

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 13 October 2016

(Extract from book 13)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

HANSARD¹⁵⁰



1866–2016

Following a select committee investigation, Victorian Hansard was conceived when the following amended motion was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 23 June 1865:

That in the opinion of this house, provision should be made to secure a more accurate report of the debates in Parliament, in the form of *Hansard*.

The sessional volume for the first sitting period of the Fifth Parliament, from 12 February to 10 April 1866, contains the following preface dated 11 April:

As a preface to the first volume of “Parliamentary Debates” (new series), it is not inappropriate to state that prior to the Fifth Parliament of Victoria the newspapers of the day virtually supplied the only records of the debates of the Legislature.

With the commencement of the Fifth Parliament, however, an independent report was furnished by a special staff of reporters, and issued in weekly parts.

This volume contains the complete reports of the proceedings of both Houses during the past session.

In 2016 the Hansard Unit of the Department of Parliamentary Services continues the work begun 150 years ago of providing an accurate and complete report of the proceedings of both houses of the Victorian Parliament.

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 20 June 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, and Minister for Emergency Services (from 10 June 2016) [Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation 10 June to 20 June 2016]	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects.	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D’Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports.	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for International Education and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. S. R. Herbert, MLC
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources.	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms G. A. Tierney, MLC

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

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn ²	Polwarth	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphine, Dr Denis Vincent ³	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
Britnell, Ms Roma ¹	South-West Coast	LP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John	Morwell	Nats
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁴	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Paynter, Mr Brian Francis	Bass	LP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison	Northcote	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Riordan, Mr Richard ⁵	Polwarth	LP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ⁶	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Brunswick	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

¹ Elected 31 October 2015

² Resigned 3 September 2015

³ Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴ Elected 14 March 2015

⁵ Elected 31 October 2015

⁶ Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Nardella and Ms Ryall.
(*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmarr and Mr Melhem.

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

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

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

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

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Thursday, 13 October 2016

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

JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council vacancy

The SPEAKER — Order! I have to report that the house met on Wednesday, 12 October 2016, with the Legislative Council for the purpose of choosing a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Honourable Damian Drum and that Mr Luke O'Sullivan has been duly chosen to hold the vacant seat.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Western suburbs police resources

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Melbourne's western suburbs points out to the house the need for strong efforts to be made by the Victorian government to ensure that residents in Melbourne's west feel safe in their community.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria give due consideration to the following:

police are funded to provide the services they need to keep our community safe;

legislation is made in line with community expectations;

police are supported to protect residents of Melbourne's west;

community services are funded to provide support to members of the community, including victims of crime and those who may be at risk of antisocial behaviour.

By Ms HENNESSY (Altona) (840 signatures).

Wyndham police resources

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Wyndham City Council comprising state electorates of Altona, Tarneit and Werribee draws to the attention of the house that Wyndham city has a significantly under-resourced police force. Figures from the police association reveal Wyndham has 45 police for every 100 000 people in the municipality, compared with a state average of 102. The association says Wyndham will need another 159 officers in the next five years to reach and then maintain the current Victorian ratio. The police service area of Wyndham also lacks in other police resources such as divisional cars and technological equipment that allows efficient policing. The suburb of Point Cook has developed at a high pace and now would require its own police station as

the nearest police station to the suburb is over 10 kilometres away. Furthermore, Wyndham North police station currently operates 16 hours a day. The community will benefit from Wyndham North police station operating as a full-time police station as it services a large geographical area.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria allocate more funds to Wyndham police service area to meet the safety requirements of residents and to instruct the Chief Commissioner of Police to allocate more first response police officers to Wyndham police service area so that citizens can feel safe again as we are well below the state average which is a priority that must be met.

By Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (1566 signatures).

Tabled.

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

Mr Thompson — On a point of order, Speaker, yesterday during question time personal reflections were made on the member for Warrandyte wherein he was referred to as 'the genius from Warrandyte'. In this particular case no objection will be made to that particular reflection.

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

INSPECTOR-GENERAL FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Victorian bushfires royal commission progress report

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services), by leave, presented report.

Tabled.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Accident Compensation Conciliation Service — Report 2015–16

Adult, Community and Further Education Board — Report 2015–16

Adult Multicultural Education Services Australia — Report 2015–16

Ambulance Victoria — Report 2015–16

Australian Centre for the Moving Image — Report 2015–16

Australian Grand Prix Corporation — Report 2015–16

- Commission for Children and Young People — Report 2015–16
- Commissioner for Privacy and Data Protection, Office of — Report 2015–16 — Ordered to be published
- Community Visitors — Report 2015–16 under s 35 of the *Disability Act 2006*, s 224 of the *Mental Health Act 2014* and s 195 of the *Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010* — Ordered to be published
- Disability Services Commissioner — Report 2015–16
- Docklands Studios Melbourne Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Department of — Report 2015–16
- Education and Training, Department of — Report 2015–16
- Emerald Tourist Railway Board — Report 2015–16
- Emergency Services Superannuation Board — Report 2015–16
- Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Department of — Report 2015–16
- Essential Services Commission — Report 2015–16
- Fed Square Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Financial Management Act 1994*:
- Financial Report for the State of Victoria 2015–16, incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No 4 — Ordered to be published
- Reports from the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change that she had received the reports 2015–16 of:
- Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board
- Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board
- Film Victoria — Report 2015–16
- Freedom of Information Commissioner — Report 2015–16
- Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust — Report 2015–16
- Health and Human Services, Department of — Report 2015–16
- Infrastructure Victoria — Report 2015–16
- Library Board of Victoria — Report 2015–16
- Melbourne and Olympic Parks Trust — Report 2015–16
- Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust — Report 2015–16
- Melbourne Recital Centre — Report 2015–16 (two documents)
- Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978* — Cumulative Summary of Returns as at 30 September 2016 — Ordered to be published
- Mental Health Complaints Commissioner — Report 2015–16
- Mental Health Tribunal — Report 2015–16
- Museums Board of Victoria — Report 2015–16
- National Gallery of Victoria, Council of Trustees — Report 2015–16
- Parliamentary Committees Act 2003* — Government response to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee's Inquiry into fuel drive-offs
- Places Victoria — Report 2015–16
- Planning and Environment Act 1987* — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:
- Greater Geelong — C271
- Latrobe — C98
- Southern Grampians — C35
- Whitehorse — C172 Part 2
- Port of Hastings Development Authority — Report 2015–16
- Premier and Cabinet, Department of — Report 2015–16
- Public Record Office Victoria — Report 2015–16
- Public Transport Development Authority — Report 2015–16
- Roads Corporation (VicRoads) — Report 2015–16
- Rolling Stock Holdings (Victoria) Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Rolling Stock (Victoria-VL) Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Rolling Stock (VL-1) Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Rolling Stock (VL-2) Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Rolling Stock (VL-3) Pty Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Rural Finance Corporation of Victoria — Report 2015–16
- Shrine of Remembrance — Report 2015–16
- State Electricity Commission of Victoria — Report 2015–16
- State Sport Centres Trust — Report 2015–16
- State Trustees Ltd — Report 2015–16
- Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003* — Report 2015–16 under ss 13, 13ZR and 21M (two documents)
- Transport Accident Commission — Report 2015–16
- Treasury and Finance, Department of — Report 2015–16
- Treasury Corporation of Victoria — Report 2015–16
- V/Line Corporation — Report 2015–16
- Victoria Grants Commission — Report 2015–16
- Victorian Arts Centre Trust — Report 2015–16
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority — Report 2015–16

Victorian Funds Management Corporation — Report 2015–16

Victorian Government Purchasing Board — Report 2015–16

Victorian Institute of Forensic Mental Health — Report 2015–16

Victorian Institute of Teaching — Report 2015–16

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority — Report 2015–16

Victorian Multicultural Commission — Report 2015–16

Victorian Rail Track — Report 2015–16

Victorian Regional Channels Authority — Report 2015–16

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority — Report 2015–16

Victorian Small Business Commissioner — Report 2015–16 —
Ordered to be published

Victorian Veterans Council — Report 2015–16

Victorian WorkCover Authority — Report 2015–16

VITS Languagelink — Report 2015–16

Young Farmers' Finance Council — Report 2015–16

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 25 October 2016.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Knox Environment Society

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I had the pleasure recently to attend the annual general meeting of the Knox Environment Society, whose members do a wonderful job in the Knox community. I pay tribute to president Richard Faragher and his committee. It was also good to see a number of members receiving life membership, including Fay and Allan Rimmer, who do great work with the Friends of Blind Creek Billabong in Ferntree Gully. I congratulate both of them on their receipt of their life memberships.

Knox Chinese Elderly Citizens Club

Mr WAKELING — Also congratulations to William Wai and his committee of the Knox Chinese Elderly Citizens Club. I, and the member for the federal seat of Aston, Alan Tudge, had the pleasure of

attending the mid-autumn festival celebration. It was a great event, and I congratulate all members on their work in representing the Chinese community within the city of Knox.

Mountain Gate Cricket Club

Mr WAKELING — It was also great to attend the Mountain Gate Cricket Club to officially launch their new oval at H.V. Jones Reserve in Ferntree Gully. Congratulations to president Garry Wilson and members. It was great to see the unveiling of this new oval, which was funded by the former Liberal-Nationals government, and I am pleased to have worked hard with that club.

U3A Knox

Mr WAKELING — I was also pleased to attend the U3A Knox art exhibition. I joined the member for Bayswater, who is a passionate supporter of the arts community, and the member for Rowville in attending the event. I congratulate the U3A for all they do.

Salford Park Community Village

Mr WAKELING — I also want to place on the record my congratulations to Salford Park Community Village for a wonderful fete night, and I pay tribute to its committee and members for a great job.

Chirnside Park, Werribee

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to inform the house about the redevelopment of Chirnside Park in my electorate, the home of the Werribee Tigers and other community teams. The sod turning was an important day for our community, and I was pleased to join Mark Penaluna, the CEO of the Werribee Tigers, and Pauline Nicol, whose late husband, John Nicol, so championed this redevelopment. He was a genuinely decent bloke. There are few places where people can gather and remember they are part of something bigger than their obligations, but for so many people that place is the local sporting club. Chirnside Park is also indistinguishable from the community that sustains it. It has been a central feature of Werribee life for over a century, and I am delighted we are setting it up for future generations.

The Andrews government contributed \$1.5 million to the redevelopment, which also received funding from local and federal governments, AFL Victoria and the Werribee Football Club. The project is a great example of all tiers of government working for the community. This infrastructure is part of the Andrews government's \$50 million Growing Suburbs Fund, which is designed

to build critical local community infrastructure in Melbourne's fast-growing outer suburbs. I look forward to seeing what else this funding can achieve for our growing communities.

Ovens Valley electorate floods

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I want to thank and congratulate all of the volunteers and staff who helped to keep the Ovens Valley safe from floodwaters last week — from the reaches of Harrierville and Bright through Myrtleford and into Wangaratta. As I drove down the Great Alpine Road very late last Tuesday night, members of the State Emergency Service (SES) were assisting drivers to navigate the floodwaters on a cold and wintry evening. But the SES did stop there; as the Ovens River met the Murray River at Bundalong there were some anxious moments through Yarrowonga and Cobram. David Booth continues to be a champion community facilitator when the going gets tough in the region, and I congratulate him, and I thank the Moira shire for its commitment. It again proves that the volunteers within our community are the backbone of our communities, both in good times and in tough times.

Fencing grants

Mr McCURDY — I call on the Minister for Agriculture to offer fencing grants to our farming communities who have been severely impacted by the loss of fences in the raging floodwaters. I visited the Ovens and Myrtleford regions last week to inspect damage to fencing. State government financial assistance would be well received in these regions.

Wangaratta Show

Mr McCURDY — I also want to congratulate Bernie Evans and his efficient team as the Wangaratta Show was another terrific event. Country shows are still a highlight on the calendar for most communities, and they help to bridge the understanding between town and country.

Myrtleford farmers market

Mr McCURDY — Allan McGuffie and Kerry Murphy are to be congratulated on the very successful launch of the Myrtleford farmers market. Myrtleford really has become quite the destination, with an array of activities for all ages. On the fourth Saturday of every month Myrtleford will be the destination of choice for many who frequent this magnificent region.

Statements interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before I call the minister, I wish to acknowledge in the gallery Mr Ted Whitten, Jnr. We welcome you.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Statements resumed.

Leopold Football Netball Club

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — It is hard to compete with that. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Leopold Football Netball Club on winning this year's Geelong Football League grand final, the first time it has done so since entering Geelong's premier competition in 1992. On the day Leopold were too good for St Mary's, beating them by six goals, but only after the lead seesawed all game. The day itself was a family affair for club stalwarts, the Thompsons — well done, Brendan — with team captain, Jai Thompson, starring and being awarded best on ground. His proud dad and club president, Brendan, watched on, himself a top local footballer through the 1980s.

Like all footy and netball clubs on the Bellarine Peninsula, I have been pleased to have worked with Leopold to ensure that they have first-class facilities. Only this year we started the process of fulfilling our election commitment to upgrade the clubrooms and to install new netball courts, which I was pleased to open just the other day.

Leopold Football Netball Club is a great club thanks to its committed and hardworking members, led by its committee and, as I said, its president, Brendan Thompson. The club has worked hard over many seasons on not only recruiting good players but more importantly on nurturing their junior teams, which have now formed the foundation of a strong and successful club. My congratulations go to all involved at Leopold, including of course its now premiership players and coach Steve Clarke. And I have no doubt plans are already well underway to make it back-to-back flags in 2017.

Hastings electorate crime

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — The latest Victorian crime statistics have confirmed that crime is again a major concern across Victoria, including the Hastings electorate. The June 2016 quarter figures show crime has continued to spiral out of control across all three local government areas of my electorate, with the City

of Casey up 17.7 per cent, the City of Frankston up 12.5 per cent and the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council up almost 10 per cent.

A similarly dangerous lawless situation developed during the Bracks and Brumby years, when those Labor governments abandoned law and order and left Victoria with the lowest per capita numbers of police officers in the nation. During those dark and dangerous years Victorians were forced to become accustomed to gang warfare, frequent murders, sexual assaults and daily reports of machete and other serious knife attacks. Weapon searches became a daily occurrence in many places, including schools, hospitals and similar institutions.

The response of the Andrews government has been as predictable as it has been dangerous. Police numbers have been slashed, police stations have been closed or their hours have been cut, and of course in my own community there has been the disgracefully political refusal by a soft-on-crime Premier and Minister for Police to open or staff a Liberal government-built \$16.3 million state-of-the-art police station.

The statistics indicate a startling leap of as much as 50 per cent in crime in townships across the Hastings electorate. This government was given a buoyant state economy, and it has just sold one of our most important assets for \$10 billion. This Premier has everything he needs to get this job done, yet he refuses to do so. If he is unable or unwilling to do so, he should step aside and allow somebody who is willing to do it — —

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

Len Fox Painting Award

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I was thrilled to attend the Castlemaine Art Museum on Saturday, 8 October, for the official opening and announcement of the Len Fox Painting Award for 2016 — an acquisitive award of \$50 000 which is held every two years, commemorating the life and works of Emanuel Phillips Fox. Known for his plein-air, impressionist style, Fox's paintings are characterized by vibrantly coloured landscapes and scenes of everyday life.

The award was initiated and funded by author, teacher and historian Len Fox, and of course E. Phillips Fox was his uncle. Forty-three contemporary artists were short-listed for the award, and a single outstanding work of art was chosen from this 2016 exhibition, with the winning artist, Prudence Flint, taking away the \$50 000 prize for her oil on linen work titled *Wash*.

This winning work will be acquired by the Castlemaine Art Museum and displayed in the gallery.

The prize is significant and one of the richest painting prizes in Australia. I am pleased that the Andrews Labor government, through Creative Victoria, has been able to support the Castlemaine Art Museum for this award. The Castlemaine Art Museum has a unique collection of Australian art and is rapidly gaining a reputation as one of the most significant art galleries in regional Victoria.

AFL Women's league

Ms EDWARDS — Three Bendigo Thunder footballers have made their mark as trailblazers of the AFL Women's league after Wednesday's inaugural draft. Isabella Ayre, Emma Grant and Sarah Last — congratulations to them. They were among the first of the 145 players to be officially drafted to the new competition.

Sierra Tango waiter

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Is there a waiter in the house? At a recent traders meeting on level crossings at a local Cheltenham restaurant, an octogenarian former mayor and great son of Moorabbin almost fainted and was swiftly assisted into supine position on a couch by a restaurant waiter. His heart rate and pulse were assessed by the waiter. His medication regime and dosages were evaluated by the waiter. Clinical observations were made by the waiter. It turned out the waiter was a doctor. Thank you, Sierra Tango and Sergio.

Sandringham Croquet Club

Mr THOMPSON — The Sandringham Croquet Club opened its 2016–17 season on Saturday, 10 September. The mayor of Bayside City Council assisted the club president, Jennie Bowles, in presenting the championship trophies for the past season. Matriarch of the district, Lesley Falloon, presented her perpetual trophy to the person with the most improved handicap.

The season was opened by the running of the first hoops by the mayor and Lesley Falloon, who is also a former dual mayor of the former City of Sandringham. A pleasant afternoon tea was enjoyed by all present. The following quote was read out by the president, being an extract from the *Brighton Southern Cross* of October 1912:

... the new lawns will form one of the finest grounds in the state and should prove a beauty spot and an attraction to the district.

Sandringham electorate opportunity shops

Mr THOMPSON — I pay tribute to the opportunity shops within the Sandringham electorate as they step in to spring to provide a range of bargains for local people and also to disburse funds across many charitable organisations.

Craigieburn Secondary College and Craigieburn South Primary School

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — I rise to congratulate Craigieburn Secondary College and Craigieburn South Primary School, which share a campus in my electorate. Mental health can be an ongoing struggle for many of our young people, and early prevention and treatment can make an enormous difference. That is why I was so pleased that Craigieburn Secondary College recently held an R U OK? event at Craigieburn Central in collaboration with the local headspace. Well done to all involved.

I was also thrilled to recently attend the Craigieburn Secondary College's Ironbark Performing Arts Centre opening. This 300-seat auditorium will allow local students to showcase their talents to the broader community. I look forward to attending many performances at this wonderful new facility.

From term 1 next year Craigieburn Secondary College students will also have regular access to a doctor, thanks to the Andrews Labor government's Doctors in Secondary Schools program. The school will partner with local doctors, making it easier for students to get healthcare support before health issues affect their studies.

The community hub at Craigieburn South Primary School runs a number of multicultural playgroups as well as weekly English as an additional language classes with free child care for participants. The hub plays a vital role in our community and through its work with migrant and refugee women as well as preschool children it helps to ease isolation and foster a sense of community and belonging.

Craigieburn South Primary is also one of four schools in Yuroke that are running a breakfast program. This program assists the one in seven students who go to school without breakfast in the morning, and I am very pleased that from next year it will also support local jobs with all of the milk and baked beans being provided from the Pactus Dairy Group and SPC Ardmona in Shepparton.

LGBTI equality

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — As it is mental health week, it is time now for the Prime Minister to abandon the proposed marriage equality plebiscite. One of the key reasons for opposing this plebiscite is the effect that it will have on the mental health of LGBTI Australians, particularly young people, because it would legitimise and unleash a damaging, hateful and hurtful campaign. We are already seeing evidence of it with materials and leaflets being distributed at people's homes and even at football matches. Same-sex attracted Victorians should not have to put up with a \$160 million public opinion poll on their right to marry the person they love.

I also call on Parliament to pass my notice of motion in support of marriage equality. It calls on the Parliament of Australia to amend the federal Marriage Act 1961 and for the federal government to abandon the proposed plebiscite. The motion could be debated in place of a matter of public importance, and it would be an appropriate expression of this house's desire to see marriage equality achieved in this term of Parliament.

Waste management

Mr HIBBINS — I would like to thank all residents who visited my stall at the Spring into Gardening fair at Victoria Gardens in Prahran to share with me their ideas for the Prahran electorate. There is so much more Victoria can do in regard to recycling and reducing waste, including a container deposit scheme, which other states are implementing; a ban on plastic bags — the Greens have introduced legislation to do that; as well as diverting food waste from the waste stream and reducing food waste. Organic waste makes up a high percentage of the waste stream and is by far and away the most polluting form of waste. Councils such as the Stonnington City Council are working with apartment dwellers to install worm farms and composting in common areas. More needs to be done.

Thompsons Road duplication

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — It was a great pleasure recently to join the Premier, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the member for Narre Warren South in formally announcing BMD Constructions Pty Ltd as the contractor that will construct stage 1 of the Andrews Labor government's \$175 million upgrade of Thompsons Road. Stage 1 works will remove the level crossing on the Cranbourne railway line in Lyndhurst with a six-lane bridge to be built over the railway line. The section from Marriott Boulevard to the South Gippsland Highway will also be duplicated.

Cranbourne electorate sports clubs

Mr PERERA — I would also like to congratulate all participants who played in various sporting competitions throughout the electorate of Cranbourne throughout the winter season. I especially congratulate the mighty Cranbourne Eagles who were premiers in 2016 and wish them the very best for season 2017. May I also congratulate the unsung heroes from the various sporting clubs, not only the participants and officials but also the mums and dads who time after time take their children to and from training and game days, and the vast number of volunteers who keep our local grassroots sporting clubs going and their welcoming doors open.

Heart Morass wetland

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — On Sunday I was pleased to attend an open day celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Heart Morass wetland restoration project. The success of this restoration project is the result of a formal partnership between Field and Game Australia, in particular the Sale branch of Field and Game, Bug Blitz Trust, Hugh D. T. Williamson Foundation, Watermark Inc. and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

The restoration project started in 2007 when Field and Game Australia's Wetland Environmental Taskforce Public Fund — the WET Trust — invested over \$1.1 million to purchase a property which covered 750 hectares of the Heart Morass wetland. The property is now 1800 hectares in size and features wetlands, red gum woodlands and over 11 kilometres of the lower Latrobe River. Over the past 10 years the Heart Morass wetland has undergone a remarkable transformation from a barren, saline landscape into a flourishing and ecologically diverse wetland system. It is a great credit to Field and Game and a fantastic example of the great conservation work that hunting organisations undertake.

Latrobe Valley employment

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The Labor government has been spruiking its so-called success in creating employment, but I notice the Treasurer fails to mention Gippsland when he gets to his feet. Unemployment has risen to 10.7 per cent under this government, up from 7.3 per cent when the coalition was in government. The government has failed the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland. It axed the Latrobe Valley Industry and Infrastructure Fund and took two years to replace it. It axed the Latrobe Valley Transition Committee established by the previous government, and this year it

tripled the brown coal royalty rate on the valley's major employers.

The government claims this multimillion-dollar tax increase will not affect the generators or be passed on to consumers. It is no great surprise we are now expecting to see the closure of Hazelwood power station sooner rather than later, with the loss of 550 direct jobs and many hundreds more.

North-eastern suburbs infrastructure

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — I welcome the draft 30-year infrastructure strategy of Infrastructure Victoria and encourage all people in my electorate to make a submission to this important document. I note that currently in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne this government has already got underway with a large range of infrastructure projects, particularly in the transport area. We have seen the consultation process underway already for the Hurstbridge line duplication at Rosanna and Heidelberg in the electorate of my colleague, the member for Ivanhoe, including the removal of two level crossings on that line at Alphington and Rosanna. These are important projects for people in the north-east of Melbourne.

We are also seeing the government getting on with the consultation process for the extension of the South Morang rail line to Mernda, a much-needed extension of that busy rail line; the duplication of Yan Yean and Plenty roads; extra car parking at Watsonia station; and the rollout of new E-class trams, which are made right here in Melbourne, on tram route 86, which runs through Bundoora and out to Mill Park. There are also new and improved bus services in the Plenty Valley area. This is in stark contrast to the record of the previous government in the north-eastern suburbs, where the only action they took in transport was to cut bus services to the many people who relied on those services to get around and get to work. The only offering that the previous government made and the now opposition is still clinging to is the dud east-west tunnel, which was shown to be an economic shocker. They should let go of that project.

Benambra electorate floods

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — I wish to put the house on notice of the devastation caused by the recent big wet, particularly in the north-east of the state and as it affected the Benambra electorate. It was in part due to Mother Nature and in large part due to a contrived flood as a result of releases from Lake Hume. A 1-in-20-year winter has left the ground saturated, with spring storms turning creeks and rivers into raging

torrents. Last week we had the Kiewa River breaking its banks, causing flash flooding in many parts of the electorate, and turning lakes in Wodonga into inland seas.

Farmers have lost stock, and pasture, now inundated for almost five weeks, is dead as well. One primary producer believes the cost to his farm is already well above \$300 000. Businesses have been isolated by the rising water, homes have been under threat and trees are simply falling over, the wet ground no longer able to keep them upright. There have been numerous power outages, and landslips have closed major roads. All emergency services and council staff in the four local government areas in the Benambra electorate have been on call 24/7 and have done an outstanding job.

While we can all acknowledge that this has been a wet winter, the situation in Benambra has been exacerbated by the unprecedented releases of water from a near-full Lake Hume. There are some major questions to be asked of those controlling the releases. Last week 14 gates were opened at the same time as a storm cell burst over the city. That is 100 gegalitres a day or 28 million litres every minute of water flowing into the Murray River, with a sodden catchment flooding farmland and businesses, and destroying civic parks and infrastructure. Now the water is starting to subside, we hope this house and this government recognise the huge cost to individuals and businesses.

Balfe Park, Brunswick East

Ms GARRETT (Brunswick) — It was an absolute pleasure last weekend to attend the opening of the Balfe Park refurbishment funded by the Andrews Labor government and Moreland City Council. Balfe Park, in the heart of Brunswick, is one of the homes of the Brunswick Zebras Football Club, a multicultural, community-oriented soccer club, with a strong focus on supporting and encouraging girls' and women's participation in this much-loved sport. The funding, which was an election commitment, has allowed upgrades to the clubrooms and facilities to make it possible for more games to be held at this ground, thereby taking the pressure off other grounds which are hotly contested in the inner city. The clubrooms now look fabulous and the girls in particular have a great place to get changed and make sure they are ready for the games.

The Zebras are an important and growing part of our diverse Brunswick community. The club actively supports refugee and migrant children, particularly from neighbouring commission housing, and it provides club fees and other assistance for the many

kids from families who otherwise would not be able to pay for their kids to participate in this sport. Hundreds of families, particularly out of the Brunswick area, are part of this incredible club. The club leadership and members alike were absolutely delighted on the glorious sunny day on which we were able to tour the facilities, enjoy a sausage and celebrate yet another election commitment being delivered by the Andrews Labor government in the heart of Brunswick.

Ringwood Magistrates Court

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — The Ringwood court is bursting at the seams with such a backlog of cases that criminals are out on bail for up to eight months before they are brought to account for their actions. It is no coincidence that a cut of 12 per cent in frontline police in Maroondah — a reduction of 14 officers — under this government and a more than 10 per cent increase in crime are occurring in our backyard. The backlog due to inadequate resourcing, a failure to address the huge, increased caseload of the court and a softening of bail laws by the Premier are creating risks to people and property in my community. These are risks that are preventable, risks that should be managed and fixed by the Attorney-General immediately.

The court officers do an excellent job but are hamstrung by a government that is not adequately resourcing our court to promptly deal with the crime wave sweeping the outer east. Why should a criminal be free to roam the streets for months on end without being held accountable for their actions? Maroondah has seen a 46 per cent increase in sexual offences in the last 12 months and big increases in burglary, drugs, assault, weapons and explosives offences. Criminals must be brought to account promptly and punishment meted out accordingly. What message is this government sending to criminals and those thinking about committing crimes? What message is it sending to my community as to why resident safety is not a priority of this government? The time to act is now; this cannot wait. The Attorney-General must significantly increase the resources of the Ringwood court and put the safety of my community first.

Macedonia

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — Recently I travelled to Macedonia, a country that has become an independent nation comparatively recently as a result of the breaking up of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the separation of countries such as Croatia and Serbia. Almost 10 per cent of the residents living in the Thomastown electorate identify as being Macedonian or of Macedonian heritage. I had the great

pleasure of visiting the towns and villages where residents of the Thomastown electorate grew up or their families and ancestors lived. I met many residents' families that are still living there. They were very generous and helpful hosts. Thank you to Mr Milko Brdanovski, brother-in-law of Mr Simon Petrovski in Thomastown, for my time in Bitola.

Macedonia is a beautiful country with warm and hospitable people and an ancient past. Victorians with a Macedonian background predominantly have connections with the city of Skopje, the capital, and the towns of Ohrid and Bitola. I was shown the ancient human settlement at the Bay of Bones, the vast, world heritage-listed and beautifully breathtaking lake at Ohrid and the British war cemetery where an Australian soldier has been respectfully laid to rest.

Whilst matters such as trade and formal relations between Macedonia and Victoria are relatively small, it is the people who make the strong connections between the two places. Whilst I was there it was similar to Victoria in that there was a whole lot of rebuilding and infrastructure building going on. I want to thank in particular Consul General Beti Korunovska, Mr Jason Kambovski and Mr Mirko Angelovski.

South-West Coast electorate infrastructure

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — Last week Infrastructure Victoria, the government's hand-picked advisory group, recommended spending more money on road maintenance and upgrades in regional areas, something the good people of my electorate have been screaming for for months. There are no excuses now: the government is flush with cash from the port lease and now its own advisers are recommending spending extra money on rural and regional roads.

Everywhere I go people tell me how bad the roads are and that they need to be fixed before someone is killed. Last week, following weeks of heavy rain, some school bus routes in the Glenelg shire were cancelled because the roads were too dangerous to drive on. The Glenelg Shire Council has released a third video showing how deteriorated its road network is. These are roads leading to the port of Portland, from where 10 per cent of the state's GDP is exported. This is not just a South-West Coast issue; this is a Victorian issue. If the roads fail and products cannot get to port, the state's bottom line will take a hit. It now seems the only people not listening to the pleas to fix our roads are the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Now that you have the money and your experts are telling you it is needed, what is stopping you?

There are also a few other projects in my region that need funding, and now that we have this state full of money there is no reason they cannot be funded. Warrnambool's Reid Oval is supposed to be South-West Coast's premier sportsground but is outdated and not capable of hosting AFL-standard games. It does not have lighting to enable night match play. The changing rooms are in need of an upgrade, as are the media and coaching facilities. The playing surface desperately needs to be improved. Dairy farmers and processors in the west of my electorate are struggling with their power supply. They are relying on single-wire earth return lines to deliver energy into their dairies, which is unreliable and often interrupted. They are calling for three-phase power to be extended to their region to improve their efficiency. This is exactly the type of project this money should be spent on.

George Treloar

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — There has been much action in Ballarat this past week. Last Monday we celebrated the success of Ballarat's adopted AFL team, the Western Bulldogs, when the premiership cup came to town, and on Saturday Ballarat became the focus of the Greek community when I attended a civic reception to honour the service and support for refugees of one of the city's famous but less known sons, George Devine Treloar.

George was born in Ballarat on 23 April 1884. Educated at St Patrick's College, he went on to become a highly decorated First World War veteran. George served in France and was ultimately promoted to major and was second-in-command of the 3rd Battalion. He later became a representative of the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees in northern Greece. George was engaged in the resettlement of Greek refugees from Asia Minor and helped over 108 000 Christian refugees fleeing persecution in the Ottoman Empire. Thanks to George's efforts, these refugees received immediate aid and were resettled in their new homeland, Greece. The Greek government awarded George the Order of the Redeemer, and the refugee village Thrylorion was named after him.

Many people attended Saturday's reception, including His Grace Bishop Ezekiel of Dervis, members of the Ballarat RSL, the local Greek community, Victoria's Pontian community and former parliamentary colleagues John Pandazopoulos and Lee Tarlamis as well as descendants of Ballarat soldiers and nurses who served in Greece in the first and second world wars. The aim of the reception was to launch a campaign to erect a memorial statue to George in his home town. I congratulate all those involved.

Around the Bay

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — Last Sunday, 9 October, I joined thousands of other cycling enthusiasts as we pedalled 210 kilometres ‘Around the Bay’ to raise funds for the Smith Family children’s charity. Right now, 1 in 10 Australian children are living in disadvantage. The Smith Family aims to give these kids the support and education they desperately need to realise their full potential. Through the charity’s Learning for Life program, disadvantaged children and young people get the opportunity on an ongoing basis to fully participate in their education, gain vital life skills and create better futures for themselves.

I am proud to have completed my first 210-kilometre Around the Bay to raise money for the Smith Family, but as I stand here today I am still feeling the effects on my body of all that pedalling. Thanks to my Labor in Lycra parliamentary colleagues and teammates, the members for Williamstown and Bundoora. Thank you also for the incredible support from former Premier and fellow cycling enthusiast Steve Bracks as well as friends Steve Booth, Liam O’Brien and Kosmos Samaris. I also want to thank Mike Boudrie, the founder of the La Velocita cycling website, for his extra motivation and occasionally warranted cycling advice, as well as the story he did on us leading up to this celebration of cycling.

I also want to thank my Labor parliamentary colleagues, stakeholders and community members for all their messages of support and generous donations. The Labor in Lycra team managed to make it to the 15th highest place in team donations to the Smith Family, with \$5750 raised. Thank you to the Bicycle Network for organising this event, in particular Tom Simmons, the business development executive. A huge thanks also to the Smith Family, the charity partner, in particular Tim Halliburton, the fundraising event manager, and Anton Leschen, general manager, Victoria. At the end of the day we pedalled 210 kilometres, raising all up \$657 726, which will mean 1142 children will have the chance to better themselves.

