

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 7 June 2016

(Extract from book 8)

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

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 (to 22 May 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Employment	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Industry, and Minister for Energy and Resources	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 Emergency Services, and Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. J. F. Garrett, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Training and Skills	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 Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Police and Minister for Corrections	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 M. Kairouz, MP

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 23 May 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education	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 Emergency Services, and Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. J. F. Garrett, 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 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 M. Kairouz, MP

**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

¹Elected 31 October 2015

²Resigned 3 September 2015

³Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴Elected 14 March 2015

⁵Elected 31 October 2015

⁶Resigned 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 Elasmar 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, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed. (*Council*): Mr Finn.

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

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

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

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

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 7 JUNE 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	2245	<i>Second reading</i>	2258, 2290
RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA CENTENARY	2245	<i>Third reading</i>	2304
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS		BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement</i>	2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254	<i>Notices of motion</i>	2261
<i>Ministers statements: police resources</i>	2246	<i>Program</i>	2263
<i>Ministers statements: protective services officers</i>	2248	PETITIONS	
<i>Ministers statements: sexual offences legislation</i>	2249	<i>Sandringham Hospital</i>	2261
<i>Ministers statements: police mental health review</i>	2251	<i>Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement</i>	2262
<i>Ministers statements: police intelligence management system</i>	2254	<i>Craigieburn Road West–Dorchester Street, Craigieburn</i>	2262
SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS		SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE	
<i>Members for Caulfield, Warrandyte and Macedon</i>	2245	<i>Alert Digest No. 8</i>	2262
<i>Member for Mordialloc</i>	2247	DOCUMENTS	2262
<i>Member for Morwell</i>	2247	ROYAL ASSENT	2263
<i>Member for Kew</i>	2249	APPROPRIATION MESSAGES	2263
<i>Members for Eltham and Ripon</i>	2250	MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Member for Hawthorn</i>	2252	<i>Keith Herring</i>	2268
<i>Members for Kororoit and Footscray</i>	2252	<i>Ryan Blunt</i>	2268
<i>Member for Mornington</i>	2252	<i>Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement</i>	2268, 2269, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274
<i>Member for Hastings</i>	2254	<i>National disability insurance scheme</i>	2268, 2269
COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT	2254	<i>Youth homelessness</i>	2269
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS		<i>Broadmeadows</i>	2270
<i>Nepean electorate</i>	2254	<i>Police resources</i>	2270
<i>Yuroke electorate</i>	2255	<i>Gisborne Secondary College</i>	2270
<i>Mildura electorate</i>	2255	<i>Emergency services blood donation challenge</i>	2271
<i>Bundoora electorate</i>	2255	<i>President Mohamed Abdelaziz</i>	2271
<i>Evelyn electorate</i>	2255	<i>Youth Education Support</i>	2271
<i>Yan Yean electorate</i>	2255	<i>Glen Waverley Toastmasters</i>	2272
<i>Rowville electorate</i>	2255	<i>Bendigo women's volleyball tournament</i>	2272
<i>Dandenong electorate</i>	2256	<i>Neighbourhood Watch volunteers</i>	2272
<i>South-West Coast electorate</i>	2256	<i>Essex Heights Primary School</i>	2273
<i>Narre Warren South electorate</i>	2256	<i>Red tape review</i>	2273
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE		<i>Sandringham Hospital</i>	2273
<i>Membership</i>	2256	<i>Colac fitness centre</i>	2273
MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY AMENDMENT BILL 2016		<i>Community Crime Prevention Program</i>	2274
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2257	<i>South-West Coast electorate roads</i>	2274
CRIMES AMENDMENT (SEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2016		<i>Sunbury electorate roads</i>	2274
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2257	<i>Sunbury Community Health Centre</i>	2275
LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016		<i>Doreen Seniors Club Biggest Morning Tea</i>	2275
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2257	BUDGET PAPERS 2016–17	2275, 2304
POWERS OF ATTORNEY AMENDMENT BILL 2016		ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2257	<i>Nepean Highway–Forest Drive, Mount Martha</i>	2320
TRANSPORT (COMPLIANCE AND MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SAFETY) BILL 2016		<i>Mount Clear College</i>	2320
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	2257	<i>Community building insurance premiums</i>	2321
<i>Statement of compatibility</i>	2258	<i>Macedon electorate kindergartens</i>	2321
		<i>Seville Primary School</i>	2322
		<i>Sandringham Hospital</i>	2322
		<i>Forest Hill College</i>	2322
		<i>Narre Warren South P–12 College</i>	2323
		<i>Porthaul</i>	2323
		<i>State Emergency Service Broadmeadows unit</i>	2324
		<i>Responses</i>	2324

Tuesday, 7 June 2016

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER — Order! We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA CENTENARY

