners over the time it developed and implemented the Regional Growth Fund. Clay was a policy director at the Victorian Farmers Federation for a number of years. Being a Victorian I might be biased, but I think he has probably been one of the two pre-eminent agricultural policy people in Australia over last two or three decades. He has a good understanding of what is needed by industry and communities and of how you can get leveraged investment out of these funding programs. He helped with the design of this program, and he worked in the former Deputy Premier's office making sure that it was implemented with the intent we believed it should have. He made sure we got those good outcomes for our regional communities.

It may be a poisoned chalice, because sometimes incoming governments do not like to keep on the departmental staff of outgoing governments, but I would like to put on the record that the staff of Regional Development Victoria (RDV), whether it be the staff in Melbourne or those out in the regions, went that extra mile in the development and implementation of the Regional Growth Fund, working with communities and businesses to ensure that their applications and submissions met the criteria and delivered a good outcome not only for the taxpayer but also for particular businesses over that time.

If you go to some of the subsets of the program we had in government, there was the Energy for Regions program. Gas is an energy source that is more cost effective than electricity for large businesses that have to do a lot of heating, whether they are running boilers or running milk evaporators, or whether they are hospitals, which also consume a lot of energy. The previous Labor government said it could not provide any more gas. It said it had provided gas to all the communities in country Victoria it was possible to provide it to. Labor had actually given up on trying to extend the reach of that provision into the future. With a lot of work by departmental staff and a bit of imagination from a number of people, the coalition government's gas program has delivered some great outcomes.

Between 2012 and 2014, works started on connecting Avoca, Huntly, Whittlesea, Bannockburn, Warburton, Wandong-Heathcote Junction and Koo Wee Rup to the natural gas network, and that is delivering a good outcome for those communities. The other part of the program, which is where the innovation comes into it, is that the former government put some of the Regional Growth Fund money together with some money from the Murray-Darling Basin plan — a bucket of money from Simon Crean, formerly a Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government — to bulk it up to \$85 million to go out to market and look at innovative ways of delivering gas to those communities.

Last September a contract was signed with Brookfield to supply gas to Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Invermay, Heathcote, Marong, Terang and Maldon. With that extra money from the commonwealth out of the Murray-Darling Basin plan, Swan Hill, Kerang, Robinvale and Nathalia will also receive compressed gas, and that will give them gas at an equivalent price to the towns that are hooked up to the grid. That will be reticulated through those towns, but there will be a mother tank at the edge of town that will be filled up, and a truck will be brought in at intervals when a refill is needed. That will enable those towns to have reticulated gas in the way they would if someone built a pipeline over 200 or 300 kilometres, which would be necessary to get out to those particular towns.

There has been some very good innovation in this area. It was something the previous Labor government said could not be done, and it is something the current Minister for Regional Development has talked about scrapping. On coming to government, Labor was going to tear up the contract on this project, but to the credit of the *Weekly Times*, Chris McLennan at that newspaper blew the whistle on the government, alerting us to the

fact that that contract was going to be torn up. He wrote a major article saying that was going to happen, and that forced the government into backing down and saying it was going to proceed with this project.

That is the Energy for the Regions part of it. Earlier I briefly mentioned the Local Government Infrastructure Fund part of it. That enabled people to fix up their kitchens in country halls, and build new playgrounds and facilities. As I said, they quite often built that money up into larger grants. I will refer to some of the really great outcomes that particular program delivered across country Victoria. I again mention the town of Berriwillock in the electorate of the member for Mildura. In that community local government infrastructure money from Buloke Shire Council, money from the Country Fire Authority, which is building a new fire shed in Berriwillock, and money out of the Putting Locals First Fund bulked up the funds from the program to build a new fire shed with a large meeting room, kitchen and fantastic community facilities that never would have been built if any one of those programs were done in isolation. It replaced four existing buildings in town, including the hall, with this lovely new building that is multipurpose and multiuse, will be used into the future and has really put the heart back into the community of Berriwillock.

There is a similar example in the electorate of the member for Gippsland South with the Yarram district hub. Money was put together to create a facility where there is child care, preschool, and maternal and child health all coming together in one hub. Again, without initial funding from the Local Government Infrastructure Fund and Putting Locals First Fund to max it up, that sort of outcome would not have been able to happen. I know the previous member for Gippsland South, Peter Ryan, is very proud of that project. It is something he fought for over a number of years during his parliamentary career.

The last example, which is another very good one, is in the electorate of Ripon in the town of Donald. Again, money out of all those funds and federal money was put together to have a new childcare centre replace the kindergarten that was falling down and had possums in the roof all the time. This is now a fantastic facility in the community of Donald because of this program and the way it could be leveraged.

On Sunday I had the opportunity to spend a number of hours at the convention centre at the Regional Victoria Living Expo. It is the fourth year that program has been run, and it is a great opportunity particularly for local government and the economic development units of local government to have a stand at the expo, which is

paid for by Regional Development Victoria, to showcase the wares of all the different communities across country Victoria in order to attract people from Melbourne, particularly professional people with skills, to come, live and work in those communities. Last year about 10 000 people went through the Regional Victoria Living Expo. I do not know the final numbers for this year, but I know that by Saturday night they were up to over 5000. On the Sunday a lot of people went through there, and there was a lot of positive feedback from those who had stands and were getting really serious interest from people who want to relocate to country Victoria. That is a great outcome. The disappointing part is that, as I understand it, the new Labor government has made no commitment as to whether that expo will continue. The feedback I get is that it most likely will not be continuing into the future, which would be very disappointing.

From a business point of view, the leveraged investments I have talked about are significant. I want to highlight a few from around Victoria that have delivered great outcomes for those communities and the Victorian economy. In no particular geographic order I will start in Mildura, where you have got the investment that was made with Olam, a large almond processing plant. The company received assistance for road, power and water infrastructure to enable a development that saw a \$60 million investment in an almond processing plant.

For those in the house who do not know much about the almond industry, it is our fastest growing horticultural export industry in Victoria. Last year the export of almonds was worth in excess of \$380 million to this state. We were on track to have the almond centre of excellence based in Mildura, because over 70 per cent of Australia's almonds are produced there. The disappointing thing is that that centre should have been in Mildura, but unfortunately it was won away by South Australia because the new Labor government did not put money on the table to have it established in Mildura.

Another important investment is in the electorate of Shepparton. Various programs out of the Regional Growth Fund enabled a package of \$22 million to be put together to assist SPC to stay in Shepparton and make sure all those jobs at SPC were kept there. As I understand it, new product lines and other innovative facilities are starting to be built now. I look forward to SPC getting those new products to market.

The other business in Shepparton, which is an exciting one that benefited from the Regional Growth Fund, is the Pactum Dairy Group plant. A new dairy plant has

been built there principally to process and package ultra heat treated (UHT) milk. It was interesting to be on a trade mission to China last year with Bega Cheese in Chongqing. Bega Cheese is utilising the spare capacity of that Pactum plant to pack UHT milk, which is now being sold in Chongqing in a deal with a Chongqing trading company. It is going straight into their supermarkets in Bega's brand. The important thing with overseas trade is making sure we have our brands in their markets so that we can capture value and continue to own that value into the future rather than supplying product into their particular brands. The Pactum plant received money from the Regional Growth Fund to assist with that, and from memory it was about a \$35 million investment by the Pactum Dairy Group.

In the electorate of Lowan, for members who love Peking duck, I indicate that the majority of Peking duck that is consumed in Victoria and even Australia comes from Nhill. An upgrade there was enabled by money from the Regional Growth Fund. From memory they are processing about 90 000 ducks a week now. It is a great facility. The other part of that facility — and a story that a lot of people do not know — is that a large community of Karen people has moved in and adopted Nhill and is making a great contribution to the Nhill community.

In the electorate of Ripon, True Foods is a food business that relocated from Melbourne to Maryborough. It employs a significant number of people there now. In excess of 100 jobs have been created in Maryborough because True Foods moved up there. It is very happy with its move. It has a stable and reliable workforce and has achieved a great outcome for Maryborough and True Foods.

Turning to the electorates around Bendigo, there is money that assisted Hazeldene's Chicken Farm with its upgrade. We know the chicken industry is under a fair bit of pressure in Victoria as to where it can get to build chicken sheds. There are opportunities in some of the larger broadacre areas north and west of Bendigo where chicken sheds can be built, but you need a processing plant probably within 1½ or 2 hours of those sheds. It was a major expansion of Hazeldene's Chicken Farm that was enabled through assistance from the Regional Growth Fund.

The South-West Coast electorate saw investment go into the Midfield Meat Group. I notice that yesterday the Minister for Planning made a decision in relation to a particular application down there, which will lead to a good outcome for everyone. But when the grant to get the Midfield Meat Group upgrade going was given, there was a fair bit of controversy about that. I am glad

to see that the new government has actually taken ownership of what is a fantastic outcome there. There is a new dairy processing plant to provide milk to the Chinese market into the future.

If you think about Geelong and Cotton On, you realise that it is an Australian company with a great success story. Five hundred jobs were created at Cotton On in Geelong with assistance from the Regional Growth Fund. If you travel round towns now, you see a lot of retail outlets for Cotton On. It is a real success story — an Australian company that had some assistance from the Regional Growth Fund.

I am getting near the end of the list, but there is a lot of good news. Some other examples of companies that received assistance in Gippsland South are Devondale Murray Goulburn at Leongatha and Burra Foods at Korumburra, both of which are dairy processing plants. If anyone has not been to the Burra Foods plant at Korumburra, I suggest they go along. The expansion plans they have are to supply the Chinese market. They have equity partners from Japan. Japanese investors have invested in that business, but it is principally aimed at supplying the Chinese market. It is a really great business, which again had some financial assistance for infrastructure to expand its operations.

In the electorate of the member for Gippsland East the example I will give is Patties Foods. It is another business that received assistance for infrastructure, particularly around drainage. That money allowed the business to expand. It is one of the major employers in Bairnsdale and is a great local business. It has now gone corporate; it is now listed on the stock exchange. It supplies quite a few of the well-known brands in the pie and cake business. The other business that got assistance in that area was Vegco, which is a large vegetable and salad processing plant.

I turn now to my own electorate and the Kagome business in Echuca. It is the principal tomato processing plant in Victoria. It received several grants, particularly to enable it to put in a beetroot processing line. Because the beetroot processors in New South Wales were closing down, Kagome was given an opportunity to process beetroot, run the plant longer and create longer term employment for staff there. The company has also introduced carrot processing.

The message I wanted to get through is that whether it be large regional communities or smaller country communities, over the last four years nearly every community has had some benefit from the Regional Growth Fund. The previous government wanted to make sure that we had the criteria and the rules set up to

enable both small and large communities to get a share of money to help them grow. Whether it be Berriwillock, which is a small community, or whether it be Bendigo, Ballarat or Beaufort, each should have the opportunity to have its community grow through whatever regional growth fund is put in place by whichever government is in office at the time.

What we are debating today is the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. I think the number of projects I have mentioned and the number of projects that other members on this side of the house will discuss in relation to their own electorates as they make contributions on this bill will demonstrate the success of what has been in place. I hope with the bill that is before the house and the changes that the government is proposing that we can all stand here in another three or four years time and talk about how equally the program has been delivered across all of Victoria and not just into key regional communities. The challenge for any government when it creates these sorts of programs is to make sure it delivers for everyone right across Victoria.

I notice that both in the lead-up to the election and in his post-election speech, the Premier made a commitment to govern for all Victoria. I hope, particularly with this regional development program, that that is the case. I hope there will be opportunities for communities in not only Labor seats but also coalition seats right across Victoria. We should make sure there is a good outcome, whether that be for community infrastructure or for business to create jobs into the future. The coalition will not be opposing this piece of legislation. However, as I said, we will watch with interest to make sure it actually delivers right across Victoria.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am very pleased to be supporting the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015 that has been put forward by my colleague the Minister for Regional Development. The bill is all about fixing the mess that those opposite created in regional Victoria.

We have just heard from the shadow minister, and it was really interesting. He could not bring himself to talk on the substance of the bill. He chose instead to do a cheerio of projects around the state, hailing different projects and different groups around the state. That was all very nice, and there are a lot of good projects and good people in that mix. However, he could not bring himself to admit that the reason this bill is before the

house is that it is about fixing the mess we have been left by the previous government.

In this regional development space, we have inherited an unemployment rate in regional Victoria that is higher than it was when we last left office. The only things that grew under the former government in regional Victoria were the dole and jobless queues. One of the reasons for this was the approach the former government took in abolishing the successful Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) to replace it with the pale imitation Regional Growth Fund. It did not work.

The former government stripped Regional Development Victoria of its core economic function, which was creating jobs and investing in infrastructure. The first action it took was to strip Regional Development Victoria (RDV) of that core activity. It did this in one principal way, through a machinery of government change — by ripping RDV out of the economic department and placing it in the planning department, of all places. It is not that I have anything against planners, but planning is not the right place if you want to have some competitive tension in government in relation to creating jobs and investment in regional areas. It just did not work.

To say, as the previous speaker did, that both Labor and coalition governments have had similar approaches over the years is incorrect — they have not. Nothing could be further from the truth, because Labor pioneered Australia's first dedicated regional infrastructure fund. I am very proud to be supporting legislation that not only brings back a dedicated regional infrastructure fund but expands on it. It has jobs and infrastructure at the heart of our regional economic agenda, which is so very important to regional communities.

This is going to be core work for the Minister for Regional Development, but it is core work for all of us as a government because we are the government of regional Victoria. We have always supported regional Victorians, and we have always supported great projects. Again, it was Labor that pioneered the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. It was Labor that pioneered the extension of the natural gas program. It was Labor that invested in the food bowl modernisation project. It was Labor that invested in the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. I could go on. It was Labor that invested in the regional rail upgrade. These were projects that were either blocked or opposed by those opposite.

The worst thing for regional Victoria, if you are interested in jobs and growing the economy, is to let The Nationals get hold of the important economic development projects in Regional Development Victoria. We saw that over the past few years. This legislation is about addressing some of the problems we have inherited and making the administration of that important statutory agency, Regional Development Victoria, and the funds and programs it has in place stronger. It is about giving it that economic focus. It is about seeing it work with communities on creating jobs and opportunities.

I want to give an outstanding example of how the former government's approach to job development in regional Victoria failed. It is one of the very examples the shadow minister just mentioned — SPC, an absolute debacle by the former government. We know that the former Minister for Agriculture and Food Security did not really have his heart in saving SPC; he was not the one going in to bat for SPC. The community of Shepparton had to beg the former government to intervene. It pleaded with the former government. It was only after the Labor Party in opposition pledged \$30 million if the situation had not been resolved by the time of the election — and we were fortunate enough to come to government — that the former government was dragged kicking and screaming to address the issues at SPC.

Is it any wonder that there is no longer a Nationals member of Parliament in Shepparton? At the very time the community of Shepparton needed The Nationals the most, they turned their back on it. The legacy is there for all to see.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — It is not rubbish. You hate the truth. Those opposite hate it when they are called out for what they are.

This package that the Andrews Labor government has for regional Victoria is a very strong one. The budget brought down yesterday unveiled a range of initiatives for regional Victoria in relation to schools, hospitals and public transport. There is a range of things. What sits in Regional Development Victoria is in addition to all of this. Our \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund, our \$250 million Regional Development Infrastructure Fund and our \$50 million Stronger Regional Communities plan form the heart of the programs, over which will sit the policy approach that will be about driving jobs and economic opportunities for our regions.

To give an example, it would be great to see the federal Liberal-Nationals government take a leaf out of the book of the Labor government in Victoria and take a different approach to the one it is taking, because we are not seeing those partnership opportunities that have been there in the past. Just a couple of short weeks ago I was very proud to represent the Victorian government at the opening of the magnificent Ulumbarra Theatre in Bendigo, which is an amazing piece of community infrastructure.

Dr Napthine interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is curious to hear the failed former Premier bleat from the other side, and I am happy to give him a history lesson on this project. In the May 2010 budget the former Labor government provided Bendigo Senior Secondary College with \$7 million in funding for a performing arts centre. Labor then pledged additional funds for that project, and I acknowledge that the former government did also tip in some money. Federal Labor tipped in nearly \$13 million as well. The City of Greater Bendigo also kicked in funds for this magnificent theatre. These are the sorts of things we want to achieve and push on with.

Unfortunately there was precious little of this sort of activity under the former government. It took a very different approach, as I have already outlined, which was about stripping away the economic development functions of Regional Development Victoria. This government is about putting them back, and I will look at some of the election commitments we have made across the state. If I can be parochial for a moment, in my own area there are projects like the Aspire Foundation in Bendigo that is going to transform the forecourt around the cathedral project. There is the Harcourt Mountain Bike Park, for which we pledged \$1 million. There are going to be important infrastructure upgrades that will also drive jobs and economic activity.

There are a couple of other projects that are about that very important space around policy in regional areas. They are about keeping young people connected to their communities and to training and employment opportunities so that they can study closer to where they live without necessarily having to travel to metropolitan areas. They can then go on to raise their families in country communities. In Bendigo we have committed to two small but important programs, the Career Horizons program and the Passions and Pathways program, which are designed to try to expose young people to the diversity of employment opportunities in their home town, connect them to

education providers and see them go on to stay in our regional areas.

We know that is one of the great challenges, and anyone who represents a country community of whatever political persuasion recognises that this is one of our great challenges. It is definitely the no. 1 issue raised consistently with me whenever I go out and talk to country communities about what we need to do. It is about ensuring that we have jobs flowing to regional communities and then programs in place to connect particularly young people to education and skills development, and then on to those jobs. This is what we are doing with this legislation — setting the foundation in place for those policies and programs to be built on over the next four years. The Minister for Regional Development has such a tremendous passion for and commitment to this area, and I am very pleased to be commending the bill to house.