Hampton Park Football Netball Club

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — Hampton Park Football Netball Club’s very own Melissa O’Brien has been recognised as a champion of the code for her outstanding contribution as a volunteer over 30 years. Melissa was one of the founding members and players of the Hampton Park Football Netball Club in 2001 and was made a life member by the club in 2010. Melissa continues to volunteer at the club each and every

weekend and is a member of the executive committee as well as being its treasurer. There are few as committed and hardworking as Melissa. Melissa, you are a true champion!

Speaking of champions, what about the Hampton Park Netball Club’s under-13 team? They went through the entire season undefeated and beat Cranbourne in the grand final to take out a very well deserved premiership. Congratulations to Indyanna De Vries, Gemma Fleiner, Sophie Fleiner, Eliza Fowler, Sharna Free, Tara Goodman, Ellernah Hanlen, Ruby Klepac, Soleil Lehmann-Rhodes, Courtney Orvad and Riley Sheedy on a fine season. Coaches Tayla O’Brien and Mia Palmer also deserve special recognition for guiding their team through a perfect season.

As the season has now wrapped up, the Redbacks have held the annual best and fairest to recognise their champion players in each division. Well done to Cory Phillips, Sean Nunan, Monalisa Groom, Megan Egbers, Michelle Halim, Victoria Hitchcock, Michelle Halim, Jorvida Misa, Hanna Levin and Soleil Lehmann-Rhodes. Hanna Levin was also named the under-15 league’s best and fairest. Team of the year was the A-grade netball team. Donna Kellett celebrated 200 games, while Lisa Simpsons hit the big 250-game milestone. It has been another big year for the mighty Redbacks, and I look forward to cheering on both the football team and the netball team in 2017.

SENTENCING (COMMUNITY CORRECTION ORDER) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2016

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 Sentencing (Community Correction Order) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2016.

In my opinion, the Sentencing (Community Correction Order) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2016, 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.

Overview

The purposes of the Sentencing (Community Correction Order) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2016 (the bill) are to:

limit the use of non-custodial orders by the courts, in particular, to restrict the use of non-custodial orders for

particular serious offences and to limit the use of sentences of imprisonment combined with a community correction order;

provide for statements on the reduction of sentences for guilty pleas;

clarify the application of the historical homosexual conviction expungement scheme to the Children's Court; and

make a range of other minor and technical amendments, to accurately reflect current law and practice.

The bill creates offence-specific limitations on the availability of community correction orders and other non-custodial orders which will see these orders not available, or available only subject to special reasons, for particular serious offences. These offence-specific limitations do not apply to juvenile offenders (those under 18 years of age). The right to a fair hearing, right to liberty and the protection from cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment are relevant to the limitations on the availability of community correction orders and non-custodial orders.

Additionally, the bill provides that community correction orders can only be combined with a term of imprisonment of one year or less ('a combined order'), rather than two years or less and courts must not fix a non-parole period as part of a combined order. The bill also provides that the higher courts will only be able to impose community correction orders of up to five years duration, rather than the maximum penalty for the particular offence.

Human rights issues

Protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment (section 10) and right to liberty (section 21)

Section 10 of the charter relevantly provides that a person must not be punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way and section 21 of the charter provides that a person may not be deprived of his or her liberty, except in accordance with procedures established by law. Where a law is vague or unjust, a person's arrest or detention may be arbitrary even if it is lawful. Both charter rights are relevant to the offence-specific limitations on the availability of community correction orders and other non-custodial orders established by the bill.

This bill creates two categories of objectively serious offences — 'category 1 offences' and 'category 2 offences':

'Category 1 offences' are the most serious offences — murder, causing serious injury intentionally or recklessly in circumstances of gross violence, rape, the most serious child sexual offences (including incest) and trafficking or cultivating a drug of dependence (large commercial quantity).

The bill provides that a court sentencing a person convicted of a 'category 1 offence' must impose a custodial order other than a 'combined order', that is, a community correction order combined with a term of imprisonment under section 44 of the Sentencing Act 1991 (the sentencing act).

'Category 2 offences' are other serious offences — manslaughter, child homicide, causing serious injury

intentionally, kidnapping, arson causing death, trafficking or cultivating a drug of dependence (commercial quantity) and providing documents or information facilitating terrorist acts.

A court sentencing a person convicted of a 'category 2 offence' must impose a custodial order (other than a combined order) unless the court finds that one of the special reasons provided for in the bill applies. These special reasons are consistent with existing section 10A of the sentencing act, which provides the special reasons that a court must find in order to depart from the statutory minimum sentence for prescribed offences, including manslaughter by gross violence or 'coward's punch' and violent offences against on-duty emergency workers and custodial officers.

In my view and, for the reasons that follow, provision in the bill for the imposition of a custodial order (other than a combined order) for 'category 1 offences' and for 'category 2 offences' (unless special reasons apply) does not limit rights under sections 10 and 21 of the charter. The bill ensures that long community correction orders are not used as a substitute for imprisonment and that custodial orders are imposed for the most objectively serious offences. These reforms aim to provide a logical, transparent and consistent approach to sentencing for some of the most serious offences in Victoria. I consider that these amendments are an appropriate response to sentencing for the most serious criminal wrongdoing.

Category 1 offences

The bill provides that community correction orders or any lesser sentencing option will no longer be available to a court when sentencing offenders for a 'category 1 offence'. As listed above, the most serious offences in Victoria are included as a 'category 1 offence'. There will be no exceptions to the requirement to impose a custodial order for people convicted of a 'category 1 offence'. By requiring that a court impose a custodial order other than a combined order, the bill introduces a requirement arguably akin to a statutory minimum sentence for 'category 1 offences'.

International courts have, in certain circumstances, viewed statutory minimum sentences as arbitrary or excessive when a court has been compelled to impose a grossly disproportionate sentence. However, unlike statutory minimum sentences, there is no prescribed minimum sentence and the court retains full discretion as to the length of the custodial order imposed. This ensures that a proportionate sentence is applied taking into account the particular offence, level of criminality and any aggravating or mitigating factors.

I also note that the High Court has consistently held that provisions imposing mandatory minimum sentences, which this bill does not do given the absence of a minimum length of imprisonment for 'category 1 offences' and the special reasons provisions for 'category 2 offences', do not constitute a usurpation of judicial power and, as such, are not constitutionally objectionable.

In my opinion, the restrictions imposed on a court when sentencing a category 1 offence do not compel a court to impose an arbitrary sentence, nor a sentence that is grossly disproportionate to the offending conduct relevant to that sentence. Offences categorised as a 'category 1 offence' are Victoria's most serious offences. These offences are

exhaustively listed and involve the highest level of culpability which is reflected by maximum sentences of either life imprisonment, 25 years or 20 years imprisonment. I also note that there are other fundamental procedures and requirements under Victorian law that protect against arbitrary detention, and disproportionate and unjust sentences. To the extent that there is any limitation of the protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and right to liberty in relation to 'category 1 offences', I consider that that limitation is reasonable and justifiable in accordance with section 7(2) of the charter.

Category 2 offences

The bill acknowledges that a custodial order may not be an appropriate sentence for all offenders convicted of a 'category 2 offence'. If a court finds that a statutory special reason exists, it has full discretion to impose a community correction order, including a community correction order combined with a term of imprisonment. The special reasons are therefore a form of safeguard, which exempt a court from imposing a custodial sentence where justified by the personal circumstances of the offender or individual facts of the case.

The special reasons provided for in the bill include if the offender has assisted or undertaken to assist in the investigation or prosecution of an offence, or the court imposes a court secure treatment order or residential treatment order. Special reasons also exist for offenders aged over 18 but under 21 at the time of offence, who can prove a particular psychosocial immaturity, and for offenders who can prove impaired mental functioning.

In addition, a court may impose a non-custodial order if there are substantial and compelling circumstances that justify not imposing a custodial order, having regard to Parliament's intention that a custodial order should ordinarily be made for a 'category 2 offence' and whether the cumulative impact of the circumstances of the case justify departure from such a sentence. The provision for special reasons maintains judicial discretion and provides sufficient safeguards, where the imposition of a custodial sentence for a 'category 2 offence' may be arbitrary or unwarranted, given the particular vulnerabilities of the offender.

Right to a fair hearing (section 24)

Section 24 of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to have the charge decided by an independent and impartial court after a fair hearing. Nothing in the bill limits the right to a fair hearing as provided for in the charter.

As noted above, the courts retain full sentencing discretion to impose a custodial order (other than a combined order) under division 2 of part 3 of the sentencing act in relation to a 'category 1 offence'. Although the bill prohibits non-custodial sentences for a 'category 1 offence', the sentencing court has discretion to impose any custodial sentence without prescribing the duration of that sentence. In addition, a court may release the offender into the community if it does not consider that additional time in custody is required, for example, where an offender demonstrates strong factors in mitigation beyond that already spent on remand.

In relation to 'category 2 offences', the courts also have the option of imposing a non-custodial sentence if satisfied that a special reason exists. The special reasons provisions allow the

courts to take account of factors that reduce an offender's culpability to such a degree that the offender should not be subject to a custodial sentence. This protects against the risk of a disproportionate sentence being imposed and ensures that the special circumstances of an offender may be considered by the sentencing court in respect of 'category 2 offences'.

For these reasons, I consider that the bill does not limit section 24 of the charter.

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 standing orders:

The government has been concerned about sentencing practices since the cumulative impact of the previous government's reforms has become clear. We supported introduction of the community correction order in 2012 and the abolition of suspended sentences and parole reforms when in opposition. Prior to the 2014 election, the previous government passed a suite of reforms which expanded the use of community correction orders.

The government agrees that community correction orders are a valuable sentencing tool, but believes that the former government's broad regime went too far.

In particular, the government is concerned about the use of community correction orders in relation to serious offending, where a term of imprisonment would be a more appropriate sentence given the gravity of the offence and culpability of the offender.

The bill will restrict the availability of community correction orders and other non-custodial orders for the most serious offences, and ensure that the availability of community correction orders is more consistent with community expectations. The bill will also make minor and technical amendments to the Sentencing Act 1991, Corrections Act 1986 and the Bail Act 1977.

Sentencing reform

The government considers that it is appropriate that a custodial sentence should be imposed for the most serious criminal offences on the Victorian statute book. For other serious offences, the courts may only impose a non-custodial order in very limited circumstances. This sends a strong message to perpetrators that the government takes criminal offending seriously and such behaviour will be met with time in jail.

Category 1 offences

The bill will introduce two new classes of serious offences into the Sentencing Act 1991 — 'category 1 offences' and 'category 2 offences'.

'Category 1 offences' are objectively the most serious criminal offences in Victoria. They include murder, causing

serious injury intentionally or recklessly in circumstances of gross violence, rape, the most serious child sexual offences (including incest), and trafficking or cultivating a drug of dependence (large commercial quantity).

The bill will provide that when sentencing a person for a 'category 1 offence' a court must impose a custodial order. A term of imprisonment combined with a community correction order (a 'combined order') is prohibited. There will be no exceptions to the requirement to impose a custodial order.

Category 2 offences

'Category 2 offences' are other serious criminal offences and include manslaughter, child homicide, causing serious injury intentionally, kidnapping, arson causing death, trafficking or cultivating a drug of dependence (commercial quantity), and providing documents or information facilitating terrorist acts.

The bill will provide that a court must impose a custodial order (other than a combined order) when sentencing a person for a 'category 2 offence', unless the court finds that one of the special reasons provided for in the bill exists. This will mean that if the court finds that a special reason exists, it will retain full sentencing discretion and may impose a community correction order, combined order or other lesser non-custodial order.

The special reasons provided for in the bill will mirror existing section 10A of the Sentencing Act 1991, which provides the special reasons that a court must find in order to depart from the statutory minimum sentence for particular offences, such as gross violence offences. The special reasons are an important legislative safeguard, which will exempt a court in limited circumstances from imposing a custodial sentence for a 'category 2 offence' where justified by the particular facts of the case or circumstances of the offender.

Special reasons include if the offender has assisted or undertaken to assist in the investigation or prosecution of an offence. Special reasons may also exist where the offender can prove impaired mental functioning or where the offender is between 18 and 21 years at the time of the offence, and can prove a particular psychosocial immaturity, or where there are substantial and compelling reasons that justify not imposing a custodial order.

Community correction orders combined with imprisonment

The previous government amended the Sentencing Act 1991 in 2014 to expand the use of community correction orders combined with a term of imprisonment. Prior to these changes, only a sentence of imprisonment of three months or less could be combined with a community correction order. Combined orders were used for less serious offences compared to cases that received a longer sentence of imprisonment with parole. The 2014 amendments raised the three-month limit to two years and blurred the sentencing options further by expressly stating that a community correction order could be imposed where a suspended sentence would have previously been considered suitable.

The government considers that the 2014 reforms have led to an inappropriate use of community correction orders in serious cases. Since 2014, the number of offenders on a combined order has steadily increased. In 2015 there were 2028 combined orders imposed by the Magistrates Court, compared with 1013 imposed in 2014. Similarly, there were

356 combined orders imposed by the higher courts in 2015, compared with 96 combined orders imposed in 2014.

The bill will reduce the availability of combined orders by reducing the length of a sentence of imprisonment that may be combined with a community correction order to one year or less and provide that a court must not fix a non-parole period as part of the sentence. This will ensure that where a combined order is imposed, an offender cannot be released on parole before commencing the community correction order component of their sentence.

The bill also preserves the role of the parole system to oversee the discretionary release of prisoners, to monitor reintegration into the community and apply strict enforcement powers where quick return to jail is required.

Limiting community correction orders imposed by the higher courts to five years

Currently, the higher courts may impose a community correction order up to the length of the maximum term of imprisonment for the relevant offence, which could be, for example, up to 25 years in the case of aggravated burglary.

The bill will provide that the maximum length of a community correction order that may be made by the higher courts for one or more offences is five years. This is consistent with the maximum length of a community correction order that may be imposed by the Magistrates Court.

Five years is an adequate upper limit for a community correction order. Lengthy community correction orders should not be used as a substitute for imprisonment for serious offending.

Statement about sentencing discount on guilty pleas

Section 6AAA of the Sentencing Act 1991 requires a court to state the sentence and non-parole period (if any) that it would have imposed but for the offender's plea of guilty. This provision is designed to encourage early guilty pleas and increase transparency in the sentencing process by identifying the sentencing discount afforded to offenders who plead guilty. However, as noted by the Sentencing Advisory Council in a recent report, the circumstances when a court must state the sentencing discount requires some clarification.

The bill therefore clarifies that a section 6AAA statement must be made in relation to orders to imprison made under section 7(1)(a) of the Sentencing Act 1991, combined orders and community correction orders of two years or more duration.

Amendments to the historical homosexual conviction expungement scheme

The Sentencing Amendment (Historical Homosexual Convictions Expungement) Act 2014 commenced on 1 September 2015. Two issues have arisen since the historical homosexual conviction expungement scheme commenced and require legislative amendment.

Firstly, the bill will clarify that part 8 of the Sentencing Act 1991, which establishes the historical homosexual conviction expungement scheme, applies to the Children's Court and allows a Children's Court conviction to be expunged.

Secondly, the bill will clarify the definition of 'data controller' to more accurately describe the officer responsible for official records at the courts and VCAT, for the purposes of the historical homosexual conviction expungement scheme.

Minor and technical amendments to reflect current law and practice

The bill will make a range of minor and technical amendments. The bill will repeal provisions in the Bail Act 1977 that require written notice of a trial date to be provided to the accused and any sureties, as these requirements are redundant and do not reflect the current practice of service of a trial indictment. Other minor amendments include updating references to repealed sections of the Corrections Act 1986 and the Sentencing Act 1991.

Conclusion

The government has examined sentencing practices for the most serious offences under Victorian law following the previous government's reforms in 2014. The sentencing reforms in this bill take account of the harm caused to victims and the culpability of persons that commit these terrible crimes. The government has targeted these reforms at our most serious offences. They reflect the community expectation that for some of these cases imprisonment is the only option.

The previous government's campaign to broaden the use of community correction orders went too far. The Andrews government will ensure that our sentencing laws reflect community views and get the balance right.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn).

Debate adjourned until Thursday, 27 October.

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION BILL 2016

Second reading

Order of the day read for resumption of debate.

Declared private

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! The Speaker has examined the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016 and is of the opinion that it is a private bill.

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I move:

That this bill be treated as a public bill and that fees be dispensed with.

Motion agreed to.

Second reading

Debate resumed from 14 September; motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to contribute to the debate on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. I rise to speak as the lead speaker for the opposition. I place on the record at the outset that the opposition will be supporting the bill before the house. By way of background the main purpose of this bill is to modernise the governance and the administrative structure to reflect the fund's current purpose. The changes in the bill seek to change the structure to ensure that the fund is best placed to attract donations and make meaningful differences to improve the lives of Victorians in need.

By way of background the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation aims to increase life opportunities and promote social inclusion through a combination of grants, research, partnerships, communications and investment tools to grow and build strong communities. The fund in its current form has a very clear focus on important areas of the state, including education and employment, homelessness and affordability, healthy and cohesive communities, and a sustainable Melbourne. The origins of the foundation date back to 1923 when then Melbourne Lord Mayor Sir John Swanson — obviously a famous name here in Melbourne — was a successful businessman and philanthropist. I quote:

In 1923 Sir John worked to establish the Lord Mayor's Fund for Metropolitan Hospitals and Charities with the vision of organising and coordinating charitable giving in Melbourne.

I go on to quote:

A visionary thinker, Sir John was convinced it was possible to provide the city's hospitals and charities with an assured stream of income. His idea to centralise fundraising through a scheme based on a community chest was welcomed by the charities board, which had been established in 1922 to coordinate fundraising efforts in the metropolitan area.

The Lord Mayor's Fund for Metropolitan Hospital and Charities was officially opened by Acting Premier Sir William McPherson on 14 June 1923 at the Melbourne town hall.

So clearly the aim of this trust, which has now been in operation for many years, was to provide an opportunity for the community to give funds and for those to then be disbursed to charitable organisations with a particular focus on hospitals.

We now see that that role has expanded. In 1930 the Lord Mayor's Fund Act 1930 was enacted to provide

incorporation for the fund, and then in 1996 the Lord Mayor's Fund Act 1996 was enacted. This made new provision for the management and administration of the fund and redefined the objectives of the fund. Certainly there was a greater scope and focus on the fund back in 1996. This current bill modernises the act and reflects the changes to community needs and fundraising and the philanthropy that has developed in this state since 1996.

The new fund seeks to rename the fund as the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. It will change the role of the Lord Mayor from being an automatic board member and chair to that of a founding patron of the foundation. Under these changes the bill will reduce the size of the board, from 21 members to 9 members, and they will be selected on the basis of a particular skill, with three-year terms for a maximum of three terms.

The bill allows the foundation to pool funds held by separate trusts and funds for investment purposes. It also allows the foundation to apply money from the fund anywhere in Victoria and not just in Melbourne.

The fund has worked with both sides of politics over a long period of time, and both Labor and coalition governments have worked with the fund to ensure that the organisation is best placed to meet the needs of that organisation. The bill before the house today is reflective of the work that has happened on a bipartisan basis.

The current board members will be able to see out their current terms, and the CEO and the board are obviously supportive of the bill, and it is important from their perspective that this achieves contemporary governance structures that are suitable for a modern foundation.

As we know, competition for philanthropic funds is strong, and the bill will allow the fund to present itself as an attractive option for donors. It is imperative that we ensure that this organisation is best placed in the market to not only divest funds but more importantly to attract funds. As we know, philanthropy is reliant on donors, and it is imperative that this organisation is best placed in order to be able to attract donors and so that donors feel comfortable and confident with the decisions being made by the board in the way in which it is divesting those funds and that it is also providing a great outcome for the Victorian community.

Each of us would know that in our own communities and across the state there is a plethora of charitable organisations that are seeking donations, many for worthy causes, but that stretches the dollar in terms of money that is given by the community. It is imperative

that this organisation is best placed in order to achieve its objectives.

I will briefly go through the report of the fund from 2015, which obviously was under the signature of the current Lord Mayor, Robert Doyle, who is also the president of the board. He acknowledges that the board, now in its 92nd year, has provided grants worth \$9.648 million to more than 500 charitable and not-for-profit organisations, with a focus on the root cause of social, economic and environmental injustices. The Lord Mayor goes on to state that in 2015 the organisation was pleased to partner with the Australian Centre for Social Innovation to launch Seed Challenge, with this initiative funding one or more social enterprises aimed at employing young people with disabilities, which is imperative considering that only 54 per cent of Victorians working age, aged 15 to 64, who live with a disability currently participate in the workforce. He goes on to talk about some of the other achievements as well. This is an organisation that has done tremendous work.

The current fund seeks to provide donations within a number of different streams in its current form. One of the first areas it looks at is homelessness, housing and disadvantage. There are a number of organisations that have been in receipt of grants under the fund in the previous year and they are focused on being proactive — dealing with homelessness, innovation programs, exploration programs, sector capacity building, the Survive and Thrive Grants program — and dealing with issues of small infrastructure as well as material aid. So there is a broad focus in terms of the work that the fund is doing in partnering with a number of local organisations dealing with issues of homelessness, housing and disadvantage.

In the area of food security, the foundation provides significantly for what is known as the Feed Melbourne Appeal and since 2008 more than \$2.4 million in grants has been provided to over 150 food service charities across the state. All of us will know of the work of the many great organisations that provide support in these areas. There has been a range of organisations that have received funding, not just within the City of Melbourne but across the state. It is imperative that this is being done in order to provide the necessary funding on the ground to deliver an outcome for those Victorians who are clearly in need and I pay tribute to the work they are doing in that space.

The next area in the foundation's report looks at work done to increase life opportunities, also with a particular focus on young people. Again, the fund has been working in areas that deal with youth initiatives and

providing proactive assistance for young people. A range of grants have been provided in that area to deal with young people. It is important that young people are provided with opportunities in order to grow, to learn, to be mentored, to gain life skills and to gain work opportunities to ensure that they are in a better place and have a greater opportunity to live a proactive life but also a life in which they can gain employment, where they feel more confident and where they can become an important member of the Victorian community. It is also pleasing to note that there has been work done with our Koori community as well as members of our ethnic communities.

One of the other areas this organisation has been focusing on is community health and wellbeing and important issues around that. There has been \$118 000 worth of grants provided to 25 not-for-profit and school partnerships involving schools such as Parade College, Stonnington Primary School, Heatherhill Primary School, University Park Primary School, Kingsley Park Primary School, Mount Erin College, Lilydale Primary School and Westbreen Primary School.

Important work has been done by partnering with those organisations in things such as the creation of the community kitchen project. Those important programs have been put in place by those local schools in partnership with their local communities. They can sit down and deliver an outcome that is important not only to that school but to that school community. It is about engagement with the broader community and it is great to see that this fund is working with those organisations.

Another area focused on by the fund is community health and wellbeing, again in partnering with a range of organisations that are dealing with a whole range of challenges Victorians face in the community health space, whether it be palliative care, mental health, Life Education Victoria or The Compassionate Friends Victoria that provide so much support to people who are dealing with grief from the loss of a loved one. These organisations are at the coalface delivering support services to Victorians and again I pay tribute to the foundation for the funding of that work.

There are two other areas I want to mention. One is Sustainable Melbourne, through which significant funds have been provided to organisations that deal with improving some of the environmental issues within our local community, whether that be the way in which people deal with sustainable living or by working with organisations such as the Yarra Riverkeeper Association that is dealing with the health of our important Yarra River, and Greening Australia.

There is a range of programs and I am encouraged to see that that work has been undertaken.

Finally, the foundation has partnered with the Eldon and Anne Foote Trust, which is about providing, in collaboration with the University of Canberra, an elite athlete scholarship which aims to help support students to balance their athletic career and tertiary education. Again, I think that is an important area and I pay tribute to the work of the foundation.

This is an important organisation. It has been ably led and I pay tribute to the Lord Mayor for the work he has done, not only with this body but also in running the City of Melbourne. As I said, I believe this is an important organisation which has had bipartisan support during its journey, so on behalf of the Victorian coalition I confirm that the coalition will be supporting the bill before the house and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. Before I talk about the bill itself I might reflect on a few comments made by the lead speaker for the opposition. I make the point and put on the record that while the lead speaker indicated that the opposition is supporting the bill and he waxed lyrical about the work of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the fund first wrote to the previous government in 2013, proposing that these changes be made and that contemporary governance arrangements be put in place.

It is just another example of the failure of the previous Liberal government to govern in the interests of the Victorian people. You have to throw your hands up and ask, 'What were they doing in those four long years?'. I said it yesterday and I will say it again today: under the previous Liberal government we saw the health portfolio managed by a person who will go down in history as one of the worst health ministers this state has ever seen.

Mr Crisp — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask that you return the speaker to the content of the bill. So far we have not heard one word about the bill. I ask her to return to the bill before the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! I was in some consultation with the Government Whip. I will continue to listen carefully to the member for Macedon and I encourage her — while I do not uphold the point of order at this stage — to confine her remarks to the bill as the government's first speaker.

Ms THOMAS — Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. For the member for Mildura, I was providing some context on the way the bill has made its way to this place. I am very glad that it is now here. This is a piece of legislation that is overdue as a consequence of the ineptitude and incompetence of the former, failed Liberal-Nationals government. Thank goodness we now have the Andrews Labor government in power, getting on with delivering for the people of Victoria.

One of the unexpected pleasures of being an elected member of this house is the opportunity to learn about some of the fantastic institutions in our state — public, philanthropic and not for profit. Indeed such is the story of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund that I want to talk a little bit about the history of this really inspiring organisation. To go back to November 1921:

... Lord Mayor John Swanson formed a special hospital committee after he saw the metropolitan hospitals were experiencing difficulties in raising funds for maintenance —

and at that time they received very little government assistance. Back in the 1920s:

Hospitals relied heavily on the generosity of the public and philanthropic contributions as they were seen as charitable institutions but as the amount of funds required for maintenance grew, fundraising became an increasingly time-consuming activity. Seeing this need, the Lord Mayor proposed that a fund be set up to relieve the burden that fundraising placed on the hospitals.

I should point out that I am quoting from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation's website and talking about the history of this great organisation. To continue:

After careful consideration and research into other hospital funding schemes, a public meeting was held in March 1922 to present the scheme proposed by the committee. This scheme proposed establishing a central depot to receive systematic voluntary weekly contributions from employers, employees and others interested in donating. It also proposed that all persons contributing systematic weekly contributions were exempt from payment for hospital treatment but other persons had to pay according to their ability to do so.

...

The proposed scheme was accepted and the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation was officially launched in June 1923.

From that time this foundation has gone on to make great contributions, and not only to our health sector. Over time it has taken the opportunity to see what other needs are there in our community and has amended its purpose and its articles as required. What we have now is an organisation that has made many great and enduring contributions to our state since it was founded.

I did notice also, in reading about the history of the fund, that after the bushfires of 1939 the fund saw an immediate need to raise contributions for people who were affected by bushfire, and indeed the fund again took on that role in response to the Black Saturday bushfires. It was great to read that the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation stepped up after the Black Saturday fires and raised an extraordinary \$1.6 million, which was donated to agencies working with bushfire victims. As I said, it has been terrific to read about the work of this fund, and it is important that we now, through this place, set in place a contemporary governance framework for it.

What is being asked for and what the bill seeks to do is, as I said, to provide for a modern governance structure with clear purpose and scope for the foundation's charitable activities. There will be a reduction in the size of the foundation's board from 21 to 9 members. Board members will now be selected on the basis of particular skills. At the request of the foundation itself, the Lord Mayor of the day will no longer be president and will instead become a founding patron. The bill also abolishes the executive committee, thereby avoiding duplication and increasing efficiency. The foundation has also asked that it be able to pool funds held in separate trusts it manages for investment purposes, and this has been provided for in the drafting of the bill.

The fund itself will continue with its charitable status intact and will have an expanded geographic scope. While currently the foundation can only direct money to hospitals and charities outside metropolitan Melbourne with approval from the Minister for Health, under this bill charities and hospitals anywhere in Victoria will be able to benefit.

This is one of those bills that on the face of it makes you think it is small and inconsequential, but what this bill does is enable one of Victoria's great philanthropic trusts to be able to spread its work further, to boost its donor base and to stay true to its original mission, which was to really support the health and wellbeing of Melburnians but to expand that to the state more broadly.

As I visit our health centres across the state, I am struck time and time again by the extraordinary generosity and willingness of local communities to continue to contribute through donations to our health infrastructure. This is fantastic, and it is to be encouraged. But I must say it is with some despair that I see our hospital CEOs and boards having to focus so much more on fundraising because of the heartless and cruel funding cuts by the federal Liberal-Nationals

coalition government. It has absolutely ripped \$1 billion out of the health system. It is an absolute disgrace.

I said it yesterday, I will say it again today, because we have got to keep reminding the people in our community of the infamous 2014 Abbott-Hockey budget. What a disgrace. It was an attack on the most vulnerable people in our community, including those people in regional Victoria seeking access to health care through our hospitals. We have gone back to the days of the 1920s when we had to raise funds through fundraising. It is a disgrace. This bill is an excellent bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. Previous speakers have outlined the changes the bill is making. As our lead speaker, the member for Ferntree Gully, announced, the coalition will be supporting this bill. And why would we not? The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation — or the 'fund', as it has been known as in the past — has been a — —

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — It really is quite extraordinary that the member for Macedon is trying to make political mileage when we are trying to be bipartisan in our approach. The foundation was modernised in 1996 under a previous coalition government, and we were working with the organisation at the time. I find the squawking from the other side is constantly political. They are totally incapable of accepting any bipartisan approach on anything.

But I will continue with the reasons we are supporting this legislation. The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016 will modernise the governance and administration structures to reflect the fund's current purpose and change its structure to ensure that the fund is best placed to attract donations and make a meaningful difference to the lives of Victorians in need, which the fund has been doing since 1923. The fund aims to increase life opportunities and promote social inclusion through a combination of grants, research, partnerships, communication and investment tools to grow and build strong communities. It has done this for a number of years in Melbourne, and I am pleased that this bill will allow the fund *prima facie* to expand that to regional areas without needing the minister's say-so.

The foundation, as it is now called and will be known as after this bill passes, makes grants on the basis of a number of principles. They are to increase life opportunities for Victorians and overcome barriers to

participation; to promote social inclusion and cohesion; to encourage community engagement; to engage beyond grants, which is an important one as well; knowledge creation and dissemination; transparency and accountability; sustainability; and balanced giving. I think it is important in terms of balanced giving that we balance not just the city but also the country. That expansion into the country areas will certainly be welcomed by rural members of Parliament.

I can say from my own perspective that we have a very active and successful charitable sector in Gippsland, but it is increasingly difficult to raise funds. There are so many organisations out there trying to raise funds locally, on a state basis or nationally. We as members of Parliament can attest to that by the simple fact that we come here each week and find there is another badge to wear, another day to celebrate and another week to celebrate. This week I am wearing a badge for supporting amputees as it is National Amputee Awareness Week. It is equally the case in country areas.

Recently I had the great pleasure to attend and also play a small part on the organising committee of Wellington Shire's Biggest Ever Blokes Barbecue. That was a fantastic local event. About 400-plus men in the Sale Memorial Hall were raising money for the local hospital and also for prostate cancer research. Incredibly, the community of Wellington Shire raised on the day just over \$100 000. That was in addition to last year raising about \$80 000, so there was an increase. As a member of the organising committee, naturally restricted by my role as an MP and not being able to get there and do too much, I had the opportunity to see the generosity of the local business community. We were constantly astounded by phone calls and emails from local businesses saying, 'Yes, I am happy to throw in \$1000 cash', and, 'I'm happy to throw in \$2000 or \$3000 worth of goods that can be auctioned on the day'.

Andrew Dunkley Machinery was a major sponsor. Of course Andrew Dunkley is the father of Josh Dunkley, who starred in the Bulldogs premiership last week. There are no Bulldogs fans in the chamber today as I speak, which is disappointing; they have been here all week. Josh of course starred in the Bulldogs premiership last week. Andrew Dunkley donated a ride-on mower worth \$7500 and was the major sponsor as a result. It was a fantastic contribution, and to raise \$100 000 in a day for our local hospital and for prostate cancer was a great effort by our local community.

Likewise, last year I had the pleasure of being in charge at the Dancing with Our Stars event, which raised

money for the Five Star Project in Sale, which provides accommodation for adults with disabilities — intellectual and otherwise. I think from memory we raised about \$40 000 on the night from that — again, a fantastic effort.

I know the South Gippsland Hospital in Foster has very strong support from the local community. It raised about \$100 000 recently to install solar panels on its roof. My own Sale Rotary Club has an annual dinner auction, which this year raised around \$10 000, but the amount it has been raising has reduced over the years — at its peak it was raising something like \$30 000. As I said, it is becoming increasingly difficult to raise funds, particularly in Gippsland where I know business conditions are fairly tight at the moment. We are seeing troubles in the Latrobe Valley with the brown coal sector. In my own area the oil and gas sector is in a bit of a hiatus to some degree — there is not much growth there. Our business conditions in Gippsland are difficult, and while the Gippsland community continues to be very generous, it is very difficult to continue to raise funds whether it is for charity or whether it is for footy clubs, netball clubs or other sporting groups or community groups. The extension of this fund's coverage into country Victoria will certainly be a welcome development.

There are a number of other changes to the structure of the organisation. I must say that the reduction in the size of the board from 21 to 9 members is a measure that I strongly support. I am regularly surprised at the size of some of the boards that run various organisations in our state. I think that 9 is about the perfect size; 21 does make it very difficult to have an effectively functioning board. That will be a good outcome.