Dr NAPTHINE (South-West Coast) — I rise to speak on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015, which is being introduced by this government as an absolutely pale imitation of the very successful \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund under the coalition government. After a significant speech by the Leader of The Nationals, it is very disappointing to hear the Minister for Public Transport playing petty politics with regional economies, regional jobs and the future of our great state.

It is even more disappointing that the minister is seeking to significantly rewrite history. I know from firsthand experience of the work done by the previous government that saved SPC and the thousands of jobs in the Goulburn Valley. I pay tribute to the former Deputy Premier and former member for South Gippsland, Peter Ryan; I pay tribute to the former member for Shepparton, Jeanette Powell; and I also pay tribute to a current member for Northern Victoria Region in the other place, Wendy Lovell. They worked so hard to save those jobs, using state government resources and the Regional Growth Fund. They not only saved jobs but helped that company re-form itself to provide a bright future for SPC in value adding.

It is disappointing that the Minister for Public Transport, who represents Bendigo, failed to acknowledge the enormous contribution of the previous government to the redevelopment and revitalisation of Bendigo. I mention in particular the Bendigo Hospital project, the Bendigo Library project and the Bendigo Art Gallery project, as well as the Bendigo theatre project. They are all major projects in that great regional city, which has a great history and future, and

that future was being built on under the Regional Growth Fund. Under the coalition government the Regional Growth Fund made a real difference to those communities, whether they were in regional cities or country towns, and I only hope that this bill can deliver some of the benefits that the previous legislation and the Regional Growth Fund did.

I express concern that already the Labor government is showing itself to be, once again, a typical Labor government — a city-centric government that does not understand or care about country Victoria. One has only to look at yesterday's budget to see what a disaster regional and rural Victoria is facing. Labor members can come forward with all the rhetoric in the world, but it is a long way from rhetoric to reality, and the reality is what was in the budget yesterday. There was a significant cut of 10 per cent in road funding, which is vital to rural and regional Victoria. In reality 20 per cent less will be spent on roads than last year. There was also a cut in funding for agriculture, a cut in funding for regional development, a cut in funding for tourism and a scrapping of the \$160 million country roads and bridges program, and of course many landowners in regional and rural Victoria, particularly farmers, are extremely concerned that the budget yesterday showed a 7.2 per cent increase in what the Labor government will take in the fire services levy.

All of those things are reality in the budget, and they show that the government says it cares about regional and rural Victoria and says it listens to people in regional and rural Victoria but in its very first budget it slashes and burns across regional and rural Victoria in key areas of vital infrastructure — —

Ms Hutchins — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, can we get the member to come back to the bill and not have a rant about the budget?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! I have been listening intently to the member for South-West Coast and at the moment I consider his comments to be relevant to the bill, but I will take on board the concerns of the Minister for Local Government.

Dr NAPTHINE — I am responding to the previous speaker, the Leader of the House, who referred to the budget in her contribution. I am responding by saying that the budget shows that the city-centric Labor government does not understand and certainly does not deliver for regional and rural Victoria, in quite a contrast to the coalition government, which had members who lived in regional and rural Victoria, who understood it and who delivered for it.

I want to talk about some of the programs that were delivered in my region under the Regional Growth Fund. These are symbolic of programs that were delivered right across the state. For example, there was investment through the Regional Growth Fund and the Glenelg Shire Council for upgrading the Portland marina, with new boat ramps, parking and other facilities. Some would ask, 'How does that deliver jobs and economic benefits?', but what we are seeing down in south-west Victoria is a great boon in recreational fishing associated with southern bluefin tuna. It has already been calculated that there has been \$7 million to \$10 million a year in additional economic benefit to the region from this industry that we in the former government catered for by providing new opportunities through the marina.

Also through the Regional Growth Fund the coalition government upgraded the port of Portland to facilitate cruise ships, and under the coalition government for the first time we saw significant cruise ships coming to Portland and bringing the people of Portland economic benefits and jobs for the region.

We saw investments in Warrnambool in upgrading Horne Road and developing the Warrnambool East industrial precinct because of the lack of industrial land in Warrnambool to cater for the growing economy and jobs in the area. By providing that money and assisting the Warrnambool City Council and working in partnership with the local community, we in the former government created a whole new industrial precinct.

We assisted in the \$5 million upgrade to the Warrnambool airport, which is ongoing at the moment, to provide an all-weather north-south airstrip to complement the existing east-west airstrip, plus additional hangars for infrastructure and job development. We also upgraded the Warrnambool intermodal freight terminal. The Leader of The Nationals previously referred to the announcement regarding Midfield Meats, where we provided, under the Regional Growth Fund, \$1.5 million to facilitate expansion of Midfield Meats — —

Ms Hutchins — How many full-time jobs did that bring?

Dr NAPTHINE — Over 200.

Ms Hutchins — Are they full-time?

Dr NAPTHINE — Sorry — 175 full time and 400 in construction.

Ms Hutchins — How many on visas?

Dr NAPTHINE — The minister seems to be criticising this move despite the fact that it was her colleague the Minister for Planning who yesterday in the house made a minister's statement about Midfield Group. He said:

... I have approved an important major project in south-western Victoria, a decision that will inject \$70.8 million of investment into the regional city of Warrnambool. This means that Midfield Group can develop a milk processing plant and cold storage facility in Warrnambool ...

He went on to talk about the jobs benefit of this program, so clearly the Minister for Local Government is not working in conjunction with her colleagues.

What we are seeing is a history of job creation under the coalition government, whether it be in Warrnambool or Portland. In my home town of Port Fairy funding was provided to upgrade the streetscape of Port Fairy to boost tourism, jobs and opportunities. Right across regional and rural Victoria, and particularly in the microcosm of the South-West Coast electorate, we saw investment through the Regional Growth Fund into key industries, key industrial infrastructure and key service areas, such as community facilities for sporting activities and community halls, where you could see community, economic and job benefits. That is the track record of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. However, this government wants to rebrand that scheme through this legislation and live off the glory of the coalition government.

I only hope that the minister has learnt from the success of the coalition government in having used key regional infrastructure funding to create jobs, opportunities, infrastructure and a better quality of life across regional and rural Victoria, because this is what it should be about. It should not be about party politics. It should be about what is in the interests of regional and rural Victoria, what is in the interests of economic development, and what is in the interests of improving our country towns, our country communities and our regional cities. That is what we were on about in government, that is what we did through the Regional Growth Fund, and I trust and hope that this government reverses its decisions to — —

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

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. I am very proud to say that this legislation enables the establishment and management of our \$500 million Regional Jobs and

Infrastructure Fund, which Labor has promised to regional areas across Victoria.

In my first 100 days of being a minister, particularly in my role as Minister for Local Government, I had the pleasure of visiting a range of regional areas across Victoria and meeting with the councils in those areas, including Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, the Latrobe Valley, Wodonga, Benalla, Ararat and Shepparton. In every single one of those meetings the issue of jobs was no. 1 on the agenda. This included the issue of unemployment and how it was affecting the region.

I noticed the overwhelming passion with which councillors and mayors spoke about the effects of youth unemployment in their areas — in some areas it is as high as 28 per cent — and just how lacking they had been in receiving support and opportunities from the work of the previous state government in terms of genuine investment in their areas, particularly in the pathways that would lead their young people and their long-term unemployed to permanent jobs in their regions.

That was reflected in the severe cuts that were made in the TAFE sector. But have no doubt about it: back in January this year the no. 1 issue on all of those councils' agendas was the issue of jobs. I know from my meetings with Rural Councils Victoria that that is still very much at the forefront of their minds. That is why I am extremely pleased to have the opportunity to talk on this bill today.

The bill establishes the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which is made up of three elements: a \$250 million Regional Infrastructure Development Fund to invest in the projects that regional cities and towns need; a \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund to help companies grow their workforce, expand their markets and create jobs of the future; and a \$50 million stronger regional communities plan to strengthen regional communities and help our towns attract families and young people to live and work in regional Victoria. One of the ways we do or facilitate that through these funds is to have those pathways, to have those opportunities. As many of the mayors and councillors I met with over the January and February period said to me, it is important to have real long-term jobs in place and real career opportunities for people.

With this bill we are looking to introduce minimal legislative change to establish the funds and to renew the focus of regional investment, putting it on infrastructure, on jobs and on strengthening our communities. The bill also continues a sensible, time-tested model used by government when investing

in regional Victoria that was developed by previous Labor governments. The model is based on a dedicated investment fund for Victoria and an advisory committee to give regional communities a voice on policy and also on the role of Regional Development Victoria.

The bill ensures rural and regional Victoria remains the key focus in the government's economic agenda by retaining provisions which establish Regional Development Victoria as the lead agency for economic and community development in rural and regional Victoria and by incorporating enabling provisions for regional development funding that are in the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011. On top of that there is also to be a new advisory body to replace the Regional Policy Advisory Committee, and I will come back to that.

The bill simplifies existing regional development legislation. It deals with the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002, which sets out the functions and activities of Regional Development Victoria, and the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011, which established the previous government's Regional Growth Fund. It simplifies the legislative framework for regional development by repealing the Regional Growth Fund Act and incorporating enabling provisions for regional development funding currently provided by that act into a single piece of legislation, which we are discussing and debating today.

One of the most vital elements of the policy that sits behind this act involves the government working to make sure that the money that comes with these programs is in place from day one of the new financial year — this year, 2015. We will also ensure that these funds will be awarded to the applications that best suit each region of Victoria. The bill sets out how future projects in regional Victoria will be considered for funding, ensuring that projects provide for better infrastructure, facilities and services; strengthen the economic, social and environmental bases of communities; and create jobs and improve career opportunities. As I said, that was put on the agenda pretty strongly with me by regional councils: support the planning and development of local projects and support economic and community development.

No two regions are the same, and these specific projects that will be looked at by the growth fund will provide the capacity for each region to prioritise its areas of economic growth and the pathways that are best for it in setting up planning for jobs growth in its region. The government expects local councils to continue to be key partners in the delivery of these sorts of programs and looks forward to working jointly with them. In

particular, in its establishment the Regional Jobs Fund will look at being able to commence from day one with specific election commitments identified as local priorities. The bill allows for the new fund to be used in local areas to support local projects and further development, providing that opportunity for better infrastructure facilities and services which are so key in driving the plans that best deliver jobs growth in an area.

I have to touch on some of the comments made by members in their contributions in this debate about the Regional Growth Fund and how it operated under the previous government. This jobs fund will be quite different. It will not be a slush fund for our mates in the regions; it will be a genuine fund that will look at how to grow employment and the pathways between our TAFE system and employment opportunities offered out in the regions. The bill paves the way for the delivery of major projects, including upgrades to particular attractions in our regions that will draw more people from the cities. I think tourism is a fantastic focus for this fund.

The fund will also grow jobs by investing in some of our key local services. One in particular that has been committed to is investment in the Latrobe Valley health training centre and dental laboratory. I have met with the Latrobe City Council twice now, and its priority is definitely growing jobs in that area. I know it welcomes the commitments that have been made by the government to growing its local economy. It is about having opportunities for jobs and training in place to keep communities together, rather than having families split up because the kids have to follow job opportunities in the city. These opportunities are going to grow our regions and, most importantly, keep our families connected and prosperous. It really puts our regional cities back into the heart of Victoria's community, and that is an extremely important agenda for this government.

I am very proud to say our \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will really kickstart growth. I know it will assist many of those regional and rural councils that are struggling with unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, in their regions. It will help to give them vision and will give them the financial support that they need to help grow jobs.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, as the lead speaker on this bill I believe I am entitled to 20 minutes.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! The clock is set for 20 minutes. In fact the time is now counting down.

Ms SANDELL — The Greens support this bill to establish a new fund for regional Victoria. Rural and regional Victoria is in my blood. As many people would know, I grew up in Mildura, and my family still lives there. My mother's family is from a dairy farming community in South Gippsland. There were significant advantages to growing up in the country, but I have also experienced firsthand a lot of the challenges faced by rural and regional communities. I remember how former Premier Jeff Kennett left regional Victoria behind and paid dearly for it. I have seen towns die due to lack of investment, and I do not want to see that continue.

To encourage development in rural and regional Victoria there is much we need to do, and it needs to go beyond a marginal seat approach. Of course we need to improve access to services and transport, create jobs and protect livability and livelihoods, but we also need to deal with some of the really big issues that are coming down the line. Investments across these areas will enhance each other, and if the state government gets its basic responsibilities right, these regions will thrive. But we need more than a fund that changes every time we get a new government. We need long-term vision and long-term investment. We need certainty for these communities. The Greens have a vision for regional Victoria — it is based on the importance of community services, and it looks with optimism, energy and determination towards a bright future for regional communities.

One of the biggest issues facing rural and regional Victoria, which we have not heard much about in this debate, is climate change. Communities are already seeing the consequences of more frequent and extreme bushfires, floods, heatwaves, droughts, storm surges and other climate change-related events. Unfortunately due to the lack of leadership of successive governments of all colours, and their refusal to give climate change the investment and attention it so desperately needs — including in this week's state budget — many of the impacts are already being felt and are already unavoidable. That is heartbreaking. But we can still avoid some of the worst impacts, and I hope a fund such as this would invest in projects to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and would fund adaptation measures.

One of the most important things we must do is transform the energy sector, and we need to do it fast. The Latrobe Valley is a case in point. Everyone in this

chamber should know — the local community knows, unions know and even the owners of power stations know — that coal-fired power stations like Hazelwood are going to close. It is inevitable. Hazelwood is the dirtiest power station in Australia and one of the dirtiest in the world. The health impacts are immense and the economic costs associated with that are astronomical. Other countries are moving away from coal — the USA has already shut down one-fifth of its coal-fired power stations.

The government has a choice — it can leave the workers of the Latrobe Valley and their families stranded when the company leaves its unprofitable asset to rot, abandoning the community, as happened during privatisation, or it can lead the way now by replacing Hazelwood and proactively developing the community-led transition plan that the Greens and the community are calling for. Working with the community on projects like this should be the top priority for any regional development fund. However, this fund is conspicuously silent on the long-term future for workers at plants like Hazelwood. Governments could just shut their eyes and hope that climate change goes away and coal lasts forever. That is fine, but that is not the reality we are facing. That is not going to happen. Funds like this need to deal with the reality we are facing.

A prosthetics factory and some health funding for the Latrobe Valley is a good start, but it is not a comprehensive plan for a community-led government-supported transition plan, which is what the Latrobe Valley needs. I seek an assurance from the government that in allocating money from this fund it will actively prioritise communities with an urgent need to transition away from fossil fuels towards a sustainable economy, with real jobs that people can rely on.

The priority must be shutting down our dirtiest power stations at Hazelwood and Anglesea, and supporting those communities through that transition. Sustainability and the development of sustainable industries should be key criteria in deciding where any money goes in regional Victoria. Putting money into so-called clean coal projects in a desperate attempt to appease companies which want to turn huge profits at the expense of the climate and the community will never be a way forward for these communities. They need a real transition away from coal, and there are so many opportunities to develop new industries. In fact there are existing industries in manufacturing, agriculture, services, health and education, which are real and have no need of brown coal.

We know that there are challenges other than climate change and energy facing regional Victoria. The waiting periods for health specialists can be months, even years. Hospital and medical services have often been amalgamated or closed. I know firsthand how hard it is to have to travel every month the 600 kilometres from Mildura to Melbourne for specialist cancer treatment when services do not exist at home.

We also know that TAFE is a vital service for rural and regional kids. I was lucky to get a scholarship to go to university in the city, but I had to move 600 kilometres away from home to do it. That is not possible nor is it desirable for everyone. It is important for our kids to get a real education that is accessible to them. Unfortunately in this budget Labor has put back less than a third of the TAFE funding that was cut by the Liberals. No government can be seen to be serious about regional Victoria if it abandons our TAFE sector.

We also know that transport in regional Victoria is often neglected but is very much needed. I was not able to ride my bike the 600 kilometres to go to university each week, but I would like to see somebody try that. I was also not able to catch public transport, because there is no train to Mildura; it was cut by previous governments. Former Premier Bracks promised to put it back but that has not eventuated. Public transport is vital to any community, especially in regional Victoria, where towns are spread out. The Greens have a vision for better public transport in our regional communities. Boosting V/Line coach services by 50 per cent would be good idea, and big improvements in rail timetables to run more frequent services with better connections, even to small towns a long way from Melbourne, would be a good idea. It would also make it easier for tourists to travel to regional Victoria independently, which in turn means more investment in these areas.

Currently if we look at somewhere like the Great Ocean Road, there are only three V/Line coach services per week from Apollo Bay to Warrnambool. Nobody lingers or travels along the road by public transport, hopping on and off like they do at other great destinations. Tourist coaches go in and come out again, and they do not invest. V/Line services to places like Geelong have been getting worse, with many being severely overcrowded and taking longer than they did five years ago. I recently read Steve Bracks's biography in which he said that it was great that you can get from Melbourne to Geelong by train in only 45 minutes. I have been getting trains to Geelong for many years, and I do not think it has ever taken 45 minutes. We also need better bike infrastructure in regional Victoria for locals and for tourists.

We know that investing in transport, health and education creates jobs. But if we had a real vision for sustainable energy in rural Victoria, we could make rural and regional Victoria a clean energy powerhouse. It is a wonderful vision to hold. One megawatt of wind equals \$1.5 million of investment, and solar power already creates many regional jobs and saves communities on their power bills. In fact Sunraysia gets more sun each year than the Sunshine Coast. We should also be investing in new technologies such as biomass and geothermal energy, looking into things that will create jobs and clean energy across Victoria.

Currently none of this is growing in the way it should be, because state and federal governments do not have the appropriate policies. Labor does not have the policies, and the Liberals and The Nationals are continuing their ideological crusade against climate action, renewable energy and environmental protection, which is to the detriment of people in rural and regional Victoria. The Greens know that targeted investment that focuses on renewable technology rather than coal and unconventional gas can also protect prime agricultural land from encroachment, including from urban sprawl and gas drilling. Food exports can sustain our export profile when the aluminium and motor vehicle industries are gone. And we know that unconventional gas is the wrong way to go. Rural and regional communities are already telling us this, and it is now time to support them. Governments and parties that do not see that coal seam gas is the wrong way to go will pay dearly at the ballot box, just as they did in Ballina and Lismore in the recent New South Wales election.

How can we forget the environment? Regional Victoria encompasses many of the magnificent natural wonders of our state, from our spectacular coastline to the extraordinarily biodiverse native forests and river systems, and our grasslands. It is a precious natural environment. But so many of our natural spaces, which are so important to rural and regional Victoria, are under threat. Deep cuts to funding for Parks Victoria under the coalition mean that people charged with managing our most precious natural areas are stretched impossibly thin. It is good to see some investment in Parks Victoria in this budget, and I commend the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water on that. But it is just the start of what we need to protect our natural assets.

Historically governments have allowed themselves to be beholden to destructive industries that have no regard for the value of our environment and in the process actually cost taxpayers money. For example, the logging industry here in Victoria costs Victorians

money and has sent our faunal emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, to near extinction. It also divides local communities. Instead we could have the Great Forest National Park, creating jobs, a sustainable tourism industry and saving taxpayers money. And we have allowed super-trawlers to come into our waters, damaging the local and recreational fishing industries and our precious environment. I hope that none of these types of projects will be supported in the regional development fund.

It is not good enough that we have put the environment on the backburner. We must do better. If we do, it will have huge benefits for rural and regional Victoria. I reassert that the Greens support this fund. However, we need to move beyond a marginal seat, short-term approach to regional Victoria. We need a longer term vision. It is one the Greens have put forward, and these are ideas that regional Australia wants and needs, as was evidenced by the rise in the Green vote across regional Victoria, mostly at the expense of The Nationals, who have been so tied to the mining industry, and the Liberal Party, which has forgotten about its regional constituents. The evidence is the seats of Ballina and Lismore in New South Wales. The Greens is the new home of people who want a bright future for regional communities.

I want to end by paying tribute to Senator Christine Milne, a dairy farmer's daughter, who has stepped down today as the Greens leader. She has done an incredible job, particularly for regional Australia. I express my heartfelt thanks to her, especially for her work on climate action.

Rural and regional Victoria is where I grew up. I know it intimately. It has been my family's home for generations, and it is one of the best parts of the world. Let us give it the attention and vision it deserves for the long term.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — There has been a touch of the valedictories about today's debate, in case members have not noticed. We had the former Premier taking care of his old constituency, defending his back. We had the Leader of The Nationals take us all the way back to soldier settlements, which was fair enough. They were hard blocks of land that were worked over a long period of time by many families who did it tough. We should put that into context. And we have had a valedictory for the national leader of the Greens as well. It has been a quite interesting debate. I did not think it would go this way. I just want to make a contribution to the debate.

When we look at Victoria's strengths, and we look at it creatively, it is promoted as a jigsaw, an emblem which accurately portrays how our diversity and our value can be combined. When we maximise opportunity we can aggregate our talents and invest in our most significant asset — our people. If you look at regional funds, you see that they are a critical piece of Victoria's economic development jigsaw. They add value to the state as a whole, they build on the rich Labor legacy and they can create opportunities right across the state. That is the point: these regional funds can create opportunities right to the borders.

Ms Kealy interjected.

Mr McGUIRE — I will take up the interjection because the member for Gippsland East raised this proposition earlier today, and now that the member for Lowan has raised it I will go to it. As the former Minister for Local Government, the member for Gippsland East oversaw the Sunbury out of Hume proposition that is now under examination. We want to know whether this was just a set-up and a stitch-up to take money out of the poorest area with the highest rate of unemployment. This is a proud, resilient community that has fought all its way for decades. Where is that money going to? That is the proposition the former minister was talking about, and we will see how it pans out. The new Minister for Local Government has done the right thing. She has taken a step back and said that she wants to analyse the facts of the matter to see what has gone on.

It is a bit rich for the member for Lowan to come in here when the previous government did a reverse Robin Hood strategy and actually took money out of Broadmeadows. She should not say they did not get anything. What about when the money was actually taken out? That is what occurred. If the member for Lowan calls it on, she should remember who the Minister for Planning was at the time. He would go out to the media and say, 'I am a Liberal and I represent the people of Broadmeadows'. Look what he did: he did a reverse Robin Hood, took the money out and shunted it down the train line to sandbag marginal seats. That is what that was about.

The Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015 brought to the house by the Andrews Labor government goes to the nub of trying to give a fair go to as many people in the regions as possible. Here is a chance to access a fund from wherever you are in this state. On that basis I congratulate the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Regional Development for the insight, the strategy and the nous that underwrites the bill. Establishing the

\$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund is a critical part of the mechanism to deliver Labor's Back to Work plan.

The point was made, and it is worth stating again for the record, that Labor pioneered this sort of fund. Australia's first dedicated Regional Infrastructure Development Fund was established by the Bracks Labor government and operated from 1999 to 2010 to deliver investment in rural and regional Victoria. During the Bracks and Brumby eras the fund evolved in important ways. The Regional Growth Fund established in 2011 by the previous government adopted the key vehicles of Labor's model. This bill today continues to build on the format established by Labor to enable government investments in rural and regional infrastructure, economic development and communities.

The debate today has been hotter than expected. We have to realise that most of these issues are evolutions and that we should build on what has happened in the past. Let us establish the facts and set the record straight. The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will enable the Andrews government to deliver modern Labor strategy, and we saw that in yesterday's budget. This is how you evolve and how you create better opportunities for jobs, growth and prosperity across the state. This fund will provide better infrastructure facilities and services; strengthen the economic, social and environmental base of communities; create jobs and improve career opportunities for regional Victorians; and support local project development or any other project to support the economic or community development of rural and regional Victoria as determined by the Minister for Regional Development.

I acknowledge that it is important that young people growing up in rural and regional areas have the opportunity to get an education and a job and the opportunity to be able to stay within their communities to build their communities. It is important for everyone across the state to have that opportunity. As was raised by my colleagues, TAFE is critical in that. The fundamental proposition is that you do not gut TAFE; you need TAFE to give young people a chance. To be at the heart of opportunities you have to have the skills so that when the jobs are there you can be matched up to them and get an opportunity in life. That is critical.

Programs designed for the new Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund have already commenced and will proceed through administrative mechanisms, including the provision of published program guidelines in

coming months. The way people will be able to apply for these programs is about to be published.

Under the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund umbrella the Labor government will establish a \$250 million Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, a \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund and a \$50 million Stronger Regional Communities Plan. The strategy the government is looking forward to delivering to small towns and regional cities across Victoria is about \$220 million worth of projects and programs that were committed to before the election.

Rural and regional Victoria will also benefit from the work of the Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel and the government's \$200 million Future Industries Fund to support job creation in six high growth industry sectors, including new energy technology. I hope the Greens political party acknowledges that the Labor Party understands climate change and the new technology and opportunities that will be available for greater productivity and the creation of new industries in order to offer more jobs in rural and regional Victoria. That is important.

The other high growth industry sectors are transport, defence, construction, technology, food and fibre, and of course medical research is another area that has great potential for us. We are genuinely world class in this field. That will be developed and will unfold in the future under this government. It is an area for which I have a great passion.

The Minister for Health is at the table. In yesterday's budget there was a good investment in this category, and it has been extremely well received by the sector. These are the new life-saving technologies that we can have. As I said, Victoria is literally and genuinely world class in this field. If you think about it, Boston has Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, London has Imperial College and there is Cambridge. We underestimate the fact that we have two institutes of the significance and quality of the University of Melbourne and Monash University, with CSIRO right next to it, developing in this area. This is something that we will work on as well. Then there are of course the regional centres that can be part of this growth strategy too.

We want to create better opportunities for lifelong learning in communities for jobs, to allow Victorians to thrive in their communities and to continue to build the jigsaw puzzle of economic development that will create greater opportunities and benefit the entire state.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — I rise with pleasure to speak in the debate on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. As other speakers have noted, the opposition does not oppose this bill, as it recognises that it reflects the rebranding of a previous fund. Having said that, there is some concern that now we will put more money into the larger regional cities at the expense of rural communities. I note that in her contribution the Minister for Public Transport did not use the word 'rural' once. She repeatedly referred to 'regional' and the large regional centres. The city of Ballarat, the new growth corridor of which the seat of Ripon takes in, is an important part of that but so are our rural communities.

In the first part of my contribution today I want to talk about the rationale for community amenity for regional development. While I agree with speakers on both sides of the house who said that jobs are absolutely vital to regional and rural Victoria — they are the way we attract people to come and live in our communities and to build successful lives there for their families — you get job opportunities not merely through helping companies. One of the other ways you can do that, which is incredibly important to rural communities and which the previous fund was very active in achieving, is by making the community amenity better. For example, in the seat of Ripon, in which I have the pleasure of representing eight local government areas, I note that under the previous fund we had funded a project called the Alexandra Oval Community & Recreation Centre in the Rural City of Ararat. It is a fantastic centre which had some federal funding as well. I was very pleased to be at the opening of it last year during the election campaign. Senator Ryan and then Deputy Premier Ryan were there to open that fantastic centre, and I joined them as the Liberal candidate. It is used all the time by the Ararat community. I live in Ararat, and so I see the use to which that community and sporting centre is put.

Another project to which I refer is the Alexandra Gardens Active Pathways project. Members may or may not be aware of the efforts that the Ararat council has taken over the past few years to work on the scourge of obesity and unhealthiness in its community. The council has been very active in looking for ways to get people in Ararat active.

Moving on to the city of Ballarat, under the previous fund the Miners Rest Community Park was funded. Miners Rest is a great community on the edge of Ballarat. I was very happy to be there not so long ago to open the new Miners Rest kindergarten. That was a fantastic project funded by the previous

Liberal-Nationals government and is now there for the community to use. Similarly the community park, which came out of the previous fund that is now being rebranded, is used frequently by the young families who live in Miners Rest.

Another project I would like to mention was referred to also by the Leader of The Nationals. It is one that is particularly close to his heart and mine. I refer to the Donald Family Services Centre. Donald is not a very large or growing town. Through the efforts of the community, the council and the previous government, we were able to build a family services centre that integrates child care, kindergarten and the district nurse — all the services you need to have for children. It is a fantastic centre. It would never have been funded under any population-based formula but the existence of the former fund made it possible.

Rather than going through what has been achieved in each of my eight local government areas — I think the house is getting the idea that plenty of projects were funded in Ripon — I refer to the fund that will not be part of the ongoing support to rural and regional communities, the Local Government Infrastructure Fund, which has been cut in the budget. Again, my communities benefitted greatly from that fund. If I were to pick just one community, it would be in the Shire of Pyrenees, where the Avoca childcare centre was funded. Again, that is another centre that would not be funded under any population-based formula. That was achieved in partnership with the Pyrenees Shire Council. I have to say that the council is incredibly good at accessing grants, and this is one that they have really kicked goals with.

In my remaining time, I will refer to three large projects, two funded by the Regional Growth Fund and one now abandoned by the current Labor government. The first of the three projects is gas for Avoca. Previously we have heard comments by the Minister for Public Transport, who has never quite been a fan of the gas for Avoca project but has said that it was not practicable and could not be done. Well it has been done, and it was done under the previous fund. The people of Avoca are very much looking forward to having piped gas rather than having to pay for very expensive bottled gas. I am very proud to be a member of the party that was able to fund that for Avoca.

Another project I want to talk about is the Go Goldfields project. I have spoken in this house before about this project. It is an incredibly important project in Maryborough to help children and families who have perhaps the worst start you can have in life. The parents are very, very young. They did not finish school and are

largely illiterate and they have ice addiction and other drug and alcohol problems. The project was developed by the Central Goldfields Shire Council and was funded by the Regional Growth Fund. I am very pleased to see that the Labor government has matched the previous government's commitment and has continued funding for that important project. Again, it is not an immediately job-centred project. Regional development is not about only jobs. Jobs are incredibly important — I am not denying that — but they are not the only thing. The flexibility under the previous fund gave those sorts of projects a real chance.

The last project I would like to talk about is Active Ararat, which is the Rural City of Ararat Council's response to preventive health. It has done a lot of work as a result of the *The Biggest Loser* coming to Ararat. The whole community was galvanised by that experience and it has gone on to kick goals in making Ararat a much healthier place. In the most recent obesity statistics Ararat did not feature, and that was exactly where we want it to be. The Active Ararat program is a great initiative of council that the former government committed to fund under the Regional Growth Fund. It has not been picked up by the Labor government, and I urge the government to have another look at it because it is an incredibly important project.

In conclusion, we do not oppose the bill. We understand the government wants to rebrand and claim it for itself. We really hope the government will keep the flexibility contained in the previous legislation, because regional development is also rural development and we should not see all the money going only into big centres.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — As the member for Buninyong, a significant part of regional Victoria, I am very pleased to speak on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015, which, as we have heard from previous speakers, sees the establishment of the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund as promised by the Andrews Labor team ahead of the election. Again, this is an example of something the government has moved on quickly to bring it to fruition. The bill builds on legislation that the former Labor government introduced in the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002. When the Bracks Labor government took office in 1999, it clearly indicated that regional Victoria had missed out seriously under the former Kennett Liberal government. The people of my electorate did not take much convincing, as others did across regional Victoria, to know that Labor was the party that was going to represent them. In being elected in 1999 to the state's most marginal seat at the time, previously held

by the Liberal Party, and then at the four elections since then, voters in my electorate, which has changed slightly over that time, have continued to elect a Labor MP. While I would love to claim that it was because they were represented by a great local member, that was only a part of the reason. Clearly people saw that under Labor, across not only Ballarat but also other rural towns in my electorate, they were being well represented and well supported by a Labor government, both with the establishment of the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund soon after the election of the Bracks Labor government, and also with so many other projects that demonstrated that Labor was serious about supporting the regions and the rural areas of Victoria.

We do not need to think about it much before we think of the regional fast rail project, which saw us turn the tide on closing regional railway lines, as had been the case previously under the Liberal-Nationals government. We were also rebuilding our regional railway lines to put quality railway stock such as the V/Locity trains on those services, upgrading the rail services so that they were a pleasure to travel on and we have seen patronage increasing. It was Labor that reopened the lines to Maryborough and Ararat in my region and people in those areas can now travel by train between their home towns and Melbourne. That includes the country towns on the way, like Ballan in my electorate. That is one example, but we saw so many other examples where schools and hospitals in our regions got great support. That is why I continue to be here and speak to members and it is why the people of my electorate see that and know that Labor continues to support them.

I am particularly pleased to speak on a bill which re-establishes our support for regional and rural Victoria with the establishment, as I said, of this \$500 million fund. We know it is going to be delivered through Regional Development Victoria as the lead agency, and across our region there will be so many projects funded out of the \$250 million Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, as will be established under this umbrella; the \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund; and the \$50 million Stronger Regional Communities plan. Those are all funding pools that will see regional Victoria benefit. Within the bill we see that this funding is going to not only provide better infrastructure, facilities and services to people in our regions, but also it is clearly going to strengthen the economic opportunities, social opportunities and even environmental opportunities in those areas. The key reason we want to do that is that we want to see jobs created in our regions, not only in the Melbourne metropolitan area. We want to see the jobs flowing

right out into our regions, improving opportunities, improving quality of life for the people of our regions and supporting locally instigated projects and making sure that we can ensure that our local regional and rural communities feel supported in their aspirations for development in the future.

I note in terms of Regional Development Victoria that we are reviewing the way it works with the community and we have appointed a highly appropriate person to lead that review in the person of former Premier John Brumby, who is now travelling around Victoria, talking with a lot of rural communities and people who interact with Regional Development Victoria to see how it is operating at the moment and to make recommendations as to how it can better operate to service those communities. That is also a great initiative of our government.

As the member for Buninyong I want to talk about some of the projects that will be coming forward through this fund to support the communities in my area. I have to mention the \$31.5 million redevelopment of the Eureka Stadium sporting precinct in Ballarat. It was great to see Peter Eddy from the Ballarat Basketball Association in today's Ballarat *Courier* expressing his excitement over the budget announcement yesterday, because as a result of that announcement our basketball facilities in the Eureka precinct area will be significantly upgraded. We know that excitement is not just about the main Eureka Stadium, which in future will be used for a broad range of activities and hopefully attract AFL boutique games and other activities; it is about having a better facility for the people of Ballarat, which means we will be able to attract more events and more people. That will bring economic opportunities which will flow on to a whole range of businesses and increase employment opportunities in Ballarat.

Through the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund we will see \$25 million going to the Ballarat station precinct redevelopment. This is another exciting project that the government, recognising the need for an upgrade of the precinct around the Ballarat station, has clearly got behind. We are putting in \$25 million to work with the private sector to further enhance that region around the station, building new economic opportunities and ensuring that there is a great flow of people wanting to come to that precinct to seek accommodation and other commercial opportunities. It will really build opportunities there.

In our region there is also \$19 million going toward the Grampians Peaks Trail. Sovereign Hill, which is a leading tourist attraction in Ballarat and a living

museum which attracts so many people into our area, will gain \$8 million to support the development of an upgrade to its sound and light show, *Blood on the Southern Cross*, which tells the story of the Eureka rebellion.

So many projects across regional Victoria will be supported through this fund. The people of Victoria will clearly see over the next four years that not only is the Andrews Labor government committed to delivering on its promises, but it is also committed to continuing to work with our regional communities to deliver on their aspirations for great projects that will build opportunities for those communities, build jobs for people in regional Victoria, ensure that our communities across the state have a great future and ensure that people know that Labor is the party that continues to support regional and rural communities.