There are a number of other minor changes that will allow the foundation to pool funds held in separate trusts for investment purposes. As I said, the change that will allow the foundation to apply funding to hospitals and other charities outside the Melbourne metropolitan area without needing the minister's approval will certainly be welcomed by my community.

The coalition is supporting this bill. It was disappointing to get the political attacks we heard from the previous speaker, but I look forward to this one passing. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I just want to pick up on a couple of differences between some of the speakers in relation to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. I recall that during my time at

Banyule City Council we had the opportunity to look at how we could align ourselves with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. We did that back in about 2007–08: we were able to put contributions from Banyule City Council towards funds to be managed by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. When we agreed to do, when I was at Banyule City Council back in 2007–08, that was following on from places such as Kingston, which in 2006 had gone down this path. What had happened there is that of course the foundation had been matching the contributions by those local government organisations to the extent that, as I noticed in some of my research in relation to this, the foundation has matched about \$100 000 into some 10 community fund accounts, including Banyule's, which has leveraged a contribution of some \$1 million.

I have established that the first council that got involved in this was Kingston back in 2006. Since then we have seen Manningham, Banyule, Mornington, Frankston and Cardinia establishing these community funds. I think that has been something that has been well prosecuted at Banyule. We obviously have other arrangements in terms of the Banyule RSL Trust Fund, which has operated for a long time with the Watsonia RSL.

I would like to touch on one of my constituents, Leigh Wallace, OAM. Not only is he a past employee of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation but he has also done a lot of philanthropic work in more recent times with the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, bringing his experience and skills to bear in that forum. I commend him not only for that work but also for his work in bringing to the attention of Banyule council the opportunity to use the legislative and legal infrastructure that the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has in place to leverage opportunities for local government to play a role and engage in philanthropic efforts in its community.

I would like to acknowledge that work. I do not mind saying in the debate that I can recall that the council was a little bit hesitant and a little bit unsure as to whether that was the best use of its funds, but of course what we need to do is look long term at how we can grow that corpus of funds and provide an opportunity into the future to leverage the other donations and contributions and look at what that can bring to the community. That is just another area where the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has been able to provide opportunities in the community and provide opportunities for local government to play its role in the work that is done in a philanthropic way.

I also want to touch on how much is picked up by trusts and foundations around Australia. Some of the work that has been done through Philanthropy Australia touches on the fact that there are some 3000 private and public ancillary funds in Australia. These are two common forms that represent only a small number of the philanthropic organisations across the country. I believe that the total assets of those private and public ancillary funds is estimated to be something in the order of \$4 billion, with cumulative distribution since 2001 totalling around \$1.7 billion.

The conversation that is often had when we look at this in the broader context is around how we can continue to leverage opportunities for philanthropy to thrive and to grow in Australia and how we can maintain the philanthropic contributions that have traditionally been made in our country. We can look to overseas examples, particularly America, even if we might not like to align ourselves in many ways with other nations. Certainly the philanthropic effort in places like America is very substantial and has a very long history. I think the key issue here is how we continue to grow and drive a willingness in Victoria and in Australia to broaden the philanthropic effort and to provide a greater opportunity and responsibility for those who have the capacity to bring about social change through their contributions to others. I think that all governments, particularly in a lot of ways the federal government in its taxing efforts, are about how we can provide greater opportunities to streamline and provide better capacity for philanthropy to thrive in Australia.

I do not think we have got there yet in terms of the obligations for those with the capacity to give more and in terms of governments playing their role as legislators to encourage and drive that; I think we still lag a pretty long way behind in terms of our capacity. There are many who do give, but they give based also on the fact that they have been able to harness and enjoy great wealth through the resources and capacities that belong to all Australians. So how do you define people's effort to give and their capacity to do so?

I think these are some of the broader questions that come to mind when we have a look even at places such as the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre. While governments make their contributions and Olivia has put her name to that project in my electorate, there is ongoing effort required in terms of recurrent funding and work, which is a significant philanthropic effort. Other than, in particular, from people whose lives are touched by cancer or other disease, how do you continue to drive and encourage philanthropic effort in the community, particularly when there is such competition for charitable dollars

and the opportunities to leverage people's generosity? I just think some of those broader issues are things that the Parliament needs to think about, particularly how we engage our federal colleagues, who have far more of a role in terms of taxation to perhaps provide greater opportunities for those who have the capacity to be engaged and to give.

We have also seen — and I am sure Acting Speaker McGuire will touch on this in his contribution — some of the work of medical research and the opportunities that philanthropy in that space has provided not only for medical research but in terms of engagement with those overseas and the way in which we can learn from that work. While there is a legislative aspect to it, there is also really a cultural and community aspect, and that is something I think we need to have a look at.

I think we have seen that whatever the crisis might be, people's willingness to contribute and to give is quite substantial when a crisis hits. Victorians and Australians are no strangers to that effort. But what I think it does say as well is that we could do more to leverage greater contributions from those who have the capacity to make them, and that is the broader conversation that brings us back to this bill on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. I certainly engaged with opportunities as a local councillor in trying to find ways at a very local community level to leverage and provide opportunities for those who had the capacity in our community to also use those mechanisms and to contribute.

I think the ongoing work of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and this bill particularly is picking up some of the mechanical issues that I suppose those opposite touched on around members of the board and how you continue to have accountability for their work. I certainly support those points that have been made and those initiatives that have been outlined in the bill. As the second-reading speech by the minister noted, the foundation manages a sizeable amount of donated money, which should be distributed in a way that benefits as many Victorians as possible and by an effective board with appropriate skills and governance capabilities.

Certainly I think anyone who has walked into a meeting where there is a couple of dozen people there as board members potentially, as has been the case here, it is a bit hard to get an understanding of who is taking absolute responsibility and where the direction is coming from. What that shows is that a lot of people want to contribute and a lot of people want to have a say, but it is important that we get these mechanisms right. The broader message here is how we as

governments and legislators can provide greater opportunities to make it easier and more accountable for those in the community who can give to do so.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Some great philanthropic work has been undertaken across the City of Melbourne since the early days of the colony. I note the great work undertaken too by recent diasporas who have migrated to Australia — including the Australian Greek Welfare Society and organisations such as Fronditha, which look after people in need, deliver funds and are involved in great benefaction. The bill before the house at the moment is the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016, which refers to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

The member for Ferntree Gully alluded to the inauguration of the foundation by Sir John Swanson, who was a former Lord Mayor of Melbourne. It is interesting to note that Swanson, who together with his brother had a building firm known as Swanson Bros, was a keen builder within the city. They built the Crown Law offices, the Collins Street Assembly Hall and the dining room wing of the Victorian Parliament House, which has recently hosted visitors from Greece and the Greek consul to Melbourne. In addition other works undertaken by Swanson Bros included the Melbourne City Baths, the arts and other buildings of the University of Melbourne, the City Court and the concrete dome of the Melbourne public library. This good work was undertaken by John Swanson, who, both as Lord Mayor and as a builder, strengthened both the built form and the golden threads of the social fabric of Melbourne.

The objects of the foundation have been to manage and administer charitable trusts and funds, to coordinate fundraising and to make grants, and to educate and engage the community and donors to undertake research into areas of need and opportunity within the community in relation to the objects of the foundation. In relation to the Sandringham community there are many opportunity shops that have philanthropic purposes. They are run by dedicated volunteers, and it is important that we recognise the valuable work they do in raising money for important community causes.

September saw National Op Shop Week 2016, which was a great time to remind us of the work that volunteers undertake and how we can also make valuable contributions. Within the Sandringham electorate there are many opportunity shops that undertake magnificent work. They include the All Souls opportunity shop, the Vision Australia opportunity shop, the Family Life Highett opportunity shop, the OzChild opportunity shop in Highett, the

Cheltenham Salvos opportunity shop, the Family Life Cheltenham opportunity shop, the Australian Animal Protection Society opportunity shop in Cheltenham, the Vinnies Mentone opportunity shop, the Southern opportunity shop in Mentone and the Mentone Salvos opportunity shop.

The opportunity shops in Melbourne provide an important community service by raising funds for local charities and communities and by helping to promote re-using and recycling valuable goods. One day the suit worn by the member for Essendon, the Sir Les Patterson suit, will provide great funds for charitable causes when it is donated to a Melbourne opportunity shop to further the great philanthropic purposes of charitable foundations in Melbourne.

There are many great opportunity shops supporting community groups. Among the beneficiaries of opportunity shops in Melbourne, the All Souls opportunity shop in particular, are the Fairway hostel, BayCISS, Bayside Youth Services, Castlefield Community Centre, the Royal District Nursing Service, the Black Rock Life Saving Club, the Sandringham Life Saving Club, Moira Disability and Youth Services, Sandringham and District Hospital, the Chelsea Men's Shed, the Dingley Men's Shed, the Anglican Board of Mission, the Anglican Health Chaplaincy, the Anglican Outback fund, Anglicare Victoria, Criminal Justice Ministry, Anglicare Dixon House, Anglican Overseas Aid, the Bush Church Aid Society, the Church Missionary Society, the Lighthouse Foundation and Mackillop Family Services foster and youth services.

Other beneficiaries include the Melbourne Anglican Foundation, the Mission to Seafarers, Nungalinga College, Ridley College, SparkLit, St Mark's Community Centre in Fitzroy, the Leprosy Mission Australia, Trinity College, Wesley Mission Melbourne, Austcare, the Cambodian Children's Trust Australia, Doctors without Borders, the East Africa Fund, Save the Children, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, WorldShare Wakisa Ministry, the Christian Blind Mission International, the Guide Dog Association, the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children's talking book library, the Fred Hollows Foundation, Vision Australia, Able Australia Services, Better Hearing Australia, the Salvation Army in Wantirna, Lions Hearing Dogs, Alzheimer's Australia, the Arthritis Foundation of Victoria, the Asthma Foundation, the Australian Kidney Foundation, the Australian Leukodystrophy Support Group, Bethlehem Health Care Melbourne, the Breast Cancer Network Australia — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Sandringham shall resume his contribution when the matter is next before the house. The time has come for me to interrupt business under sessional orders for questions without notice and ministers statements. I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Fire services enterprise bargaining agreements

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Do you stand by your claim made yesterday in the house that Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria's (VFBV) Andrew Ford is a liar? What evidence do you have that this is the case?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the member for Gembrook for his question, and I stand by the many comments I have made on the lies and the misinformation reported by the Liberal Party, by the aspiring Liberal politician who heads the VFBV and by the federal government which was caught out lying about the 'seven on the ground' clause and could not even explain its own legislation. The Senate inquiry had a version of the agreement that was an old version and that did not include the specific clauses protecting the role of our volunteers. Let me just reiterate —

Mr Wakeling interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Ferntree Gully!

Mr MERLINO — The parties to the agreement have reached an agreement. The Country Fire Authority and the union representing the firefighters have reached an agreement. The only people that are trying to stop it, that are trying to continue to divide and pit firefighters against firefighters, are those opposite and their friends in the VFBV.

Supplementary question

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — If you are so confident with the evidence that you have against Andrew Ford, will you join me on the steps of Parliament after question time and make the same statements outside with the media — because I am sure they are all free.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is unable to hear the member for Gembrook, and I am sure my friends in the media gallery are also unable to hear the member. Has the member for Gembrook concluded his question?

Mr BATTIN — I have to say, Speaker, that was a \$50 000 statement, that one.

If you are so confident in the evidence you have against Andrew Ford, will you join me after question time on the steps of Parliament with the media and make the same accusation — that you called Andrew Ford a liar?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Yan Yean will come to order. The Chair is on his feet. The minister will respond to a supplementary question as put by the member for Gembrook. Members will cooperate and allow the minister to be heard in silence.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the member for Gembrook for his question.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr MERLINO — I am generous. That was a particularly pathetic question from the member opposite.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will continue through the Chair and be heard in silence.

Mr MERLINO — I will stand with those firefighters who want to end this dispute. I will not stand with those who vilify —

Ms Britnell interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast will come to order.

Mr MERLINO — I will not stand and I will not agree with those, like the member opposite, who spend their time vilifying the brave men and women who protect our property.

Questions and statements interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling on the Premier to make a ministers statement, I wish to welcome to the gallery Ms Marina Hrysoveloni, the

Deputy Minister of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks from Greece. You are welcome. Further, Ekaterini Xagorari, Ambassador for Greece to Australia, and of course Christina Simantirakis, Consul General of Greece. *καλώς ήρθατε*. Welcome.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Questions and statements resumed.

Ministers statements: China and Japan visit

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am pleased to inform the house on outcomes from my recent visit to China and Japan. It was an official visit to China and one that I enjoyed very much, and indeed the visit to Japan also. We understand on this side of the house how important it is to have strong relationships with our major trading partners and our major investment partners as well. That is why I pledged to visit China each and every year that I have the great honour of leading our state, and every member of my cabinet — and maybe even a few more — will be visiting China as well. That is how important we understand that relationship and partnership to be.

I was very pleased to sign a sister state agreement with Sichuan Province, giving Victorian business and all Victorians a front-row seat to the fastest growing region in China, with 81 million people and an 8.5 per cent annual growth rate in terms of economic activity. We are there in the prime position thanks to this government and our efforts.

We of course made further announcements about international education. We know how important that is to every member of this house. International education is a very important part of our economy. We made an announcement about securing the Boao Forum, a very prestigious international event that will be visiting Melbourne in just a few weeks time. And of course cultural exchange is very important as well, and the National Ballet of China will be visiting Melbourne next year.

We then went to Japan and met with many household names — companies that have had a long presence in Victoria and Australia, that are giants in terms of employment and investment — and we made a number of other important announcements and visits, particularly in relation to the new Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development, one that I think will bear fruit for our medical research community into the future. It was a great official visit and one of many that this government will undertake.

Fire services enterprise bargaining agreements

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Tracey Rau, the wife of Peter Rau, the former chief fire officer of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), has gone public about her husband's illness and subsequent resignation, stating that:

The main reason my husband has had to resign is due to stress as a result of bullying by the UFU ...

He has lodged a claim with WorkCover and it has been accepted.

Minister, given WorkCover's acceptance of Mr Rau's claim, what steps have you taken to ensure that all current Country Fire Authority (CFA) and MFB staff have a safe workplace and are protected from bullying by Peter Marshall's United Firefighters Union (UFU)?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. It would not be appropriate for me to talk specifically about anyone's WorkCover claim, but what I would say in general in regard to the fire services is consistent with what I have been saying. Not just over the last couple of years but over many, many years there has developed a toxic relationship between management and its workforce, and that is reflected in comments in the fire services review, and I quote from the fire services review:

At times, the relationship between the leadership and firefighters seems like trench warfare.

...

The organisational leadership also needs to draw a line in the adversarial relationship with the UFU and launch a new constructive and collaborative dialogue with it.

The comments that Jim Higgins as CEO made before the parliamentary inquiry into bushfire preparedness again acknowledge the challenges in the relationship between management and the UFU.

No one side is to blame in this longstanding development, but we need to respond to the issues that have been raised in the fire services review, in the Fiskville inquiry and in other inquiries into our fire services. We do need to change the culture of the leadership. We do need to improve the relationship between management and the union that represents the career firefighters. We do need to do that. As part of the resolution of disputes in the CFA, we have set up the consultative committee. We need to do similar improvements in the MFB. That is what we are focused on. All the opposition understand is going to war with

the men and women who help keep our community safe.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — WorkCover’s acceptance of Mr Rau’s claim indicates that they believe the UFU’s activity has caused injury to Mr Rau and that the UFU’s conduct has been unacceptable. Minister, when you became aware that Peter Rau went on extended leave in order to avoid the effects of this relentless UFU bullying did you do a single thing about it, or were you comfortable with that kind of behaviour because Peter Marshall and you wanted Peter Rau, David Youssef and other senior MFB staff all gone?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) — The categorical answer is no.

Ministers statements: Victoria-China education services manager

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I rise to advise the house that Victorian schools will now have a helping hand to forge stronger links with Chinese schools, with a new dedicated education representative in Shanghai. The new school education services manager will help Victorian and Chinese schools work together to deliver the Victorian certificate of education (VCE) in China as well as increasing the number of international enrolments in Victorian government schools. Six Victorian schools are currently delivering VCE education in 19 Chinese schools.

The new education services manager will also forge contacts across the Chinese education sector and make it easier for Chinese and Victorian schools to collaborate. We now have 52 000 students studying a Chinese language; we have around 1500 year 9 students who will be studying in China for six weeks as part of the Victorian Young Leaders to China program; and more than 170 schools have sister school partnerships. The new education services manager will help strengthen our ties with Chinese schools and encourage more Chinese students to study VCE and spend time in our schools.

I was honoured recently to visit China in an official capacity as a minister in the Victorian government. The Premier has been encouraging ministers to build on our already strong relationship with China. Indeed this call to action has now been taken up in a bipartisan form. I acknowledge the efforts of the could-have-been 23rd member of the Andrews Labor government’s cabinet, the member for Caulfield, the adjunct professor and

apparently the Victorian minister for innovation, energy, resources and renewables, and I am happy to make those photos available, Speaker. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, so perhaps we should take this as a compliment.

Fire services enterprise bargaining agreements

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Minister for Emergency Services. A United Firefighters Union (UFU) bulletin released on 27 January 2016 headed ‘666 days ago the MFB tried to drag us through hell’ called on members of the UFU to remember what the UFU described as the evil actions of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). The bulletin contains a hit list of 15 senior MFB staff, including Peter Rau, David Youssef, Darren Davies, Craig Lloyd and Andrew Zammit — and I am happy to make that available to the house. These people are all gone. Minister, why do you continue to ignore or, worse still, to back this UFU and Peter Marshall campaign of systematic bullying to drive senior MFB staff out of their jobs?

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. While we are getting these inane questions from the Leader of the Opposition, these conspiracy theories — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MERLINO — The very same week that we are getting these inane questions from the Leader of the Opposition, the MFB and the UFU are constructively negotiating before the independent umpire, the Fair Work Commission. So the only people interested — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is entitled to silence. A question was put to the minister, and the minister should be able to continue in silence.

Mr MERLINO — The only people interested in industrial warfare, the only people interested in vilifying our firefighters, are those opposite. The MFB and the UFU are constructively working through the issues, negotiating the agreement — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn!

Mr MERLINO — They are negotiating the new agreement before the Fair Work Commission, the independent umpire, as we speak. So I reject the question from the Leader of the Opposition. On this side of the house we are interested in resolving industrial disputes. We are interested in improving the culture of our fire services so that we have a much better relationship between management and the union representing its firefighters.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The UFU bulletin I referred to lists 15 people — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The members from Macedon and Essendon are warned. The Leader of the Opposition is on his feet. During a question the Chair must be able to hear the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr GUY — This is about people's careers. There are 15 people listed as a hit list by the UFU, 15 people whose names I will not read out but I am happy to make available to this house. Five of these 15 staff have been bullied out of their jobs. I ask the Deputy Premier: will you take any steps to guarantee the remaining 10 senior MFB staff on this UFU hit list will be protected once and for all from bullying, intimidation and threats from the UFU or, Minister, do you just back Peter Marshall's purge of the MFB staff?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will come to order. The Minister for Emergency Services was asked a question. The minister is entitled to be heard in silence. The minister has the call.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) — They are so concerned about the welfare of firefighters they denied presumptive rights for four years, they denied the links between certain cancers and the welfare of our firefighters, they did nothing about Fiskville, they denied presumptive rights and they did nothing about Hazelwood. I will not take a lecture for one second by the Leader of the Opposition or anyone opposite.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members will come to order. I call on the Minister for Energy, Environment

and Climate Change. The minister will be heard in silence — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is entitled to silence when making a minister's statement. The minister has the call.

Ministers statements: energy industry employment

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) — I rise to update the house on the work being done in my energy, environment and climate change portfolio to create local jobs and export opportunities for Victoria. The Andrews Labor government is committed to making Victoria the new energy technology hub of Australia. That is why this government established a \$20 million New Energy Jobs Fund. I have now announced the first round of funding to successful applicants because it is really important that when you are an actual minister, as opposed to — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government and opposition members will come to order. The minister will continue on her minister's statement.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — When you are an actual minister, as opposed to — I do not know — a DJ or an adjunct professor or indeed a pretend minister of the Crown travelling through China, you actually do what you say you are going to do. That is why today I am really pleased to inform the house that our government has awarded the Victorian company RayGen \$1 million in funding to support the manufacturing of world-leading new energy and solar technologies. This funding strengthens RayGen's export competitiveness and creates 40 new jobs in Victoria.

RayGen is a Victorian success story, backed by this government's actions. For example, last year, overseen by the Premier, RayGen signed an agreement in China with JuYe Solar to build 500 megawatts of concentrating solar PV plants using RayGen's innovative technologies. This agreement creates 200 jobs in Victoria.

As the actual Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I very much look forward to visiting China to help facilitate the growth of Victoria's new energy technology businesses in this state. Only our government is committed to getting things done, and we will do just that.

Murray River flood levees

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My question is for the Minister for Water. Residents living along the Murray River in my electorate have long been raising concerns about the poor state of the levee banks, especially as they have been watching rising water levels during the past fortnight. They are concerned that the flood levees have not been maintained and have significantly deteriorated as a result of many years of neglect. While there is a Victorian flood plain management strategy there seems to be a great deal of confusion about who is responsible for levees in Victoria. Minister, what steps are being taken by the government to ensure that our flood levees are regularly inspected and fit for purpose on an ongoing basis, not just when an emergency arises?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Water) — I thank the member for Shepparton for her question. As the member for Shepparton has indicated, it is a very difficult time for a number of communities along the Murray as we continue to see threats around flooding. I know that there have been some intensive interventions made by some of our emergency service workers in some of the levee work to maintain some of the really critical levees that are protecting towns. One occurred over the weekend in Wangaratta.

Victoria has about 4000 kilometres of levees across the state. Many of these, particularly those along the Murray, were built in the early 1900s. Some were built by private landowners, some by council. Many of these are in a state of disrepair, particularly those that are not around our townships. The priority of councils and communities over the decades has been to maintain those that surround our towns. But there has been a lot of dispute over who has responsibility for these levees.

In 2014 the former minister got a draft flood plain strategy, which caused a lot of grief at the time in terms of who was responsible. That strategy talked about the state government not having any ongoing financial responsibility. So we committed to some further consultation with communities, which we did, that resulted in the flood plain management strategy being released earlier this year, linked with \$25 million of investment. For the first time this does assign responsibility. It basically assigns responsibility to those who benefit from levees; they have the responsibility to maintain those levees. It is very clear about that. It also assigns responsibility for who is responsible for responding in flood situations. It identifies nine regional areas that will have flood strategies for which the \$25 million will go towards supporting particular flood mitigation works.

In the past it has been a very ad hoc arrangement in relation to whether the state government contributes. For the first time it is very, very clear that the state government will be a partner with the council and with the commonwealth government in building new levees and in the major refurbishment of levees with those who benefit being responsible for the maintenance of those levees. We will contribute one-third towards the cost of building new ones and refurbishing levees.

There has been a commitment to 15 particular areas of funding, including Numurkah, Donald, Bendigo and Seymour, which is about supporting both the strategy development as well as the infrastructure that they need. We gave some additional resources to Numurkah recently to put in some monitoring arrangements as well. We are rolling this out and it will be the first time the state has some responsibility in this area.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — Minister, across the river in New South Wales substantial levees have been constructed, and this, among other things, has affected the ability of the community and emergency services to predict the outcome of the current flood event. Minister, will you provide details of the mechanisms for management of flood levees on both the New South Wales and the Victorian sides of the River Murray, including the current status of any joint committees and when they last met, and what cross-border processes are in place to deal with the current flood event in my electorate?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Water) — I thank the member for Shepparton for the supplementary question. Firstly, in relation to the current flood, there are arrangements in place that operate between the Victoria State Emergency Service and the New South Wales State Emergency Service that are well understood and play out in terms of managing the flood across the New South Wales and Victorian border.

In relation to the current issues that the member talks about, undoubtedly New South Wales agencies have identified a number of levees that are unauthorised, and we are still to understand the impact that they might be having on flood flows. The New South Wales government is investigating that and will be reporting back to Victoria in relation to that. In regard to the flood plain strategy in terms of the long-term arrangements, each of the nine regional strategies, where they are along the Murray, will require partnership with those New South Wales agencies for ongoing flood mitigation and flood strategy work.

Ministers statements: ITS World Congress

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I have some marvellous news I want to share with the house. I rise to advise the house that the 23rd ITS World Congress is being held this week at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. What a marvellous success it is. As of Wednesday there were 9850 delegates — it has probably increased. I also notice that the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks from Greece is one of the delegates, and I very much thank her and others for coming.

The conference brings together some of the best and sharpest minds in relation to information technology and moving people around. I guess many cities in the world have a serious issue to deal with in relation to this space, and that is congestion. It is amazing what IT can do and the capacities these people have to use logarithms and the like to actually move people around so well. I want to thank the CEOs of Europe Ertico, America and Asia Pacific for their support.

I want to thank so many delegates. I think we had 500 delegates from Japan, and that was a great delegation, but we also had many, many delegates from China. One particular delegate mentioned their delight at the fact that the Victorian state government was sending so many ministers over there and wanted to engage. I thought that was very good. They said, ‘In recent weeks we have had a couple of ministers’, so what did I do? I went and had a look at Facebook. I went to have a little look at Facebook and see who was recently there, and you would be surprised! I noticed the grand khan of artifice in the state Parliament was there. This person was not an adjunct professor —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Burgess — On a point of order, Speaker, in the best collegiate manner I am sure that all people in this house would like to help the minister out with the fact that he said logarithm when he probably meant algorithm, but it is up to the minister to correct himself, I suppose.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair will rule on the member for Hastings’s point of order. Not surprisingly, there is no point of order.

Mr Southwick — On a further point of order, Speaker, given that the minister was referring, I think, to the amount of travel and investment that has been done in China — a very important partner for all of

Victoria, as we all gather and which I hope would have bipartisan support — and given that a minister in the upper house has spent over \$160 000 of taxpayers money on travel and has got nothing to show for it, I think it is fair enough that we should help one another out to deliver some results for Victoria.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will continue. There is no point of order.

Mr DONNELLAN — As I was saying, I had to point out to the delegate that that was not an adjunct professor, that was not a minister — that was simply a naughty boy not called Brian but David.

Police numbers

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Minister for Police. Official Victoria Police figures quoted by you on Tuesday and released yesterday show that regional police at stations — that is, actual frontline police numbers — were 9841 in November 2014 and this week were 9813, a reduction of 28 officers. Minister, for once will you just tell the truth and admit that, despite rising crime and population growth, under your government frontline police numbers have actually been cut?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General will come to order, the Premier will come to order and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will come to order and allow the Minister for Police to respond to the Leader of The Nationals on a substantive question in silence.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — Can I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. I am really disappointed I have only got one question today, because there is so much to say. I want to be very, very clear, Speaker.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! A question was put and an answer is being advanced to the house. The minister is entitled to be heard in silence.

Ms NEVILLE — Let us be very, very clear here, absolutely clear. On every single count there are more police now in our regions and on our front line than there ever have been. Total police full-time effective in 2014, 13 145; in September 2016, 13 370.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

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

Ms NEVILLE — Total regional police allocated to regions in 2014, 9029; September 2016, 9321 — 292 extra. Operational support police, again we have more now. In terms of number of recruits, more now than November 2014. Sorry, Speaker. Do you know what they have counted? The shadow minister — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of factuality, I have here the official police by location statistics for November 2014 and the most recent show the reduction in the numbers that I quoted. I seek permission to table those figures.

The SPEAKER — Order! Is leave granted? Leave is not granted. The Leader of The Nationals has concluded his point of order. Leave was not granted.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Planning and the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing will allow the Minister for Police to make a point of order and to be heard in silence. The Minister for Police, in silence.

Ms NEVILLE — Speaker, they can just look on the website, because that is exactly where I am looking — the official figures from the police. What they did count, though, was police constables prior to deployment. These are constables that are not on the front line. They are counting those police, and guess what? That was a little bit down.

Mr Guy — They are on the front line.

Ms NEVILLE — They are not on the front line.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will come to making her point of order.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will come to making her point of order and conclude it.

Ms NEVILLE — Sorry, I was not doing that.

The SPEAKER — Order! I beg your pardon. The Chair understood that the minister was contributing on the point of order. There is no point of order. The minister will continue to respond to the Leader of The Nationals.

Ms NEVILLE — Sorry about that confusion, Speaker. It is clear that the shadow minister has counted these police constables prior to deployment, which I do not include in the figures because they are not on the front line. The story that that tells you is that in fact the opposition in government in 2014 and 2015 had zero dollars for frontline police. It is actually a story more about — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals will be heard in silence when making a point of order.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, the substance of the question was very much about the minister for once actually telling the truth. I urge you to bring the minister back to telling the truth for once in her life.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte! There is no point of order. The minister, to continue and to be heard in silence.

Ms NEVILLE — In the official figures there are more frontline police now on every count than there was under the previous government. But in addition to that, Speaker, I heard the shadow minister say that the academy was empty. Well, let us look at the facts on that. In 2014–15 under their last budget, the previous government's budget, 616 in the academy; in 2015–16, 1103, and in 2016–17 it will be 1056. So on every single count I stand here — —

Ms Britnell interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South-West Coast.

Ms NEVILLE — On every single count we are funding more police than ever. We have funded more police in our time in government than they have ever funded, because they funded zero, and there are more police on the front line now than there was in November 2014 on every single count.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will allow the Leader of The Nationals to direct a supplementary question to the Minister for Police.

Supplementary question

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — Minister, with frontline police numbers cut and officers — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General is warned.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will allow the Leader of The Nationals to put a supplementary question.

Mr WALSH — With frontline police numbers cut and officers overworked, overstretched and suffering enormous pressure, will you confirm that under your government police attrition rates have skyrocketed by nearly 20 per cent?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — Well, wrong and wrong. Wrong, we have cut no frontline police; in fact there are more now. And wrong on attrition rates; attrition rates are running at about 2.6 per cent at the moment — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition! The member for Bass is warned.

Ms NEVILLE — We need 3 per cent in order to keep up with attrition, so again, wrong and wrong. But let us talk about cuts; let us talk about factual cuts. Some \$100 million was cut from Victoria Police. Cuts to forensic services — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Members for Bass and South-West Coast

The SPEAKER — Order! The members for Bass and South-West Coast will withdraw from the house for a period of 30 minutes.

Honourable members for Bass and South-West Coast withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Police numbers

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — The only people that have cut Victoria Police are those opposite when they were in government. There was Blue Light disco. People were taken off the frontline to support administrative jobs. The police band was cut. The Auditor-General found hundreds of police were babysitting prisoners in cells. We are funding more police. We have got more police now than ever in Victoria and we are funding police custody officers that are freeing up our police. We will give the Chief Commissioner of Police the power and the resources he needs, and that is what we are doing.

Ministers statements: economy

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to update the house on the success of the Andrews government in safeguarding Victoria's finances. The annual financial report tabled today shows that Victoria has recorded a strong surplus of \$2.7 billion for the 2015–16 financial year. In the first full financial year of this government we have delivered one of the biggest surpluses in Victoria's history. It is \$776 million higher than the revised budget estimate and is proof of the strength of our economy.

These are not shadow figures; they are real figures. They are not adjunct figures; they are real figures. These figures do not purport to be what they are not. In fact they are the real deal, old China! Net debt is lower as a proportion of gross state product and in absolute terms this is a significant change from the previous government, which actually doubled debt, adding \$11 billion in its short time in office.

When it comes to jobs, when it comes to surpluses, managing debt and growing the economy, we are better on every front by every measure as economic managers. Victoria is again leading the nation in jobs growth and this was confirmed of course if you looked yesterday at the dwelling completions. This was achieved while our state final demand grew by 4 per cent in 2015–16. This was achieved alongside massive investment. After four soporific years we will remind the Victorian people what it means to have a government that actually gets the job done, and you do not need facial technology to prove it.

Mr Watt — I raise a point of order, Speaker, with regard to question on notice 9972 that was asked of the Minister for Police on 31 August. It is still outstanding. It was a question regarding consultation with the Burwood community about the Burwood police station closure. I notice that the minister does not like answering questions or at least telling the truth when answering questions, but at the least my community would accept an attempt at answering a question. I ask that you get the minister, in line with sessional order 10, to actually answer the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair welcomes the point of order put by the member for Burwood and shall follow it through.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Malvern electorate

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — (11 815) My question is to the Minister for Planning. Residential amenity is threatened by inappropriate development. Projects such as the massive 590 Orrong Road development, approved under the former Labor government's Melbourne 2030 policy, is an example of what my community has said quite clearly it does not want.

The former Liberal-Nationals government gave councils more power to prevent inappropriate development. However, this is now under threat. Labor's hand-picked advisory body, Infrastructure Victoria, has recommended that Labor:

Intensify housing development in established areas of Melbourne ... by amending planning schemes within 0–5 years. This should focus initially on Melbourne's eastern and southern suburbs, in particular around train stations on the ...Glen Waverley ... Frankston, Sandringham, Pakenham and Cranbourne lines ...

Minister, this is a blueprint for shoehorning high-rise, high-density, inappropriate development into my community. My question to you is: will you today rule this destructive proposal out?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (11 816) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and I ask the minister: what are the locations of bus stops along the new 890 bus route that will provide better access to the Dandenong South employment precinct? The recent announcement of the new 890 bus route servicing the Dandenong South employment precinct was welcome news to local businesses and employment agencies that have been

advocating for additional public transport to the area. The new service will run seven days a week from Sunday, 13 November, and travel between Lynbrook station and Dandenong station, and for the first time it will offer public transport to the Abbotts Road corridor.