The other parties can crow, but people have seen that the coalition did not deliver in office — and that is why we are on this side of the house. That is why at the last election Victorians chose to elect the Andrews Labor government. I am sure they will be very pleased with the outcome and will see a better result in 2015 because of Labor's commitments.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is an absolute pleasure to stand today to speak on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015, particularly after that quite amusing joke about Labor representing rural and regional Victoria was thrown in by the member for Buninyong. We had a look at the budget yesterday, and I think the member for Gippsland South must have been quite bemused at the lack of infrastructure projects over on his side of the state — to the point where the index actually lay over the part of the map of Victoria where his electorate is situated. I think we have been forgotten in that regard. Yet again we see a Melbourne-centric Labor government with no idea that it has to govern beyond the tram tracks and right to the border.

The main clause of this bill is clause 1, which sets out the purpose of the bill — that is, to amend the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 to establish a Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund and a Regional Development Advisory Committee. In order to do this, the bill repeals the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011 and makes other minor and consequential amendments. I note those minor and consequential amendments because, as the member for Ripon mentioned, this is really just a change of name that is going to cost the state a lot of money. It is another time when we are seeing more talk and a loss of investment in rural and

regional Victoria. It is a waste of taxpayers money, quite frankly.

In debating the regional jobs and infrastructure bill, we need to consider the number of programs that were delivered under the Regional Growth Fund. I note the name of that fund: it was a 'growth' fund. It is interesting that Labor decided to delete the 'growth' out of rural Victoria, and that certainly appears to be its strategy, given yesterday's budget. We can look at the Putting Locals First Fund, which was an absolutely fantastic program that supported local community groups and organisations to invest in the projects that mattered to them. Decisions were made by local people on local projects. That is something we have not seen in the new fund that has been developed by Labor because enormous amounts of money have already been committed out of that fund. There will not be locally made decisions; they will all be made in Melbourne, and we will be told what to do in the country. I can assure you that there will be many mistakes made, and we will be holding the Labor government to account.

The current regional development structure also includes the local government infrastructure program, a \$100 million program. The previous member for Lowan, the Honourable Hugh Delahunty, worked tirelessly to get his fair share of that funding for the Lowan electorate. He made sure that about \$16 million investment was allocated to our local area through the Local Government Infrastructure Fund. I thank Hughie very much for the work he did in strongly representing and advocating for country Victorians, particularly the people of Lowan.

The record shows that over 1400 projects were delivered over the four years of this brilliant program through the Regional Growth Fund in conjunction with Regional Development Victoria, which does an absolutely fantastic job of working with local communities and local people. We have seen the investment of \$500 million to support 1800 projects and the leveraging of more than \$2 billion worth of investment — not just in the big regional cities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong but right through to the smallest country towns in our electorates. It secured \$3 worth of investment for every \$1 contributed by the government. This is something that stimulated local economies, and I cannot see how Labor's impersonation of the coalition's policy will do the same.

We have the word 'jobs' in the title of this bill, so obviously a lot of jobs are going to be created. Earlier a member implied that the Regional Growth Fund did not deliver any jobs. I would like to put on the record that

that is not the case. The Regional Growth Fund created 23 000 or more jobs right across regional and rural Victoria, including 6000 direct full-time jobs, 11 700 indirect jobs and nearly 5000 construction jobs. We really looked after the construction workers out there, as we always do, making sure we are building a stronger country Victoria.

This structure worked so well. It had been our intention to continue this fund because we heard over and over again from our local communities that this was a way that we could get real investment and real infrastructure. Most importantly the Regional Growth Fund was successful because we had local people making decisions for local people, and we really saw a difference in rural and regional Victoria.

During the four years in which the coalition had the Regional Growth Fund in place there were some fantastic success stories I can share about people right across the Lowan electorate. One of the initiatives I am really proud of — and I was at the announcement for it — was the \$500 000 in funding for that fantastic business in Nhill, Luv-a-Duck — and I really do love a duck! This company does a fantastic job. It is a success story. It has evolved from a duck farm to a huge processing plant, which produces the fantastic take-home products that are ready to cook right off the shelf. It is a great story as well when you throw in the success the company has had in employing people from the Karen community, who are absolutely wonderful people, always welcoming and delightful. The way this company has brought on board people from that community and really integrated them into Nhill has been a fantastic development.

What difference has that \$500 000 from the Regional Growth Fund made to Nhill? I can tell members that that funding leveraged \$28 million worth of investment. That all comes from the \$500 000 the former government provided for key infrastructure like water and electricity. That funding also created 80 jobs. In a community like Nhill, 80 jobs makes an enormous difference. Luv-a-Duck is currently working through key plans to get that development up and running sooner rather than later. I look forward to doing a tour of Luv-a-Duck in the near future.

The other communities that have benefited from the Regional Growth Fund include the smallest of communities like Byaduk — not Luv-a-Duck, but Byaduk — which received a \$1000 sporting uniform grant for its cricket club. Rupanyup received \$2.7 million for a water quality and treatment plant. I can tell members I had a great day in Rupanyup, because not only did we open and launch a plant that

provided new drinking water, tap water and potable water for the community, but on the same day we also opened the new sewerage system with a sausage sizzle, which was fantastic.

There have been huge benefits for Horsham. The government provided \$80 000 for the Horsham motocross facilities upgrade, and that facility is now ready and able to host international events. I believe there is a very exciting announcement coming up for the Horsham motocross, which will be hosting an international event. That is extremely exciting for our local area.

Longerenong College — Longi ag. college — also benefited from the Regional Growth Fund. We have to look after our agricultural sector, and again it seems to be something that has been neglected in this Labor budget. The former government could see the benefit of investing in agricultural education. We invested \$1.2 million in an upgrade of the college facilities at Bayer CropScience and \$1.1 million in an accommodation project. These are fantastic projects that will see a real difference. It will ensure that our next generation of agricultural workers are clever and well educated and can make a real difference for our rural people. Our productivity in the future will be fantastic because of that investment.

In Penshurst the former government provided \$70 000 for a netball court upgrade. It provided \$100 000 to the Halls Gap Zoo, which is an absolutely fantastic zoo. I recommend that everybody goes there. At Rainbow the former government provided nearly \$15 000 for the Rainbow Neighbourhood House. That organisation does absolutely fantastic work. If we look at Dartmoor, a fantastic community in the south of my electorate, \$3.4 million was provided for the Dartmoor-Hamilton Road restoration over Muddy Creek. That is a fantastic local project. In Casterton the coalition provided \$1.1 million for the Kathleen Millikan Centre, a brilliant children's hub that incorporated maternal and child health services, child care and day care services and a kindergarten. The centre delivers wonderful programs that support local families. That is a fantastic thing that the Regional Growth Fund was able to deliver.

In Hamilton we saw over \$200 000 delivered for the Pedrina Park soccer field development. New clubrooms were built. The coalition has supported important country people.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to join the debate on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. As has

been previously outlined, the new Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund consolidates the legislation into a single act, which will be the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002. Currently Regional Development Victoria and its major funding activities are established by two pieces of enabling legislation, so consolidating these activities in one piece of legislation is most welcome.

Before I cop a series of interjections from those opposite, I want to preface my contribution by acknowledging the fact that I am Melbourne born and bred. I grew up in the outer suburbs of Wantirna. I lived there most of my life, and I moved into the seat of Essendon about 12 years ago. I started working in Parliament in 1996 as an adviser to John Brumby, and I remember working on an idea. I thought, 'I am going to write a policy paper, and I am going to look at aligning local governments with businesses and university councils to drive economic growth in the regions'. I spent a lot of time working on this paper for John Brumby when he was opposition leader. I stayed up late writing it and then I gave it to Julia Gillard, because at that time she was Mr Brumby's chief of staff. She said, 'This is great. It looks really good'. Then I had my audience with the leader. I went into his office in the north wing of Parliament House, and I presented the paper. He just looked at it, looked at me and said, 'No. I'm not doing it. I'm not having another layer of bureaucracy'. And he was absolutely right. I got it wrong.

I still persisted. I thought, 'I am here. I've got to try. I'm here to learn. I've got to work. I have to have a crack'. I remember sitting in the opposition rooms in about 1997. I was looking at a map of regional Victoria, and I thought, 'I know. I have a great idea. We should look at expanding the Midland Highway'. I thought it would do something for people who live along that corridor from Geelong up to Bendigo. I put that up, and I remember Dan O'Brien, who at that stage was John Brumby's economic adviser, saying, 'We'll think about that'. He then went on a road trip with Mr Brumby up into the bush for a period of time, and he came back and said to me, 'You're an idiot. No-one wants this'. I was humbled by the fact that as a policymaker you always have to be careful not to try to second-guess the electorate or basically impose your views on the community. Instead what came back from those trips and the series of trips John Brumby undertook as opposition leader was the answer, which was the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund. It was basically a community-driven fund to provide community input to work out what, as a government, we should be funding.

I am happy to say that John Brumby was right. When Steve Bracks was Premier he implemented the policy. He was right and I was wrong. I was wrong because I did not know enough about regional Victoria. It is important to recognise your limitations. That is why it is always important that if you are looking at having these sorts of funds, you are putting it out into the community and letting the community have its say in terms of what should be happening. It really comes down to government taking on the role of an enabler. This new fund will be about ensuring that government can be an enabler and that the economic gains are spread across Victoria and are not just concentrated within the 3000 postcode.

The other welcome aspect to this bill is the establishment of the Regional Development Advisory Committee, which will replace the Regional Policy Advisory Committee. Again this is to make sure you have got independent expertise providing advice so that these things will work and work well. The reality is that we are looking at different times. I remember being at high school in the 1980s, and a careers advisors said one of the great challenges was that in the 1980s we had to train people then for jobs that did not exist. I remember at the time wondering how you would do that. I thought, 'What jobs that are going to exist now do not exist in 1987'. Back in 1987 I could not think of it, but we know the reality when you consider the digital divide. We are now looking in a policy sense at disruptive digital technologies coming to the fore that will play a key role in driving growth and innovation. That is the reality.

If Victoria is to do well as a state, we have to make sure we embrace this. But of more fundamental importance is that we need to make sure we share those gains across the state and that they are not just concentrated within the CBD, within the Hoddle grid. A fund like this is important because it will help encourage and foster growth and innovation. It is also about making sure that we try to drive that level of innovation through clusters.

I recently read a book by Walter Isaacson called *The Innovators*, in which he talks about a really smart guy named John Atanasoff, who developed a very basic computer in the late 1930s. He was at Iowa State University and was that classic smart guy, sitting by himself, who came up with an idea for this computer. He went off to war, and the computer sat down in the basement and was not really discovered again until the 1980s. Running concurrently with that is what was happening between the United States Army and the University of Pennsylvania Moore School of Electrical Engineering, which developed the electronic numerical

integrator and computer or ENIAC. That came about because of that collaboration. There was innovation and a cluster of people working together, collaborating, to make sure they could go on and develop this product. This is a case in point. If you compare Pennsylvania with Iowa, that could be a metaphor for what you see in country and regional Victoria versus Melbourne. So funds like this are really important to make sure that the gains — the economic benefits — are spread across the state.

I am reminded of an article I read once about the ‘dead cities’ of western Syria. For a relatively brief moment in time those cities developed olive oil and wine on land that is highly inhospitable, having very low rainfall and very poor quality soil. You could say it is desert, but they were able through the strength and power of the Roman Empire at its height to develop olive oil and wine. For that relatively brief moment in time it was able to be transported across the Roman Empire. That is a case again of government as an enabler making sure viable trade routes are open to foster, encourage and develop economic growth and activity in areas which would basically be of marginal significance. In reality once the Roman Empire fell, the dead cities fell into disrepair.

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Essendon has strayed quite a long way from the bill. We do not need a history lesson. If he does not know anything about country Victoria, I suggest he sit down.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! The member for Essendon is making a point, and I think he will come to it.

Mr PEARSON — As I was saying, it is important that we are very clear and make sure the economic growth and gains are spread across the state and community. People like John Brumby and Steve Bracks had vision. We do not want Casterton to become the next dead city, like what we saw in western Syria. Neither do we want that to happen to Cann River, Nyah, or other towns like Numurkah. This bill is about making sure appropriate funds are in place to ensure that those gains and benefits are spread across the board. I have fessed up to my limitations — I acknowledge my limitations in terms of having that really strong bond, connection with and deep understanding of regional Victoria.

The wonderful thing about the Labor Party is that it is a broad church. We have had some wonderful leaders like Steve Bracks and John Brumby, who went out, consulted with the community and listened, and who

then crafted policy. They made sure that when they implemented policy they listened to the community and brought it with them in order to make sure they got the best economic outcomes. You can compare and contrast what we saw in the period 1992–99 with what we saw in the last four years.

This bill is incredibly important, because we are always striving to make sure that just because you live outside of Melbourne, just because you do not have postcode 3000 by your name, does not mean you cannot participate in the emerging industries and make a valuable contribution to the growth and economy of Victoria. The reality is that we are living in extremely turbulent times. A lot of disruptive technologies are emerging, and it is vital that we ensure that the policy settings are right, that the gains created by these technologies are spread far and wide and that people who choose to live in regional Victoria are doing so because they want to and can participate in the economy.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I rise to contribute to the debate on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. Coming from regional Victoria, I am sure I can make a much more meaningful contribution to the debate than the member for Essendon, who strayed quite considerably from the bill.

The purpose of the bill before the house is to amend the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002, with two core aims. One is to establish the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, and the other is to establish a Regional Development Advisory Committee. At the same time the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011, which was introduced by the former Deputy Premier, the Honourable Peter Ryan, and which established the Regional Growth Fund, is being repealed. Typically, as is often the case when we look at amendments, the bill makes other minor and consequential changes. Essentially we have the two acts I have just referred to, the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 and the Regional Growth Fund 2011, being incorporated and rolled into one.

When we look at some of the context around this we see that governments have the prerogative to introduce bills to allow them to govern how they see fit. I am sure this bill, which is aimed at country Victoria, is more likely to underwhelm and underdeliver to country Victoria than overdeliver. I would expect a lot more than lip-service here. We have heard members opposite talk about what they think the bill is going to do when it is passed, so I am expecting that they will do a lot more than just provide lip-service. I am expecting that they

will do more than simply deliver funds and projects to regional cities, because country Victoria is not simply Ballarat, Bendigo and the satellites around those major cities: country Victoria includes many smaller municipalities and communities. I expect more than this fund being used as an all-encompassing fund for any project that will be delivered outside the metropolitan boundary. That is where the risk lies.

I mentioned that one of the core aims here is to establish the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund. It is a lot like our Regional Growth Fund, but with a different name. It is unlikely to be as good as the Regional Growth Fund, because that was a real winner.

It is good that the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 is being updated to include the definition of rural and regional Victoria, as we had outlined in our bill in 2011.

I want to touch on the Regional Growth Fund, because this proposed legislation follows on very much from our \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, which we introduced very early in our term of government; it was introduced in March because of the significance of regional communities to the coalition. This is being introduced two months later in the year, and I wonder what this government has been doing that it has put this on the table now, which I would say is late in its term of government.

The establishment of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund was to support the regional centres and towns, to drive growth and prosperity, and to strengthen the future for those who live outside metropolitan Melbourne. It was about investing in infrastructure and services that regional industries need in order to compete effectively and efficiently in intrastate and interstate markets, as well as globally, because we have some wonderful businesses and industries in rural Victoria which very much compete on the global stage. It is very important that they be given every opportunity to compete in strong terms, because a lot of other countries subsidise their agricultural products much more heavily than we do.

What I particularly liked about the Regional Growth Fund was that it focused on both the big picture and the smaller picture. It had targeted strategic interventions at that very big picture level, but it also had flexible local approaches. The latter was about locals on the ground, whether they were in the form of communities and community-driven projects or councils. This was a real winner in country Victoria. I was flabbergasted to hear the Minister for Public Transport saying that the government was fixing the mess of our Regional

Growth Fund. That is clearly contrary to the feedback we received. The government is not in touch with country communities. We are talking about country communities here; we are not talking about city communities. Far and wide across the state country communities congratulated the coalition on the Regional Growth Fund and what it was contributing.

We know also that when country communities do well and growth and prosperity is occurring there — when the regions are doing well — the state also does well. We had programs such as the Putting Locals First Fund, which sounds awfully like some of the programs that are being rolled out now to support the development and planning of local projects in rural and regional Victoria, as outlined in the bill. The local government infrastructure program was absolutely loved by the councils, because it gave them opportunities to do some infrastructure catch-up. The infrastructure funding and the programs to develop stronger regions and resilient communities were widely appreciated.

Ms Edwards — It's about jobs.

Ms McLEISH — I can hear those opposite saying, 'It's about jobs'. Of course it is about jobs. When you have strong local communities you attract people to those areas who will then live, work and create jobs. Jobs are not created by government. Local industries and businesses create jobs. Having communities in a strong position attracts people to living in those areas of strength. One of the projects we launched was the Regional Victoria Living Expo. It was about bringing people from the city areas to look at country areas. That was extremely well received. We had very positive feedback.

Another thing I found quite flabbergasting from the Minister for Public Transport was her ownership of the extension of natural gas project. She was quite clearly on the record in her former role as Minister for Regional and Rural Development saying that all country towns that could be put on gas were on gas, yet the coalition government was subsequently able to hook up another 12 communities and move that program along. That program was extraordinarily well received by communities who had been let down by that minister and by the previous Labor government. This was about investing in local communities and jobs. I will look at Warburton, now that gas has been extended to Warburton the Edgewater Yarra Valley Resort and Spa development is coming on board to create 200 jobs. It is coming on board because it is confident now that gas extends into that community, so it can afford to invest and know that it will get a good return on its investment.

I want to talk also about the risk. In proposed section 17(1)(e) in new part 4 of the act there is a provision for projects determined by the minister to support the economic or community development of rural and regional Victoria. The risk here is that every project under the sun that should be picked up as part of other portfolios, such as sport, tourism, health or roads, will all be rolled into the allocations under this fund. The bill clearly states — —

Mr Nardella — No. That is wrong.

Ms McLEISH — Those opposite think I am not telling the truth, but clearly there is a risk in the bill that this is possible. There is a risk that country Victoria will again be screwed by a Labor government because it does not understand regional and rural Victoria.

The other element in the bill that I want to touch on is the Regional Development Advisory Committee. I want to touch on this because the Liberal government had a Regional Policy Advisory Committee and this is a rebranding of that committee. The government says that this committee will have similar functions and that it retains the independent expertise-based advisory structure. However, I always worry when Labor governments come in. We have seen what happened with the water authorities and the Alpine Resort Management Board. Labor sacks all the competent and expert staff and puts its mates in those jobs rather than focussing on people with skills. Very often those mates do not have any understanding of how to create growth and prosperity, because if you look at their backgrounds you find that typically they have been someone's mate or they are part of a union payback.

I want to highlight the example of a friend of mine who was told by the former Labor government, 'I know you are Liberal, but that particular board is stuffed and needs some help. We need you because you have the right expertise to come in and fix it'. I think that is clear evidence of the way in which Labor sweeps out old boards is — —

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

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I am really pleased to rise to speak on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015, being a proud member representing regional Victoria and in particular the Bendigo West electorate. In fact I live in regional Victoria, unlike some members on the other side. Labor went to the election last year with a clear and determined commitment to regional Victoria, and its plan for regional Victoria was

emphatically endorsed by the people of Victoria, especially by those in regional areas like my electorate of Bendigo West and the electorates of Bendigo East, Macedon, Buninyong, Wendouree and of course Geelong.

We made no secret of what our plans were for regional Victoria, and we make no apologies for getting on with delivering those plans that have at their core returning jobs to regional Victoria, building infrastructure for regional Victoria and investing in regional Victoria to build stronger regional communities. The Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015 is the first step towards establishing the fund that will deliver this much-needed investment in regional Victoria.

The centrepiece of this bill is the establishment of the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund which includes the \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund. I will repeat that for the benefit of those opposite — the Regional Jobs Fund. Jobs are not something the former government ever pursued, especially in regional Victoria. It was not part of its vocabulary for four years. The result has been a skyrocketing youth unemployment rate and an unemployment rate higher than it had been for over a decade when it left office in 2014.

The Regional Jobs Fund will help companies to grow their workforce, expand their markets and create jobs for the future. The \$20 million Regional Jobs Fund will establish Food Source Victoria. This program will build alliances between producers from the same region with the same specialty, focusing on high-quality goods and collectively marketing their produce for export. Part of the Regional Jobs Fund is of course the Victorian wine strategy, a \$1 million plan to boost cellar door visits, grow overseas markets and support wine exports. I know there are many members of this house who enjoy a tippie now and then and would lay claim to the fact that they come from pretty nice wine regions. However — and of course the member for Macedon might argue with me about this point — I think Bendigo West has some pretty significant wine regions such as Harcourt, Maldon, Newstead, Bendigo and Welshmans Reef. I think there would be many members in the house who would be very supportive of the Victorian wine strategy.

Then there is the \$50 million for the stronger regional communities plan to strengthen regional communities and help our towns attract families and young people to live and work in rural and regional Victoria. There is also the strengthening of a new future in regional Victoria fund, providing \$25 million to support

partnerships between industry and tertiary institutions. The member for Essendon reflected on where this all began. It was back in the days of former Premiers John Brumby and Steve Bracks. It is a great initiative which is ongoing and which we will continue to support. We will be supporting place-based jobs growth through skills and industry alignment.

Two great Bendigo-based projects which have been mentioned by the Minister for Public Transport and member for Bendigo East are the \$300 000 Goldfields Career Horizons project, which will support the City of Greater Bendigo in continuing to deliver and develop its very successful web portal linking primary, secondary and tertiary students to work experience opportunities offered by business and industry. There is also the Passions and Pathways program, which is a great program fostering partnerships between schools from traditionally lower socio-economic areas, the City of Greater Bendigo's economic development unit and the Bendigo Manufacturing Group, supported and facilitated by the Goldfields Local Learning and Employment Network. We all recall the threat that our hardworking local learning employment networks (LLENs) faced under the former government. It was only Labor that committed to ongoing funding for LLENs across the state.

Then there is the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, which is a \$250 million fund to invest in the projects that regional cities and towns need. In Bendigo there is the \$5 million commitment to the Aspire project, a \$15 million project to develop a faith-based precinct comprising an interpretive education and resource centre, a cafe, retail outlets and spaces for business meetings and events. This is a project I am very proud to support. It is a project that will add to and build on Bendigo's strength and commitment to a multicultural, multifaith community that is inclusive and tolerant. There is also the Harcourt mountain bike trail. That is a great project on which I was pleased to work with the Harcourt community to obtain a funding commitment. This will make Harcourt the central place for mountain bike events across the region and strengthen the Harcourt economy. It will open up many opportunities for that township, and when it is completed it will put Harcourt on the map as the no. 1 place for mountain biking in Victoria.

Then there is a project I am also very proud of that reflects Labor's commitment to renewable energy, particularly in the regions. I was pleased to make an announcement with the Minister for Energy and Resources around this project not very long ago. That is the Renewable Newstead project. The project will convert the town of Newstead to 100 per cent

renewable energy by 2015. It grew out of a collaboration between Newstead 2021 and the former Central Victoria Solar City to work together to achieve this purpose. The Andrews Labor government is currently preparing a Victorian Renewable Energy Action Plan which will outline a comprehensive set of measures to attract Victoria's share of the \$36 billion in investment in renewable energy forecast to occur in Australia by 2020.

Following the previous coalition government's crippling of the renewable energy industry, work has already started on reviving renewable energy development in Victoria. Renewable Newstead is a perfect example of that. The government is also supporting the wind energy industry by reducing the exclusion zone to 1 kilometre around wind farms, paving the way for more projects that will create jobs and generate investment. We are also creating a \$20 million New Energy Jobs Fund — that word again: jobs, jobs, jobs — which will offer grants to companies and community groups developing renewable energy products.

The bill demonstrates what governments can really do when they put their minds to it. It demonstrates a significant commitment to regional Victoria and also to rural Victoria, for want of an expression that encompasses some of our small rural towns. There are many towns in my electorate that will benefit from this new investment, which will occur particularly in jobs, renewable energy and skills.

Regional Victoria will be much better off after this bill passes through the Parliament. Regional Victorians, no matter where they live, will have access to good quality infrastructure, jobs and services. I am pleased that the opposition is not opposing the bill and that many of its members have commented on how successful the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund was under the Brumby and Bracks governments, because that is where this started. We will continue along those lines and ensure that regional and rural Victoria is not left behind. I commend the bill to the house, and I congratulate the Minister for Regional Development on her hard work in this portfolio.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution to the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. The bill seeks to establish the new Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which will replace the current Regional Growth Fund. The tone of the debate was set early on when the member for Murray Plains and the member for South-West Coast gave measured contributions about the importance of investing in

regional Victoria, whether through a coalition government or a Labor government. However, a different tone was set — and it highlights the tone of the present government — by the member for Bendigo East, who is also the Minister for Public Transport. Her contribution politicised these growth funds, and she set the tone of the debate on both this bill and the budget bill by putting politics ahead of people.

This bill seeks to replace the Regional Growth Fund, which contributed half a billion dollars to regional Victoria, supported almost 1800 projects and leveraged about \$2 billion worth of investment. That was \$3 worth of investment for every \$1 contributed by government. It created almost 23 000 jobs across regional and rural Victoria, including 6000 direct full-time jobs, 11 700 indirect jobs and nearly 5000 construction jobs. As I said earlier, these growth funds, regardless of which party establishes them, are there for the betterment of rural and regional Victoria.

The bill in effect seeks a name change from the Regional Growth Fund to the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund. It contains provisions to ensure that the new fund can be used for providing better infrastructure, facilities and services; strengthening the economic, social or environmental base of communities; creating jobs and improving career opportunities; supporting local project development; and — this is the real kicker, which was mentioned in the second-reading speech — ‘any other project to support the economic or community development of regional Victoria, as determined by the minister’. That last use is very broad. It means virtually anything. Does that mean the fund could now be used as a substitute for sport and recreation money? Will it be used as a substitute for major events funding?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr KATOS — I take up the interjections claiming that that was something we did. The Victorian Open Championship has been funded in this year’s budget through this fund. It is held in Barwon Heads, which was formerly in my electorate, and it is a major sport and recreation event. That money should be coming out of the bucket of money for sport, but instead it is coming out of the fund that replaces the Regional Growth Fund. Another example is the Stawell Gift. Again, this is a major event; it is not something that is part of regional development. It should have funding for a major event that involves sport and recreation. The third example is the Eureka Stadium in Ballarat. Is anyone going to try to tell me that the redevelopment of the Eureka Stadium in Ballarat is not part of sport and recreation and is not a major project? That is where this

money should be coming from, and at the moment it is not.

That is the problem we face, and that is what I fear with clause 7 of the bill: the minister will be able to do whatever she likes. She can fund anything. If the local school needs a roof replaced on a section of its building, does that mean the minister can approve that funding when it should be coming out of education funding? These are the sorts of issues that concern me. The clause is so broad. Earlier the Minister for Local Government said in her contribution that the fund will not be a slush fund for mates in the regions, but new section 17(1)(e) is there specifically for that purpose — to make it a slush fund. You can use this for anything. It could be used to fund roads, education, health or anything else.

Whilst it is good to see funding going out into the regions — I do not begrudge that — this is just smoke and mirrors. In the case of the Victorian Open Championship, it is a major event. It should be coming out of a bucket of money from within the portfolio of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events — not from regional development. That is the problem I see with the bill.

While the funding is welcome, about \$60 million has already been committed to Geelong in the first budget basically to fulfil election commitments. That does not leave much out of \$500 million over four years for anything else in Geelong, let alone the rest of Victoria. My fear is that new section 17(1) will allow money to be poured into marginal seats — basically Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. That is great for those towns — I am from Geelong, and I love funding for Geelong — but what about the smaller townships, as the members for Eildon and Lowan raised earlier? What about those smaller townships that have little local community events?

I will give an example of a project that was funded by the Regional Growth Fund in the last Parliament in my electorate: the upgrade of Mount Moriac Reserve, the home of the Modewarre Football and Netball Club, which is where the Abletts played their junior football. That was a local hub for the communities of Moriac and Modewarre. It was not just a sporting club; it was a hub where local rural and regional people would gather on a training night. It was left in such a poor state after 11 years under the previous Labor government that if they turned on a toaster while the lights were on on the oval, the fuse blew.

The coalition government then invested over \$300 000 from the Regional Growth Fund to go into that facility,

because it is not just a sport and recreation facility. That is something the member for Ripon alluded to earlier: the funding for some of these little projects should not be replaced by funding that comes out of other buckets of money. That is my great fear with this. As I have said, there is that clause, described in the second-reading speech as ‘any other project to support the economic or community development of rural and regional Victoria as determined by the minister’. That gives a very broad power to the minister. As I said, that is my fear and concern with the bill.

As for the rest of it, to see money going into regional and rural Victoria is a good thing. This is essentially a similar thing to the Regional Growth Fund. All governments, whether coalition or Labor, want to see money going out into regional Victoria. I certainly support the continuation of money going out into regional and rural Victoria, but I have genuine concerns with respect to that clause of the bill. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — It is my great pleasure to speak on this bill. I stand here proudly as a member of the Labor Party representing a regional seat, Macedon, and I am delighted to be here with so many of my very active colleagues who work so hard in their regional seats to bring the issues and concerns of their communities to this place and to advocate very strongly for those communities. To those on the other side who bleat and moan about their own electorates, particularly those in The Nationals who want to raise with us —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms THOMAS — Where are they? None of them is here.

An honourable member — There’s one here.

Ms THOMAS — We have one here? Okay. As I said, they bleat and moan about their needs not being listened to. I suggest to them that they should take a leaf from the book of the hardworking members on this side of the house and get out there and represent their communities and advocate on their behalf to this government. We are here to listen, and we will govern for all Victorians. We will do what we have always done — we will represent the interests of people in rural and regional Victoria. We will do that so much more effectively than those who purport to speak for rural and regional communities but have shown time and again that they are inadequate when it comes to doing that and have no ability to advocate on behalf of their communities. That is why those opposite are now the opposition, having been a historic, one-term

government. That is also why we in the Labor Party are in government. I am delighted that we are, because we can deliver some real changes that will ensure that there are jobs in our communities.

Let us go to the bill and talk about what it does. It repeals the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011 to provide for the abolition of the Regional Growth Fund and the transition to new funding provisions which will enable the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund to operate flexibly within the broad purposes of the act. The bill amends the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 to ensure that the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund can be used to provide better infrastructure, facilities and services; to strengthen the economic, social and environmental bases of communities; and to create jobs and improve career opportunities for regional Victorians.

The bill is about supporting local project development — projects that will support the economic or community development of regional Victoria. This initiative is broad, and that is because we are open to really good ideas. We are open to hearing from communities, from employers, from local governments and even, might I say, from representatives of The Nationals and the Liberal Party. If you have a good idea, come and talk to this government, because we are a government that is about getting on with it, because we care about jobs in regional Victoria.

As I said, what we are doing is all about jobs. What we saw under the Liberal-Nationals coalition government was that unemployment rose by 2 per cent. It was an absolute disgrace. What we also saw was that it was young people, including young people in regional Victoria, who were particularly affected. I acknowledge previous contributions on this matter. Members on this side of the house are really concerned about the impact unemployment has on young people. The social impacts cannot be underestimated. It is really vital that we do everything we can to ensure that young people see they have a bright future, particularly in regional Victoria. Under a Labor government they will have that bright future.

As I said, this bill has at its centrepiece the Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which will provide \$500 million over four years to support economic growth in rural and regional Victoria. This fund includes \$200 million for a Regional Jobs Fund to help regional businesses grow their workforce, expand markets and create the jobs of the future. Again I would like to point out that we have heard those opposite whinge and moan about their communities, which they have failed to effectively represent. This government,

as I said, is a government that will govern for everyone. That is why we are investing in the Stawell underground physics laboratory. It is why we are investing in the Frewstall lamb and sheep processing plant. We have a Victorian wine strategy, and I have to take issue here with comments made by other speakers. There is no doubt that the Macedon region produces the finest cold climate wines in Australia. Cellar door tourism is already an important part of the economy in my electorate, and it will be an even bigger part in future. We have a strategy here to promote and grow this really important industry. I am delighted at what is in this bill and importantly what it will enable.

It is fantastic to see the Minister for Planning in the house. We have a progressive Minister for Planning who has an eye to job-creation opportunities. In particular, in relation to my electorate, he is committed to repealing the antiwind farm laws, and he will enable community wind farms to be developed in the Macedon Ranges. It is all about jobs — jobs for the future and renewable energy jobs. We will deliver jobs in regional Victoria, and renewable energy will deliver jobs in regional Victoria. We are committed to that. We have jobs in the wind industry and jobs in the wine industry, and I am also really excited to see investment in horticulture through the horticultural research foundation. That also is very important in my electorate.

I talked earlier about the significant and important history in my electorate of potato growing, which is continuing. There is plenty of opportunity there. I see people across my electorate who are investing in organic fruit and vegetable production. They are producing niche goods, and they want to expand and grow their businesses. With Labor they know they have a government they can talk to that will have a real interest in and commitment to assisting them to grow their industry.

This bill enables some fantastic initiatives that will grow jobs, but you cannot get a job unless you have a good education. Let us be very clear about that. A good education is the absolute foundation of economic growth and development — there is no doubt about that. I am absolutely delighted that under this government only yesterday we saw a record commitment to supporting young people in Macedon. We have seen commitments to upgrade our kindergartens in Romsey and Gisborne. We have seen a commitment of \$500 000 to replace the art room at New Gisborne Primary School, which burnt down in 2011. It was completely ignored by the previous government, which hoped the problem would go away

and never visited the school. The total inaction was shocking.

Yesterday our budget delivered on our commitment to completely rebuild Kyneton Primary School. We are developing an education precinct. We have put \$5 million into a trades hub at Kyneton, which will ensure that young people across the electorate of Macedon can get the skills they need for the jobs they want and for the industries that are growing in my electorate. This is a fantastic initiative and one that has been exceptionally well received across the electorate.

A commitment was also made yesterday to Daylesford Secondary College, which was completely ignored by the previous government, despite the fact that it is the sole secondary college in the shire of Hepburn. The previous local member, now the member for Buninyong, lobbied hard on behalf of Daylesford Secondary College, and it was his lobbying that saw stage 1 of an upgrade to the school completed in 2009, but after that nothing happened for four years. Now Labor is back, and Daylesford Secondary College has \$10 million to complete the rebuild. This is absolutely essential.

I will not stand here and let our children in rural and regional Victoria be ignored. I will advocate for them very strongly. I believe I have already done that, and I am very proud of those achievements so far. The community now has a government that will listen to it and a government that cares about our young people and is committed to growing jobs in rural and regional Victoria. We will continue to advocate because it is the Labor Party that will best serve the interests of people in rural and regional Victoria. They have been neglected and abandoned by The Nationals — even its members do not know what it stands for anymore. They scarcely retain their party status. The Liberal Party has continued to neglect the people of rural and regional Victoria.