Lack of public transport connections can be a major obstacle to employment. This service helps get people to where the jobs are and also helps businesses to secure the skilled workforce they need. Local industry is keen to find out further details about the planned bus stop locations along the new bus route so they can communicate this to their employees and promote it to prospective employees for this thriving employment precinct.

Gippsland South electorate

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — (11 817) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask on behalf of the Foster Primary School Council: what action can the school council take to get itself into the education department's planning process for new school buildings?

I visited the primary school last year and also last week at the invitation of the school council president, Matt Wallis, and met with him and the principal of the school. Foster Primary School is in a fairly poor state of repair. It was built in 1965. It is riddled with asbestos, as many school buildings are. I note the government apparently has a plan to rid schools of asbestos, but this one in particular has significant issues. There are leaking roofs, and the school is faced with significant maintenance costs if it does not get an upgrade. The government does need to fund a new Foster Primary School, and I seek the minister's assistance to begin this process.

Niddrie electorate

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — (11 818) My constituency question is to the Treasurer, and I ask: how will the stunning result of the Andrews government in leasing the port of Melbourne benefit Niddrie constituents, in particular with the removal of the Buckley Street level crossing? It was a stunning result for the state of Victoria that the port of Melbourne lease has returned a massive \$9.729 billion. That is \$9.729 billion for Victorians, well in excess of most estimates. The Treasurer has advised that the lease of the port will help remove level crossings as well as build new infrastructure for all Victorians. But in particular I am most keen to hear how the stunning result from the lease of the port of Melbourne will

benefit the removal of the Buckley Street level crossing.

Hastings electorate

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — (11 819) My question is to the Acting Minister for Sport. During the term of the Liberal-Nationals government a commitment of \$1 million was made to fund sporting facilities at the Langwarrin, Somerville and Pearcedale football, netball and cricket clubs. This government has since removed that funding allocation. I ask the acting minister to provide information on what assistance the Andrews government would be able to provide to upgrade the facilities at Langwarrin, Somerville and Pearcedale sporting precincts, including the provision of lighting of a standard to allow the playing of both night football and cricket.

In addition to being able to play high-grade night-time sports, these lighting enhancements would allow community sporting and cultural events to be held at these venues. Such facilities are lacking throughout the region. Increasing the hours per day and days per year of use, as well as the range of uses for which these local facilities are suitable, will dramatically increase the social value of these already important community assets. Langwarrin, Somerville and Pearcedale are all vibrant communities, and they deserve the very best in sporting facilities. The better our sporting facilities are, the more our young people will play sport and the less likely they are to take risks.

Eltham electorate

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (11 820) My question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. What is the minister doing to ensure that there are adequate numbers of aged-care beds in my electorate? Last week the Minister for Planning visited my electorate to announce that the aged-care facility in Eltham, commonly called Judge Book, would be providing temporary accommodation to refugees from Syria and Iraq in the independent living units that have been vacant since 2011. It was a wonderful community event, with many groups represented. We were happy to create an opportunity to welcome very disadvantaged people to start a new life across Victoria.

Unfortunately, some people in my community are being told that there will be no beds for aged care and for senior residents because of refugees being given preference at Judge Book. This is despite the fact that there appear to be well over 500 beds free across the Nillumbik shire and the two neighbouring municipalities. There are some who are using the

resettlement of refugees to stoke up fear in my community for their own particular agendas. Minister, what conditions are being placed on temporary accommodation of refugees at St Vincent's Care Services in Eltham and what provisions are being made to help ensure beds will not be lost to my community?

Shepparton electorate

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — (11 821) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Some of my constituents are having difficulty in accessing a professional who can undertake the testing required by VicRoads for them to be relicensed where they have some impairment or medical condition requiring this. They also have raised the issue of the substantial cost associated with such an assessment. The question I ask is whether the government is taking any steps to provide for cheaper and better access to subsidised driver assessment services for people who need to be assessed regularly, particularly in regional areas.

I understand that there is currently no access to occupational therapists for reassessment in Shepparton for my constituents, resulting in escalating costs for travel to other centres or for the occupational therapist to come to them. One gentleman said that he had to pay more than \$850 in total to regain his licence after he failed his first assessment and had to undergo the process again. The RACV has also identified this as an important area needing attention and has called on governments to provide greater access to subsidised driver assessment services, particularly in regional areas.

Frankston electorate

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — (11 822) My constituency question is for the Attorney-General. What funding opportunities are available to help meet the demand for legal assistance services provided by Peninsula Community Legal Centre (CLC), which services my electorate very well? Last year the Attorney-General and I visited Peninsula CLC to hear the dedicated staff, including CEO Jackie Galloway, talk about the work they do in supporting vulnerable people, including victims of family violence, who have issues with infringements.

The work they do is invaluable, but CLCs are feeling the pressure, particularly given commonwealth funding to Victoria under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services will decrease by around 30 per cent. I am proud to say the Andrews Labor government has previously provided grant funding to Peninsula CLC through the Family Violence Duty

Lawyer Fund and the Community Legal Centre Assistance Fund, but demand for legal services and support services is still high, particularly for family violence-related matters.

Burwood electorate

Mr WATT (Burwood) — (11 823) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. I refer to the minister's statement on 24 August 2016 that police are required to consult with the community when making changes to police station counter hours, and I ask: how many actual residents of Ashburton were consulted regarding the change to counter hours of the Ashburton police station, where hours have been cut from seven days a week to two days a week in 2015?

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) — (11 824) My question is to the Minister for Industry and Employment. The advice I seek is information on the government's plan for a coordinated strategy for industries and jobs in Melbourne's north, particularly Broadmeadows. I thank the Premier and the minister for their commitment to Ford workers, which contrasts dramatically with the coalition's deafening silence and their strategy of wilful blindness and managed decline towards families in Broadmeadows.

The cost of the Australian government remaining a bystander is mounting and cannot be ignored. Another example is CSL's leading science being manufactured in Switzerland instead of Broadmeadows. Mutual obligation requires a coordinated strategy between governments, business and civil society during deindustrialisation to help so-called postcodes of disadvantage emerge as postcodes of hope. Victoria will have to lead nationally if a coordinated strategy is to be achieved. I call on the Australian government to invest in Melbourne's north, expected to be home to 1 in 20 Victorians within two decades. Convergence of coalition governments, state and federal, left unemployment in Campbellfield, home of Ford's Australian headquarters, and other communities in Broadmeadows equal to the rate in Greece.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to the constituency question from the member for Niddrie, particularly in relation to sessional order 7, which requires that constituency questions be in relation to constituency matters. I note that the member raised an issue about the port of Melbourne sale and how that would affect a level crossing in an electorate which is not his electorate. I seek your guidance as to whether or not a member asking a question about a particular

development or issue that is not in their electorate without actually referring to their own electorate at all within their constituency question is in fact at constituency question.

Mr Carroll — On the point of order, Speaker, I actually did refer to the Buckley Street level crossing. It is 100 metres outside my electorate, but I did say how it will benefit my constituents, which is the idea and the thought behind the port of Melbourne lease. The lease of the port of Melbourne is going to allow us to get rid of 50 of our most dangerous level crossings, including the one at Buckley Street, Essendon, which is approximately 100 metres outside my electorate. This will benefit all the people from my electorate who cannot cross the Buckley Street level crossing when the boom gates are down. Only the Labor Party promised to get rid of this level crossing.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair does not uphold the point of order.

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — Just prior to question time I was making a number of remarks in relation to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. I note the outstanding work done by Sir John Swanson when he inaugurated the original fund in 1923 and the heavy lifting that has been done through the City of Melbourne and the funds that have been raised and distributed. I also note the great work of the Swanson brothers and the buildings they built in the City of Melbourne, including part of the parliamentary precinct where we are assembled.

I had also been going through the heavy lifting undertaken by charitable organisations of a comparable nature in the Sandringham electorate, in particular local opportunity shops and the All Souls Opportunity Shop's distribution in 2016, as reported at its annual general meeting for the previous year. I would like to continue an outline of their vision, which is quite extraordinary and is reflective of philanthropic organisations across the states.

The donations from the All Souls Opportunity Shop, as reported at its annual general meeting, included, and I continue on: the Breast Cancer Network Australia; Burnet Institute; Caulfield cardiac support group; Cystic Fibrosis Australia; Fight Cancer Foundation,

formerly the Bone Marrow Donor Institute; Hamlin Fistula Australia Ltd Relief and Aid Fund, Ethiopia; Huntington's Disease Association; Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation; Meniere's support group; Motor Neurone Association of Victoria; Multiple Sclerosis Association of Victoria; National Heart Federation of Australia; National Stroke Foundation; Ovarian Cancer Research Foundation; Parkinson's Victoria; Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre; Royal Children's Hospital Foundation's Beyond Sight Auxiliary; Royal Flying Doctor Service; Scleroderma Foundation of Victoria Inc.; Sir Edward Dunlop Medical Research Foundation; Southern Peninsula Rescue Squad Inc.; St John Ambulance; St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research; Bayley House; Bayside Special Developmental School; SCOPE, Chelsea/Moorabbin; SCOPE, Dame Mary Herring Centre; Paraquad Victoria and RDA Victoria, formerly Riding for the Disabled Association Victoria.

Other beneficiaries included Statewide Autistic Services Inc.; VEWSA, formerly Wheelchair Sports Victoria; Beyond Blue; Camp Quality; Country Fire Authority; Compassionate Friends; Cottage by the Sea, Queenscliff; emergency resources, Kingston City Council; Kids Under Cover; Launch Housing, formerly Hanover Welfare Services; Legacy; Lifeline; Lighthouse Foundation; McAuley Community Services for Women; Monash kids, Monash Medical Centre; Melbourne City Mission palliative care; Mirabel, St Kilda; Ozanam House, destitute men; Portsea children's camp; Regina Coeli, homeless women; SANE Australia; SecondBite; Southern Mental Health, Lantern; St Kilda Gatehouse; St Kilda Mums; St Kilda Youth Services Inc.; State Schools Relief Committee; 3 RPH; Very Special Kids; Assistance Dogs Australia; Donkey Shelter Inc.; Save-A-Dog Scheme Inc.; Beyond Subsistence; Oxfam Australia; Anglican Overseas Aid, Fiji; Drought Angels; and the day procedure centre, Sandringham Hospital. There were also one-off donations to the Ebola emergency, the Vanuatu cyclone appeal and the Nepal earthquake appeal.

The funds directed to these organisations are the result of the volunteer efforts of many, many people, and I pay tribute to the vision of Reverend Waterman who established the All Souls Opportunity Shop in the 1950s and the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been raised and distributed through the hard work of volunteers from, in this case, people predominantly within the Sandringham electorate to those organisations. I also mentioned the great work done by other opportunity shops in Sandringham, Highett, Cheltenham, Mentone and Hampton in the Sandringham electorate, where funds provide much-needed assistance to many different people.

Thus too with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016, the works undertaken there will provide support for many people. I note the contribution of Joan Lupson, a former citizen of Melbourne who was dux of her school and spent numbers of years assisting the charitable work of the City of Melbourne in yesteryear.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — I am very pleased to speak today in support of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. The provisions of this bill respond to the request from the chairperson of the foundation's board and its chief executive officer to revise the current act to enable the foundation to continue to flourish as a modern philanthropic organisation. The bill repeals the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund Act 1996 and makes new provisions for the governance, management, powers and object of the body corporate that administers the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund.

So what is the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation? The foundation has a very proud history dating back to 1923, when Melbourne's then Lord Mayor, Sir John Swanson, saw the need to support the city's hospitals and charities and established the Lord Mayor's Fund for Hospitals and Charities. With an initial focus on addressing poverty and sickness in post-First World War Melbourne, over the past 90 years the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, as it is currently known, has continued to provide a significant connection between people who are able to give, charitable organisations and those in genuine need. Tens of millions of dollars have been fundraised and granted to charities and public hospitals in that time by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation which administers the fund.

Today the foundation has a thoroughly modern focus on increasing life opportunities and promoting social inclusion through a combination of grants, research, partnerships, communications and investment tools to grow and build strong communities. With the foundation's long and proud history of benefiting Victorians, it is important that its governance structure be modernised to ensure that it continues to benefit Victorians and indeed extends the reach of that benefit well into the future. It is important to also recognise that the benefits derived from the foundation are not limited to those provided by way of donation or assistance from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund.

Clause 6 of the bill sets out the functions of the foundation. It provides that the foundation has the function of holding and administering the fund and administering other charitable trusts and funds. As such, this recognises that the foundation administers

other charitable trusts and funds besides the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund.

One of these charitable funds is the Hume Charitable Fund, which was established to support and distribute funds to charities in the City of Hume. I would like to talk about the importance of this fund to the community of the Hume municipality, including the community of the Yuroke electorate. By way of background, the Hume Charitable Fund was established by Hume City Council in 2004 to support philanthropic activities and to distribute funds to local charities in the City of Hume. The Hume Charitable Fund operates in perpetuity, and it is administered by and operates under the umbrella of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation.

While the fund has been operating since 2004, there have been three rounds of grants to eligible local Hume charities since 2009, including in 2012 and 2014. The determination of grant recipients is undertaken by the Hume Charitable Fund panel, which is comprised of the mayor of Hume City Council, a representative from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, a community representative, which is currently Mr Alan Free, JP, and the chief executive officer of the council.

As mayor of Hume City Council, I had the privilege of being on the panel and making the presentations to the 2012 Hume Charitable Fund grant recipients. These recipients were local charities working in the field of health and human care. I was extremely proud to be able to recognise their terrific work in the community. A total of \$19 950 was awarded in this round. I want to go through each of the recipients to illustrate the wide range of projects that benefit from this fund and the great difference that small donations and small grants can make.

McKenna House is located at Broadmeadows Health Service. It is something that the member for Broadmeadows would be very familiar with. In fact he would be quite familiar with a lot of the organisations that I will mention. It is part of the Northern Health group, and it received funding just short of \$5000. McKenna House is a 24-bed palliative care unit, and it is the only service provider of its kind in the areas bordering Hume. It provides palliative care to patients in their last few weeks and days of life. This grant provided funds to purchase a blanket-warming device to maintain patients' warmth while using light bedding. The device accommodated 12 blankets and many more towels for post showering to improve the quality of life of patients facing life-limiting illness. I visited this unit to announce the grant, and it was a moment of great pride for me to see the joy on the faces of the workers,

the patients and their families. The provision of warm blankets and towels was greatly appreciated by those who would benefit from their use and those who care for them.

The Riding for the Disabled facility in Oaklands received a \$5000 grant. Riding for the Disabled provides a horseriding experience for disabled people in a pleasant and safe environment, fostering physical activity and social interaction for clients from local special schools. This grant provided funds to assist with agistment, feed and vet care for one horse for one year and with the purchase of two full-size saddles to fit larger riders coming through the program. Not only was this practical horse-care support important, but the new saddles were required by the facility as their client base had shifted from younger clients from organisations such as Scope, formerly Yooralla, to older youth on the autism spectrum. To cater for these new clients there was a requirement for much larger horses and equipment and saddlery. It was really important to Riding for the Disabled to be able to extend its services to cater for this cohort as they were seeing terrific, responsive results from their work.

EQubed runs an emergency food project, and it received a grant of \$5000. This organisation is run by the Anglican church in Dallas and Broadmeadows, and it provides emergency food supplies to over 70 families per week for 48 weeks of the year for a fee of \$3.50 per week per unit. The funds provided assisted in the purchase of four 60-litre iceboxes and a donation of fresh meat for emergency food supply packs.

The Lighthouse Foundation received \$5000. The Lighthouse Foundation provides homeless young people from backgrounds of long-term neglect and abuse with a home, a sense of family and around-the-clock therapeutic care. This grant assisted the organisation with the provision of its psychological wellness program and the provision of services to one person in the Lighthouse Foundation's Greenvale home.

The 2014 round of Hume Charitable Fund grants built on the benefits that were derived in 2012. This included additional funds to McKenna House, which enabled it to purchase two pressure redistribution mattresses and pumps. This equipment helps to prevent pressure sores developing in terminally ill patients. CareWorks SunRanges received \$2500, which went towards the provision of emergency food hampers, home assistance programs and its Christmas hamper program. Riding for the Disabled in Oaklands received another \$5000. This enabled it to continue to care for ageing ponies and horses and deal with the ongoing severe drought

conditions that were being experienced at the time. Lentara UnitingCare received \$5000 to assist with its Christmas giving program, which is part of its emergency relief program. Meadow Heights Community Foundation received just over \$3100. This enabled it to purchase some computer training equipment, which it used to train 30 students from disadvantaged and disengaged backgrounds.

What this range of grants from the Hume Charitable Fund demonstrates is the great benefit that the fund has for members of the Hume community, including the Yuroke community. The majority of funds are raised through Hume City Council, staff participation and support through gold coin donations on casual Fridays on the last Friday of each month, with donations over \$2 being tax deductible. Funds are also raised through the use of donation tins provided at Hume events such as Carols by Candlelight. All donations to the Hume Charitable Fund are vitally important and appreciated as they enable local charities to continue their important work in providing assistance to those facing challenging circumstances in our community.

I would like to acknowledge Megan Anderson, an executive officer at Hume City Council, for all her work in coordinating the Hume Charitable Fund grants program and panel. Megan does a terrific job, and she is passionate about supporting the fund, the charity recipients and the broader community that benefits from the program.

In conclusion, while it is important to recognise the great work being done by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, it is also very important to appreciate that the foundation administers other charitable trusts and funds, such as the Hume Charitable Fund. There are 260 charitable fund accounts that are administered by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, so the widespread benefit of these funds cannot be underestimated. I congratulate all those involved in the work of the foundation and the associated charitable funds and wish the bill a speedy passage.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016, and I give the foundation credit for working with both sides of government to bring this piece of important legislation to the house.

It truly is a pleasure to talk about foundations. I do have a long history with community foundations. To see the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation taking active steps to bring its structure up to modern-day practice is particularly pleasing. There are a number of very good reasons for doing so. Firstly, there are some simple

procedural, but important, changes. There is the name: the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation rather than 'fund'. This is an important change because it recognises the structure of the foundation, and people will actually be able to relate much better to an organisation that is a foundation rather than a fund.

The bill also clarifies the objects, powers and functions of the foundation. It is very important for a community organisation to have very clear objects, powers and functions so that there is transparency in its governance not just for the board members but also for the community and the recipients of grants. That is a very good change.

What is a really important change, I think, is the reducing of the size of the board from 21 members, who are representative of various stakeholder organisations, down to 9 members. So 21 down to 9 is an important step, and I think it is an important step because of the functionality of the board. Twenty-one is particularly cumbersome, and the board does not seem to necessarily represent the stakeholder organisations. Twenty-one is such a large number, and I think the move away from the stakeholder organisations to 9 board members holding particular skill sets is important. I have been on a number of boards, and I think the selection of board members is absolutely vital for the overall running and prosperity of the foundation. It is also very important that the board members hold a range of skills. To have that enshrined in this piece of legislation is a very good move.

It will enable the board to do an analysis of what skills they might be lacking at board level and specifically target new board members that can fulfil those skills. For example, they might have a number of solicitors on the board and they might be lacking in, say, marketing skills. They can specifically target a board member or a prospective board member that might fill those requirements. And every board needs a very good accountant — somebody that has got a background in accounting — so if they did not have a board member who, for example, had accounting skills, they could look for a chartered accountant and fill the role with a professional at that level who has had a wide range of experience in the accounting world. I think that is very important too. You could have, for example, a board consisting of legal skills, accounting skills, marketing skills and general community involvement. To have that enshrined in the legislation and in the foundation's charter is particularly important, so I congratulate them for that change.

I also note that the board members will have three-year fixed terms, and a particular board member can only

hold that position for three consecutive three-year terms — so, a maximum of nine years. It is an interesting debate as to whether maximum terms are important or not. Some would say they are. I think it is more important that the board continues to change, adapt, modernise, be innovative and above all be energetic and enthusiastic.

I am not sure that fixed terms are absolutely necessary. I was a board member of Outlook. I was on that board for about 16 years, our president was on it for about 18 years and our treasurer was on it for 18 years as well, and I think the board functioned very, very well. Outlook certainly prospered from having a strong board who stayed the journey and changed. We had an excellent CEO, Tony Fitzgerald, and a deputy CEO, Ann McCormick, and we all worked together for the benefit of Outlook. So fixed terms on that board would not necessarily have been necessary. It would not necessarily have worked. It would not have been to the benefit of the organisation.

However, I think generally fixed terms are probably a good thing. I did attend a board governance workshop one day, and our guest speaker was Henry Bosch. He actually said, when he was asked a question about fixed terms, his no. 1 criterion for assessing a board's effectiveness is generally that if it is not broken, then you do not try to fix it. He said that if a board is working or if an organisation is prospering, there is no need to change the rules to introduce fixed terms, and I think that was very important. I will always remember him saying that.

If generally things are not broken, they do not need to be fixed, but as a general rule I think fixed terms are quite effective. It gives a board member who might be thinking about leaving a board but is uncomfortable making that decision a mechanism to leave the board. He might feel that he has got a — —

Mr Pearson — Or she.

Mr PAYNTER — The person might have an emotional attachment to the board, and this might give that person an out without needing to necessarily get into the personalities and emotional attachment. So I think fixed terms are probably a good thing overall, and this implements that.

I also think that a very important change for the foundation is that the bill broadens its ability to fund organisations out of the metropolitan-type area. It enables them to issue grants anywhere in Victoria, and it is really important — being a member from regional Victoria — that that change is being put in place.

In fact I was on the founding board of the Casey Cardinia Foundation — it was at the time the Cardinia Foundation — back in 2003, and I chaired that board for over 10 years up until 2014. We also had a charter in place, which was based on granting to a region. But the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund is such a huge, massive fund that this change — where they can issue grants for funding outside of the general Melbourne base — is an important one. In fact the Casey Cardinia Foundation joined with the Lord Mayor's foundation and set up a sub-fund where they contributed \$100 000 and we contributed \$100 000, and that has been hugely beneficial to the Casey Cardinia Foundation, which has continued to grant to our local area. In fact it is well in excess of \$400 000 to date. We also have the Bass Coast Community Foundation, which is centred on the Bass Coast at its headquarters in Wonthaggi.

Community foundations are wonderful additions to our local communities. They encourage philanthropic activities and giving, and they can provide vital funds to our smaller organisations who do vital work in our local communities. The Lord Mayor's foundation is a flagship which other foundations aspire to, so I congratulate the board on working on these changes, enhancing their structure and in turn enhancing the wonderful state of Victoria.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. It is interesting. I have sometimes thought: what makes a Lord Mayor a Lord Mayor as opposed to a mayor? I am just trying to compare and contrast the difference. Apparently what it comes down to is that Lord Mayor is a particular status which is granted by the monarch. Although there have been many, many Lord Mayors of Melbourne, the first Lord Mayor of Melbourne came into the position in 1902 as a result of a title which was conferred by Edward VII.

It is interesting when you are comparing and contrasting the commonwealth nations because Australia tends to have a particular penchant for this title. There are lord mayors of Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne of course, Newcastle, Parramatta, Perth, Sydney and Wollongong. But outside Australia there are very few lord mayors. There is the Lord Mayor of Kampala in Uganda and there is the Lord Mayor of Niagara in Canada. Canada only has one Lord Mayor while we seem to have a multitude — a multiplicity of lord mayors, as it were.

It is interesting because as a concept this goes back to Roman times. Acting Speaker, I know you will be surprised by this. It actually comes back to the

praefectus urbi — ‘praefectus’ which is a substantive adjectival form of ‘praeficere’, which means to put in front or in charge. The praefectus urbi were originally appointed by Romulus when he founded Rome in 753BC. Basically what Romulus sought to do, and at that stage the office was known as the ‘custos urbis’, was to create an office to serve as the king’s chief lieutenant. That was a position that they served in for life. It is interesting that despite the fact that Rome transitioned from a kingdom to a republic to the imperial period, the praefectus urbi continued right through until about 499AD, long after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, and indeed remained in place in Constantinople up until the 13th century.

Ms Kealy interjected.

Mr PEARSON — Indeed, member for Lowan. Get out of town. It is interesting that this notion of a patron acting on behalf of the monarch continued into English times. In the 13th century we see in Latin the first notion of dominus major, and in 1440 the first lord mair — for the benefit of Hansard I will spell that — was appointed. The term ‘Right Honourable’ was first used in the 16th century.

What is interesting, when we compare that with our current set of circumstances, is this position was historically an unpaid position. Indeed the Lord Mayor of London, for example, had to incur great expense to discharge the duties and obligations of being the Lord Mayor of London. In fact some Lord Mayors of London said, ‘Look, I would actually rather pay a fine than be the Lord Mayor of London’, and there have been examples where the Lord Mayor of London has ended up in debtors prison because they had difficulty discharging the duties and functions of being the Lord Mayor of London, which I must admit I find quite fascinating.

As we think about the notion of becoming a republic I think we do have to think about the notion of Lord Mayor. I am not necessarily sure whether Lord Mayor would fit with my innate republican instincts. I would much rather have, instead of the Lord Mayor, a People’s Republican Mayor of Melbourne. I think that would be outstanding. That would be a far more appropriate and worthy title — the People’s Republican Mayor of Melbourne —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I am just warming up — as compared to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne. But it is interesting that the charitable foundation has changed over time. In the 1920s, when this foundation was

established, you did not have the state being active in the way we currently perceive it. You saw, for example, that any level of health care or charitable benevolence was destined for the deserving poor. That was augmented and supplemented by independent orders such as the Independent Order of Oddfellows and other friendly societies, all of which went broke in the Great Depression. Most of those organisations were rent asunder as their members lost their jobs, had to pay bills and demanded payment from the friendly societies. Really what you saw was the collapse of the friendly societies and the rise of the welfare state in the mid-20th century, which sought to look at increasing not only the tax take that it received but also the way the state started to, in providing important services and provisions, address market failure as a consequence of the trauma wrought by the Great Depression.

With the passage of time the needs and requirements of the foundation have changed. I listened with great interest to the contribution of the outstanding member for Macedon in terms of her critique of the current woes that confront us as a society when the federal government withdraws its engagement in this space and the difficulties and challenges that poses that we then have to respond to.

It was interesting listening to the contribution of the member for Bass, because I could not quite work out what the member for Bass was saying about fixed terms. On the one hand he questioned whether you need fixed terms and talked about his experience of having served on a board for 16 years and how other members had served for 18 years, but then he turned round and said, ‘Oh, maybe fixed terms aren’t so bad because they give people an opportunity to reflect and think about leaving’. He belled the cat when he said that great conservative line, ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’. Has that not been the mantra of many a company that has gone broke over time? ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. Don’t tinker with it. It’s fine’. Where would we be in the 21st century if we had companies that took that view? We would probably have Apple still creating a substandard multitude of PCs and not looking at innovation.

My experience on a board was the absolute reverse. We looked at rewriting the constitution and I explicitly directed the organisation, with approval from the board, that we would have compulsory retirements. In my case it was six years and then you were out, which I thought was a good thing because you wanted that sense of a constant level of throughput — people being engaged, people coming up to speed and making a contribution and then leaving. It is important that we always try to make sure that we look at making further

improvements and then we leave. Having these fixed terms is important.

Acting Speaker, I know you will be interested in this story. I read recently about the CEO of Dropbox, who I think is about 33. He was asked: if you were to write a letter to your 22-year-old self before you founded Dropbox, what would you say? The CEO, whose name escapes me, said it would be about three things — a tennis ball, a circle and the number 30 000. The tennis ball represents passion, because he has a dog — I presume he does not have children — and his dog loves playing with the tennis ball, so it is about passion. The circle is about how most of us only have five really close friends but you must surround yourself with people who bring out the best in you. And 30 000 is the average number of days we will live on this earth. So the CEO of Dropbox said find something you are passionate about, surround yourself with people who bring out the best in you and recognise that you are here for only a finite period of time and make the most of it.

I say to the member for Bass that I think fixed terms are important because when you appoint people to these statutory positions it is not some sinecure they have in perpetuity. It is not something that you say, 'Well, I'll just keep that on the CV and maybe tattoo it on my arm' — member of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation 2016 in perpetuity. No, I think it should be about saying, 'You're here for a defined period of time and then you just get on with it'.

Mr Wakeling interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I note the interjection from the member for Ferntree Gully. Everyone has to choose their own course in life. For me, I do not think I am going to be here terribly long compared to others. I do not think I am going to be like the member for Sandringham and be here for 20, 30 years. I do not think that is me. But maybe the member for Ferntree Gully, because no-one else wants him and no-one else will have him, will be here in perpetuity.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Order! Stick to the bill.

Ms Ryall interjected.

Mr PEARSON — That may not necessarily be a good thing, member for Ringwood.

Anyhow, it is an outstanding bill. I say from dominus major and lord mair to praefectus urbi it is wonderful that we are continuing a great tradition that started in ancient Rome, and I commend the bill to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Order! I must comment on the history lesson. We are all enlightened by it!

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is a privilege to rise to make my contribution to the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016 debate. It always is quite a privilege to sit through the member for Essendon's contributions to debates. This time I do feel like perhaps I was sitting through a history lesson back in high school. We went through the history of the Roman Empire, which was quite interesting, and I thought maybe he could have raised that comment 'All roads lead to Rome', but then he would have to talk about potholes, about the amount of budget cuts the government has made to the roads budget and about how terrible the roads are in western Victoria. We heard the Treasurer earlier today gloating about this incredible surplus, yet he still will not spend that extra money in our country areas to make sure our roads are up to scratch. So perhaps we will round out that bit of the history lesson. I did also note that the member for Essendon was not quite ready to endorse fixed terms for Labor MPs. He was just on the cusp but with a little bit of a back-pedal in terms of endorsing fixed terms when talking about his own party.

I would like to go over just some of the key elements of this bill. From the beginning I really do commend the work the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation does for the local community, and I commend the board for taking the initiative of working with the current government. It is something they have done over many years; they have always worked with whoever is in government and taken a bipartisan approach. They are taking good steps to modernise the governance and administrative structure to reflect the fund's current purpose and also to ensure that they can maximise the opportunity for donations so that they can donate more money to the community and fulfil their remit, which is to ensure that they are supporting local communities. I really commend the work of the charity on how it has supported people and particularly through some of its welfare initiatives. It does give grants, it supports research, it works in partnerships and in communications, and it also develops investment tools to grow and build strong communities.

One of the key elements I am really happy to see is that this bill will result in people from anywhere in Victoria being able to apply to the foundation for funding. It is not just focused on Melbourne anymore. For a member of Parliament who represents a country area, to have this opportunity for the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation to perhaps support local community groups or organisations and to provide investment to our local

area and local people really is fantastic to see. I am so pleased to see that the foundation is seeking to support people in country Victoria. Often we do not have the same access to funding, we do not have the same access to larger donors and we do not have that automatic linking into the big head offices in Melbourne for sponsorship and the like, so we have to do whatever we can in order to get our infrastructure upgraded and to best support our people to be the best people they can be and to contribute to their local community.

I just wanted to go through some of the great foundations and community groups we have in western Victoria. Honestly I think the people of western Victoria are perhaps the most generous of any group in the state. I was very fortunate to join the Horsham Country Fire Authority — which is my local brigade and I am a member of the brigade — during the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal. I joined them on a truck. It is basically just a doorknock around the community. It was incredible — and something that was commented on by all the volunteer firefighters I was out with — that the areas you would think would be the poorest of the community, the lowest socio-economic areas with the highest density of housing commission homes, were the areas that often had the people who were most generous in their donations. They were often the people who would chase the truck down the street if they had missed it.

We see not only those individuals. Right across the region we can raise an incredible amount of money for a good cause. We also have fantastic community groups, whether they be our Rotary clubs, Apex clubs or Lions clubs. I recall an event I went to last year, which was the opening of the Nhill swamp boardwalk. I saw all the community groups that had supported that — they included the Lowan masonic lodge, part of the freemasons, of course — and the amount of support they provided, both financial and in kind, and how they got their hands on deck was really outstanding. It helps our country communities to keep on ticking.

I was honoured to open the Horsham Spring Garden Festival on the weekend. This is an event which is run by the Horsham Rotary Club. Graeme Cox and the team at the Rotary club do an outstanding job in supporting this fantastic community event which helps to support local nurseries and retailers of garden products and gets people out of the house. We had spectacular weather, and I think it was a great event. I look forward to attending the 30th annual garden show next year.

I did want to make mention also of a fantastic group called Rachael's Wish. Rachael's Wish was an

initiative started by Rachael Littore. She was undergoing some treatment and recognised that the facilities of the Wimmera Health Care Group — Horsham hospital — were not up to scratch. So she initiated Rachael's Wish, which is a foundation solely focused on raising money for the Wimmera cancer centre. It is not anything to brag about that in the Wimmera we have the highest five-year mortality rate — that is, in the Wimmera once you are diagnosed with cancer you are more likely to have passed away five years after diagnosis than anywhere else in the state. We definitely need to improve access to cancer services in the local area, but we also need to improve access to other healthcare services across the region, because unfortunately our health outcomes across the region usually top the state's as being the worst. That is something we need to reverse urgently.

It is great to see that now Rachael's Wish has raised over \$1 million — I think it is nearly \$1 075 000 — from community donations. This is over about an 18-month period. That is just another reflection of how generous our communities are and how we all come together and are happy to put our hands in our pockets, even through a period of drought, to support our local people and make sure we have those opportunities to access better health care.

There are many other groups that do a fantastic job. There are our community clubs, such as the Horsham Sports and Community Club. I went to the awards ceremony this year. They donate to local clubs. They donated over \$110 000 this year and have donated over \$1 million over the years to local organisations. This is for organisations such as the Country Fire Authority to buy hoses or it might be for the croquet club. It is very impressive to see the range of sporting bodies and community organisations that are supported through the Horsham Sports and Community Club.