I commend this bill to the house. It continues our fantastic tradition of standing up for jobs and communities in rural and regional Victoria. I congratulate our Minister for Regional Development; she is a fantastic advocate for people in our community.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — It is a pleasure to stand up and speak on this bill, the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. It has been rather amusing listening to some of the contributions from both sides over the last hour or so. At the end of the day we appear to be in furious agreement about our aims — there are just different ideas about how we should get there. I

appreciated the contribution of the member for Macedon, although the last minute or so was not quite so welcome. I also liked hearing the member for Bendigo West. I certainly preferred it to being lectured on regional development issues by the members for Essendon and Broadmeadows, or by those who say, 'I know a lot about it, I grew up in Wantirna' or 'I grew up in Watsonia'.

But I do welcome this fund, and I am pleased to see this bill in the house because it is important that we support our regional areas. In fact that is the reason I am here in this place, as my Nationals colleagues and many others would know. The Nationals are here to stand up for rural and regional Victoria, so I certainly welcome the fund and hope that it works well.

However, I am cautious in my enthusiasm because Labor has got form on these matters. Like the member for Essendon, while I have been in this chamber only a short time I have been around the traps for a while, and I recall what happened under the Bracks and Brumby governments. In 1999 a Labor government established the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, which was a good idea, but after winning many seats in 2002 it watered the fund down by introducing interface councils around Melbourne. A lot of the money that was supposed to be for rural and regional Victoria was suddenly directed to the outer suburbs of Melbourne, because that is where Labor's heart really lies.

We saw further evidence of Labor's form as recently as yesterday in the budget papers. We have had all the members opposite telling us how wonderful they are and how committed they are to regional Victoria, but the member for Gippsland East put it best when he showed a map indicating funding, which becomes very sparse once you get outside Melbourne and the surrounding area — so much so that the poor old member for Gippsland East lost half his electorate from the index because there was nothing there. We see output for agriculture down by 17 per cent, output for regional development down 24 per cent and output for the trade sector down 61.5 per cent — and that is obviously a critical area for regional Victoria. We see the regional expo cut. We see the roads budget down 10 per cent. We see the \$160 million country roads and bridges program cut, and yet we are being lectured by those opposite about funding for roads and bridges.

We have seen other cuts in areas of importance to rural and regional Victoria: the wild dog bounty is gone, the fox bounty is being funded for one year only and as recently as yesterday in the other place the National Parks Amendment (Prohibiting Cattle Grazing) Bill 2015 was passed, removing cattle from the high

country. All of that goes to show that the Labor Party really does not care much about rural and regional Victoria.

I have recent personal experience of Labor's form on this. Obviously I am passionate about Gippsland South. We had a fight in Gippsland South in the by-election a couple of months ago, and Labor did not even bother to turn up. Labor did not even have the courage to put up a candidate in Gippsland South. However, given the candidate put forward in the state election in November 2014, perhaps that was not such a bad thing. The candidate in Gippsland South was the personal assistant to the state secretary of the Labor Party. She did not appear in the electorate once, she did not put out a press statement and she would not answer calls from the media — that is how much the Labor Party cares about Gippsland South. So it was perhaps no great surprise that it did not turn up when we had a blue a couple of months ago. Labor has form on this.

On the other side we have a strong record. Many of my colleagues have outlined the success of the Regional Growth Fund, and I am going to do a little bit more of that. As I said, I have a bit of history around this place, and I recall my predecessor, the former member for Gippsland South and Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan, in 2002 announcing a \$1 billion regional growth fund. We were laughed at at the time by a former member, Sherryl Garbutt. She made a comment then, which is quite funny in retrospect, that The Nationals do not announce anything unless it has \$1 billion in front of it. She was right, and we went on to deliver it. It took a little while to get there, but in 2010–11 Peter Ryan delivered that \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund. I am pleased that the Labor Party has picked up the cudgels and is continuing with something that is very similar, certainly in the scope of the funding available.

Our records from the previous government show there were 1426 funding decisions. Peter Ryan was very clear that he did not knock back a single project, because we got it right from the start. We had staff from Regional Development Victoria working with everyone who came forward to ensure that their projects would qualify, and if they did not, they could go away and make sure that it was something that was appropriate for the fund. We invested \$500 million in supporting almost 1800 projects, which leveraged more than \$2 billion worth of investment.

I have heard a lot of noise from those on the other side about jobs — 'You didn't mention the word "jobs"'. We can say that Labor has not mentioned the word 'growth'. But there were jobs delivered by our program — 23 000 of them over the four years. There

were 6000 direct full-time jobs, 11 700 indirect jobs and nearly 5000 construction jobs. As the member for South Barwon said earlier, we were looking after the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union as well. That is part of the record.

It will come as no surprise to members that my predecessor looked after his electorate of Gippsland South. There were plenty of projects there that provided jobs and delivered for Gippsland South. They included \$1.5 million from the Regional Growth Fund to the Murray Goulburn Co-operative in Leongatha, a plant that I went through just last week. It is a wonderful plant that has been there for a long time. It is at the heart of the dairy industry, and I am sure that my colleague the member for Ovens Valley would acknowledge that Gippsland is the capital of the dairy industry. No, he is not quite going to agree with me on that. But \$1.5 million went into Murray Goulburn's site upgrade and energy infrastructure project, which is helping to support a fantastic UHT production facility that is exporting to the world. Likewise, just up the road at Korumburra's Burra Foods another \$1.5 million was invested to assist that company to expand into the nutritional milk powder market. That project is going gangbusters, as everyone in the dairy industry knows, at the moment. Nutritional milk powders are referred to as 'white gold' because they are going gangbusters into Asia and China in particular. Those projects have underwritten the creation of jobs in Gippsland South.

We put \$115 000 into the tourist railway between Korumburra and Leongatha. And while I am on the issue of rail, we invested \$2 million initially in the Great Southern Rail Trail from Foster to Welshpool. Then just last year we put another \$1.3 million into the project to complete the Black Spur section of the rail trail between Koonwarra and Meeniyan. Members might be interested to know that you will be able to ride your bike along the rail trail from Leongatha to as far as Welshpool once the Black Spur section is finished. Businesses along that route tell me how wonderful it has been, with many tourists coming down and utilising the rail trail to the beautiful landscape of South Gippsland. That facility has been delivered by the Regional Growth Fund.

Small grants were made, but they were no less important. A grant of \$25 000 was made to the South Gippsland food directory. A grant of \$88 000 was made to upgrade McIndoe Park in Leongatha. A grant of \$77 000 was made to the Community College Gippsland horticultural training centre and community garden. A grant of \$150 000 was made for a proposed broiler farm in Stony Creek.

In and around my home town of Sale we invested \$4.75 million to co-locate the Gippsland Art Gallery and Sale Public Library at the port of Sale, \$4 million of which came from the Regional Growth Fund. These were important projects. Earlier the Leader of The Nationals, the member for Murray Plains, referred to the Yarram and district hub, which received \$500 000 from the Regional Growth Fund, to deliver high-quality childcare, kindergarten, maternal and child health services and an expanded library.

The Regional Growth Fund was a great program. Despite what we have heard from some of those opposite, it was a wonderful success. I look forward to this program getting up and going. It has taken some time, and I know there are plenty of people around country Victoria who are concerned about where this money will go. I think the member for South Barwon made some comments earlier that highlighted some of those concerns. We trust that this fund will not be used to substitute for funds that should be coming from government departments for things like the Latrobe Valley clinic and the Gippsland logistics precinct. They are both worthy projects, but surely they will be funded by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources respectively.

Nonetheless, I look forward to this fund becoming available. I make it clear that I will be lining up at the minister's office with a good list of projects on behalf of the people of Gippsland South. I am sure that the member for Melton will support the projects I will be supporting, and I look forward to the government supporting regional Victoria better than it has in the past.

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on this very important bill, the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. It is great to see that the coalition is supporting this bill because it is a great piece of legislation. I have been listening to the contributions from other members, and it has been good to hear them, particularly those from this side of the house. It was very interesting to hear the member for Eildon say the coalition has been congratulated on its work. I suggest that it was congratulated right out of office.

To me this bill epitomises the Labor Party and what Labor is all about. We are the party that governs for all. We govern for regional and rural Victoria. We recognise that life does not stop at the tram tracks and that regional Victoria is not the 'toenails of the state', as former Premier Jeff Kennett described it. Regional

Victoria is a critical part of this state in terms of our economy, our community and our contribution.

This bill is about jobs, and it is about regional jobs. This bill is about adding to the assets of regional communities through building infrastructure, because we on this side of the chamber believe infrastructure supports our communities and our economy, particularly our local economy. We believe social infrastructure is equally important.

I will go through what this bill is about and what it does. During the election campaign Labor released its policy to establish the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund in order to support major projects, create the jobs and industries of the future and build stronger regional communities. This has always been a commitment of ours in government, and this bill establishes that fund. It repeals the Regional Growth Fund Act 2011 and amends the Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 to provide for the abolition of the existing Regional Growth Fund and to enable transition to the new Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund. It also simplifies and consolidates a legislative basis for the government's support for and investment in regional development activities under the Regional Development Victoria Act.

I will now go through some of the main points in the bill. The \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund comprises a \$250 million Regional Infrastructure Development Fund, a \$200 million Regional Jobs Fund and a \$50 million Stronger Regional Communities Plan. The bill also sets out how future projects for regional Victoria will be considered, and I will outline the parameters for consideration of these projects. They must be projects that provide for better infrastructure, facilities and services; strengthen the economic, social and environmental bases of communities; create jobs and improve career opportunities; support the development and planning of local projects; and support economic or community development.

Having outlined those details, I want to talk now about the benefits to the community I represent and what this fund will mean for my community. I want to first talk about Eureka Stadium and the Ballarat sports precinct, which will be redeveloped under this fund. This is a huge project which I am really proud of, and I am excited to get behind it and see it develop. Redeveloping Eureka Stadium in order for us to attract AFL games is a fantastic thing not only for our community in Ballarat but also for people from smaller country towns around Ballarat who will get to experience an AFL game live, perhaps for the first time if they have not had the opportunity or the resources to

get to Melbourne to watch one. I am sure we all agree that there is nothing like going to a game of footy to get us going. My Tigers are not doing very well, but I am sure they are warming up and we will get there in the end.

The redevelopment is also about putting money into our local economy. People will come from all around the area and from Melbourne to the stadium to watch a game, and that is going to bring dollars into our community. It is going to mean that our local pubs will have extra people going there, people will stay for the weekend and perhaps visit some of the other amazing facilities in the area like our art gallery and the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka. Perhaps they will go and see a great local band live at the Korova Lounge, and I would recommend the Korova to anyone who wants to watch some great local talent. Hunting Grounds, for example, came out of Ballarat.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms KNIGHT — That's right. 'I'm tight with Sharon Knight' T-shirts — they did wear those. Eureka Stadium is a really important project, but the sports precinct is more than that. It is also about basketball and netball. It is about providing extra courts so we can accommodate the growing interest and participation in those sports.

A place that is close to my heart is CE Brown Reserve, home of The Lakers — my son played for The Lakers — and also home to the Wendouree Cricket Club and the Wendouree Athletic Club. Hundreds of families use that reserve, and they participate in local junior football, netball, cricket and athletics. The changing rooms are completely run-down; they are disgusting and need to be replaced. We have made commitments out of this fund to rebuild the clubrooms to provide new changing rooms so girls can participate equally and so that we can provide those resources and that state-of-the-art infrastructure to our grassroots local sporting groups. It is important, and Labor recognises that.

Funding has also been committed to the Ballarat railway station redevelopment. That is also a very important project for my community. The Ballarat station is right in the heart of town, and it is run down. There is an old goods shed that has been languishing there for many years, and it is a bit of an eyesore. We are going to turn all of that around. The goods shed will be renovated and used, for example, for exhibition spaces. We are going to clean up the site, and that will provide an incentive and the confidence for local businesses or other businesses to come in and maybe

build a hotel and develop that area. It will also make the area safer. People will feel much more comfortable walking past the centre of town when that site is engaged.

I also want to talk little bit about our commitment to the Sovereign Hill by night sound and light show, even though it is in the electorate of my colleague the member for Buninyong. Ballarat embraces Sovereign Hill, and I want to congratulate its CEO, Jeremy Johnson, and the board of governance at Sovereign Hill for the amazing job they do. Sovereign Hill gets an incredible number of tourists, many of whom come from overseas, and then of course they spend time in Ballarat. Our commitment to Sovereign Hill by night is going to make it even more of an attraction, getting even more people, including more overseas visitors, into Ballarat, which will create more jobs.

All of these projects create jobs. They create jobs in construction immediately, and they also create jobs for the future. That is what this bill is all about, and that is what Labor is all about. We recognise that regional and rural Victoria has a vital role to play in Victoria's economy and who we attract to this state in terms of tourism, business and imports. I am proud that the legislation is before us today, because it says loud and clear that Labor is about all of Victoria and that regional Victoria is an important part of our state and our economy. I would like to congratulate the Minister for Regional Development on her work on this bill, but I also congratulate the former shadow Minister for Regional Development, who is now the Minister for Public Transport, and former premiers Bracks and Brumby for setting the tone around regional Victoria and for valuing regional Victoria. I am proud that we are continuing to value regional Victoria.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution to the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. The Nationals in coalition are not opposing the bill. The new Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, which is part of the mechanics of this bill, has very large shoes to fill when it comes to expanding jobs and opportunities in Mildura. If we look at an overview of the projects the Regional Growth Fund delivered to Mildura, for \$35 million the fund leveraged projects worth in excess of \$220 million and created 200 jobs in the Mildura region. These are impressive shoes to fill.

Let us look at some of those projects to get a feel for what Mildura is about and the sort of opportunities that exist there for this government to step up to the plate and invest in. At the top of my list is supporting our volunteers, and Sunassist Volunteer Helpers Inc. is an

organisation that coordinates a large amount of community transport and volunteers. You cannot run a community without them, and they were supported with \$45 000.

Looking at tourism, the Mildura Rural City Council was given \$300 000 for the Chaffey Trail project. That was to increase the tourism offering and the employment that goes with it by establishing a walking and cycling trail along many kilometres of our riverfront between Mildura and Merbein.

In the private sector, Nangiloc Colignan Farms, large-scale table grape and citrus producers and exporters, expanded their coolroom facility to include processing and storage rooms. Again, more jobs were secured to service the export industry. Dried Fruits Australia undertook a sustainability project which led to the development of a facility at Iron Horse Intermodal for export fruit disinfestation treatment. They were provided funding of \$300 000 to ensure that we have access to more markets for our valuable produce in the Mildura region. With more markets come more jobs. Similarly there was a grape industry analysis for investment and redevelopment. Again, that piece of work was done under the Regional Growth Fund to give confidence to those in the table grape industry and the other grape industries going forward about where their markets will be and what will be required.

Mildura District Aboriginal Services provides services to our Indigenous community. It received \$500 000 to develop their facilities to provide better health and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in my region, which are vital. The Mildura Motorcycle Club generates millions of dollars a year in tourism development for my region. It received \$200 000 to improve its motorcycle track. In a time and age when we know that a safety barrier made from red gum is probably not world best practice, the club now has one of the world's best safety barriers around its track. That is attracting increased events and tourism and is therefore supporting jobs. Mildura also has a very strong sustainability site, where we have a demonstration house. Funding of \$170 000 was provided to show people how to better and more effectively manage older homes in a hot and dry environment and thus save money.

At Ouyen a project based on tourism and jobs was provided with \$500 000 in funding to create a recreational lake and therefore increase the employment opportunities from tourism in Ouyen. Work was undertaken on a solar distillation plant at Mildura. This is really worth looking at. It is about how to use the sun to distil wastewater from the landfill next door to bring

it to drinking quality. The water is also used on a community garden there. It is a little bit like the old allotments that members may have seen in many an English television series. In Mildura we have allotments where various groups grow vegetables on pieces of land using water from recycling. They have a very strong culture and discussion groups. The Blandowski Walk received funding of \$272 000, again to boost tourism and access to a historic site.

From the Local Government Infrastructure Fund the Mildura Rural City Council was the benefactor of \$500 000 for the Langtree Mall shade pavilion, again supporting the retail centre of Mildura and the jobs that come from retailing. The Merbein Community Hub is a library and meeting area that keeps the community vibrant. Olam Australia is a major grower of almonds. This year it grew 33 000 tonnes of almonds on 12 000 hectares of orchards. The company received funding of \$500 000 to put in a road. Then Olam also built a \$60 million processing facility at the end of that road and created 60 new jobs to process those almonds. These are good numbers for a community.

Mildura's gateway for business and tourists is the airport. The investment in the redevelopment of the airport between the terminal and other works totalled nearly \$8 million. It is a major airport, with more than 200 000 people using it each year. Three major airlines provide numerous services to and from the airport every day. It is a vital part of the business and tourism infrastructure. Again, the Regional Growth Fund was used to support jobs in Mildura.

For years Mildura has been separated by a rail line from its major tourist asset, the Mildura riverfront. An investment by the previous government of over \$12 million has resulted in the creation of huge numbers of construction jobs as that riverfront is transformed to provide access. There are proposals for the usual restaurants and coffee shops and these will support more jobs in Mildura. It is a huge job for the Regional Growth Fund, and I expect that the projects in Mildura will continue.

We have a number of projects on our list, one of which is the extension of the Mildura Airport runway. We now have an airline using 737-800s to come to Mildura. To make sure they can take off in most weather conditions an additional 350 metres of runway is required. That is a high priority. As passenger numbers grow the 737s will become more common in Mildura.

Some other projects include the Murray Basin rail project, which received \$220 million from the sale of the Rural Finance Corporation. It is a vital project. The

current budget contains \$30 million for maintenance. This project needs to go ahead. I am concerned that this money might be in the never-never. We need to have that project completed. It will see the standardisation of the Mildura line and a number of other branch lines so we can shift our high-value horticulture, grains and mineral sands quickly and effectively to the port of Melbourne. Mineral sands are Victoria's second-largest mineral export. They are mined in my region but need to be processed in Hamilton. Mineral sands should be shifted by rail. They are very heavy materials.

Mildura has been active in the Energy for the Regions program. The coalition government invested \$10 million in boosting Mildura's gas supply by around 40 to 50 per cent by installing a compressor in South Australia. This alternate energy source is supporting our food processing industries and is also supporting jobs in the Mildura area. Robinvale, another major food processing area, is listed for gas under the mother tank and localised distribution. The Regional Growth Fund has been very busy in Mildura. The Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will need to be busy in Mildura. We have a lot to offer, and this government needs to govern for all of Victoria, including the regions. This fund needs to extend that.

Mr Nardella — Where's that train line going?

Mr CRISP — I take up the interjection about the rail line.

Mr Nardella — The one that you closed.

Mr CRISP — I advise the member for Melton that the rail lines are not closed. As it is a Wednesday night, to my knowledge there will be a 1.2 kilometre-long freight train leaving Mildura taking several million dollars worth of table grapes and citrus to markets. That line is in need of an upgrade, however, and that is what the Murray Basin rail project is about. It will standardise the line. The money came from the sale of the Rural Finance Corporation. Let the record show that rural people sold an asset to realise a new asset.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — I am pleased to rise to speak on this very important bill, the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. I can speak from the heart as somebody who spent his first 18 years in Churchill in regional Victoria. Despite some of the remarks made by those opposite, who think this government does not represent anyone in regional Victoria, in fact we have quite a few regional Victoria residents up and speaking.

I hope to make a better contribution than the member for South Barwon did today. Once again, he proved that

the Liberal government hates Frankston. It does not like the fact that someone can be standing up and delivering for Frankston. We are busy getting on with it and improving people lives. Those opposite are obsessed with Frankston, but they neglected it for four years.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr EDBROOKE — If you want to take a photo, take it. The \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund is the Andrews Labor government's centrepiece for a commitment to regional Victoria. The Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill is the first step to establish the fund and deliver much-needed investment in regional Victoria. This bill puts in place a legislative framework needed to invest \$500 million in growing jobs, building infrastructure and strengthening communities in regional Victoria. It consolidates provisions into one act, creating a simpler and more efficient framework for regional development.

The bill will establish the \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund, made up of \$250 million for the Regional Infrastructure Development Fund to invest in projects in regional cities and towns in need — we have heard a little about that from members on the Labor side of town; \$200 million for the Regional Jobs Fund to help companies grow their workforce, expand their markets and create jobs for the future; and \$50 million to create stronger regional communities, to strengthen regional communities and to help our towns attract families and young people to live and work in rural and regional Victoria.

What changes will this bill introduce for regional Victoria? It will make important changes that we are going to deliver as part of our election commitment. With minimal legislative change the bill establishes the \$500 million regional investment fund and it renews the focus of regional investment on infrastructure, jobs and strengthening communities. It consolidates provisions into one act, creating a simpler and more efficient framework for regional development. The bill also continues a sensible, time-tested model for government investment in regional development used by previous Labor governments. The model is based on four things. There will be a dedicated investment fund for regional Victoria. There will be an advisory committee to give regional communities a voice. We heard before that regional communities will not have a voice, but they will have because part of the government's expectation is that local councils will continue to be key partners and sponsors in many of these projects. The member for Lowan needs to listen to this because we will

continue to heed the priorities set by communities through regional planning.

I find it ironic to listen to members who presided over no jobs plan for four years in government when they talk about how they are helping regional Victoria. When was the last time we had a government that did not even come up with a jobs plan? We are presiding over 6.8 per cent unemployment, and that hits regional communities more than anything — more than the inner city. That can be seen in places where I grew up, like Morwell and Churchill. We had \$1.2 billion slashed from our TAFE system, which again affects the regional communities, where TAFE is so important. TAFE is the future for our kids. Educating our kids means that they can get jobs. I find it particularly ironic that we have opposition members who say they stand up for regional Victoria but who abandoned it in its biggest time of need, such as last year during the Morwell coalmine fire. Do members remember the Morwell coalmine fire? The former government abandoned Morwell and abandoned the people of Morwell. It had no interest in that at all and brushed the problem away, as if it was not happening. It is ironic to hear some of those members representing regions in Victoria saying that Liberal-Nationals governments stick up for Victoria.

While this bill contains minimal changes, it consolidates regional development legislation to ensure that all stakeholders find it easy to access and understand. Regional Development Victoria and its major funding activities are currently supported by two pieces of legislation. The Regional Development Victoria Act 2002 sets out the functions and activities of Regional Development Victoria in facilitating economic and community development in rural and regional Victoria, and it provides for a regional advisory committee. The Regional Growth Fund Act 2011, which established the Regional Growth Fund, sets out how grant funds may be provided to regional organisations such as local governments, community groups and business and industry associations to support regional development. The bill simplifies the legislative framework for regional development by repealing the Regional Growth Fund Act and incorporating enabling provisions for regional development funding currently provided by the act into a single piece of legislation, the Regional Development Victoria Act.

I also note that while The Nationals have had a bit of a whinge about the bill, they will not oppose the bill because they know it is a good bill for Victoria. They understand that this is going to do good things for regional Victoria. Again, the irony of hearing members

say that they have stood up for regional Victoria in the last four years is just shocking and absolutely shameful. It is reflected in the fact that in areas like Morwell there have been large swings to Labor.

The bill sets out how future projects in regional Victoria will be considered for funding, ensuring that projects will provide for better infrastructure, facilities and services, strengthen the economic, social and environmental basis of communities, create jobs and improve career opportunities. We are doing that; it is happening right now. But the Libs? No job plan! Cut TAFE! This is where we are coming from. The people in these areas are hurting. We create jobs and improve career opportunities, support the development and planning of local projects and support economic or community development.

The \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund is the centrepiece of the Andrews Labor government's election commitments to regional Victoria, and I think we should be proud of that. The bill establishes the new fund and creates a simpler, more effective and more efficient legislative framework for regional development. This will be achieved by abolishing the stand-alone Regional Growth Fund Act 2011 and consolidating its provisions into the Regional Development Act 2004. The Regional Growth Fund was established by the coalition government. It was based on the model established by the previous Labor government but the investments made through it failed to support regional communities and grow the economy. We need to change with the times.

Under the previous coalition government, regional Victoria went backwards, unemployment grew and TAFE was gutted. I have already said that \$1.2 billion was taken out of TAFE, there was unemployment at 6.8 per cent and there was no jobs plan. The new bill paves the way to deliver major projects, including upgrading the Eureka Stadium, developing the Grampians Peak trail and constructing the second stage of the Geelong Performing Arts Centre. It will grow jobs by investing in the Latrobe Valley health training centre and dental prosthetics laboratory and Frewstall lamb and sheep processing, and it will strengthen communities through support for initiatives like the regional community leadership program.

Speaking from the heart, I can say that my family in the Latrobe Valley is very much looking forward to having the better chance at life in regional areas that will be given to it by a Labor government. I congratulate all the people who have contributed to the debate on this bill today. It has been a spirited and lively debate. At times I think it has been factually incorrect, and we need to

address that. I commend the bill to the house and wish it speedy passage.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to make a contribution to the debate on the Regional Development Victoria Amendment (Jobs and Infrastructure) Bill 2015. It is about time the Andrews government began to show a little bit of confidence in what the coalition delivered in the Regional Growth Fund. It will try to copycat that, but we know that Labor cannot manage money and that it will blow that opportunity.

The coalition certainly delivered for regional Victoria with the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund that we used in our last term. We leveraged that money to \$1.7 billion or \$1.8 billion. If you look at the budget handed down yesterday, you will see that Labor has already blown nearly half of it with very little leveraged at all. It is one thing to commit money; the main thing is to get some leverage and use that to make it better for our communities and businesses in regional Victoria. Projects include those for the Cobram Agricultural Society, which is only small money, with \$4500 for power upgrades; Yarroweyah Engineering, the largest rotary dairy exporter in Australia; Katamatite Sport Centre and Community Hub; and of course the St James Public Hall refurbishment. Apart from Cobram, all of the others are very small but vibrant communities. They really are important. That is what the Regional Growth Fund has done for us.

Under the Labor government I think those smaller communities will be forgotten. When you look at the 2015–16 budget, you see that Wangaratta got \$500 000 after we dragged Labor kicking and screaming to come and look at the saleyards in the Premier's own home town. We got \$500 000, but after that I think we can forget it and shut the gate because there will be nothing for our smaller communities.

One of the areas of concern that I had when reading the budget yesterday was that half of the money has already been committed. Without that leverage our communities are going to starve and wither on the vine because they need that leverage to get two, three or four times the original value out of the money. We know Labor cannot manage money. It cannot deny that, and it really does not care about regional Victoria. Labor finds it very hard to deny that it cannot manage money. Let us think about the desalination plant, the north–south pipeline and whatever white elephant Labor is thinking about at the moment. There will be something bubbling along out there. We do not know what it is yet, but we know for sure it will be another white elephant. It will be another copycat of what the coalition delivered in its

term, and certainly Labor will ruin this opportunity for us.

As the member for Lowan said, Labor — this city-centric, Melbourne-focused government — has taken the growth out of the Regional Growth Fund. The Regional Growth Fund delivered over 1800 projects and created 23 000 jobs. Those on the other side talk about jobs. If you listened to them, you would think they are the only ones who create jobs.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr McCURDY — It is not true, because 23 000 jobs were created in regional Victoria through the Regional Growth Fund — construction jobs, jobs for our families and jobs for the communities.

Mr Battin interjected.

Mr McCURDY — The member for Gembrook interjects, and he is exactly right; Labor created jobs for the boys and jobs for the unions — not jobs for the families and the communities. People in the Ovens Valley applauded the Regional Growth Fund, which is certainly in contrast to their reaction to the budget yesterday. As I said, there is nothing in it for education in the Ovens Valley — zero. What about health? Absolutely nil. What about job creation? Nil, zero, zip. Those opposite stand in this chamber and try to preach to us about Labor caring for regional Victoria, but they just do not understand; they are absolutely delusional.

In terms of what the coalition delivered in the King Valley, we delivered thousands of dollars to Gracebrook Vineyards and to Chrismont wineries, which led to job creation and opportunities, and we delivered the Whitfield recreation reserve, which was another fine project for an outstanding community. We were able to do all of this because we leveraged the money along the way. We leveraged it with private enterprise, with local councils and with federal money as well.

In Bright we provided \$300 000 for the Bright Art Festival, \$180 000 for one of the caravan parks and money for the Bright Museum. We provided \$560 000 to the Alpine Valley Leadership Program to upskill and develop our young people. I encourage the Labor Party to continue to support leadership in our regional communities through this growth fund, because it is absolutely imperative that we continue to develop that leadership in our communities through our young people.

I want to venture out of the Ovens Valley for a moment and to look at the \$22 million that supported SPC in

Shepparton. Shepparton was deserted by the federal government and by the local council, so it came down to the state coalition. The state coalition government delivered \$22 million to SPC. That is what got the ball rolling and saved SPC. There is no doubt that the people of Shepparton have made their decision, but I think they will look back to that time and wonder whether they can get \$22 million out of this fund. It will be interesting to see, and only time will tell. The challenge is there and we will see what happens.

Murmungee and Gapsted are small communities with small community halls. After 11 years of waiting for Labor to do something, they had just withered. We committed to upgrades in these small communities because we respect and understand these communities. There was a collective sigh when Labor was elected again.

Country Victoria is Melbourne's playground, Melbourne's food bowl and Melbourne's future. This is a say-anything, do-anything government which has already wasted \$640 million. I could talk about the desalination plant or the north-south pipeline. I advise the member for Albert Park not to leave now — there is more to come! We sit and wait to see how many other opportunities Labor will find to waste the money of Victorian taxpayers that has been hard earned by generations. What other white elephants can they think of? It is like a mirage. If you think about a mirage, you can see something in the vision of the future. If you look hard enough and try to imagine something, you can see something developing, but as you get closer, you find there is nothing there at all. This is just like the budget for regional Victoria that we saw yesterday, but we did not even get a mirage. We got absolutely nothing. We got zip. Maybe that will change in time.

I want to look at the community of Myrtleford, which was a huge beneficiary of the Regional Growth Fund. They received \$300 000 for the lawn tennis club, \$100 000 for the skate park and \$48 000 for the museum. These were projects that the community waited over 11 years for and nothing was delivered.

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Mr McCURDY — They were 11 dark years, and I expect they will find themselves waiting again. Labor members stand here and say that they understand regional Victoria. They say, 'We know all about it', but if you look at the 24 regional seats in this house, Labor only holds about 6 of them. We are talking about a quarter of the seats, geographically less than 10 per cent of the state of Victoria, and yet they try to tell us that they understand regional Victoria. Clearly Labor does

not understand regional Victoria. If those opposite want to listen and take some time, they may get the opportunity to learn a little bit more about regional Victoria. Regional Victoria is not Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo. It is all of country Victoria — small communities and small towns throughout regional Victoria and country Victoria.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny) — Order! I am sorry to interrupt the member for Ovens Valley, but the time appointed by sessional orders for me to interrupt business has now arrived. The honourable member may continue his speech when the matter is next before the Chair.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny) — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Berwick College health and wellbeing centre

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. I ask the minister to attend Berwick College with me to discuss a proposal for a health and wellbeing centre. Berwick College, a state school in the Gembrook electorate, has faced challenges in the past few years. The challenge is not a school-specific issue; it is a community issue that is faced in many local schools.

I have spoken in the past in this place about youth mental health and the rates of suicide in our community. This was highlighted in the ABC's *Four Corners* program, which spoke about and confronted the issue head on. There is no right answer; there are many options and programs for young people that assist with mental health issues. As a Parliament we must keep this focus on new ideas that work with young people and keep abreast of all new research. In the past couple of years I have spoken to leaders in schools, including principals, school councils and teachers. I have also met with the member for Bass, and together we have met with some of the local groups in that area as well. Some of the leaders have admitted that they are unaware if they are able to use the word 'suicide' in class; whether they can openly ask someone if they have considered suicide or have considered harming themselves.

The centre for excellence at Griffith University in Queensland produces quality information and research that I often read to see if there is anything else

government can do to achieve the goal of assisting young people with mental health issues and reducing suicide and self-harm. I ask the Minister for Education to visit Berwick College with me. I am a proud local and a past student of the school, and its principal, Kerri Bolch, and I have worked tirelessly with her community to plan her dream of a health and wellbeing centre. The centre would work with students and offer services that would benefit students now and into the future. The plan is to assist young people in the transition period, a period in life that can be very stressful. I look forward to the minister's reply. More importantly I look forward to a positive answer to work towards better mental health outcomes for young people in the Berwick area.

Whittington Primary School

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education. I ask the minister to visit Whittington Primary School to discuss with the principal and parents the requirements of this very important school. I am proud that the Andrews Labor government has committed to rebuild the primary school due to its poor state of repair. Labor has delivered on its commitment to rebuild education. The Whittington school community has welcomed this commitment with great excitement.

Whittington Primary School has been blessed with an extraordinary principal, Barrie Speight, whose dedication to his students and their families is clearly exceptional. Barrie and his team have been innovative in their approach to students and families in addressing their needs and issues. Almost 100 per cent of the school's families are on pensions and benefits and many face day-to-day struggles. Barrie and his team have introduced a way of life in the school that ensures that every child has breakfast and lunch every day. The school provides welfare services and programs to address the many issues that arise with its students and families. It provides a playgroup to encourage parents into the school with younger siblings. It has developed its own music program through donations of instruments and through music teachers donating their time.

Engaging parents has been a real focus. When the school realised that having parents volunteer for the reading program did not work, it introduced an art program where parents came into the school and worked on art projects with students. This has been a great success. The school has many more plans to engage its school community, and I am committed to working with it to make this happen. This amazing school has taken an innovative approach to ensure a

quality education for its students. It has identified the importance of engaging parents to support the school, and has also learnt the value of education. Whittington Primary School, its students and families deserve our attention and commitment.

Torquay Netball Club

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Sport, and the action I seek is that he urgently provide funding for a new pavilion for the Torquay Netball Club. The club is situated at Spring Creek Reserve in Torquay. The main pavilion is in the reserve, the upgrade of which was funded by the previous government. Work on the lighting has been completed, and there is a playground going in, but the netball courts which are at one end of the reserve have a substandard pavilion. It is very ordinary. It is a relic of the 1970s, the days when perhaps a few of the fathers would have got together and bashed together a clubroom — the good old days! The facilities have no proper changing rooms, the canteen is very small, there is no toilet and there is no shower, office or meeting room.

At the last election the coalition committed \$300 000 to upgrade the Torquay Netball Club pavilion. Obviously members opposite think it is good that girls are getting changed in the back of cars or in substandard toilet blocks out in the open air. It is shameful that the girls and women have to do that. I visited the club on the weekend. It was having a breast cancer awareness fundraiser, and the president of the club, Julie Lew, the committee and committee members did a very good job with that fundraiser. I have a copy of the plans for the new pavilion, which I would be happy to table. I seek leave to incorporate the plans into *Hansard* for the minister's benefit.

The Attorney-General has refused leave. The netballers in Torquay will really like that. The government is not even interested. The new clubroom would provide home and visitors changing rooms. Currently the ladies and girls are changing in a room that is practically a broom closet. The plans include a canteen, an office, a storeroom, a disabled toilet and a shared changing room. It would be a very good facility, because it would be separated from the main pavilion. The girls and women who play netball in Torquay, a huge growth area, should not have to put up with such substandard facilities. I urge the minister to consider providing funding for the club.