Alexandra House, Hamilton, do a very similar thing. Certainly the local sporting clubs rely quite heavily on these community clubs for donations. It might be for their uniforms, it might be to send somebody away to a training camp, but without these clubs we certainly would not be able to support sporting activities as well as we do.

I know that the local clubs are awaiting some information from the government as to what their contributions will be for some of their gaming licences, and I hope that Labor delivers that information as soon as possible, because at a meeting with Hamilton Alexandra House a couple of weeks ago, they stated that this is really restricting them in being able to apply for a bank loan; they simply do not know what their

outgoings are going to be next year. Without a full profit and loss financial history and a budget for the coming year, the bank simply will not give them a loan. This is holding up their ability to make improvements to their site and also to support local clubs. They have had to cut back as a result of some of the decisions of this Labor government over the past couple of years.

We have as well some very generous families in our local region. I would like to make mention of Allan and Maria Myers, who do an enormous amount of generous work particularly around the Dunkeld and Hamilton area, and also the Geoff and Helen Handbury Foundation. Everywhere you go across the south-west there seems to be a plaque — I do not think there is really any school or public garden or perhaps even a hospital without one — thanking the Geoff and Helen Handbury Foundation for their great work.

I would like to make a quick mention of how important these groups are. If we did not have these charitable organisations, we would really be missing out in country Victoria. We know that under this Labor government we got less than 3 per cent of the infrastructure budget for country Victoria last year. Considering we have 25 per cent of the population, this is simply below par. We need to see a huge increase in this investment in country Victoria, because unless we support country Victorians we are going to continue to have this differential in population growth. We need to support the backbone of our economy, which is around the agricultural sector. If Labor continues to fail to do so, we are going to end up with significant issues for generations to come in country Victoria. I thank all local contributors to community foundations, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) — The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has a long and significant history of raising funds and distributing them to hospitals and charities to address poverty and sickness across Melbourne. As someone who has served on the board, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge everyone who has made a contribution since 1923. I know that people who have had the opportunity to serve regard it as a privilege. I also want to commend the Minister for Health for these practical reforms that modernise the board's role and extend the reach of its contribution in the public interest. I think these are important reforms at a really appropriate time.

If we look at the name of the board, we might think it sounds a bit anachronistic, but it is a consequence of the timing of its establishment, which was to support public hospitals caring for the needs of large numbers of

injured servicemen and women returning from World War I, so that is the historical context.

The foundation has funded a range of priorities, including public hospitals, refugees, migrants, medical care and, most recently, chronic homelessness. We would all be disturbed by the increasing numbers of people sleeping rough in the City of Melbourne, the heart of the world's most livable city. I know the Lord Mayor — I have heard him speak on this — and the Victorian government are obviously concerned about establishing the causes and how we address this issue.

Some of the most recent requests from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation have included funding to VincentCare for the redevelopment of Ozanam House, the Sacred Heart Mission to support the expansion of homelessness services, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre for a housing project and to the Lighthouse Foundation. These are important institutions caring for some of our most vulnerable people.

The bill has come about after the chair of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation wrote to the government requesting changes to the legislation to modernise the organisation's governance. This was recognition from the current board that things had to change. Modernising the legislation provides clearer purpose and scope for its charitable activities.

All of these changes, I am happy to say, are being supported across the chamber. That is important for the public interest as well. The bill includes key initiatives to improve governance capability. Board members will now be selected on the basis of particular skills, which was the pitch that was made to me a long time ago, so I am glad to see that this is now being formalised. That is important. Also cutting the size of the board from 21 to 9 members will I think make the meetings more efficient. That is just another straight, practical and positive thing to do.

The bill abolishes the executive committee, avoiding duplication and increasing efficiency. The foundation has also asked to be able to pool funds held in separate trusts it manages for investment purposes. It is obviously important to aggregate the assets, and getting a better return on their investment is always something that we should keep an eye on.

I want to acknowledge the contribution of the member for Sandringham, who listed a range of causes which have benefited from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation over a long period of time, and also the member for Yuroke, who added the local benefits to

my constituents, all the way down to funding for eCubed, a local organisation run by a very strong-willed Anglican representative who has done an enormous amount in the community of Broadmeadows in helping to provide food for the people who need it most. In a lot of ways I guess we could say that the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has planted seeds throughout our community that have helped organisations grow and flourish. I think that is the key to its legacy.

As far as the future is concerned, the opportunity will exist to broaden the scope of where funds can be provided. I think this is important. I would argue that we should have a needs-based approach to where funding should be invested. We should look at a needs base from the perspective of hospitals and also the burden of disease. Expanding the geographical scope will show that if we look at where the burden of disease is highest, it should not come as a surprise to members of Parliament that that is in the poorest communities. This could have a major benefit in addressing the systemic changes that need to occur and get more to the causes of these diseases and how we try to address that.

Also on the needs-based proposition, the increase in patients from the northern growth corridor forecast to be admitted to any hospital in the near future is 74 per cent. The increase in patients forecast to be admitted to the Northern Hospital alone is expected to be about 83 per cent. The area of greatest need, historic neglect and huge population growth is Melbourne's north, so that would be an area to look at. There is booming growth. We need to address the burden of disease and the communities most affected. I think this would be a very efficient and effective use of some of the funds raised through the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and the bequests that have been established over a long period of time. I would like to look at how they could be organised.

This bill goes to a proposition that we are also looking at: how do we expand investments and donations or bequests into medical research? It goes to the proposition of taking a more preventative approach. Melbourne is one of the international leaders in medical research. This is something that the Victorian government, the Andrews government — particularly with the Premier being a former health minister with his sophisticated knowledge and understanding — is in pursuit of along with the Minister for Health. We are looking to see how we can expand the assets and opportunities that we have through what is commonly called the Parkville precinct and also the great southern hub around Monash University and CSIRO.

If there is a way we can look at getting further investment into medical research, I would suggest that would also have a huge benefit for trying to get to the causes of diseases and trying to coordinate our strategy, as we are doing with the US and President Obama's Moonshot quest to cure cancer. One of the connections we have with those organisations is with the Texas Medical Institute, which I have had the privilege of visiting and whose representatives are expected to come to Melbourne soon. The institute has the proton beam, which is something the Victorian government has invested in as well. We are looking to take a leadership position on that for Australia and for New Zealand.

I think the reforms that have been made go to the heart of how we modernise this veritable organisation: how do we give it a better focus, how do we make it more efficient and how do we actually get to some of the causes rather than just treating the symptoms. I think if we can do that in a coordinated fashion with goodwill right across the community, that will deliver the best results. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. Up-front I also note that the coalition supported the motion moved by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety at the commencement of this debate which made this a public bill rather than a private bill, therefore waiving the costs involved in preparing this legislation. I think that is an excellent gesture by the Parliament and the government of Victoria towards a charitable foundation.

The purpose of the bill is to provide for the governance, management, powers and object of the body corporate that administers the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund, to provide for the administration of that fund and other funds and to repeal the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund Act 1996. This really is about modernising the governance and administrative structure to reflect the purpose and to make the fund fit for purpose. The changes are intended to ensure that the fund is best placed to attract donations and make a meaningful difference to improve the lives of Victorians.

The background of this is that the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund has been around for a very, very long time. It aims to increase opportunities to promote social inclusion through a combination of grants, research, partnerships, communications and investment tools, and to grow and build strong communities. The focus of this fund has been on education and employment, homelessness and affordability, healthy and cohesive communities, and a sustainable Melbourne.

The fund was established in 1923. In 1930 the Lord Mayor's Fund Act 1930 came through the Parliament. Then, in 1996, the Lord Mayor's Fund Act 1996 made new provision for the management and administration of the fund and redefined the objects of the fund. Now, here we are in 2016, again modernising the act to reflect the changes to community needs, fundraising and philanthropy since 1996.

The bill renames the fund as the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation and changes the role of the Lord Mayor from an automatic board member and chair to a founding patron, which is in line with other charities. The bill reduces the size of the board from 21 members to 9, which is a much better size. In a modern-day world trying to get a quorum with 21 busy people, to get the diaries to work, would be a challenge, so nine certainly is, to quote the member for Gippsland South, a perfect size for a board and reflects modern terms. Of course it will be a skills-based board with terms of three years and a maximum of three terms. It allows the foundation to pool funds held by separate trusts and funds for investment purposes, which is very much in line with how so many organisations operate these days. The bill also allows the fund to consider funding applications from anywhere in Victoria, not just Melbourne. I also note, as did the member for Gippsland South, that in doing this the horizon of the Lord Mayor's fund has been expanded — it can in various ways deliver benefits even for rural and regional people, and I think that is important.

I think it is a fund that has endured and has delivered a great deal in time. It has been very much apolitical in its approach, and the Parliament has had a bipartisan approach to the good work it does. The current board members will be able to see out their current terms too so that we do not remove the continuity and good service that has been established by these members. The CEO of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation is supportive of the bill and believes it achieves contemporary governance and is suitable for a modern foundation. The good work that has been done by the Parliament allows this very important foundation to be fit for purpose and fit for the future. I think the work they have done is outstanding and the work they will do in the future will make a difference to Victorians. The National Party and the coalition are not opposing this bill.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. It is a bill that makes some very practical, commonsense changes to the function of the foundation — a foundation that has been supporting charities in Melbourne since 1923, when it was founded

to support public hospitals caring for the needs of large numbers of injured servicemen and women returning from World War I. Some of the more recent bequests have included those to VincentCare for the redevelopment of Ozanam House, to the Sacred Heart Mission to support the expansion of homelessness services, to the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre for a housing project, and to the Lighthouse Foundation.

As I said, the changes are practical and common sense and include a reduction in the size of the foundation's board, from 21 to 9 members and improved governance capability, with board members now being selected on the basis of particular skills and having set terms. The Lord Mayor of the day will no longer be president but will instead become the founding patron. In addition, and very, very importantly, the charitable scope of the foundation will be broadened so that the foundation is able to direct funds to hospitals and charities outside metropolitan Melbourne. This is extremely important. No doubt our members in this house from regional Victoria are very pleased about that change.

If I could perhaps add a local flavour to that part, I know that the Bayside Auxiliary of the Royal Flying Doctor Service completely direct their time and efforts in fundraising for better health outcomes in rural and regional communities. I know they will be pleased with that change. For many years I have seen the ladies from the Bayside Auxiliary selling their craft at the rotundas on Centre Road, Bentleigh. In fact the day before the election in 2014 I was very pleased to introduce our former Premier, Steve Bracks, and the federal Labor leader, Bill Shorten, to them. It was actually the day before the election and they were in town supporting me, and on the same day the ladies from the Bayside Auxiliary were there. They do fantastic work to improve health outcomes in regional Victoria. In many ways the changes to this bill are for that purpose.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who said that the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the charity of others, and that is just so true. So many of our hospitals and health services, and more broadly community organisations, have relied on the time and effort and charity of others. They have relied on philanthropy — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! Now is an appropriate time to break for lunch.

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

Mr STAIKOS — It is a pleasure to continue my comments on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Bill 2016. Before we were interrupted by the lunch break, I quoted Mahatma Gandhi, who said:

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

So many of our hospitals, health services and various community organisations have relied upon the generosity of others. They have relied upon philanthropy. Moorabbin Hospital in my electorate is one such hospital. It began as a community hospital. The land was purchased in 1949 in Bentleigh East, and the hospital was officially opened in 1975. It is fair to say that over its history it has been knocked about by a number of different Liberal government cuts. Certainly under the Kennett government we lost the emergency ward — and I believe Inga Peulich was the member for Bentleigh at that stage — but a number of Labor governments have invested in it over the years. The Cain and Kirner governments in 1990 constructed the west block and the Bracks and Brumby governments invested in it so heavily that it is now one of the top cancer centres in Australia.

The Andrews government is continuing that strong investment, with \$16.2 million for new cancer services at Moorabbin Hospital. But before it was a cancer centre it was a general practice hospital which had a maternity ward and an emergency ward. A lot of that was helped along with the support of the ladies auxiliary. The ladies auxiliary used to run the kiosk at Moorabbin Hospital — and I remember them well. While we no longer have the kiosk, we still have the ladies auxiliary and they are still working hard around the hospital.

A number of the ladies have been recognised over the years for their generosity and their service to others. Two of them have in the past been named Glen Eira Citizen of the Year. Patricia Huggins in 2013 was named Glen Eira Citizen of the Year, and Patricia upon receiving that award said, 'You know that your efforts are something that's helping others'. That is certainly the attitude of so many people who have given so much to this hospital. Most recently, in 2014, Marjorie Lochhead won that award. She was a founding member of the Moorabbin Hospital ladies auxiliary. She volunteered in the hospital kiosk for decades and still helps around the hospital to this day. Congratulations to both of them.

Another organisation in my electorate that has relied entirely on philanthropy from its inception is GriefLine Community and Family Services. GriefLine was started by the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, the same order that established Bethlehem Hospital. In fact GriefLine was established because the sisters had

decided that there was a need for a counselling service at the hospital for families who were grieving the loss of a loved one. It was started nearly 30 years ago. In 2007 GriefLine became an entirely independent organisation, but the sisters of course did not abandon GriefLine. For a number of years after that, GriefLine was accommodated in a property owned by the sisters, rent free, and GriefLine to this day is supported by the sisters and by other philanthropic organisations.

It is a fantastic local community organisation that receives 52 000 calls from individuals across Australia who are experiencing grief or trauma. It deals with over 55 000 issues involving loss or grief, it reaches 2000 people through education programs, it supports 600 people through its online email and website service, it supports more than 1000 people through personalised programs and it enables over 200 volunteers — and this is quite staggering — to give over 48 000 hours of their time each year. They are volunteers who, of course, are allied health professionals.

We can see that many of our health and community service organisations rely on the generosity of others. They rely on philanthropy, and many of them have relied on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. Locally we have the Kingston Charitable Fund, which was established in February 2007 in partnership with the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. Since its inception the Kingston Charitable Fund has raised more than \$1.2 million and assisted more than 50 local organisations with over \$400 000 in grants. Indeed the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has granted over tens of millions of dollars since its inception. It is a very worthwhile organisation that has served our community well for many years. These are practical, commonsense amendments, and I wish the bill a speedy passage.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — It is a pleasure to rise on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016 this afternoon. Let me start by just acknowledging all the charities we have in Victoria. Our world as we know it would not be the same if we did not have people that put others before themselves and tried to make life better, even in small ways, for other people. I come from a family of Salvation Army folks, and that is how I was brought up. It was always packing Christmas hampers at Christmas time, trying to do the right thing by people and never looking down on someone but instead actually giving them a hand up. To speak on this bill today is a fantastic thing.

I note that the Minister for Health had a letter written to her from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation requesting some modernisation of their structure and

their governance. Of course this is a good thing. It is good to have renewal to refresh our boards and our structures and to make sure we are actually up with the times and as efficient as we can be. They did this because they aim to enhance the foundation's capacity to develop innovative approaches to Melbourne's issues, to further develop our multisector community initiatives, to create opportunities for new partnerships with government and also to ensure that the foundation is able to continue to engage donors around Melbourne's needs in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing philanthropic environment. We know that every major city in the world has challenges, and Melbourne is not without its challenges as well. It is charitable funds like this — philanthropists — that make the wheels turn for a lot of people in our community, and a lot of people would be struggling and a lot of children would be not able to get to school without charities.

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has had a place in Melbourne since, I think, 1930, and it has done an incredible amount since. I acknowledge all the people who have been involved in its system of governance during that time. I think Melbourne is very fortunate to have the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. It has actually been in place since 1923, and that was in response to the challenges of the community at that time. Initially it was to support public hospitals in caring for unexpectedly large numbers of servicemen and servicewomen returning from World War II. It was unexpected at that time, but in retrospect we know how some of those men and women actually came back from some of those theatres of war, and that would have been a massive burden to take on.

The foundation spent almost 80 years operating with modest grant budgets and responding to grant applications, which we know is quite tiresome for every charity even today. They did not, however, set any particular priorities until a short time later. Over time they have responded to various issues as they have arisen, including settling refugees and migrants and dealing with emerging health challenges such as HIV/AIDS and anorexia nervosa. They have also supported a wide range of charities with other grants. The foundation has funded a large range of priority issues over its history. I think it is one of the leading charities in its field.

In recent years the foundation's capacity to make a real impact in Melbourne has changed. They have been able to greatly enhance their reaction to these challenges through sizeable bequests from Eldon Foote, of \$130 million, and Arthur Martin, of \$30 million. Today

the foundation has a corpus of more than \$225 million, and in 2014–15 they made grants to charities totalling \$9.648 million. That is a lot of help in anyone's terms. That is an unbelievable amount of help to people in our community. But we know there can always be more, and there is always more needed. We will probably never get to a point where we can actually meet the demand. This is why they have come forward and asked for our help as the legislation body to ensure that they can meet these needs through efficient processes and modern governance.

The bill provides a modern governance structure with clear purpose and scope for all of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation's charitable activities. This is important because we really need to keep this charity going. Even at a local level in the work we are doing in Frankston with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and former Melburnian of the year, Bryan Lippman, who runs Wintringham, through our Frankston service response partnership, you can just see the passion that these people have for their community and how hard they have to fight for their funding. I guess that is a good way of putting it. I find them very inspirational, personally. It is something to come out of the office, go down to the Brotherhood of St Laurence and witness their Victorian certificate of applied learning program and what they are doing in our community. It is absolutely inspiring, so we need to encourage more of it.

With the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation there will be a reduction in the size of the board from 21 to 9 members, and I think this is common sense. If you have 21 members, trying to get a quorum is very difficult when you have got people who are in high-functioning careers, which is what you want on a board. It is very hard to get that quorum, so bringing it down to nine is a sensible option. To improve the actual government capability, board members will now be selected on the basis of particular skills, and these days that is a pretty general step. Most boards would have a lawyer, an accountant and so on. Boards with this kind of make-up certainly function well. We are in the process of looking at a new board in Frankston at the moment and looking at particular skill sets for the Frankston VFL Dolphins. We are looking at all the sorts of skills that would be required to make this board efficient and to get the most out of it.

At the request of the foundation itself, the Lord Mayor will no longer be president and will instead become founding patron. I think we are happy to fulfil that request. The foundation has also requested that it be able to pool funds held in separate trusts it manages for investment purposes, and this has been included in the

drafting of the bill. Investment of course is very important for the longevity of charities. They need to be able to keep going decade after decade, and this usually requires a fair bit of money. So to be able to invest in certain options will obviously give them a fair amount of longevity to serve people in the future.

The fund itself will continue with its charitable status intact, and it will have an expanded geographic scope, which is fantastic. While currently the foundation can only direct money to hospitals and charities outside metropolitan Melbourne with the approval of the Minister for Health, under this bill charities and hospitals anywhere in Victoria will be able to benefit. That is a fantastic step. It is a big charity. Plenty of benefactors in the city and plenty of individuals have benefited from the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. It would be great to see the people of greater Victoria receive the benefits of this as well. Of course it is up to the foundation itself to decide who receives its charity, but I know that there are certainly several very good causes all throughout Victoria.

In contrast to the Liberals and the four dark years we had with them, we are getting on with making the changes necessary to help charities help our people. That is basically the mantra of putting people first. We are acting in partnership with a charity that wants to innovate and become contemporary. The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation asked for these changes to their governance quite a while ago, and I think it was David Davis — Deadly David — who could not get his mates together and deal with it on so many levels. This is just another example of that. The foundation and the community they serve was a victim to this, and like many other Victorian institutions the inability of the previous government to really do anything really affected them and their ability to help people.

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016 is just another example of us reacting to a need and answering an ask from our community. We are listening to make sure the charities are able to look after everyone in the community. It is a good bill. It makes a lot of sense, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — The member for Frankston is always a tough act to follow on important matters such as these. His words are always inspiring, so I thank him for that. It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. As we heard, this bill originates from a request from the chairperson of the foundation to modernise the foundation's governance and to provide a clearer purpose or scope for its charitable activities. I note the chairperson of the foundation is actually Daniel

Leighton, who I have had the pleasure of dealing with and working with not only in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Volunteers but also in my former capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Carers. Daniel could not be a better chairperson for such an organisation. He is a man with incredible social values and a great sense of community. It has been my absolute delight to get to work with him over the last couple of years.

As we have heard, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund was established in 1923 with the worthy mission of creating positive social change through grants, research partnerships, communication and investment tools. In my research for this bill I had a bit of a look at what the functions of the foundation are and learnt that its functions are to coordinate fundraising and make grants to support the objective of the foundation, which I just outlined, to educate and engage the community and donors in understanding and addressing the objective of the foundation, to undertake research into areas of need and opportunity within the community in relation to the objective of the foundation, and to collaborate with other bodies to address the objective of the foundation. The areas of impact for the foundation have been education and employment, homelessness and affordable housing, healthy and cohesive communities, and a sustainable Melbourne — all very worthy areas.

We should not underestimate the impact of the foundation's investment in these areas during its time of operation. I will just cover off on a few that have happened in recent years. Since 2008 a partnership between the foundation, Leader Newspapers and FairShare has resulted in the annual Feed Melbourne appeal, which has provided more than \$2.4 million in grants to more than 150 food service charities. The foundation has also provided a grant of \$600 000 to support the redevelopment of VincentCare's Ozenham House to increase the amount of crisis and transitional housing available for men and women recovering from a period of homelessness. It has also driven appeals raising money for the prevention of family violence, and in one financial year, which I believe was 2014–15, it granted \$9.6 million to more than 500 charitable and not-for-profit organisations with a focus on the root causes of social, economic and environmental justice.

We know that these causes are incredibly worthy indeed, and the finances that come from the philanthropic sector go a long way to propping up really important services within our community. Sometimes governments do not do the work they should in that area, and I am thinking in particular of the federal government and its cuts to emergency relief and the impacts that had within my community of

Dandenong. It put some smaller organisations under incredible stress, but what perhaps the federal government did not fully appreciate was the level of stress that caused in the broader community when people's avenues for help were quickly whittled away and destroyed over time. It is good to see organisations like the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation doing some really valuable work in this space. It is just unfortunate that the current federal government does not see fit to enhance its efforts to the same end.

The foundation manages quite an extraordinary amount of money, but donations fluctuate each year, depending on levels of charitable giving, bequests and the like. As I have indicated, the function of the bill before us today is to make new provision for the governance, management powers and objects of the body corporate that administers the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund. More specifically, the bill will reduce the size of the foundation's board from 21 members to 9. The bill also provides for transitional arrangements regarding the employment and accrual of benefits for the CEO and other staff currently employed by the foundation, and it outlines that the current board members will complete their terms. That is obviously an important measure for transition during a time of change for any organisation.

The bill will also make changes that mean that board members will be selected on the basis of particular skills to improve governance capability. As it stands, board members are representatives of various stakeholder organisations. This change appears to be one that many organisations go through, particularly if they have grown or transformed quite significantly over time, which happens to any organisation that has a long life. I was on the board of a small disability sports organisation, which essentially started out as a club but now has statewide reach. During my time serving on the board, it went through some changes, including some significant tweaking for government arrangements to ensure it reflected its modern purpose but also to ensure it was covering off on its legal responsibilities and its responsibilities to the community it was serving. Having a board with the necessary skills, whether they be legal, financial or otherwise, was an important part of that process, and I think it is for the very same reason that the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation is seeking to make these changes through the bill before us today.

Another change outlined in the bill is that the executive committee will be abolished. This is essentially an efficiency measure to avoid duplication of decision-making. The bill also removes the Lord Mayor as the board president. This in particular strikes me as a very sensible thing to do to ensure that there is no

political interference in the foundation's activities, whether that be real or perceived. The Lord Mayor will now be referred to as the founding patron, and while he — the mayor is currently a he — can still attend board meetings, he will not be able to vote.

Under this bill, the fund will have an expanded geographical scope. Currently the fund can only direct moneys to hospitals and other charitable organisations outside the metropolitan area with the approval of the Minister for Health. These changes before us today will mean that any charitable organisation or hospital anywhere in Victoria will be able to benefit from the fund. That change presents an obvious benefit for the broader Victorian community, and it is one I fully support.

Changes made by the bill will mean that the foundation will be able to pool funds that it holds in separate trusts for investment purposes. I assume this is to allow a growth in funds through investment strategies, which in turn hopefully will allow a greater level of charitable giving to worthwhile causes. I think that is also a worthy objective. If there is a greater good achieved through those practices, I think we can all be supportive of them.

Nothing about this bill will change the foundation's charitable status, which is important to note. This bill is another example of the Labor government being responsive to pressing needs and basically getting on with it and making important changes that have been on the agenda for years, as these changes have been.

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation requested these changes be made during the term of the previous Liberal-Nationals government, but needless to say that went nowhere. Like so many things under that government, they just never got around to it. You might forgive them had they been extraordinarily busy, but there is very little evidence of any kind of busyness or activity over the four years in government. In fact, there is barely any evidence of signs of life, really.

Not only was the foundation a victim of that government's inactivity in this regard but the community this foundation serves ultimately suffered as a result as well. I am very pleased to be in this place today to make sure that these changes are made and that we have actioned something that is incredibly important not only to the foundation itself but also to the community it serves, as there is that broader impact on the Victorian community.

It is important that we encourage organisations to modernise and take responsibility for their governance

requirements, because that ultimately leads to healthier organisations and stronger outcomes for communities. The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has been a significant contributor to Victoria's philanthropic scene. Its ability to function and function well is a very important outcome for our community, as is the good functioning of any organisation within our community.

Like previous speakers, I am keen to thank the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation for the work it has done in its long life so far, and I look forward to seeing in the time ahead what other projects it can invest in for the greater good of the community. As the member for Frankston said, many of us are familiar with the great charitable and philanthropic work that is done in our own communities, and without it I think we would genuinely be lost. It is scary to think about what the world would look like if we did not have the good intentions of good people and the money to back them up. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation Bill 2016. This is a bill that primarily deals with governance issues surrounding the foundation, and I understand it is at the request of the foundation that these amendments are being made to effectively modernise what is really quite an old foundation. The fund was established in 1923 by Sir John Swanson, who was a successful businessman and philanthropist in Melbourne. He worked to establish the Lord Mayor's Fund primarily for metropolitan hospitals and charities, with a vision of coordinating and organising charitable giving in Melbourne. That indeed is what has taken place. He was seen as a visionary thinker. Not only did he fund the foundation but over the years many other bequests have been made and there are other foundations that are administered via that fund.

Over the past 90 years the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation has continued to be a connection for people who are able to give to charitable organisations and those in genuine need. In looking at this foundation, it is very pleasing to see that the bill actually extends the scope of its operation into regional areas, because previously it has primarily been used to fund organisations in Melbourne. It is not unusual for a charitable trust to be formed in this way, so I think it will be very pleasing for people in regional areas to be able to make applications to a fund such as this for the purposes that it has.

In looking at the issue of charitable funds, it is interesting to simply look at what motivates people to establish trusts of this kind. I would like to mention a few I know of that I have come across in my day. The

first is the Hugh Williamson Foundation Trust. Hugh grew up in country Victoria, and he witnessed firsthand the difficulties of life in rural areas and how these difficulties were exacerbated by World War I, which stripped our towns of young men. They were really very long, hard years, so it was very important in his view to provide a fund to benefit those people. As a young man, he began his working life in 1916 at the Ballarat Banking Company. He worked his way up through the ranks of the ANZ bank and eventually became general manager, retiring in 1961.

The Hugh Williamson Foundation has been particularly important in my life because it has funded Leadership Victoria at various times. Leadership was one of the aims of the fund, particularly in rural areas. I had the great privilege of undertaking the Williamson Community Leadership Program in 2000, and from a leadership and an awareness-raising point of view and as a rural person I found that a remarkable and very broadening experience.

Perhaps the other trust that is one of the most important to my electorate, in particular to Greater Shepparton, is the Fairley Foundation, which was established by Sir Andrew Fairley and his wife Mineta only a short time ago, in 1965. That may seem like a very long time ago to some members but it does not to me! Sir Fairley was the managing director of the Shepparton preserving company SPC, and he created this fund to benefit the people of the Greater Shepparton area. My association particularly with that organisation is through leadership. The Fairley Foundation for the first 15 years funded the Fairley Leadership Program, a regional program in the Goulburn Broken area of Shepparton, and that has been a program that has brought forth many leaders in our region. You would rarely find a board or a committee that did not have a Fairley fellow on it. Leadership, particularly in rural areas, is such an important thing because of the lack of opportunity often to access those sorts of programs.

I myself was the chair of the Fairley Leadership Program for a number of years, and I spent many graduation dinners telling people at the end of their course how important it was that they should stand up if an issue troubles them or they think needs changing — stand up and do something about it. In October 2014 those words reverberated in my ear when I decided to stand in the 2014 election. So sometimes we have to do what we say and advise other people to do.

Sir Andrew Fairley was a prominent Victorian business figure. He arrived in Shepparton as a small child — one of six children — with his parents, grew up and started work in a number of areas. Fairleys department store

was the only department store in Shepparton for many years, but it was really his time at SPC that was remarkable. He was at the age of 37 when he joined the board. Unfortunately SPC has had many struggles over the years. He was able to bring it through many of those, and his success led him to be in a position at the conclusion of that time to establish a foundation for the benefit of so many people.

The other foundation that I have had the great pleasure of being involved with is the Goulburn Valley Health Foundation, a great community foundation. What happened was that in 1989 there was a large fundraising community effort to find funds to build the children's ward at Goulburn Valley Health. It was so oversubscribed that after the building of what was then a state-of-the-art children's ward, the foundation was set up to hold the balance of the funds. Over the years that has grown into a reasonably substantial corpus, and of course the hospital now accepts donations and bequests from many other people into that fund for the benefit of the hospital, not unlike the Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund at its inception in that it was primarily for hospitals and like charitable organisations. The Goulburn Valley Health Foundation trust deed was quite limited in that the funds had to be used for children's ward purposes, and over the years that also has been modernised, as many trusts have to be, to deal with what is the current circumstance. So that has been broadened into being a trust that can allocate funds for mothers and children — a broader outcome than previously was the case.

One of the particular interests of the foundation at the moment is possibly the establishment or encouragement of the establishment of a mother-baby unit in Shepparton, something that is in fact entirely lacking throughout regional Victoria. That service, such as that provided by the Tweddle Child and Family Health Service here in Melbourne and the Queen Elizabeth Centre, enables mothers, fathers and their children who may be experiencing a range of difficulties to live in after the birth of their child. That is something that we do not have in Shepparton.

We have the lowest breastfeeding rates in the state in Shepparton, and that is so related, I think, to the fact that these days mothers, after giving birth, are discharged from hospital within 24 hours or 48 hours. The fundamental thing that I think is really wrong in all of this is the fact that if a mother and child are continuing to have feeding difficulties — in other words, the child is not feeding appropriately — that is not regarded as a reason for a mother and baby to remain in hospital. That has created significant disadvantage in our community in that we have a high

teenage birth rate and of course these low breastfeeding rates, so charitable organisations play a very significant role in improving the quality of life of so many people.

Something such as a mother-baby unit is just a really good reflection of how a charitable organisation can address disadvantage or problems for people following the birth of their children. It can fund leadership programs and indeed many other programs that are so essential to the community and where government is unable to or fails to pick up the tab. Without these charitable organisations and foundations within our community, we would have a lot more disadvantage and so many areas of family life and community life would not be addressed in any significant way. So rather than speak to the bill, I simply commend the bill to the house. The detail has been gone through by others.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

VICTORIAN FISHERIES AUTHORITY BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 15 September; motion of Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety).

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise as the lead speaker on behalf of the Liberal-Nationals on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. This bill establishes the Victorian Fisheries Authority, known as the VFA, which will be the statutory authority that has responsibility for both recreational and commercial fishing regulation and management here in Victoria. Effectively the functions and roles of Fisheries Victoria, currently managed by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, will be transferred to the VFA in the future.

The VFA is in many ways modelled on the Game Management Authority (GMA) legislation that was introduced by the former Liberal-Nationals government between 2010 and 2014. I acknowledge the very hard work of Roger Hallam, as chair of the GMA, and particularly the staff of what was then the Department of Environment and Primary Industries in developing that legislation and getting the GMA set up. The people from KPMG helped with that as well.

I suppose the VFA takes over the administration role. It takes over licensing and it takes over the compliance

and enforcement functions of Fisheries Victoria. The bill sets out the powers to do that work and also the powers to develop fishery management plans and operational plans for Victoria's fisheries. The VFA will give the minister and secretary advice on fishery management matters and strategic policy advice for fisheries in Victoria, including the setting of quotas, the allocation of funding, the development of legislation and the development of fees, royalties and levies. The VFA will also continue current duties around the promotion and support of recreational fishing opportunities in Victoria and make provisions for the continuation of enforcement activities so we can, importantly, protect our world-class fisheries from poachers and other illegal activities.

I think our fishery officers have done a very good job here in Victoria over the years. I never cease to be amazed, I suppose, at the ingenuity of those who want to do something illegal, but I think our fishery officers have in most cases been very good at staying one step ahead of those illegal activities and making sure they catch people, particularly those taking abalone and some of the particular species that are very popular with some people in Melbourne.

It is a rather large bill at 88 pages, but quite a lot of that relates to consequential amendments to the 14 acts affected as a result of setting up the authority. Those consequential amendments transfer legislative accountability and associated decision-making responsibilities to the VFA, and the CEO of the VFA is responsible for the employment of staff and compliance issues.