Eaglemont newsagency and post office

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I wish to raise an issue with the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that she advise my office of the outcome of Metro Trains Melbourne's expression of interest (EOI) process for shop 1–2, 60–62 Silverdale Road, Eaglemont, which is located under the Eaglemont station. I thank the minister for arranging a meeting for me with Metro Trains and the staff of the federal member for Jagajaga, Jenny Macklin. She is doing a great job.

The current lease held by the Eaglemont newsagency and post office at 68 Silverdale Road is due to expire and cannot be renewed. My concern is that if a new premise is not found, Eaglemont Village could lose a major asset in its newsagency and post office, both of which are an integral part of life of local businesses and residents. Eaglemont Village is a village, and it is a great local community. It has been well serviced by these local businesses for many years. It is critical to the local community that the post office and newsagent facilities continue. The newsagency and post office is a myki top-up venue, which is an important service for the Eaglemont Village shopping community.

At the moment Metro is conducting an expression of interest process. It will spend some \$20 000 refurbishing the shops underneath the Eaglemont station, which are currently vacant, and removing asbestos. Metro will make the shops available through its EOI process to people who wish to run a business in them. At the same time we are going to lose the newsagency and post office in Eaglemont if the community interest involved here is not given serious consideration. While there are commercial considerations to deal with in the EOI process, I implore Metro to give due consideration and weight to community need and community interest when it makes its decision. The local community would expect nothing less of me than that I advocate for their needs in the local community to make sure that the local newsagency and post office facilities continue in Eaglemont Village.

There is an opportunity here for Metro to show a bit of community spirit through this EOI process. I know that the owners of that newsagent and post office have submitted an EOI. I know it will be given due consideration. I understand from Metro that it will resolve these matters during the month of May. Again I ask the Minister for Public Transport, who has arranged a number of meetings with Metro, with the office of the federal member for Jagajaga, Jenny Macklin, and with me, to make sure she informs us of the outcome of that

EOI process. I certainly give that EOI process our local community's endorsement.

Anglesea power station

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I raise the matter of the Anglesea power station. The action I seek is that the Minister for Energy and Resources write to Surf Coast Air Action Inc. explaining what conditions she intends to impose on any future owners of the Anglesea power station site should it be sold. In particular I would like her to specify whether she will require the rehabilitation of the site by the current and future owners, whether she will mandate the installation of sulphur dioxide scrubbers and whether the owners of the plant will have to contribute the estimated \$170 million in health costs that Harvard University researchers have calculated the Anglesea coal plant causes each year.

The Anglesea power station, like Hazelwood and many others, is a blight on our environment and our state. The Anglesea power station pumps tonnes of toxic waste into the air, particularly sulphur dioxide. Children at a primary school less than 1 kilometre away are forced to breathe this polluted air every day. This power station produces a negligible amount of power, and the aluminium smelter it was built to serve has closed.

Alcoa is looking to sell, and we need to know if any future owner will get the same free ride Alcoa has profited from to date. Despite its woeful track record in creating air pollution and despite being located in one of Victoria's most beautiful coastal areas, the Anglesea power station currently gets huge perks. Alcoa pays minimal royalties to the state and leases irreplaceable, biologically diverse heathland from Victoria for the peppercorn rent of only 62 cents per hectare annually.

On top of this, Alcoa is allowed to dump its waste in the Anglesea River and it cannot be held liable for damage to biodiversity caused by its poisonous chemical waste pool. According to former Treasurer Kim Wells, the Anglesea power station receives state government subsidies estimated to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. We do not know the amount for certain because Alcoa enjoys complete exemption from freedom of information laws.

The local community, and indeed all Victorians, deserve to know what kind of sweet deal any future purchaser will be getting in Anglesea at the expense of the community's health and the climate. The climate, environment and health reasons for shutting down coal-fired power stations are urgent and compelling. If the government is serious about acting on climate change and if it is serious about protecting communities

in regional areas from toxic air pollution, it must act to close the Anglesea and Hazelwood power stations immediately.

Bolton Street, Eltham

Ms WARD (Eltham) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister participate in a community consultation session in my electorate regarding the upgrade of Bolton Street, Eltham. I thank the minister for coming to my electorate last year and seeing the absolutely terrible condition of the road. This road has been neglected for so many years as the Nillumbik and Banyule councils have made patchy attempts to keep it safe, all of which have been bandaid solutions.

With over 18 000 cars using Bolton Street each day, the country lane feel of this road, while in keeping with the rural feel of my community, is not adequate for the needs of commuters and pedestrians. This is a road on which people have died, including many years ago a young Eltham High School student who was hit while walking on the road because there was no footpath. This happened when I was in high school myself; the road has changed little since, with only minor attempts at putting in guttering and footpaths along some sections of the road.

While I was doorknocking many thousands of homes in the area last year, local residents told me they want the road to be safe. They have had enough of the slippery gravel on the road's shoulder, and they are tired of having their hearts in their mouths every time they try to enter Bolton Street from their homes or the side streets. The current minister and the now Premier came out to Bolton Street on a cold morning last year and saw for themselves the terrible state of the road, and it obviously made a strong impression on both of them. They are adamant in their support for fixing this road, making it safer and improving traffic flow. I thank the minister for allocating money for this project — \$300 000 in the first instance for planning and consultation work. Local residents have put up with the issues this road raises for such a long time, and now it is time to stop with the bandaid solutions and piecemeal, half-hearted responses and get some real action on this road.

In total \$10.5 million will be spent on upgrading Bolton Street and making it safer. I know this will happen as soon as possible. In the interests of getting this project right, I invite the minister to come out to my electorate and sit down with local residents to give them the opportunity to share their thoughts on Bolton Street and respond to any concerns they may have.

Shane Doherty Memorial Tri-State Masters

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Sport, who is also the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. The issue I raise is that the minister reconsider providing financial support for the Shane Doherty Memorial Tri-State Masters golf tournament in Mildura.

The event has been running for over 23 years, and in that time it has attracted 5500 golfers from 249 clubs throughout Australia and even from New Zealand. It has served the purpose of promoting Sunraysia as a region and tourism destination. It attracts around 250 golfers annually, and their minimum stay is seven nights. Many extend their stay beyond that or travel along the Murray Valley enjoying our Murray tourism experience. The organisers estimate over that 23 years there has been \$35 million worth of investment accumulated in the Mildura region from running this golf tournament.

The request for \$5000 for support in advertising this event is pretty humble. It provides very good leverage for a very small investment. The minister's initial rejection of the funding application because part of the event is to take place in New South Wales is pretty thin, particularly in that corner of New South Wales. Any dollar that may be spent by these people in New South Wales, who are mostly accommodated in Mildura, very quickly finds its way back across the border and into Victoria's economy.

In considering cross-border issues — and this is something that again releases the genie from the bottle that is cross-border issues — the cross-border charter for Murray regional tourism requires that local Murray tourism bodies work together across the border. This really does mean this government is now closing Victoria off at the borders, and what does that mean for an organisation like the Murray Regional Tourism board? If the minister is looking at ending these sorts of arrangements, there is \$100 000 worth of support from Victorian taxpayers to provide a joint Victoria-New South Wales-focused Murray regional tourism strategy.

With that, surely the government will not be cancelling those tourism initiatives. Surely it will not be walking away from those cross-border arrangements. I think it is worthy of the minister considering changing his mind and supporting this particular event for a very small investment of \$5000.

Kingston green wedge

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — Tonight I raise a matter for the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is for the minister to prioritise the protection of the Kingston green wedge for the betterment of our community and future generations. Green wedges are an important element in the planning priorities of Melbourne. They were established more than 30 years ago to conserve rural activities and significant natural features and resources between the growth areas of metropolitan Melbourne. The Kingston green wedge forms part of the south-eastern green wedge running from Karkarook Park around Heatherton in the north of the municipality to Braeside Park, around the areas of Aspendale Gardens and Waterways, before linking up with the Greater Dandenong green wedge.

Kingston's green wedge is over 2000 hectares, which is the equivalent of 1035 Melbourne Cricket Grounds, and is part of the lungs of the south-east of Melbourne. The green wedge has been a heavily contested issue in the city of Kingston, which only adds to the uncertainty for our community and landowners.

In August 2012 Kingston City Council adopted its Kingston green wedge management plan, which was prepared by consultants at a cost to ratepayers of an estimated \$340 000. The management plan at the time took in over 1100 submissions from the community and interested parties, delivering a strong plan for the future use, management and protection of the green wedge. Unfortunately that plan has been shelved despite the substantial work done, with many of my local constituents concerned about the future use and protection of the open spaces. It would be a great outcome for the community if Kingston City Council would reconsider the implementation of this policy document.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Andrews Labor government and its commitment to enhancing our green wedges. I also note the comments of the Minister for Planning recently in the regional *Chelsea-Mordialloc-Mentone News*, where he reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining and strengthening the integrity of Victoria's green wedges, along with establishing a permanent urban growth boundary.

I also welcome another key element of the government's planning policy with the important work being done to re-evaluate and assess Plan Melbourne through the reconvening of the ministerial advisory committee that developed the original plan. This is another vital process that will be closely followed in my

region, with a new plan expected to be incorporated into the planning scheme next year.

Good public policy must be underpinned by strong research and consultation and be free from short-term politicking, and this also applies to planning policies on our green wedges and open spaces and our planning zones.

In conclusion, the action I seek is for the Minister for Planning to prioritise the protection of the Kingston green wedge for the betterment of our community.

Lake Cooper

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — The matter I raise is for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. The action I seek is that she tour Lake Cooper and Gaynors Swamp with me and residents of Corop.

The community of Corop would like the minister to consider its request for the provision of recreational water for Lake Cooper. Given that the minister has recently agreed to provide a 5000-megalitre entitlement for Lake Toolondo in western Victoria on the basis of its recreational value, I think the request of the Corop community deserves thorough consideration.

If the minister agrees to visit with me, she will hear of the recreational value of the lake, which is home to the Victorian Water Ski Association. Indeed I remember boating on the lake as a child. It is also a very popular spot for fishing.

Clem Murphy, the president of the Corop Action Group and a member of the Cornella Local Area Plan Implementation Committee, describes Lake Cooper as the icon of Corop. For many years the community has focused on the lake as a reference point for the community's revitalisation. While Gaynors Swamp has a higher environmental value, Lake Cooper is also of importance, particularly in terms of habitat, and the community feels that there is a strong case for the use of environmental water.

Lake Cooper has had a history of occasionally drying. Anecdotal records suggest the lake dried five or six times in the first half of the 20th century. However, between 1944 and 2003 the lake remained full. When the lake dried in 2003, the community thought it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It came as a shock when the lake remained dry until the central Victorian floods of 2010.

Following the floods the community began to restore the walking tracks and the fences in the belief that the lake would not dry for another 60 years. In recent

weeks the lake has dried again. Dust is blowing across Corop from the surface of the lake, and the assets of the Victorian Water Ski Association are stranded.

One suggestion put forward by the community has been filling the lake with opportunity water following a heavy summer rain when water upstream bypasses Goulburn Weir during periods of high flow in the Goulburn River and runs down the river, where it could be captured and put into Lake Cooper. The community believes that putting water into Lake Cooper would provide habitat for waterbirds and native fish; provide recreational opportunities for fishing, sailing, skiing and swimming; and limit the nuisance of dust storms affecting the township of Corop. Furthermore, filling the neighbouring Greens Lake via Lake Cooper would assist with the export of salt.

Finally, members of the Cornella Local Area Plan Implementation Committee would like to reinforce with the minister the fact that the Gaynors Swamp diversion structure is shovel ready and only waits for funding.

Dandenong South level crossing

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. I ask that the minister, along with her parliamentary secretary and her department, work with me to host a community consultation with local industry in Dandenong South to ensure that we deliver the best and most cost-effective solution to the congestion caused by the Abbots Road level crossing.

It is with great pride that I stand here in the house today as a member of this government not contemplating but actually discussing the action being taken to remove dangerous level crossings, particularly those clogging up the busiest line in the network, the Cranbourne-Pakenham line. The importance of this multibillion-dollar upgrade to the Cranbourne-Pakenham line and the beneficial impact on the people of the broader south-east cannot be overstated, and it will be celebrated widely in my community.

The works will boost capacity by up to 42 per cent on the Cranbourne-Pakenham line every day, accommodating an extra 11 000 passengers in the morning peak and boosting capacity across the network. Removing nine level crossings will also eliminate congestion at some of the worst level crossings in Melbourne, where some boom gates stay down for up to 80 minutes during a 2-hour morning peak. Further to this, a decision to apply 50 per cent

local content on the manufacturing of new trams and trains is a fantastic announcement for many businesses in Dandenong and a welcome signal that manufacturing in Victoria will remain an important component of our economy going forward.

The Abbots Road level crossing in Dandenong South is a cause of productivity losses for many local businesses and is a pain for commuters. It is a busy pathway for heavy vehicles, and it has been a site of tragedy. Since the announcement that the Abbots Road crossing will be removed, I have received consistently positive feedback from my community. I have also heard some really compelling ideas from industry representatives, as well as from the City of Greater Dandenong, about how the project might be carried out to maximise benefit to the industry and the Victorian economy. Again I thank the minister for her commitment to the level crossing project and ask her to assist in the creation of a consultation process that gives voice to some of the wonderful ideas I have been hearing from industry and the local council.

Responses

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I thank the member for Gembrook for his request, and I would be pleased to visit Berwick Secondary College to discuss the health and wellbeing centre with principal Kerri Bolch. It is something that the member has spoken to me about a few times in quite glowing terms, so I thank him for raising this matter with me. I would also welcome the chance to talk about the broader needs of students in the south-east school community and to discuss solutions for how our education system can work in partnership to address the needs of all students. The significant boost to education funding in the budget the Treasurer delivered yesterday — the biggest funding boost to education in Victoria's history — gives us the chance to have these discussions with the confidence that we can actually deliver the solutions that will make a real difference for Victorian students.

As the member highlighted in his adjournment matter, there is a lot that we can learn from Berwick Secondary College. I am aware of the work undertaken at Berwick Secondary College, of the work of its nurse and of the history of the school, and I would welcome the chance to join with the member for Gembrook in better understanding the needs of the community and in taking on board the good work that is happening at Berwick and looking at how we can explore options both at that school and elsewhere. I thank the member for raising the matter.

I also thank the member for Geelong for her request. I would be very pleased to visit Whittington Primary School to monitor the progress of our investment in the future of this school and its community. Yesterday the Andrews Labor government made an investment in Victoria's future — an investment of \$568 million in building, upgrading and acquiring land for government schools across the state. Whittington Primary School is one school with a bright future ahead of it because of that investment. When I was last there the principal highlighted the fact that this was not only important for the school itself but also for the wellbeing of the broader community. This project is significant not just for the kids at the school and their families but for the community of Whittington as a whole.

Yesterday's budget is the first step in addressing the chronic underfunding of school capital that occurred over the past four years. I have said before that the lack of investment has led to a situation in which not one new school will be opened in 2016; that is the result of the underfunding of the previous government. There was a 500 per cent increase in the movement of relocatables, which is an unprecedented historical movement of relocatables, because new schools were not being built. Schools that were experiencing huge enrolment growth did not get the upgrades that they needed. I will be pleased to join the member for Geelong in visiting Whittington Primary School. Again, I will look forward to visiting the community and seeing the difference that can be made for Whittington staff, students, parents and the broader community.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I will deal with the remainder of the matters that were raised in the adjournment tonight. The member for South Barwon raised a matter for the Minister for Sport seeking that he fund a new pavilion for the Torquay Netball Club, and I will convey that to the minister.

The member for Ivanhoe raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking that she advise his office of the outcome of the expression of interest process being run by Metro Trains Melbourne for the filling of a shop in Silverdale Road, Eaglemont. The member is seeking that Metro pay particular attention to the concerns of the local community and its need for a post office and newsagency, and I will pass that on to the minister.

The member for Melbourne raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources seeking that she write a letter to some local community members in the seat of Polwarth about the Anglesea power station. I will of course pass that on. However, during that contribution the member for Melbourne indicated that

the Hazelwood power station ought to be shut down immediately. I find it surprising that the member would seek that, with no phase-out and no replacement of base load power requirements, and clearly no concern for industry or the jobs that would be lost as a consequence of that, no concern, given that winter is coming, for the elderly and the disadvantaged, who might like to turn on a heater in their home, and no recognition of the reality that there are many Victorians who might like to watch the footy on their TVs in their homes over the winter — none of that. Even as a Carlton supporter, I still now and then want to watch the footy, but not Carlton games.

I say to the member for Melbourne that of course I will pass that matter on, but really that call is just a bit of feel-good populism, playing to a small group of wealthy, advantaged, high-income people who would not have to deal with the awful consequences of a shutdown of base load power in this state. I will pass on the member's lack of concern.

The member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety seeking that the minister sit down with local residents to talk about matters relating to Bolton Street, Eltham, in her electorate. I will pass that on.

The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Sport, who is also the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, seeking that there be a reconsideration of funding for the Shane Doherty Memorial Tri-State Masters. I will pass that on.

The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Planning seeking that he prioritise the protection of the green wedge in the city of Kingston. As a member who also represents part of the city of Kingston, and given the way that council is currently constituted, I can attest and agree that the green wedge needs to be protected from that council.

The member for Euroa raised a matter for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water seeking that the minister tour Lake Cooper and Gaynor Swamp. I will pass that on.

Finally, the member for Dandenong raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, seeking that the minister host a community consultation in Dandenong South regarding congestion caused by the level crossing in Abbots Road, which again I am very familiar with, given that prior to the redistribution that was a matter I had to contend with.

That dispenses with all of the matters raised on the adjournment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny) —
Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.34 p.m.