From the point of view of the Liberal-Nationals, we will not be opposing this legislation. While the legislation is between houses we will be discussing a couple of issues with the bill, which I will come to a bit later when I talk about that. From a two-party point of view, we have always been very strong supporters of both the recreational fishing industry and the commercial sector. From the recreational fishing point of view, one of the programs we were responsible for when we were in government was providing the extra \$16 million of actual budget appropriation that went into the recreational fishing sector on top of the licence fee money. I think that enabled a lot of very good work to be done in the recreational fishing sector.

There was talk from the minister in the second-reading speech about the number of fish stocks that have been released. The scene has been set for a continual increase in the numbers of fish stock that are being released in Victoria over time, particularly by the investment that we made when in government to upgrade the Snobs

Creek hatchery. There was quite a bit of money invested in the upgrade to Snobs Creek, and there was some improvement in the technology they were using and an increase in the number of fingerlings that were coming out of that particular establishment.

One of the pleasant jobs I had as minister was to go and help the staff of the Snobs Creek hatchery to actually release some of the big mother fish from up there. I must admit as a fisherman it was very disappointing in some ways, but very good in others, to go there when the great big cods that were used for breeding were actually let loose into Lake Eildon. We let them loose a month before the cod season opened so there was time for them to acclimatise and get away. I was very tempted to tether one around the corner so I could go back in a month's time and maybe catch that particular fish, but I know that is illegal and I would not have done that. The breeding stock they were using were magnificent fish.

Out of that additional \$16 million of budget appropriation that we put into the recreational fishing industry over four years a lot of boat ramps were built around Victoria. A lot of fish cleaning tables and fishing decks were put in at some of the estuaries around the coast. There was a significant improvement in the infrastructure for the recreational fishing industry over that particular time in addition to what was reinvested out of the licence fees. I am very proud of that time.

I know the current government, as part of its election commitments, had its Target One Million program, which is about increasing the number of people involved in recreational fishing to 1 million Victorians. I suppose the question I would ask — and maybe the minister in the upper house can talk about this in her summing up on the bill when it is in committee — and it is a question a lot of people have asked me, is: is Target One Million a slogan or is it actually a plan to get 1 million Victorians involved in recreational fishing in the future? When you go onto the website and search, you find there is very little detail about the actual plan. I cannot find a detailed plan. I cannot find any detailed accountability or key performance indicators that the department is supposed to meet or time lines around when different milestones are supposed to be met if there is such a plan.

I would be interested in hearing an explanation from the minister of the detail of the Target One Million program, including the key milestones and key outcomes that are going to happen over the term of this government. I note that both sides of politics went to the state election with a plan to stop netting in Port

Phillip Bay. We were actually first, but I do not think it is a matter of who was first and who was second. It is something that has happened, and it is something that was sought by the recreational fishing industry. It is one of the things that will supposedly increase the number of recreational fishers, but I have not seen any detail around how that is actually going to happen and where the milestones are for those particular things to happen. I suppose the question to be asked is: is the Target One Million long on spin and short on substance or is there a detailed plan that goes behind it?

In the recreational fishing fish stocking program one of the other interesting little projects that was done at that time was the breeding of estuary perch. Estuary perch is a fish that is quite hard to breed in captivity. A hatchery in New South Wales developed the technology to breed estuary perch and I had the opportunity to release some of those perch into Lake Bolac as the then Minister for Water. Most people would remember the droughts of the early 2000s when a whole heap of lakes and wetlands across Victoria went dry, of which Lake Bolac was one. It filled in a matter of a couple of days with the heavy rains in late 2010 and early 2011 and we were able to restock Lake Bolac and a lot of those wetlands. Because they had been dry and were then filled with floodwater the lakes and wetlands had high nutrient levels and there were very good growth rates for those fish.

Another good program that came out of that \$16 million investment in the recreational fishing initiative was the breeding of other species of fish as well, including the estuary perch that were put into Lake Bolac and into the Hopkins River down there.

When you come to the actual bill, the issues that have been raised with us are around the prerequisites for the appointment of directors to the board, which are set out in clauses 21 and 22. We have no issue at all with what is in the legislation except that there is one prerequisite that is not there. The legislation stipulates that the minister must appoint a board of between five and eight people, to my recollection, and have a mix of practical skills to ensure the board functions well. They include legal practice, finance or accounting, public administration or governance and natural resource management — all things that make sense. They also include fisheries management; Aboriginal culture and identity as it relates to fishing and fisheries — again we support that; stakeholder engagement — I wonder whether that is more a staff administration issue rather than a board issue but we accept that being there; leadership and business management, including human resources, again a good skill to have on the board to make sure management is functioning correctly;

communication skills; and marine or freshwater science.

Then in clause 22(2) the bill goes on to talk about those who must not be appointed to the board. They include people who are members of a council, licensing appeals tribunal or commercial fisheries licensing panel, and we agree with that. It then talks about not appointing the holder of a current commercial fishery licence or aquaculture licence or a person or entity associated with the holder of a current commercial fishery licence or aquaculture licence. I would agree that probably a person who holds one of those licences should not be appointed to the board, but if you think about the skills you are looking for on the board, my suggestion to the government is, maybe between houses, they look at having a paragraph (k) after paragraphs (a) to (j) and have someone with some commercial fishing experience on the board.

If you think about the regulatory role that the Victorian Fisheries Authority will have with the commercial sector, the commercial fishing sector pays significant licence fees and significant royalties. The VFA will be responsible for setting quotas for that sector and all that work will be done on a fee-for-service basis. It is important that the VFA, in fulfilling that role and given it is a fee-for-service role of behalf of the commercial sector, has someone on the board who has experience in and an intimate understanding of the commercial sector so those decisions can be made with some good knowledge.

Although we all talk a lot about the recreational fishing sector in this place, and it is a very, very important sector, with a lot of people enjoying fishing, whether it be freshwater or ocean water fishing, the commercial sector is also important here in Victoria. Given the VFA is going to be regulating that sector and given the amount of fees and royalties that will come from that sector that will go to the VFA, I think it is important that there is someone who has a very intimate understanding of the sector appointed to the board. My suggestion would be that the government might like to consider adding that to the other prerequisites for appointment to the board into the future.

As is always the case when we debate these sorts of bills and when it comes to appointments to government boards, it is important to make sure there is balance in the people who are appointed to that board. Given the income from both the recreational sector through licence fees and the commercial sector, which I have already talked about, I would not like to think that appointment to this new body will become a matter of jobs for the boys or jobs for Labor mates into the future.

You could craft a scenario where, for argument's sake, Craig Ingram might be chair of the new Victorian Fisheries Authority and Travis Dowling, for argument's sake, might be the CEO.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr WALSH — I am not sure whether he is in the gallery. Is he in the gallery? We do not want to see this become — —

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr WALSH — The National Party has never, ever stacked a board. I would like to have faith that there will be balance across politics in the people who are appointed to the board so that it does not just end up a Labor mates board, and I think there should be some gender diversity on the board. I know the government has quotas around gender diversity, but I think you will find that there are a lot of women who enjoy recreational fishing so I hope there will always be some gender diversity on the board into the future. I am just putting it on the record as a cautionary note. I would not like to see the recreational fishing licensing funds and the commercial fishers fees, royalties and charges used to fund just a Labor mates board.

The other issue I would just touch on while we are talking about this bill is that there has been, with the support of the industry, I do concede that, a significant increase in the cost of licence fees for recreational fishers. The two-day licence has gone from being a \$6 licence to now being a three-day licence for \$10. A 28-day licence, which was \$12, has now gone to \$20. A one-year licence, which was \$24.50, has now gone to \$35 or \$33 if you buy it online. And a three-year licence, which was \$66, has now gone to \$95 or \$90 if you buy it online. The announcement of those fee increases was touted as one of the major parts of the Target One Million plan. As I said, there was general support from the industry for those increases but again I want to strike a cautionary note by saying that we want to make sure that money actually goes back to the recreational fishing industry for infrastructure and for restocking programs to enhance the fishing experience for recreational fishers.

With the setting up of the Victorian Fisheries Authority what we do not want to see is that money starting to be used to fund the authority itself rather than having budget appropriations for that particular project. Again I make a cautionary note that we do not want to see this become a cost-shifting issue, where what has previously been money that has been paid willingly by recreational fishers, because they know it will improve

their fishing experience in the future, is hypothecated across to substitute for budget appropriations for the recreational sector. With the money the commercial fishing industry pay, we also do not want to see their fees, charges, royalties and levies increased to cover the cost of running the Victorian Fisheries Authority into the future instead of having the appropriation that would normally have gone to the department to employ the staff to do that work.

Back in the early 2000s we had an experience with PrimeSafe, which was originally the regulator for the red meat industry and the chicken meat industry. When Bob Cameron was the minister — between 2002 and 2006, if my memory serves me correctly — the fishing industry was brought into PrimeSafe and all of a sudden it got stung with something like half a million dollars of extra fees and charges, which they did not believe were fair and equitable. They did not believe they were getting value out of that.

Mr Katos interjected.

Mr WALSH — The member for South Barwon, who was a member of the commercial fishing sector and a fish wholesaler and retailer, will no doubt talk a little bit about the PrimeSafe experience in his contribution on the bill.

Having a dedicated authority for the fishing industry is a good thing for Victoria, particularly given the mega-department we have now. I think it is good to have it carved out of that department, because with the size of that particular department there is a risk that things like this will in some way get lost. So setting it up is a good idea. I just reinforce those points I made through my contribution to the debate about having someone with commercial fishing experience on the board because of the amount of money the commercial sector will pay into the Victorian fishing authority, and making sure it is not a board for Labor mates to have a job for life on a high salary. I would ask the government to consider those thoughts I have raised, particularly around the appointment of people with commercial fishing expertise to the board in the future.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — It is great to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. Just to follow on from the previous member's comments about having a person on the board with fishing experience, I note that there is nothing in this bill that prevents the minister from appointing someone with such fishing experience. In fact if I go to clause 22(1)(e), I note that it includes a provision for someone with fishing experience to be appointed to the board.

Like so many Victorian families, I was lucky enough to spend a great deal of time growing up fishing with family and friends. It is probably fair to say, though, that I was far better at fishing in my younger days, when I was around 11, than I am now, at 31. I do not think I have the skill I used to, it is fair to say. Fishing really is a wonderful pastime and a great experience. It is a great opportunity for people to come together and for families, especially through summer, to share some really great quality time. It provides great joy for hundreds of thousands of Australians every year, and it is vital, as the previous speaker mentioned, that our fisheries are managed and managed well to ensure their long-term sustainability. I want to take this opportunity to thank the hundreds of hardworking and dedicated fisheries staff right across the state. A family member of mine was with fisheries for a number of years and through the experiences he shared with me I was able to understand his role and the important, dynamic and diverse nature of the job and the challenges faced by fisheries.

Our fisheries generate considerable money for our economy. In this state we have hundreds of thousands of kilometres of coastline, fresh and saltwater rivers, lakes, streams and estuaries. Our fisheries staff play a vital role in ensuring not just their sustainability but their protection, to ensure that for this generation and generations to come these areas are preserved and protected. As I said, fisheries staff do play that vital role in assisting in these areas and in caring for and serving the people of Victoria. It is the intention of this bill to improve governance around fisheries, and I think it is very important, as we have discussed, to have a standalone authority that is responsible inevitably to the minister but that will certainly improve the governance of the way we manage fisheries.

I want to reinforce to all people who partake in fishing in this state — for men, women and children — that they respect and value our fisheries staff and the very important work they do. We can never take for granted the protection of our fisheries. If you were to consider other parts of the world which are not as fortunate as we are in having such great fisheries — often full, I like to think, of fresh, healthy, stocked fish with good water quality and all of the other things that make for good fisheries — I think you see that we in this state have done, certainly up until now, very well.

We know that fishing and its related activities contribute significantly to the Victorian economy and jobs, and the creation of a dedicated, standalone authority for the sustainability, management and support of the fisheries sector is incredibly important. The estimated total value of production for wild catch

fisheries in Victoria in the period from 2013–14 was \$54.6 million, with a further contribution of \$25.4 million for aquaculture.

Fisheries, as I have said, are one of our most treasured areas. It is a great pastime and social activity. We know that Victoria is home to an estimated 750 000 recreational fishers. We want to increase that number through the Target One Million initiative. We want to see more people out and about, spending time with family and friends and getting involved in what is a terrific activity.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016 will deliver on a major election commitment. The standalone authority will go a long way to improving fisheries right across the state. The bill establishes the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) as an independent statutory authority and provides those necessary provisions to ensure a modern, fit-for-purpose authority. The bill includes the usual provisions that underpin a statutory authority's basic operations. These include things such as the objectives, the functions, the powers and the guiding principles to provide a strategic direction for the VFA and define the scope of operation, guide decision-making and the whole range of important functions that the VFA is responsible for.

The minister may provide written directions to the VFA. These will be published upon the VFA's formation. The VFA's objectives provide directions for the board and key stakeholders, and there are so many of those, as we have just heard. There are 750 000 recreational fishers and there are also those within the commercial industry and all the flow-on effects of that, including the side businesses and industries that gain a whole range of economic benefits from these very important areas.

The VFA will be directly accountable for the administrative, licensing, compliance and regulatory functions of Fisheries Victoria. It will develop operational plans, conduct research, provide advice and make recommendations and encourage compliance via education. Education is a very important component of what fisheries do. There is education around bag limits, sizes and not taking more than you are legally allowed to. Fisheries play such an important role in compliance around those operations. We need to make sure that we are resourcing fisheries appropriately to ensure their health and wellbeing. If we do not encourage this, we need to enforce the law to provide for a healthy ecosystem.

This bill defines the roles of both the minister and the secretary, as is the case with other statutory authorities.

In addition to the board, the bill will clarify accountabilities of all three parties in relation to Fisheries Victoria. The minister is to appoint the board, including a chairperson and deputy chairperson. The board will consist of no fewer than five and no more than eight directors with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience that assist the VFA to carry out these important functions and objectives.

If you look at things like the Level Crossing Removal Authority and the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority, you see that this is a government that is intent on and committed to getting things done — —

Ms Thomas — Absolutely!

Mr J. BULL — ‘Absolutely’, says the member for Macedon. This is another example of a bill that sets up a very important authority, one that has the powers and the functions to place fisheries on a very important governance base. We know that upon being appointed the board will employ the CEO in consultation with the minister and the CEO will be the employer of all VFA staff, who will remain Victorian public service staff. That is obviously very similar to the way that other statutory authorities are set up.

Our plan is to increase the number of anglers to 1 million by 2020, as we have already mentioned, as part of Target One Million. With this we want to see increased fish stocks, support for local clubs, improved access to facilities and the removal of netting from Port Phillip Bay as well as the purpose of this bill, which is to establish a statutory authority. The Andrews government wants to grow fishing in Victoria. It is a fantastic form of recreation. It is a great source of fun and pride for many individuals and families alike. We want to take what is a very good industry and make it a better one. I am of the belief that the VFA will help us do this. I think it will be a worthy authority, a very good authority. I want to take the opportunity to very briefly thank the minister and her staff for all the work they have done. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise this afternoon to make a contribution to the debate on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. The bill establishes the Victorian Fisheries Authority as a statutory authority. Some of the figures spoken about include the recreational fishing sector, which is very important to our economy. It contributes \$2.3 billion per year, which includes the flow-on effects right through.

I want to focus a bit of my attention on the commercial sector, having had 20 years experience in it. The estimated production of the commercial sector for wild

catch in 2013–14 was \$54.6 million according to the minister’s second-reading speech, with aquaculture contributing a further \$25.4 million. The reality is that those figures are grossly understated. That is the bite. That is the catch. That is what is landed.

When you look at the recreational figures, they are done as a flow-on effect through the entire industry, so they include fuel and bait purchased. The commercial figures are purely the value of the fish that are landed. The commercial sector also buys fuel. They maintain their vessels and they buy gear and equipment. There are all those flow-on effects. They employ people on the land side and the ocean side, whether it is in the wholesale industry, the processing industry and also the retail sector. So if you were to apply the same measure to the commercial sector, it would have a substantially bigger value. These figures always tend to understate the commercial sector, which employs about 8000 people. It is a significant sector, but unfortunately it always tends to be understated in that circumstance.

One of the things I want to touch on, as did our shadow Minister for Agriculture, the member for Murray Plains, is the role of the board. Seafood Industry Victoria has put out a position paper in which they have detailed the industry’s concerns with regard to the board. Clause 22 of the bill is about the appointment of the board. For some reason the government is choosing to specifically preclude anyone with commercial experience from the board, which I find quite staggering because the knowledge that is in the commercial sector is huge. They can bring a lot of value to the table.

Clause 29 of the bill talks about a director of the board having a conflict of interest. Pecuniary interests of directors have to be declared. Let us say there was a person on the board who held a commercial scallop licence. Obviously if there were discussions around the setting of the scallop quota or the opening and closing of the scallop season, then they would declare a conflict and not vote on that issue because that is a direct issue of interest.

There could also be directors on this board that could have other commercial interests in the sector — for example, in bait and tackle or in the charter industry. They could have conflicts of interest but they also bring expertise to the board. This is the conundrum that we are facing. We are happy to bring recreational experience to the board, but not commercial experience. The pecuniary interest provisions will safeguard that because if you have a conflict of interest you have to declare it, and that is quite logical. If you have a person with commercial experience, they are involved in a

particular sector of the industry. They would simply declare conflict, as a member of any board would, and not vote on that issue. It is just common sense.

That they have been singled out and that there will be no-one with commercial experience on the board is, I think, quite staggering. Given that wealth of knowledge in the commercial sector of Victoria, I just cannot understand why you would do that. When you consider all the other positions — there are between five and eight positions on that board — I think it is just wrong not to have someone from the commercial sector represented on the board. Those decisions that the board makes will directly impact people in the commercial sector, so it is logical that they would have a voice. If there were eight on the board and there was one with a conflict, that is one vote out of eight, so it is not like they will have the numbers to all of a sudden skew the outcome of the board towards the commercial sector. You want to bring that wealth of knowledge that is in the commercial sector to the board. I think that just needs to be done.

That is one thing. It is the main point that Seafood Industry Victoria has put forward, and it is quite a logical point. I think perhaps government members should tell us why the commercial sector is excluded given you have clause 29, 'Pecuniary interests of directors', meaning you have to declare an interest if you are on the board. There are safeguards in place to prevent that. It is quite simple, given those safeguards. If a member of the government can explain to me why the commercial sector is being excluded from this board, I would very much appreciate it, as would the commercial sector.

There is one other thing. Interestingly, the shadow minister, the member for Murray Plains, talked about PrimeSafe earlier, but in the context of cost shifting. The one thing we do not want to see is the commercial sector having their fees jacked up and hiked to pay for activities that are geared towards the recreational sector, particularly enforcement, for example. I recall from my experience that the Seafood Safety Act came in in 2003 and PrimeSafe took over fishing in Victoria on 1 January 2004. At that stage, before PrimeSafe came into being, I was involved in the seafood industry. We were paying \$550 a year in fees. Then the government through PrimeSafe wanted to put our fees up from \$550 to \$6500. We are talking about an almost \$6000 hike — that is a 1300-odd per cent hike — in fees for no benefit to me as a business or to anyone in the trade. You do not want to see this happen here. Commercial licence-holders do pay significant fees, and you do not want to see those fees jacked up to then push that money into other activities, whether it is the funding of

the operations of the board or replacing money that should be coming out of consolidated revenue. That is a genuine concern with the cost shifting.

I said about the bill regarding commercial netting in Port Phillip Bay that there is a real issue around enforcement. There needs to be a bigger budget for enforcement of fisheries, particularly in Port Phillip Bay. You have a situation there where the netting is being phased out. I understand there are about 10 fishermen left now in Port Phillip — 30-odd took the package — so there is a real temptation for a black market to be created in the fisheries sector in Port Phillip Bay. You have very expensive species of fish in King George whiting, southern calamari, snapper, and even flounder and garfish. They are very prized table fish. You do not want to see a situation where you have a black market created. If enforcement is not there, the temptation is there to create a black market.

That is a real problem. What people must understand is that those licensed fishermen, whether they were in Port Phillip or in the 20-mile zone in Victorian coastal waters, are there to harvest fish on behalf of the Crown for those who cannot harvest their own fish. The reality is that not everyone is able to get in a boat and go and catch their own fish. In fact the vast majority of people are not able to go catch their own fish. So we do need those fishermen there to go and catch fish on behalf of the Crown and to provide fish for the people of Victoria who cannot fish. There is a real danger there of a black market, and it really concerns me. I stated it in debate on the bill regarding the phasing out of netting in Port Phillip Bay. I think that is really important, and that is something that should be coming from consolidated revenue, not from jacking up fees to pay for that. That is a real issue that has been created by this.

As I said, the main industry concern is regarding the board, and I would certainly like to hear an explanation from the government with regard to why the commercial sector is excluded from the board.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I take great pleasure in joining the debate on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. Fishing is something that I am really growing to love. I have always loved to be outdoors, but in my younger years I probably found it a bit harder to sit still. Now I am slowing down a bit and smelling the roses, and I am meeting some great fisherfolk right across the state. The government has a very ambitious target. We went to the election with a very strong policy position of increasing support for recreational fishers and also a target of growing the number of recreational fishers by 2025 to 1 million. I think on the last figures we are about three-quarters of the way

there. We want to get more Victorians fishing more often.

Fishing is a pastime that families can enjoy together. I certainly want to pay credit to the team at Snobs Creek up at Eildon, who do a fantastic job in growing fish for our recreational fishermen. It is not only introduced species that people love to eat. Some great work is being done to ensure that our indigenous species grow.

I turn to the departmental staff. We have some great public servants in Victoria, but you rarely meet some that are as happy in their jobs as those that are involved in this great work. I want to pay credit to the minister for the events that she has instigated this year, including fish stocking and the Ballarat Fishing Festival, a great event that was held at Lake Wendouree. Many of my family members were up there, and I also had the privilege of representing the minister at Lake Eildon. It was just an outstanding event.

Fisherfolk are just the nicest people that you are ever likely to meet. Those who indulge in outdoor pursuits as a family are not the families that you see with huge social problems or with kids that run on the wrong side of the law. Fishing has enormous social benefits, including keeping families together. Importantly fishing actually contributes a lot to Victoria's economy, and in particular Victoria's regional economy. I would really like to acknowledge the fisheries officers, the fishos. They are members of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU); as a former official with the CPSU, I always had great conversations with the fishos. They have been involved in the consultation around this bill, and they are very keen and supportive of it.

The bill establishes the Victorian Fisheries Authority as an independent statutory authority and provides necessary provisions to ensure a modern fit-for-purpose authority. The member for South Barwon challenged government members to respond to some of his queries in relation to the board. It is proposed that the board will have not less than five directors and not more than eight. The member seems to be echoing the words of the Leader of the National Party in saying that the opposition believes there should be someone on the board that currently has a commercial licence. They are saying that there is a need for there to be commercial acumen on the board.

The government agrees that we need commercial acumen on the board, which is why I would direct the member for South Barwon to proposed section 22 of the bill, in division 5, which goes through the skills that collectively we would expect the board to have. With modern board practice, you would want board members

to have a range of experience, but gone are the days of a representational board. Even the football codes have gone away from that. The president of each club does not sit on the AFL board because they tend to push their own interests. In our alpine boards we do not have representatives of particular sectors; we have an overall skills board.

Proposed section 22 of the bill provides:

- (1) In appointing a person under section 21, the Minister must, so far as is practicable, ensure that collectively the directors of the Board have skills, knowledge or experience in relation to —
 - ...
 - (d) natural resource management; and
 - (e) fisheries management; and
 - ...
 - (h) leadership and business management, including human resources; and
 - ...
 - (j) marine or freshwater science.

At no point does it say that there will not be someone with commercial experience. Of course there can be people with commercial experience, but the government does not agree with the opposition that there should be someone that has a current commercial licence; that would be patently unfair.

We know that the opposition has got form on picking winners. The national competition policy has made numerous recommendations over recent decades, saying that we should have skills boards and that we should not have one interest represented over another. You should not have one licence-holder with access to more information than every other licence-holder in Victoria. There was no barrier to previous licence-holders being able to be involved, so I do not agree with the contention of the member for South Barwon.

On the issue of costs, the member for Murray Plains, the Leader of The Nationals — a former minister responsible for fisheries — said that on the one hand the government is not spending enough when in fact we are spending \$46 million compared to his \$16 million — that is \$30 million more. On the one hand we have the situation where we are not spending enough, and on the other hand he is concerned about the increase in the annual fee. The increase in the annual fee is no more than the cost of a packet of bait. If we are having more Victorians fishing more often

and providing better support to the infrastructure that gets Victorians out fishing, I do not think I know anyone who fishes who would say, 'In one year I can't manage the cost of a packet of bait'. We stand by \$46 million compared to \$16 million, and we think that that is better for fisherfolk in Victoria.

I want to refer to some fish that we have seen around in the western Pacific recently. There has been some fishy activity. I refer to an article from the *Daily Mail* with the headline 'Master of disguise — first chameleon fish found in western Pacific'. The article states:

With its coat of many colours, depending on whether it is hunting or hiding, the blue-striped fangblenny is the first fish found to be able to mimic others as it swims in the western Pacific ...

They say it has been found in Indonesia, but I think it has actually been found in China recently. I think it actually might come up in the guise of someone who might pass themselves off as a minister when they are actually a shadow minister. The blue-striped chameleon fangblenny has been seen passing itself off as a minister rather than a shadow minister.

Mr T. Bull — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, whilst I am enjoying the contribution of the member for Yan Yean on this bill, I do feel she is straying a little. I would encourage you to bring her back to the content of the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! Thank you. The member is talking about a particular type of fish, and I am very interested to hear what this fish is and how it relates to the bill.

Ms GREEN — A photograph in the article is captioned 'Now you see him — the fangblenny fish turns bright canary yellow'. It can turn bright red, and probably turn bright red with embarrassment when it gets sprung. There is another picture in the article captioned 'Now you don't — the fish all but disappears against a backdrop of coral and rock'. I think he might disappear when he has done the wrong thing, when he said that he was a professor when he is not actually a professor, when he said that he has got a qualification when he does not.

Mr T. Bull — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I note your previous comment that the member was talking about a fish. I think it is appropriate that she restricts her comments to that actual species of fish and not reflect on other members of Parliament.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! I ask the member to continue to talk about the bill.

Ms GREEN — I have no idea what the member for Gippsland East would be referring to when I am talking about the blue-striped fangblenny.

This bill is strongly supported by VRFish, by the Future Fish Foundation and by other key stakeholders. I wish the bill a speedy passage and commend it to the house.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I rise to also speak on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016 and, this may surprise some members of this place, in support of a sustainable commercial fishing industry. In fact I would like to speak about support for good evidence-based policymaking, which unfortunately seems to have gone completely out the window when it comes to this Labor government's approach to fisheries and our marine environment.

This bill relates to how fishing is regulated in Victoria. It establishes the new Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA). Of course more research needs to be done on our fisheries, but from what we know so far from the evidence we have, there are many fisheries in Port Phillip Bay that are actually sustainable. Snapper, silver trevally, southern calamari and King George whiting can all be sustainably fished in Port Phillip and Corio bays according to reports by the Australian Conservation Foundation. Fisheries in these areas provide fresh local fish for Victorians, which is very important obviously for our diet and for the industry.

But rather than supporting sustainable industries such as these, or funding more research to ensure that industries are sustainable, the Labor government has decided to close commercial netting in Port Phillip and Corio bays, meaning that Victorians will no longer be able to buy sustainable local fish and instead will be forced to buy fish from elsewhere, potentially places with a much worse environmental impact. Now we see this government creating a new fishing authority which will be responsible for implementing this nonsensical policy and others like it.

The public has every right to ask: why is the government doing this? Why are they taking this nonsensical approach? Unfortunately they are not shutting down the commercial fishing industry in order to protect the environment or to protect the sustainability of fish stocks into the future, because as I said, the evidence we have says that these fisheries have been shown to be sustainable, although of course it would be great if the government could fund more research to verify this. Instead they are getting rid of commercial netting because they are throwing the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party and recreational fishing interest groups a bone by saying that they want

to significantly expand recreational fishing in the state, but they are giving no thought or research at all into the sustainability of these stocks into the future when we expand recreational fishing or the impact on our marine environment. This decision by Labor was purely — let us be honest — a political one, not based on any evidence whatsoever. I consider that a real shame because we absolutely need to protect our marine environment and our fisheries into the future if people want to keep fishing. The decisions being made by this government around fisheries are doing the exact opposite.

Let us be clear what the government is doing with this bill and with other fishing policies. It is incentivising and encouraging more and more fish to be taken out of our oceans, mostly by recreational fishers, with no research into whether this is sustainable. In fact we have virtually no research into how much recreational fishers catch or the impact of their fishing on fish stocks or the environment. The Productivity Commission itself has said that we do not have sufficient research on this. Now with the shutting down of commercial netting, which was our only real source of data about how much is being caught in these bays, we are about to lose that data because we are losing those industries. Not only is the government doing a disservice to the environment but it is actually abandoning sustainable fish sources and local commercial fish industries, which is not good for our restaurants, it is not good for people who like to consume locally bought food and of course it is not good for the environment.

Many people during this debate have talked about how people in Victoria like to go fishing, and my family is included in that, but we need to make sure we are managing our fisheries in a way that is based on science and evidence and in a way that is sustainable. I think everyone who goes fishing would want to know that they are having a minimal impact on the environment and that their kids and grandkids will also be able to go fishing in the future. If we squander our stocks now, there will not be fish left for our children and grandchildren to catch.

Target One Million is the Labor government's policy on fishing. It wants to increase the number of recreational fishers to 1 million by 2020 and is giving a lot of support to the industry to do that. But — news flash — fish are not an unlimited resource. You cannot just increase the number of recreational fishers forever and ever without figuring out whether that is actually having an impact. Labor has also said they will not introduce any new marine sanctuaries, which is a huge mistake as well.

This brings me back to the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill that is before us. The bill creates a new independent authority to do the regulatory work that Fisheries Victoria currently does. We in the Greens acknowledge that there are some potential transparency advantages to having an independent authority dealing with a public resource, and the governance arrangements here certainly seem to be more transparent than they have been. For example, the VFA will create its own annual reports rather than that information being embedded in the departmental reports. Hopefully they will actually engage with stakeholders about those reports and the board minutes will be accessible through FOI processes.

We have some issues about board appointments, as does the opposition. For example, the board cannot include anyone who has a vested interest in commercial fishing, but there is no mention of those who have a vested interest in recreational fishing, which does not seem to make any sense from a policy perspective and seems really to be purely a political move. I know The Nationals and the Liberals have raised their desire to have commercial fishing interests on the board, but where were they when we had this debate about whether we should actually shut down commercial netting in the bay? Pretty much nowhere. We heard nothing from them, and they have sold out the commercial fishing industry in our bay just as much as Labor.

The modest improvements that this bill brings are pretty much beside the point because the VFA will be bound to implement government policy, including Target One Million, to expand recreational fishing and fishing infrastructure without any evidence or research. And if the government chooses to shut down other fisheries, the VFA will have to do that too.

In particular, it is quite worrying that the VFA is based on the model of the Game Management Authority, which simply has not worked. It is promoting hunting, and that is against the ministerial statement of expectations, which states that promoting hunting would be in direct conflict with its regulatory functions. It corresponds more with pro-hunting stakeholders than with environmental stakeholders, even to the extent of having chats with the shooting lobby about when the minister might return from leave and make a duck shooting season announcement. It is just completely unacceptable. I am worried that we will just see more of this with the Victorian Fisheries Authority because it has been set up in the same way as the Game Management Authority.

It would have been much preferred if the government had established a marine and coastal authority rather than this fishing authority, and it is quite unclear to us why a new fishing body has been set up at all while the government is still in the process of developing the marine and coastal act. It would have made much more sense to do the act first and then look at what regulatory bodies are needed to enforce the act. They have done it the other way around and it is purely a political move and we are going to see a lot worse outcomes for the environment because of it.

The environment, particularly the marine environment, is so important for Victoria. I love to go scuba diving; it is one of my absolute favourite things to do. People come from all over for Victoria's beach environment, but we are just going to see more and more risks to this pastime, to our industry and to our environment because of this government's policies and in particular its complete inability to introduce new marine parks, to fund more research into our fisheries and to put limits on what kind of activities can be done to make sure that we have sustainability in these areas. There is also the government's inability to do anything to date on plastics, banning plastic bags, and preventing microbeads and plastic packaging from entering our oceans, which is one of the biggest threats to our oceans.

In conclusion, this bill really misses an opportunity to address the real threats facing our oceans, which are a huge asset to Victoria. We should have seen a marine and coastal act first and then had a marine and coastal authority look at this in a holistic way, rather than just this political move to throw a bone to the Shooters and Fishers in return for who knows what and to try to win some votes in certain marginal seats. I really hope that this is not the way we are going to see policy made in the future, although I do not have a lot of faith given what we have seen with fisheries policy to date.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — Thank God that is over! Yet again the member for Melbourne, like the member for Prahran, parades her prejudice against the pastimes of working people. They hate drinking, they hate gambling, they hate recreational fishing, they hate recreational shooting — they hate the pastimes of the working class. They come into this place, they condemn all of us and then they leave. The member for Melbourne said that she likes scuba diving. Well, I am sure many, many working-class people would love the opportunity to scuba-dive, but do you know what? They cannot afford it. They do not have the money. But I will tell you one thing: there will be a lot of kids of working families who could go fishing with their dad or their mum, yet they are being punished by the member

for Melbourne in her statements. They are being condemned because they have the temerity to want to experience an outdoor lifestyle, to spend time with their family and to fish.

The other thing I would say to the member for Melbourne is: do you know why sometimes working people like to go recreational fishing or hunting? It is because it is a cheap form of food they can feed their families. When you are poor you do not have a lot of money, so you cannot wander down to the local gourmet fish shop and spend \$45 per kilo on flathead tails. You do not have that opportunity when you are poor. Yet whenever there is a chance to sneer at working people, to condemn working people for their pastimes, you can be sure that the member for Melbourne and the member for Prahran will be front and centre condemning working people. They should be condemned, because they are absolutely outrageous. It is absolutely appalling.

The reality is that in terms of the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) this is an important step forward because it is about establishing a statutory authority. I listened with interest when the member for Melbourne said, 'Hopefully this will have greater levels of transparency so we can FOI board minutes'. Well, that would be a novel concept, would it not? Imagine the idea of having a group of people getting together and being able to see their deliberations, read the minutes, participate or be an observer — like, for example, the Greens political party state conference. That would be novel, would it not? Would it not be novel if we could all join hands together and go down to the Greens state political conference and listen to their deliberations? We cannot do that, because they shut it down. They preach transparency, but not when it comes to us actually seeing their own internal processes.

I have been a delegate to ALP state conferences for many years, on and off. They are always open to the public and always open to the media for scrutiny. The Liberal Party, I know, do the same. I believe even the National Party would do the same. But not the Greens political party. No, it is one rule for everyone else and it is separate for them. They are just like this sort of self-promoting, self-absorbed cabal of self-interest.

The reality is that we are seeing a change in diet and patterns of behaviour. My father was a butcher and ran his own business for many years. Back in those days — I am thinking back to the 1970s and 1980s — people did not eat a lot of fish, really. Where I grew up it was meat and three veg most nights. When I was growing up we had meat every night — a lot of red meat — and a bit of chicken as the 1980s got on and we started to

get out there and experiment. But now the reality is that people are consuming far more fish and other seafood than they did in earlier times. In fact my eldest daughter has decided, at the age of 11, she wants to become a pescetarian. I call her a fish-and-chip-ocrite. But anyhow, I support my daughter's choices. I asked that she write an essay on why she wanted to, given that I do all the cooking. I thought, 'I'll indulge you, but please convince me' — and she convinced me. She is outstanding.

It is important that we create this statutory authority to reflect that there is that change in terms of diet and consumption. Many of us are embracing the Mediterranean diet for all the benefits that it provides us, and we are eating more. It is also interesting to note that by having a separate statutory authority we can actually start looking at tackling issues like abalone poaching. I remember some years ago speaking with someone in the industry who said that for criminals drug production and abalone poaching were like a portfolio of interests that they would have. If they were criminals, you would often find that they were engaged in a wide variety of criminal activities, abalone poaching being one of them. So having an authority to tackle that is really important.

Like you, Acting Speaker Kilkenny, one of the highlights for me in recent times was seeing the barramundi swim freely at the Hazelwood pond. I remember seeing our esteemed colleague Harriet Shing, a member from the other place, letting the barramundi go, and that was fantastic. Again, if we start thinking about making these sorts of investments into the valley, I think that is really good. Certainly from an Essendon perspective, I am very excited about the fact that we will, as part of Target One Million, have more estuary perch released into the Maribyrnong River as well. It is about having that level of understanding that we have got these beautiful assets and reinvesting in those assets by making sure that we do not have polluted waterways but healthy waterways and healthy bays and having the ability to release more fish stock to address that. Yet again, when you look at the Greens and their comments you see they are completely and utterly opposed to these sorts of initiatives.

The member for Melbourne in her contribution talked about a lack of an evidence base in terms of what is informing our legislation. That is just complete and utter nonsense. I would say to the member for Melbourne, 'Where is your evidence that there was no evidence that was used to formulate this legislation?'. It is just absolute arrant nonsense.

I listened with interest to the Leader of the National Party's contribution earlier. I think I have got this right. His issue was that in relation to the fees that recreational fishers pay they should make those payments but that money should not be used to fund the VFA; the VFA's funding should be done via an appropriation. I think that was what the Leader of the National Party was alluding to.

One thing that sort of struck me as a point is to look at it from another angle. My esteemed colleague the member for Macedon is in the chamber, and she does an outstanding job working hand in glove with the Minister for Health in her duties as parliamentary secretary. We have got a number of hospitals in the state which, for example, use commercial parking operators to generate revenue. If the Leader of the National Party's logic was extended to health, what he is saying is that if you generate revenue from a commercial car park at a hospital, that money should not be used by the hospital; that money should be passed to Treasury and Finance and reappropriated back to the hospital. What I would pose to the Leader of the National Party is that if the VFA is collecting this revenue as part of its normal operations and duties, then it would probably be more efficient for the discharge of its duties if that revenue was retained so that it could be used to fund its operations.

I am not quite sure that the notion that the VFA has to collect this dough, transmit it to the Consolidated Fund and then have to wait for appropriation bills to be passed in order to receive payment is necessarily a particularly efficient use of public resources and whether that is the most efficient way in which the VFA should operate. Again I just use hospitals as an example, because they are very large complex businesses and the reality is that they do generate a lot of revenue in their own right, which will clearly be used for operational purposes. I do not think that anyone would be suggesting for a moment that there is something intrinsically wrong with that as a proposition.

As has been indicated, if you are looking at the establishment of the VFA, you are looking at a board of five to eight members, which I think is really good number. I think you then get the right skill mix in that type of board situation. Clearly you need a chair and deputy chair, you need a person who has responsibilities from a treasury perspective, you probably have a legal compliance officer and you might have someone who has got a bit of knowledge about the industry and the sector. I think that is a really healthy balance and mix. The reality is that as we progressively update the governance architecture of

these instrumentalities, we must be trying to ensure that it reflects common practice and what we are currently seeing. It should be about constantly improving these sorts of organisations.

Again, it is galling when I and other members of this house have to listen to some of the nonsense that the member for Melbourne and the member for Prahran produce. I do not know why it is that they just sneer at working people. I do not know why they condemn working people who like to hunt, who like to fish, who like to drink and who like to punt.

Mr T. Bull interjected.

Mr PEARSON — Well, you and I, brother, are on a unity ticket — although not the hunting bit. It is just extraordinary. I commend the bill to the house.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to speak on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. But before I do I must disclose that I have a pecuniary interest in the fishing industry. In fact I have got quite a substantial pecuniary interest. We started off with a 10-foot tinny which was able to be towed by the normal family car. The family got really interested and we progressed up and up. We got a new boat, we spent more money, made more repairs, bought more tackle — until we ended up with a 27-foot boat that not only required a special vehicle to tow it because it was so heavy but then we seemed to buy about another 25 fishing rods. We then spent money on repairs.

It is interesting hearing comments about recreational fishing. I somehow got the impression that the member for Melbourne thinks that recreational fishers financially benefit from recreational fishing. Let me tell you, when you pay \$100 for a tank of petrol, go out and catch the fish — if you are lucky you catch about \$40 worth — and then get home and do all the other things you have to do, recreational fishers are not making any financial benefit. What they are getting is a terrific benefit for the whole family. There is the bonding together of families and the fresh air, the interests and the healthy pursuit. Whether it is helping the little ones catch a fish or the baiting, the hooking or the teaching of how to gut or fillet a fish, all those things are so important to this industry. The side health benefits and the mental health benefits in recreational fishing cannot be over-estimated.

I never wanted to go fishing; I was dragged into fishing. But now I am quite interested in it, although I do not catch as much as anyone else. I cannot understand how there can be six people on our boat, we have the same bait and possibly the same hooks — and everybody else

seems to catch the snapper and I catch the tangles and everything else. I do not understand the science of that.

The member for Melbourne talked about science. I wonder if she is thinking about the Tim Flannery sort of science that talked about everything being doom and gloom and us never seeing rain again. And look at it, we are so wet and so bogged in country Victoria.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mrs FYFFE — I am listening to the interjections. He did say that it would never rain in that way again and that the dams would be empty. So I am wondering if that is the sort of science that she is seeking, that is saying that recreational fishing should be stopped. But I will come back to the bill because obviously those opposite are getting a little bit excited, and one must not do that on a Thursday afternoon at 10 to 4.

This bill will establish an authority which will replace Fisheries Victoria with an independent board and authority over a CEO. The Victorian Fisheries Authority will be directly accountable for a range of regulatory functions, and these include the administration, licensing, compliance, enforcement and management plans. There have been a lot of comments made about who will be on the board and how it will be comprised. Seafood Industry Victoria has brought up some important points regarding the future board and the appointment of directors to the board, and that it looks like it is going to exclude current commercial licence-holders from appointment. There is an argument that there is a conflict of interest here, but there is also an argument that the board needs that commercial industry experience. Seafood Industry Victoria says that the specific exclusion of any commercial seafood interests from the board is completely uncalled for. I believe that for the industry to respect the authority of the new board there is a need for commercial input from the industry that employs over 8000 people in Victoria. I hope the minister is going to work closely with Seafood Industry Victoria and allay its fears about what is going to happen.

There is mention in the bill that the board will look at aquaculture, which, as all of us know, is a very important thing for the future of feeding the world — not only Australians, but also other people in other countries. The recent developments in aquaculture are quite exciting. I am sure other members saw a recent article on lobster aquaculture, which is showing great promise. We have so much land and so much clean water that hopefully those developments will progress quickly and we will have more fish farming, as it is commonly called, of many more types than we

currently have. We have very good oyster farms and mussel farms, we have salmon farms in Tasmania and we have other fish farming along the coastline of Australia. Victoria needs to put more emphasis on fish farming, because it is a growing industry and one that is going to be very viable.

I would just like to go back to recreational fishing. In my area we have the fishing group Yarra Valley Fly Fishers, which hosts a fishing day for the local Scope group on Fridays. I was very fortunate to be there the other Friday, and it is terrific. Scope brings a lot of its clients to those fishing days, and the club members volunteer all day, fishing with them. They caught a tremendous amount of fish and had a great deal of fun. The water level of the lake was very high because of the water running in. Of course the fish had been stocked from a fish farm, so that meant that nearly everybody caught a fish.

On Saturdays the club is open to people from the community to come and practise fly fishing. Members talk about sustainable fishing, about catching fish and letting them go again. They tell them that you do not have to kill every fish you catch and that you do not have to eat all the fish you catch — that you can actually catch them and let them go. Club members spend every Wednesday night practising casting, and they teach people, anyone who is interested, how to cast lines. These volunteers, the recreational fishers, should be praised for the work they do in lobbying and making sure that our rivers and lakes are stocked with the right sorts of fish. Their concerns about carp are to be listened to.

I must say that there has been very good work done by both sides of the house over the last couple of decades in relation to the fish in our rivers and making sure that they are not getting overrun. We have very strict laws about people not releasing exotic fish. It still happens a little, unfortunately, but we do have laws on that. We have some very keen people working in government departments who are emphasising the need for native fishing, and that is terribly important in the Upper Yarra. Blackfish are a challenge to catch but delightful to eat, and on a lovely day you can see hundreds of people out there fishing on the Yarra.

There are fishing clubs in many districts, and my area is no different. If the government is committed to Target One Million, a lot of the money that is going to come in from licences as the number of people fishing increases has to go towards putting in more boat ramps and providing more facilities. If you see the queues, particularly down on the Mornington Peninsula during the season, you know it can become quite dangerous. I

was driving along Point Nepean Road near Rye, and there were trailers parked everywhere. There were people with trailers with their boats still on who were doing U-turns, trying to get into the queue. I have heard of people queueing for a couple of hours to launch their boat.

We want to encourage more people to fish. The boat industry is growing. It is not all river and lake fishing. We know that — and we have to put in more safe places to launch boats and more safe places to park trailers, otherwise we are going to disadvantage the people who are not fishing, people who just want to go down to the beach for a quiet day but cannot get there because of all these vehicles. It is terribly important that the money comes in, that it is not wasted on the formation of a bureaucracy and not wasted on a lot of reports, consultants, fees and so on, but that it is actually spent out there, as has been done a great deal by both sides of the house, on improving the facilities for the launching of boats.

There are still questions to be answered, some details to come. I am sure they will come out as the bill goes between the houses and as it is investigated more thoroughly in the upper house.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I wish to speak on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. Fishing is a very important industry in Victoria. It boasts a variety of fish and other seafood, whether you buy it from a fishmonger, eat it at a restaurant or catch it yourself.

Nations with large coastlines have a big advantage with sea access, and they can improve their economy by increasing fish production and putting into place sensible policy mixes. Victoria's mainland and island coastline is 2512 kilometres in length. There are about 123 bays, inlets and estuaries, varying in water area from around 1 square kilometre to 2000 square kilometres. Estuaries are important for fish spawning or as nursery grounds, which are fundamental to fish breeding.

Victoria's commercial fisheries supply an extensive variety of species to domestic and international markets and provide some of the world's finest seafood, including abalone, rock lobster, King George whiting, scallop, giant crab, eel and snapper. The resources are managed to a world-class standard through a range of fishery management tools and strategies.

Recreational fishing contributes \$2.3 billion to the economic wellbeing of Victoria. The Target One Million plan aims to increase the number of Victorian recreational fishers from about 730 000 to 1 million by

2020. The state government is committed to delivering \$46 million for the Target One Million plan for recreational fishing. In the period between April and November each year, 600 000 to 700 000 trout and salmon are released into Victoria's public waterways. Most of these fish are released into lakes and impoundments, where they provide enhanced recreational fishing opportunities for anglers.

To help get more Victorians fishing more often, the Target One Million plan will establish Fisheries Victoria as a statutory authority. The other initiatives to promote the plan are as follows: introducing school education and children's fishing programs, establishing a Better Fishing Facilities Fund, implementing the maritime species stocking program to stock 5 million fish per year, developing new recreational fishing reefs, improving boat-launching facilities and access to waterways, and halting commercial netting in Port Phillip and Corio bays.

The Andrews Labor government moved ahead with its plan to ban commercial net fishing in Victoria's Port Phillip Bay by April 2022 after its Fisheries Amendment Bill 2015 was passed. Under the proposal, the government will contribute \$27 million in compensation to commercial licence-holders.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill delivers a key element of the Victorian government's Target One Million election commitment and provides for a new, modern, fit-for-purpose authority to ensure efficient service delivery across the fisheries sector. The new Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) will be directly accountable for the administrative, licensing, compliance and enforcement functions currently undertaken by Fisheries Victoria.

The government's Target One Million plan to get more Victorians fishing more often includes a commitment to provide all eligible angling clubs with up to \$2000 to promote membership. To be successful, an applicant needs to demonstrate how their proposed project will promote and/or increase club membership and increase recreational fishing in Victoria. Another key element of Target One Million is the Better Fishing Facilities grants program, which funds projects that deliver clear benefits to recreational fishers and contribute to boosting participation.

The new VFA is on course to be operational from 1 July 2017, and it will have very transparent governance arrangements that will undoubtedly drive improved performance. It will support the development of recreational and commercial fishing and aquaculture in Victoria, and it will regulate fisheries and provide

advice to government on a range of fisheries management opportunities. The VFA will be led by an independent board at arm's length from the government and take an integrated and collaborative approach to the management of Victoria's fisheries resources.

The Andrews Labor government recognises that Aboriginal people have a strong connection to the country that is central to their culture, both traditionally and today. It is time to evolve how we manage Victoria's fisheries to incorporate the rights, interests, aspirations and culture of Aboriginal people in both what we do and how we work. This needs to be done in a way that also respects the interests of commercial and recreational fishers in accessing the community's fisheries resources. It will be the responsibility of the VFA to take into consideration the Victorian Aboriginal Fishing Strategy when formulating policy. One of the components of fisheries compliance work is education about regulation. The aim is to increase awareness, understanding and acceptance of fisheries regulations and therefore, in the longer term, to increase compliance.

It is exciting to see the release of recreational fishing applications bringing the popular *Victorian Recreational Fishing Guide* to iPhone and Android. The first of its kind in Australia, the free application features colour illustrations of more than 65 species found in Victoria's waterways. Anglers can identify their catch, confirm size and bag limits and access information on permitted equipment and closed seasons. There is also a maritime park boundary locator, which uses a smart phone's internal GPS to determine whether the user is in or approaching a maritime park or sanctuary. These are fantastic developments facilitating and hence motivating anglers to do more fishing more often. These developments no doubt will assist the Andrews government immensely to achieve its Target One Million plan sooner rather than later.

Most anglers have blamed the previous coalition government's environmental policies for ruining the state's iconic trout fisheries in the high country early in 2014. At the time anglers said the past season was disastrous in terms of lost brown and rainbow trout populations and feared that famous trout rivers were years from recovery. Many blamed the widespread removal of non-native willows and poplars on public land under the previous coalition government's environmental policy as the chief cause. The loss of habitat and food combined with a rise in stream temperatures from the loss of shade has been identified by experts as the likely killer of trout.

That is why it is a very sensible move by the Andrews government to set up the Victorian Fisheries Authority to take control of wideranging issues that affect the Victorian fishing industry as a whole. As one would expect, the VFA will be directly accountable for a range of regulatory functions such as administration, licensing, compliance and enforcement. The VFA will be empowered to develop fisheries management plans and operational plans, conduct research, encourage compliance via education, and monitor and enforce compliance under the Fisheries Act 1995 and other relevant legislation. The opposition suggests having a commercial licence-holder on the board, but that would create a conflict of interest in my view. By definition recreational fishing does not have a pecuniary interest. This was also confirmed by the member for Evelyn.

The VFA will deliver efficient services that ensure long-term sustainable management of Victoria's fisheries. This means the VFA will be responsible for ensuring that there will not be a disastrous season such as the one we experienced under the previous coalition government in 2014. That is why the bill requires that the board has an appropriate mix of skills, knowledge and experience to assist the authority to achieve its objectives, perform its functions and maintain good governance practice.

I am absolutely positive that the Victorian Fisheries Authority will deliver efficient regulatory and compliance outcomes and take an integrated and collaborative approach to the management of Victoria's fisheries for future generations. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — It is a pleasure to rise and make a contribution on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. As we have heard, the purpose of this bill is to establish the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), a statutory authority that will be responsible for recreational and commercial fishing regulation and management in Victoria, replacing Fisheries Victoria. While I am certainly not opposed to the creation of the VFA, as our lead speaker pointed out, we do reserve our position on this bill as there are a few areas that we believe require some clarification.

I should say — and as you well know, Acting Speaker Blackwood, being a regular holiday-maker down to my electorate — the recreational and commercial fishing sectors are very, very important to my local economy. They have been established for a very, very long time and obviously have spin-off benefits for the tourism industry as well. Being a keen recreational angler myself, this bill is also of great importance to me. Acting Speaker, whilst I note your fishing exploits have

been exceptionally unsuccessful in your various trips down there, I seek your indulgence for my contribution.

I must point out that I actually found the contribution from the Greens to be quite extraordinary. I am not sure what they were saying. I would have to check *Hansard*, but I think they were talking about concerns about growing numbers of recreational anglers and perhaps putting a limit on the number of recreational anglers that we have. I think that would probably be a view shared by only members of that party in the chamber, if in fact that was their view. The member for Evelyn pointed out that recreational fishing has enormous benefits for society. When we look at mental health and we talk about families spending time together, it is certainly a sector I think all other members in this chamber would want to see grow.

I do want to make some comments on the structure of the board. I know that speakers on both sides of the house have covered off on that. I want to explain the area that, I guess, has created a little bit of confusion and concern. First of all, I just want to have a talk initially about why I believe both sectors should have representation on the board. When I say both sectors, I am referring to commercial and recreational. We have heard that the board will have no fewer than five and no more than eight members, including a chairperson and a deputy chairperson. That certainly provides the capacity for the board, if we look at a board of eight, to have at least two or perhaps three members from both sectors making up that board.

An area of concern that has been raised by Seafood Industry Victoria (SIV) and others in the commercial sector is that if the new authority is to go into areas like setting quotas, developing legislation, setting fees and royalties and setting commercial fishing regulations, it certainly should have commercial representation on its board. As I said, I note the comments from the member for Yan Yean and I will get to those in a little while. But one of the concerns that has been raised is that the commercial sector may have a pecuniary interest. There is no need for this to be a concern because anybody serving on a board or a council or a committee can make a declaration of interest if they have to make a determination or a decision in an area that has a financial implication for them in one way or another.

Seafood Industry Victoria has said that if the commercial sector is to have faith in the operation of the authority going forward, it certainly must make provision for commercial input. SIV believes that the exclusion of any commercial seafood interests on the board is uncalled for, and the point was made I think by the member for South Barwon that there will be times

when that may arise. Absolutely that may arise; no-one would argue with that. Similarly, it may apply to people who are involved in recreational charter operations or bait and tackle outlets, but those people should not be excluded from being on the board. They are often people with a wealth of organisational skills, and if their level of expertise and their portfolio of experience fits that need, they have every right to serve on that board.

What has created concern around this is that in his second-reading speech Minister Donnellan states that the government:

... will seek to ensure that collectively, directors have expertise in a number of areas, including legal practice, finance, natural resource management ... stakeholder engagement —

and the fisheries sectors. The member for Yan Yean pointed that out and basically said that is why we will allow commercial representation on the board. The problem is that in commentary also provided by the minister he says:

The government does not want there to be a situation where knowledge gained through membership of the board is used to make financial gains of a personal or commercial nature ...

The assumption was made that this was directed perhaps at the commercial fishing sector. As I have said before, not only can this be covered off by a declaration of interests, but it can also apply to those who have charter operations or bait and tackle shops. All these people will certainly have the level of expertise to be able to make a valuable contribution to the board so it would be a good outcome, in my view, to have strong representation on this board.

I am sure it is the view of the Liberal-National coalition that if we could have multiple representatives of those two sectors on the board, that would be a pleasing outcome. I was delighted to hear in her contribution the member for Yan Yean clear that up for us and pretty much absolutely guarantee that there will be members of the commercial sector on the board. I do thank her for making that absolutely clear here in the chamber today. That has certainly put my mind at ease, and I look forward to that being followed through when the board is appointed.

There are a couple of other small concerns. There was some concern over the definition of what is a 'representative body', with the explanation being that 'representative body' has the same meaning as it has in the Fisheries Act 1995. I have made a quick perusal of the Fisheries Act, and others have read it in more detail than I have, but there does not appear to be a definition

of 'representative body' in the Fisheries Act. I see the advisers taking notes over there. If that is something that could be checked on, that would be good. It is a concern that has been raised by Seafood Industry Victoria, so if that could be noted, that would be terrific.

There have also been concerns raised that the objectives of the VFA do not provide for evidence-based decision-making. It was covered off in the second-reading speech that this would be the case, but SIV has expressed the concern that it is only found in the non-binding components of the bill. They would like to see it clearly stated that the objectives of the authority must include that the decisions made by the board must be justifiable and must be backed up by the best available current, scientific — perhaps peer-reviewed — research.

SIV has also raised concerns that one of the functions of the authority is to conduct, coordinate and encourage research. This is a point that I agree with. A view has been expressed that the authority perhaps should not be conducting research itself. Such a statutory authority can oversee the research, but research should be put out to tender and completed independently. Where it says in the bill that the VFA is 'to conduct, coordinate and encourage research', perhaps some thought can be given to removing the word 'conduct' so that it reads simply that the authority is 'to coordinate and encourage research'.

In summing up, the new authority certainly has the potential to deliver some great outcomes for the fishing sector in Victoria. It is a sector that in some regards is often overlooked and not spoken about a lot and perhaps does not receive the attention and recognition that it deserves in both the recreational and commercial sectors as a key economic driver in our state. My electorate of Gippsland East, with its many waterways — predominately the Gippsland Lakes but also Lake Tyers and many other estuaries further east — has a whole lot of coastal communities that rely very, very heavily on the income generated by recreational fishing. We also have in Lakes Entrance a well-established fishermen's cooperative. Townships like Lakes Entrance, Metung and Paynesville on the Gippsland Lakes were founded predominately on the back of the commercial fishing industry, and that industry has a long history in that area.

There are always a few bumps in the road when we are setting up a new authority. I hope that the areas that require further clarification can be covered off between houses and perhaps in some of the upper house

contributions. As I stated in my opening comments, we reserve our position.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I also rise to speak in support of the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. As previous speakers have said, this is part of an overall strategy of and election commitment from the Andrews Labor government. There have been some small criticisms of the bill in certain areas, but I think it has been more about the opposition being upset that they did not do anything in this space to raise the status of the fishing industry. There is a recognition of the importance of fishing in Victoria in a recreational sense because there are so many Victorians that enjoy the recreational side of fishing. I know there are many, many people in the electorate of Thomastown who are away nearly every weekend fishing. They go to various places all around Victoria, whether it is to the rivers or to the oceans and bays, as part of their recreational activities.

We have a number of multicultural fishing groups in the electorate of Thomastown and recreational fishing is a way of bringing in people who may otherwise be sitting at home, isolated and alone. We have support from the Whittlesea Community Connections and the Whittlesea City Council with transport and fishing days organised where up to 20 or 30 members of some of the seniors groups get in a bus and travel down to the coast or inland to fish. Not always are they successful in the number of fish they bring home but they have a great time doing it.

Legislation that provides that the fishing industry has an authority — the Victorian Fisheries Authority — increases its status of and puts a focus on how much the Andrews Labor government values the fishing industry and understands its importance, whether in an economic and commercial sense or in a recreational sense, giving lots of good times to many people living in Victoria. I actually like fishing. I do not do a lot of it, but I certainly think it is a great activity. There is nothing better than being able to fish — to actually catch something — and to be able to eat what you catch.

In looking at this legislation some concern has been expressed by the opposition around the make-up of the authority and who is on it. In terms of the selection of people, including the great initiative of the Andrews Labor government to increase the number of women represented on boards, either government boards or boards that have government appointments, we will certainly be able to ensure that the fisheries authority will have great representation on the board so that it can do all the things this legislation seeks to do.

That of course covers many things around the fishing industry. It is not just about the fishing. It is also about making sure that there is research and evidence-based documentation about what we need to do in terms of fishing, the environment and the stock we need. Many in this place would know that the Andrews Labor government has the Target One Million project, and there have been many activities around putting more stock in our rivers to ensure that we have a sustainable supply of fish, in particular for recreational fishing, and this will continue under this legislation.

When looking at legislation you can always scrounge around to try to find problems or things that might be wrong, but as far as I understand, the only ones complaining are those from the opposition. There has been a lot of consultation in terms of setting up an authority, because of course you do need to do a lot of work, including a lot of backgrounding, to bring together all the information needed to put together and introduce into the Parliament a bill as substantial as this. As I said, this is something the Labor government has considered long and well. There was an election commitment around increasing the status of the fishing industry in Victoria, giving it the recognition it deserves and ensuring it is sustainable and can be shared between both the commercial and recreational sectors.

In terms of the Thomastown electorate, I note that a resident, who comes in to see me quite regularly, still has a lot of grievances around scallop fishing. It goes way back to the Kennett Liberal government, which changed the scallop licensing regime and broke the licence from the boat, resulting in a lot of scallop licences becoming almost worthless. This is a comparison, I guess, between how the past Liberal coalition governments have treated the fishing industry and what we as the Andrews Labor government are doing in this space in 2016.

The legislation is very comprehensive. It is looking to make sure that the fishing industry will operate smoothly and will be set up in a way that is acceptable to all. I think we will look back at this bill in the future and see how successful it has been in helping to promote the fishing industry as well as make it a lasting industry that is sustainable and protects and supports the environment while also allowing economic gain from it. That can be not just through the actual fishing of fish but also economic gain in terms of tourism, because of course we know that internationally there are a lot of avid fisherpeople, and we hope that Victoria will become a destination for them to do some really great fishing. This legislation is good for Victoria and good for the fishing community within Victoria.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — I too rise today to speak of the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. I have to say as I start that I admire the member for Essendon, who got up with a rant and managed to turn the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016 into a rant about good old-fashioned Labor class warfare. It is quite a unique talent he has to bring the completely irrelevant into a debate on what is actually quite an important bill. I think it has been made quite clear today that the opposition coalition parties agree in principle with the concept of a Victorian Fisheries Authority, as it seems to bring together the various elements to ensure an industry and its viability into the future.

I guess what concerns many of us who have been listening to the debate today is that it has been very focused on the recreational side and has referred a lot to the grand plans for Target One Million. Given that, I think many in the commercial fishing industry can quite rightly be a little concerned about the prospects of a new authority being set up where clearly great lengths have been gone to to exclude that commercial element — that commercial expertise and that commercial understanding — of an industry that has been feeding Victorians for well over 150 years and is an important element in our food supply.

Those of us who represent country areas know that it has been a strong view of both sides of Parliament for a long time now that in Victoria we have great opportunities as a food bowl. We have great opportunities to produce great lamb, great beef and of course a fishing industry. The fishing industry, like many industries, is not just an industry of one homogenous group who all work the same way and have the same skills and the same expertise; the fishing industry is as diverse as the fish that they collect, whether it is the eel fishermen of western Victoria, who have a very unique set of circumstances and skills that are required to carry on their business, or whether it is fishermen in Port Phillip Bay or those who go into deepwater fisheries.

I can understand the concerns that those in the industry may have that just because they are involved in the industry that will therefore preclude them from being involved in the decisions going forward. I cite one very good example of where the insights of those involved in the industry would clearly benefit a board like this. I take, for example, the situation with the rock lobster fishermen off Cape Otway. Those fishermen fish in areas that the average recreational fisher is not going to get to. They are aware of the complications caused by commercial shipping and also the seismic activity from gas and oil explorations and other industries that have to coexist in the productive and very valuable fisheries

here in Victoria. If we are going to exclude that firsthand knowledge and expertise that is built up over many generations of people, put that to one side and ignore it, it seems to me that that is not the smartest way to promote and ensure a profitable and sustainable fishery for the state of Victoria.

My electorate of Polwarth probably has one of the highest rates of recreational fishing when it comes to the value that it adds to its various seaside communities. Unlike some of the speakers who have spoken today about their prowess at the end of a fishing rod, mine is the complete opposite. Therefore I very much declare a pecuniary interest in the viability and sustainability of a good commercial fishery because without them I would never get to taste fish. I am one of the ones who has taken an economic view. The member for Evelyn pointed out earlier that each fish her family caught probably cost \$200 or \$300. I concur with that in that if I went fishing, that is the sum of money that I would have to spend to get one fish.

So while the member for Essendon ranted and raved that this change was needed because it would provide a low-cost food option for low-income working-class families, I would proffer that without a viable commercial fishery that provides good-quality, clean, affordable fish at fish markets, at the supermarket and of course for Friday night fish and chips many people in our community in fact will not get to enjoy the taste of fresh fish.

This raises another situation we have seen. This is the second piece of legislation put forward by this government in the last 12 months that has really put to one side the interests and concerns of the commercial fishing industry. I raise that because while the objectives of this bill are very noble and indeed ones that most people would support, the fishing industry itself quite reasonably has concerns and neither the faith nor the confidence in the way that this new authority may treat it going forward.

We have raised a couple of concerns today in regard to the setting of fees and charges for commercial fishermen. The old adage of 'no representation without taxation' is one that sticks very clearly in most people's minds. We already know that our many marine parks, our many lakes and our many spots that we are wanting our 1 million recreational fishermen to go to are already quite severely under-resourced. We have the quite famous Lake Burrumbeet in my electorate, which is really struggling at the moment because the boat ramps and the jetty are inadequate. We have got policies around many of our Western District Lakes, for example, that have suffered and that have not had the

necessary water or political will to provide water services to them.

It is all very well to have an ambition for 1 million more fishermen, but I think the commercial industry should be concerned about the fact that their fees and charges may be diverted to help prop up what the government is failing to fund through other mechanisms. That industry relies heavily on the money that they pay for further research and development. It is important that that research money and investment in the commercial fishing industry is sustained and not eaten into in order to keep recreational fishermen happy. I think it is also important in this day and age, as I mentioned a little earlier, to think about the need for clean, green food and the ability for Victoria to feed itself and the world, so this is certainly not an industry that we should be giving up on lightly.

This also concerns me, particularly after the cutbacks to the Port Phillip Bay catch areas. There are many quite common and popular fish varieties that you can now no longer source readily or easily here in the state of Victoria, even though those fish stocks are in sustainable quantities in our waters. It is a worry to think that we are going to be importing them from other states, because that certainly does not tick the government's environmental boxes and it is certainly not good to think that we will be bringing them in from other countries with far less sustainable fishing, far less policing and far less research into the viability of those fish varieties and fish stocks.

In conclusion, there is a general consensus that the bill is the way forward to better manage the fishing industry, but we would like to see some improvements made as it progresses through Parliament that put to rest any concerns the valuable Victorian commercial seafood industry has around both job provision and supplying a healthy and sustainable food source here in the state of Victoria. It is terrible to think that we could create an environment where we pit recreational fishermen against commercial fishermen and see them as mutually exclusive options for the state. Clearly we can have both and clearly we should be supporting both, and for the betterment of everyone in Victoria and the access of everyone to good, healthy seafood we need to make sure that the Victorian Fish Authority is not just seen as a cheap opportunity to pander to one side of the argument and not the other.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to speak on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. As many members would be aware, it was an Andrews Labor government commitment to introduce this legislation to pave the way for a new authority to

manage fisheries statewide. This legislation is very important as it not only delivers on one of our key election commitments, Target One Million, but it also sets a path for a new, modern and fit-for-purpose authority to ensure efficient service delivery across all fishery sectors.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) will be directly accountable for the administrative licensing, compliance and enforcement functions currently undertaken by Fisheries Victoria. The new authority will hopefully be operational from 1 July 2017. Most importantly, we will see a whole new transparent arrangement that will drive improved performance right across this important industry and tourism sector for Victoria. It will also support the development of recreational commercial fishing and aquaculture in Victoria as well as regulate fisheries and provide advice to government on a range of fisheries management opportunities. The new authority will be led by an independent board and will take an integrated and collaborative approach to the management of Victoria's fishery resources.

I want to congratulate the Minister for Agriculture for her work in delivering on this commitment, as well as the Leader of the House, the member for Bendigo East, for her work in the development of this policy in opposition. I also acknowledge the work of the parliamentary library.

I have never been a very big fisherman. I do remember once when I was growing up going out with Rex Hunt and the Future Fish Foundation. I commend Rex for his work, in particular with disabled children. He gave them the opportunity to fish and see what it was all about and taught them through the Future Fish Foundation about sustainable fishing and sustainability more broadly. So I have had a little bit of a taste of it.

I know myself, though, that I enjoy the atmosphere around Apollo Bay and the Murray River, where you do see fishermen and you see what an important pastime it is, particularly for families. Often it might be a dad and his son. Getting away fishing is an important pastime. I must say, too, because we have the Minister for Water, the member for Bellarine, at the table, that I was just having a quick look at a *Bellarine Times* article headed 'My big catch', by Mr Garry Kerr, who in his editorial of 22 September was very commending of this legislation. He said:

The state government has introduced legislation to the Victorian Parliament to pave the way for a new statutory authority to manage fisheries statewide.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill delivers a key element of the government's Target One Million election commitment

and sets the path for a new, modern, fit-for-purpose authority to ensure efficient service delivery across all fisheries sectors.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) will be directly accountable for the administrative, licensing, compliance and enforcement functions currently undertaken by Fisheries Victoria.

The new authority is on course to be operational from 1 July 2017 and its transparent governance arrangements will drive improved performance.

I do believe that is a very key component of this legislation.

If you have a look at the bill and go through the clauses line by line, you actually do see how substantive it is. I was just in the library and I got my hands on the report headed 'Economic study of recreational fishing in Victoria — Headline results VRFish'. It is a bit like the racing industry in many respects. When you look at it, you see the contribution it does make to the Victorian economy. If I could just acknowledge the work of Ernst & Young, who performed this economic research in order to determine the net benefit and economic contribution of recreational fishing Victoria. A couple of the key lines on the outcomes of the study are:

it is estimated 721 000 Victorians participated in recreational fishing ...

which is very much higher than what has been previously reported, where the number has often been around 500 000 —

the number of fishing trips taken in Victoria is estimated at an average of 12 per year per fisher, with the total number of fishing trips undertaken per annum in Victoria by all fishers being estimated at 8.7 million;

the average expenditure per trip per fisher is estimated to be \$250 inclusive of variable costs (such as accommodation, bait, fuel et cetera) and fixed costs (such as equipment and capital);

an average of 2.4 people accompanying a fisher on each Victorian fishing trip; and

the average number of locations regularly fished in Victoria by each fisher was 2.8.

The major demographic characteristics of Victorian recreational fishers include:

67 per cent of recreational fishers are male with 33 per cent being female.

64 per cent of recreational fishers reside in metropolitan Melbourne and 36 per cent in regional Victoria.

Hence the fuel, the accommodation and all the nuts and bolts that go into the strong tourism economy that Victoria has. It also states:

The majority of fishing takes place inland and in the marine environment with bait fishing being the most popular, followed by lure fishing and fly fishing.

What I think is very important, though, is the results of the economic analysis:

The activity direct expenditure was valued at \$2.3 billion in 2008–09 and is estimated to increase to \$2.9 billion in 2028–29.

The industry produced an estimated total gross state product (GSP) of \$825 million in 2008–09, representing 0.3 per cent of the total Victorian GSP. The net present value of the recreational fishing industry over the next 20 years is estimated at \$10.6 billion.

The recreational fishing industry contributed 5200 jobs in Victoria ...

There is a significant regional component to the economic contribution of recreational fishing in Victoria as is reflected —

in all the gross regional product outcomes.

In my concluding remarks I just want to acknowledge that this legislation is important, most particularly in that it does pave the way for a new future for fishing in Victoria. What I like most about this legislation is the spirit of it. You are going to get a really collaborative approach from the minister, the board and the secretary of the department to ensure that we have the most transparent fishing industry ever in the year 2016–17. On both sides we all recognise that fishing is an important cultural, recreational and commercial pursuit. Our fisheries are a prized communal resource that need to be sustainably managed for future generations. We all want a long-term and viable fisheries sector. Fishing and related activities contribute to the Victorian economy and to jobs, and this dedicated authority will ensure we have a sustainable fisheries sector well into the future.

I do not propose to go through all the key provisions of the bill line by line except to say that I was most pleased to see the strong governance arrangements in the clauses of the legislation relating to the appointment of the board, and to see the transparent nature of the reporting and even the obligations, not only on the secretary of the department but on the minister also. This bill does provide a legal basis for a new independent authority that will not only regulate the industry but also support the development of recreational commercial fishing as well as aquaculture well into the future. Creating this new authority will be about providing tailored and transparent governance to ensure we have the best performance outcomes for recreational fishing right throughout the state. In 2016–17 we are going to have a modern, fit-for-purpose authority that will deliver efficiencies, regulation and compliance outcomes as well as that collaborative approach for the management of Victoria's fisheries resources well into the future for future generations.

When I had a look at the bill as well as the second-reading speech I could see there has been a wide range of consultation on this important piece of legislation. I want to commend the minister, VRFish and all the stakeholders for all their input to ensure that we do get the collaboration right for recreational fishing going forward. The 1 million initiative, as I did say earlier, was very much part of the Labor opposition's policies at the last election. This is another tick for the Andrews Labor government. It is a tick in the sense that it is another election commitment being fulfilled and that it will go a long way to ensure that the new fisheries authority makes a splash, if you do not mind the pun.

I think it is very important. Victorians love their fish, they love their fishing, they love their Friday night fish and chips and they love getting out on a tinny on the weekend. I love getting down to Apollo Bay. There is something about the atmosphere around fishing, around the small business people, and around recreational fishers coming together for their pastime, enjoying each other's company and getting out on the boat doing some fishing. I want to again congratulate the Minister for Agriculture, and I commend this bill to the house.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I too want to make a contribution to the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. As you have heard, Acting Speaker, opposition members are not opposing the bill, but we do have some significant concerns around it.

Like many who have spoken on this bill, I am a keen recreational fisher, but I am also a strong supporter of sustainable fishing, particularly in our waterways — inland fishing. Most of mine is done in New South Wales waters on the mighty Murray River. My policy of fillet and release seems to work very well for me, and we need to have sustainable input into our fish stocks to make sure that those who fillet and release like me can still have more fish later down the track.

The purpose of the bill, as we have heard, is to establish the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), a statutory authority that will be responsible for the management of recreational and commercial fishing regulation throughout Victoria. As I said, we have some concerns that I will get to in a moment.

Briefly on the bill: Fisheries Victoria is currently a division within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. The VFA would take on that regulatory function, including administration of licensing, compliance and various other functions that are currently being performed by Fisheries Victoria. This would give the authority the power to develop fisheries management plans with

regard to Victoria's fisheries and would also advise the minister and the secretary on fisheries management issues and strategic policy for fisheries in Victoria, including quota setting, funding and development, which are all the important areas.

The VFA would also facilitate recreational fishing improvements, including administering the licence trust. That will play a role in supporting and promoting recreational fishing. As we know, recreational fishing is a major attraction in regional Victoria along the coastline and throughout the tributaries and streams as well — internal fishing.

We understand that the VFA will have a skills-based board comprised of between five and eight members. Fisheries Victoria staff members will all be transferred to the VFA without job losses or reductions to their entitlements, which is a good thing. These reforms relate largely to updating compliance and enforcement responsibilities within existing acts.

Recreational fishing is popular throughout Victoria in all our regions, hence it is important that we get this right. Seafood Industry Victoria has expressed some concerns. The major concern is the lack of recognition for commercial fishing experience on the board. Fishing is a \$100 million or more industry, so excluding commercial fishing representation from the board does seem outrageous. I can think of an example up on the Murray where I live in Victoria. Sam Kennedy runs Cobram Outdoors. He is focused mainly on tourism in our region and makes his living out of fishing on New South Wales waterways. Sam could be appointed to the board, whereas a commercial fisherman who has a much larger stake in the fishing pie, so to speak, could not be on the board. I think that is quite unfair when you look at the commercial sector. Of course there are more numbers when it comes to people in recreational fishing against commercial fishers, but when you look at the dollars returned, I think it is still important that commercial fishing has representation and has a say on the board, as is said in a Seafood Industry Victoria document.

The other concern I have, as does the seafood industry, is about the amendment to section 4(c) of the Land Conservation (Vehicle Control) Act 1972. It provides fisheries officers with the power to take proceedings for any breach of regulation under this act. The industry was not consulted on this. We have seen how veto clauses seem to sneak into this government's paperwork and the ramifications that follow on from those types of clauses. Currently Parks Victoria has prosecuted many and will continue to do so, I would have thought, into the future, so it does seem an unnecessary inclusion in this bill.

This government talks about jobs, but certainly sometimes fails to act when the need arises. As far as this bill goes, the commercial seafood industry employs 8000 Victorians, so while we consider the recreational fishers, commercial fishers certainly have a lot more skin in the game and have a lot more at stake within their businesses as well.

All of us in this place know the contribution of the former coalition government, which committed \$4 million a year, so \$16 million over the 2010–14 period, which was terrific assistance. Whether it was spent on boat ramps in coastal areas or on restocking fish estuaries and tributaries, it was a significant contribution by the coalition government and one we are very proud of.

The current government's Target One Million plan aims to have 1 million Victorian recreational fishers by 2020. It is certainly an ambitious target, and I wish the government well for it, but we need to make sure there is a strong plan that underpins that target.

This government has increased the price of recreational fishing licences. It has gone from \$6 a day for a two-day licence to \$10 for a three-day licence — not significant, but it is still an increase. The cost of a 28-day licence has gone from \$12 to \$20, and the cost of a three-year licence has increased from \$66 to \$95, so we are talking nearly a 50 per cent increase there.

It is important that the revenue raised by the increases that have been committed to goes back into recreational fishing and allows for fishing improvements. As an example of that, although the Murray River is on the New South Wales waterways — European carp is not just in the Murray but certainly very strong in the Murray River — it is also in other rivers throughout our system. This would be another opportunity to release the carp virus to try and reduce the numbers of the European carp that certainly have grown in number over the years.

In summing up, I agree with many of the other speakers that a dedicated authority is a good thing — there is no doubt about that — but as opposition members we reserve our right to suggest further changes if the government continues its single-minded approach to not having commercial fishers on the board. The member for Thomastown was clearly wrong when she mentioned that the only ones complaining are the ones on this side of the house. The member for Thomastown really needs to read this document that I am holding, the Seafood Industry Victoria plan. It is a five-page document, and it says:

Specific exclusion of any commercial seafood interests on the Board is completely uncalled for.

So it is not just those on this side of the house who are suggesting the government needs to revisit it, but the industry itself. I encourage her to do that.

Those are the main concerns I have had, mainly through Seafood Industry Victoria. We are not opposing the bill, but we do reserve our right down the track to make appropriate changes if we cannot get some support for commercial fishing representation on the board. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I am very pleased to rise to make a very brief contribution in the short time available to me to the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. As other members on this side of the house have said, this bill will deliver on a major element of the Andrews Labor government's recreational fishing policy — that is, to establish Fisheries Victoria as a statutory authority.

I do enjoy fishing. Of course my husband, Steve, thinks he is the best fisher in Victoria, but he rarely catches anything very good; in fact I usually outdo him. But I wanted to take this opportunity to encourage members to perhaps this weekend head up to wonderful central Victoria and beautiful Bendigo, where great fishing can be found. Indeed Lake Eppalock is full to brimming, and out at Lake Eppalock you could catch yourself a Murray cod, a trout, a golden perch or a redfin and, if you are really patient, quite a big one. Of course you can always get over to the beautiful Loddon River near Bridgewater or indeed out at Baringhup. The Loddon River is also quite full, as is the Campaspe. These are both fantastic places to get along and do some great fishing.

If you want to head a little bit further north, you can go across to the beautiful Cairn Curran Reservoir, which is also located on the Loddon River and is on the outskirts of my electorate; it is about 10 kilometres west of Maldon. Out at Cairn Curran right now you can catch yourself some beautiful trout, some redfin; some golden perch; some eels, if you are into eels; and of course that wonderful carp that is always plentiful. I have caught carp in the shallow waters of Cairn Curran where they seem to enjoy swimming around.

There is a lot of fly fishing out there as well, particularly at this time of the year. Early spring and summer is an excellent time to get out and do some fly fishing. And of course if you want to go even further north, you can head over to Tullaroop Reservoir near Maryborough, which is also a great recreational fishing spot. When I was a young thing growing up in Maryborough we used to head out to Tullaroop quite regularly during school holidays and over Christmas time, and we would bring home some pretty nice redfin

for my mum to scale and cook us up a good feed of fish and chips.

Of course I am a little bit loath to mention it, but over at Ballarat they have got Lake Wendouree, and it is a particularly nice place to go fishing. It is always cold, but it is not too bad over there for fishing. Lake Wendouree is in fact known for producing some of the best trout fishing in central Victoria and you, Deputy Speaker, might yourself have gone out and done a bit of trout fishing on Lake Wendouree. In fact it was one of the first waters on mainland Australia to be supplied with an abundance of brown trout way back in the 1870s. Fly fishing is very popular at Lake Wendouree. In fact it is quite exceptional — and again, I am loath to say it; I do not want to promote Ballarat too much — and Lake Wendouree has hosted several state and national championships for fly fishing over the years. I believe that it has a great supply of brown and rainbow trout, which of course are very plentiful in the autumn months and right through to spring. Right now you could pop over to Ballarat and Lake Wendouree and catch yourself a nice redfin and enjoy a nice weekend up in beautiful central Victoria.

Obviously there are many members who have spoken on this bill who love to get out and have a good fish, so I would encourage them to wander on up to central Victoria, spend some money in our region and catch a few fish. I commend the bill to the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived and I am required to interrupt business. The house is considering the second-reading question of the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

FOOD AMENDMENT (KILOJOULE LABELLING SCHEME AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 12 October; motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

TRADITIONAL OWNER SETTLEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 11 October; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

ROYAL COMMISSION INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Report

Resumed from 14 April; motion of Mr ANDREWS (Premier):

That the house takes note of the report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Motion agreed to.

CHILD WELLBEING AND SAFETY AMENDMENT (OVERSIGHT AND ENFORCEMENT OF CHILD SAFE STANDARDS) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 12 October; motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, nightclubs

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — (11 825) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and the action I seek is that she investigate the incidence of drug distribution and use in and around Glenferrie Road that is in any way related to activities at licensed nightclubs in the area. As part of her investigation I urge the minister to instruct her department to provide an assurance that all necessary and sufficient resources are being made available to enable officials to fully enforce the terms of the liquor licences of local venues.

I have received a number of constituency concerns about nightclubs in the area of Glenferrie Road and the distribution and use of ecstasy and other related drugs in the vicinity, particularly in recent months. This is not the place to name any particular venue, but the level of community concern is growing. I understand that police raided two Hawthorn nightclubs in August and charged one individual with possession and trafficking offences involving ecstasy. Eleven other individuals were caught, I understand, with drugs on the same night at those same venues.

Victoria Police itself has said that it:

... is extremely concerned about the drug use and subsequent overdoses in the nightclub scene in Hawthorn and are liaising with venue operators to address the issue.

This was reported in the *Age* of 30 August.

It is widely believed that the death of a 19-year-old female in May 2015 and a 17-year-old male in July of this year were in some way associated with one local venue. We know that earlier this year Victoria Police and ambulance paramedics attended one club when a number of patrons required urgent medical attention. I also understand that Victoria Police closed one nightclub when four patrons were taken to hospital as a result of ingesting drugs.

You will often find on a Sunday morning that Glenferrie Road in the heart of my electorate is covered in a great deal of litter in the vicinity of and surrounding local venues. Media reports, based on anonymous information from former staff, suggest that one venue is 'awash with ecstasy, GHB and other synthetic drugs'. The coalition believes that firm action needs to be meted out to operators who breach their licences.

My colleague in the other place Mr Ed O'Donohue has said recently:

It is not good enough for Daniel Andrews and nightclub operators to turn a blind eye to illegal, dangerous drugs in clubs.

Daniel Andrews needs to get tough with rogue operators and if need be, shut them down.

The previous coalition government was committed to this. In 2014 the Victorian government provided \$245 000 to install eight CCTV cameras on Glenferrie Road near a number of local venues, including McDonald's, following a surge in late-night violence and vandalism. Glenferrie Road, in the heart of my electorate, is a very special shopping strip and a very special area, and I would appreciate the minister's response in due course. As I said earlier, I know that community concern is growing about this issue, particularly as more people move into the area. I await the minister's response in due course.

Suicide prevention

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (11 826) Today I rise to discuss a difficult issue that many of us in this place have been connected to in some way personally. It is certainly something all members will be aware of in their electorates from time to time, and that is the issue of suicide. The action I seek from the Minister for Mental Health is that a mental health task force be established in Melbourne's north-east. I am seeking the minister's advice and assistance on how we as a community can increase our efforts to help people who are contemplating ending their own lives not to do so.

In recent days my friends have again been impacted by this. There has been an impact on my community, and in particular the impact on a good friend's family and friends has been immense. This recent tragedy is the second time in the last two years that someone I know has taken this awful step. I understand that the member for Eltham will rise shortly to raise safety issues of concern in our areas.

I ask the Minister for Mental Health to assist me, other local MPs, community groups, local government, families and constituents alike to convene a round table to tackle the issue of suicide in our community and create a prevention task force. I commend the minister for the innovative trial that is occurring in Whittlesea of a program which is aimed at halving the rate of suicide across Victoria. It is targeted at young people. But too many people, particularly men in their middle years, are crying out for help, and that need is not being met. The community is extremely concerned about what seems to be a cluster of suicides among middle-aged men in the north-east, and I urgently ask the Minister for Mental Health to work with me in resolving the issue and supporting the community through this difficult time.

Bairnsdale respite care

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — (11 827) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and the action I seek is for the minister to consider funding respite hours at a new respite facility that is to be built in Bairnsdale by Noweyung. Noweyung provides a range of support services to adults in the areas of education, training, community development, pre-employment, employment and advocacy. Noweyung has committed to developing a facility-based respite service in Bairnsdale at its own cost for the capital works, which entails the construction and fit-out. The estimated annual total recurrent funding we believe is required is around \$220 000 to \$250 000 for the 3900 annual hours being sought.

Across the East Gippsland shire we have a huge unmet need for a local respite facility for people with a disability. Currently families in East Gippsland seeking respite have a number of options, none of which is ideal. They either pay, with or without any respite funding, a high daily respite fee for in-home respite services that are provided by people living in the home, or the alternative is that they need to travel considerable distances to the nearest facility, which is located in Sale in the Wellington shire. If this facility is not available on the dates required, they have got to travel even

further to Morwell in the Latrobe Valley. Either that, or they just do not receive respite at all.

Data provided by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) shows that over the past 12 months in East Gippsland 43 families have accessed DHHS facility-based respite and 51 families have accessed community-based respite. Unfortunately there is no data available to quantify how many families have not opted for respite because of the considerable travel requirements that are presently attached to the other options and the cost of the distances required to be travelled as well.

National disability insurance scheme estimates indicate the demand for respite services, including facility-based respite, will grow. That is why the community has generated \$500 000 for this through various enterprises. Hats off to Noweyung, which has made this an extremely high priority. They do intend to build this facility. It is extremely badly needed in East Gippsland — we do not have a respite facility in the entire electorate of 27 000 square kilometres. So I certainly encourage the minister — and I am happy to talk to the minister about this; we have already had one brief chat — to look at funding some of the recurrent hours that are being sought so that families can utilise this new facility that will be constructed in Bairnsdale.

Thomastown electorate community safety

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — (11 828) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police, and the action I seek is that the minister visit the Thomastown electorate to chair a round table forum on community safety and policing.

The Thomastown electorate has almost doubled in size geographically since the last election and redistribution. New growth areas have been added to the electorate, and this means that there are new community safety and policing issues. For example, the new housing estates are often at first isolated and underpopulated as people have purchased land and are in the process of building their homes. This means that their homes are at various stages of construction and are often vacant and attractive to thieves and vandals. Similarly, the infrastructure is not all in and the lighting and roads have not been fully established on those estates. Lots of building products are lying around without any oversight, and people are taking them. These areas of course are also subject to the same problems as the more established areas.

Families living in the Thomastown electorate would very much appreciate a visit from the Minister for

Police so they can talk to her about the issues they face, their fears and concerns, and to clarify the facts. During the tenure of the Liberal-Nationals coalition governments from 2010 to 2014 their police ministers never visited the area to consult with residents and take on their concerns. The people of Thomastown would very much welcome the Minister for Police visiting us, listening and responding to our concerns.

Bus route 703

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — (11 829) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is for the minister to stop stalling on implementing the work done by the previous Liberal-Nationals state government and turn Labor's shoddy, short-changed, shortcut SmartBus route 703 into an actual SmartBus route and to stop dudding the good residents of my district.

If you have a look at the SmartBus project on the Public Transport Victoria website and also the former Department of Transport site, it is very clear what that bus service should be. It should run as a high-frequency bus service every 15 minutes between 6.30 a.m. and 9.00 p.m. Its frequency should average every 30 minutes between 5.00 a.m. and 6.30 a.m., and it should run on average every 30 minutes between 9.00 p.m. and midnight on weekdays. It should also run between 6.00 a.m. and midnight on Saturdays and public holidays at 30-minute intervals, and run on average at a 30-minute frequency between 7.00 a.m. and 9.00 p.m. on Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas Day.

The great shame with this bus route is that significant work — most of the heavy lifting — was done by the previous Liberal-Nationals government to ensure that this SmartBus route that was introduced by Labor as a short-changed SmartBus route actually fitted the definition of a SmartBus route. The service frequencies were going to be improved, the operating hours were going to be improved and the consultation was done — all the heavy lifting was done. It was all ready to be implemented. It is very sad to say that at this time, even after giving this minister quite a period of time to deliver this, it still has not been delivered.

Unfortunately my great fear is that, like so many other projects in my district, this minister thinks that she can get away with short-changing my constituents, because this is not the first public transport project in my district that has been cut back under this government. Whether it is trying to scale back the Syndal multistorey car park, reducing plans for improvements at the Glen Waverley railway station or other things, it is very clear

what Labor's agenda is in public transport in my district — that is, to cut the projects and deliver as little as possible.

I understand that there is always some politics in government, but fair dinkum when most of the work is done, when the heavy lifting is done to improve this SmartBus route, all the minister needed to do was sign off and implement the work already done. I call on the minister to stop stalling. I call on the minister to ensure the service frequencies and that the duration of the route goes through to Middle Brighton. Nothing less than a full bus service all the way to Middle Brighton will satisfy my constituents. I call on the minister to stop delaying and implement that work.

CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway widening

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — (11 830) I appreciate the opportunity to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister provide an update on the Tullamarine Freeway widening project, particularly in relation to the works being undertaken at the Bell Street interchange.

Many Pascoe Vale constituents use the Tullamarine Freeway on a daily basis for a variety of reasons — getting to and from work, to and from school and across the local area. The CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway widening project will add an extra lane to the Tullamarine Freeway from the Bolte Bridge to Melbourne Airport in order to improve traffic flow and road safety. It will also make significant improvements to interchanges along the Tullamarine Freeway. The new Bell Street bridge will address a difficult intersection — certainly a very dangerous intersection — where traffic merges between Bell Street and the Pascoe Vale Road exit ramp to make the journey over the freeway safer and easier for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.

The Tullamarine Freeway widening project is part of the Andrews Labor government's comprehensive infrastructure agenda, and we are already experiencing the benefits of it locally. But those commuters who are currently coping with the effects of the roadworks on the Tullamarine Freeway are certainly keen to understand exactly how quickly we are progressing this project, so I ask the minister for an update.

Tatura water summit

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — (11 831) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Water. The action I seek is that the minister attend the second

annual Tatura water summit, which is being hosted by the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district (GMID) water leadership forum, on 14 November. The GMID water leadership forum was formed 12 months ago, and indeed the minister attended our first summit on that occasion. The primary goal that arose out of that first summit was to commission a study into the socio-economic impact of the current Murray-Darling Basin plan.

As well as representatives from a broad range of interests, including industry and water organisations, state and federal politicians from both sides will be invited to attend the summit, which will discuss the GMID socio-economic impact study and also look at it in the context of the recently released northern Murray-Darling Basin socio-economic impact statement commissioned by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority itself. A similar study is being undertaken by the Victorian government and should be released by the date of the summit. The group employed independent consultants RMCG to undertake the study. Our report assesses the impact of the Murray-Darling Basin plan to date and estimates future outcomes for our region if the current plan were to proceed as it is.

The northern Murray-Darling Basin plan has just been released and is being discussed widely. The results of our study show a similar trend. Sadly the findings back up many of the fears expressed by irrigation communities along the Murray during the consultation period for the Murray-Darling Basin plan. An estimated 1000 jobs will be lost by 2020. Already more than \$550 million a year has been lost in regional production from the reduced water availability in the plan. It is predicted that the annual production losses, which are linked to the unavailability of water, will cost the GMID \$4.4 billion over the basin plan's implementation to 2020.

We need bipartisan support to lobby the commonwealth for a fair water policy to ensure the security of our region's food bowl and a balance for the environment and the farming industry — the true triple bottom line which has been spruiked since the draft basin plan was released in 2010. This evidence provides us with the capacity to advocate strongly against the 450 gegalitres of up-water which is envisaged by the plan in addition to the 2750 gegalitres provided for the environment. It has been the intention of all parties to the Murray-Darling Basin agreement that the 650 gegalitres would come from water-saving projects, and this is essential.

The water leadership forum is calling for the abandonment of the commonwealth on-farm further

irrigation efficiency program and for that \$1.5 billion in funding to instead be redirected into works and measures to achieve similar or even better environmental outcomes and farm upgrade incentives, with water savings to remain on farms. We also firmly believe there should be no further reduction in water for production either through buybacks or on-farm upgrades that require farmers to transfer their entitlements to the commonwealth.

Casey crime prevention

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — (11 832)
My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police, and it is connected to the great work of our outstanding local police in Casey. The action I seek is that the minister consider what further support could be provided to assist the great work our local police do, specifically around crime prevention grants, with a focus on young people at risk of engagement in antisocial or criminal behaviour.

We know that in Casey there are small numbers of young people involved in serious offending and that alongside the strong enforcement approach our local police have taken there needs to be a strong crime prevention strategy. We know that when we establish local partnerships with police, community leaders, school principals, youth agencies and even magistrates to tailor suitable responses, we can drive a whole-of-community approach to youth offending. This approach needs to have strong links to training and employment opportunities for young people who are marginalised and in need of help. We know that although we have got less young people offending overall, they are offending at very high rates, and sadly they are doing some really nasty things that show a complete lack of respect for other people.

We have a developing phenomenon where some young people feel disengaged from mainstream society and simply do not fear the consequences of being locked up, and once released they offend again. It is vitally important that we not only stop them from reoffending but that we also ensure that they do not offend in the first place. We must address the root causes — the reasons why a minority of our young people choose to venture down this path.

Just last month the minister joined with me in visiting the Narre Warren police station where we heard firsthand about the challenges the officers at that station face each and every day. Instead of listening to the deplorable and dishonest campaign led by the City of Casey and the opposition, we spoke with those on the front line. We on this side of the house are not going to

resort to cheap political tactics. We understand that people are worried and indeed fearful, and we are committed to targeted action to ensure community safety.

The fact is that we have provided more police. We also know that additional police are coming soon and that by April of next year 406 new police officers will have been sworn in and deployed in areas of high need such as Casey. The Andrews Labor government understands that Casey is a priority, but I tell you what, we are not going to be distracted by the cheap stunts and dishonesty of desperate councillors seeking re-election, mainly members of the Liberal Party.

We will always support our local police, and we will always make sure that they have the resources they need to make their community safer. I ask the minister to ensure that our local police are assisted through consideration of youth crime prevention — —

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

Chadstone railway land

Mr WATT (Burwood) — (11 833) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that the minister arrange for the clean-up of railway land adjacent to Paringa Court in Chadstone, creating a neat and orderly environment. I have been contacted by constituents who reside at Paringa Court regarding the land adjacent to their properties and the train tracks, which is owned and used by VicTrack and Metro Trains Melbourne for the storage of surplus tracks, sleepers, ballast and other materials used on the line. The area has been left looking derelict, and the grass has been growing untended for the last few years, causing a rodent infestation as well as attracting the sort of wildlife that regards rodents as a food source; this includes but is not limited to snakes.

My constituents have contacted Metro numerous times in the past asking for action — that it cut the grass and give the area a more pleasant appearance — but this has fallen on deaf ears. I ask the Minister for Public Transport to do her part in remedying this situation by having the responsible authority act to cut the grass and improve the situation to the satisfaction of my constituents.

Greensborough Bypass bridge

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (11 834) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is that the minister instruct

VicRoads to look into how to make the Greensborough Bypass bridge over Plenty Gorge in Greensborough safer. The Greensborough Bypass is a very busy route for both residents and commuters. Sadly the bridge over Plenty Gorge attracts vulnerable people experiencing crisis. Community members have approached me seeking additional precautions on this bridge. My community is close; the degrees of separation are very small. When someone is hurt it affects many of us; we all know each other. Both the member for Yan Yean and I feel very strongly about this issue. We want an action that will protect both pedestrians and commuters. The time has come to do something about this bridge. I urge the minister to direct VicRoads to investigate this issue as soon as possible and come up with a solution.

Responses

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I will start with the matter raised by the honourable member for Gippsland East. I assure him that I will certainly work with him and his community around the Noweyung respite facility proposal. Just to very briefly put that in context, as honourable members will know, the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme over the next three years will completely change the processes whereby all specialist disability services, and in particular housing and respite services, are funded; they will no longer be funded through organisations but through individuals. It will be the people with disabilities themselves who will be funded. There will be more than a doubling of funding for specialist disability services over the next three years.

In terms of working with the provider the member mentioned, I can assure him and all honourable members that in relation to the providers they have, wherever their community is, the whole model of respite funding and indeed the whole model of funding specialist disability services will completely change. Having said that, the smart providers, such as the one the honourable member mentioned, are getting ready for the national disability insurance scheme and are putting capital and processes in place that will facilitate and lock in this funding, because the National Disability Insurance Authority (NDIA) has particular guidelines about what it will and will not fund.

The key thing that all honourable members need to know in relation to housing and particularly in relation to respite is that if providers meet those NDIA guidelines about space, size and other criteria, and if their consumers, as they will be called, are funded accordingly through the NDIA, then that process should, by any measure, be successful. It was indeed

successful in the Barwon trial area and the Hunter trial area in New South Wales. What that means is we will have a different model. I appreciate the good faith in which the honourable member put forward that adjournment matter, and it will be reciprocated in equal good faith.

In regard to the honourable member for Yan Yean's matter, she is right. Suicide is an issue that, I think rightly, is seen as one of mounting concern right across Australia. That is why it was a key item of the National Mental Health Commission's report last year, why it was a key priority in this government's 10-year mental health plan and why \$27 million was funded for the suicide prevention plan in this year's budget. As the honourable member said of her own community the issue is targeting the Whittlesea local government area as a particular area, sadly as a result of the data that drove the allocation of where the \$27 million was to be allocated. The community is suffering disproportionately from people taking their own lives or contemplating taking their own lives.

In terms of an undertaking that the honourable member sought in regard to working with her and her community, and indeed on similar matters raised by the honourable member for Eltham, I can certainly give her the undertaking that in cooperation not just with my department but with her community we will work to establish that task force and seek to drive down our suicide rate. According to the most recent figures we have, 646 Victorians lost their lives to suicide in 2014. That is twice our road toll. This is an unacceptable figure. It is a figure that I am sure all honourable members and their communities will work diligently towards halving. That is our goal. We seek to halve the suicide toll over the next 10 years as a part of our 10-year mental health plan. It is a challenge that I am sure we are up for.

In regard to the other matters, I will certainly undertake to refer issues on behalf of the honourable member for Hawthorn to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation regarding nightclub operators and their licences in his electorate. In terms of the honourable member for Thomastown and her request that the Minister for Police visit her electorate and consult with her community on community safety issues, I will certainly ensure that that is referred. In regard to the honourable member for Mount Waverley's matter for the Minister for Public Transport regarding bus routes, that matter will be referred.

The honourable member for Pascoe Vale had a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway, especially in

terms of issues around Bell Street. I will certainly make sure that that matter is referred too. In regard to the honourable member for Shepparton and her request that the Minister for Water participate in the second Tatura water summit next month, I will certainly pass that on. In regard to the honourable member for Narre Warren South's matter for the Minister for Police in regard to the Casey local government area, her request in relation to what local crime prevention work and work of government can assist both Victoria Police and their local community will also be referred.

As I have already touched on, there was the member for Eltham's matter — not unrelated to the matter from the member for Yan Yean — regarding safety on the Plenty Gorge bridge in her electorate and making sure precautions are taken there to save lives through VicRoads. Finally, in relation to the member for Burwood and his worry about snakes and rats, I will certainly undertake to refer that because you cannot be too careful in this game when it comes to snakes and rats, and the member for Burwood should certainly take snakes and rats in his electorate and his organisation very seriously. Thank you very much.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Just before we adjourn, we have the unveiling of the portrait of the Honourable Ted Baillieu later on today. So if people are around in Queen's Hall, everyone is welcome to be there.

House adjourned 5.31 p.m. until Tuesday, 25 October.