The SPEAKER — Order! This year the Returned and Services League of Australia is celebrating its centenary. A number of events for the centenary have been held over the past few days here in Melbourne. On behalf of the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition and all members, I congratulate the RSL on its work for our veterans' community and their families over the past 100 years. I wish all members of the RSL well in their centenary year and in their continuing work, which is appreciated across our community.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Speaker, before beginning, I seek leave to give to the Premier in this Parliament a 60-year Country Fire Authority (CFA) service medal from a CFA veteran volunteer. I seek leave to give it to the Premier from someone who is disgusted about their treatment.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GUY — Take it! Take it! Take it!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Warrandyte is warned. The Leader of the Opposition is also warned. Standing orders apply to all members. They have been adopted by this house for all members by all members. Is leave granted? Leave is not granted.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GUY — Every day our state relies on 60 000 CFA volunteers to protect our towns, homes and families, and my question to the Premier is: Bill

Boyd from the Yarra Glen CFA says the union's plans would cause chaos if faced with a situation similar to Black Saturday. Vern Dawson from Skipton CFA says the union's push for control over the CFA chief is dangerous. Premier, these volunteers and tens of thousands like them do so much for Victoria, including 60-year volunteers. As leader of the state you are elected to stand up for them. Premier, why are you so determined to work against the best interests of our state's 60 000 CFA volunteers?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have cautioned members, and the Chair will continue to caution members and, if need be, apply standing orders. The Premier, in silence, in response to the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — No member of the government is anything other than fully respectful of our CFA volunteers — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! All members will come to order and allow the Premier to respond to the Leader of the Opposition in silence. The Leader of the Opposition asked a question, and the Premier is entitled to be heard.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier has just said that every member of his government is respectful to the CFA. I again seek — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat!

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Members for Caulfield, Warrandyte and Macedon

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Caulfield will withdraw from this house for the period of 1 hour, the member for Warrandyte will withdraw from this house for the period of 1 hour and the member for Macedon will withdraw from this house for the period of 1 hour, under standing order 124. When the Chair is on his feet, all members have to remain silent.

I request respectfully that the Leader of the Opposition make arrangements to come to see me in my office after question time.

Honourable members for Caulfield, Warrandyte and Macedon withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining
agreement**

Questions and statements resumed.

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

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — That is why we have boosted the CFA budget as opposed to cutting it.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — And that is why, Speaker — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will resume his seat. I remind members of standing orders. When the Chair is on his feet all members are to remain silent. The Premier will continue in silence. He has barely had an opportunity to respond to a good question advanced by the Leader of the Opposition. Members will allow the Premier to respond.

Mr ANDREWS — That is why we are confident that the concerns raised by the CFA can be fully addressed through the involvement of Commissioner Craig Lapsley, someone who is respected, someone who is committed, someone who has spent his life in the protection of Victoria and someone who will provide a process to deal with the concerns raised by the CFA.

The SPEAKER — Order! Has the Premier concluded his answer? The Premier has concluded.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The United Firefighters Union's (UFU) proposed enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) directly contradicts the CFA volunteer charter, which the Premier and his party vocally supported in 2011. Premier, if your word is to be believed, will you now guarantee that your government will not back an EBA that will directly breach the CFA volunteer charter?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I will remind the Leader of the Opposition that the independent umpire, the Fair Work Commission, has made a number of recommendations — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is unable to hear the Premier. I am sure the media is unable to hear the Premier. Both the government and the opposition would be interested in making sure that the public understands the subject matter before this house and giving the Premier an opportunity to respond to the supplementary question in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — By the Leader of the Opposition, in full — we will get an outcome here that respects and honours our volunteers. What is more, we will continue to support our volunteers and career firefighters with the equipment they need, the budget they need and the presumptive rights that those opposite never gave them.

Ministers statements: police resources

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I rise to inform the house of a new government initiative to combat gang violence and public disorder.

Last week I was very pleased to visit the New York police department's Real Time Crime Center, along with Assistant Commissioner Deb Abbott from Victoria Police. The Real Time Crime Center supports officers on the ground by analysing data and by providing instant access to criminal records and other vital information for police out in the field. Its surveillance system helps to prevent crime by predicting it and helps to bring perpetrators to the justice they richly deserve. It acts as a nerve centre for the great city of New York in the fight against crime.

In the budget last year we provided Victoria Police with very strong support. In this year's budget we went even further: \$596 million — the biggest boost any government has ever provided to the fine men and women of Victoria Police. We have said consistently that the chief commissioner will get the powers he needs, and he will; that the chief commissioner will get the budget he needs, and he is. That is exactly our intention, and the budget delivers in that \$596 million \$15 million for a new 24/7 monitoring and assessment centre, which will be modelled on the New York Real Time Crime Center.

We have the best police in the world here in Victoria. The best resources they have ever received have been

delivered under this Labor government — the best technology, the best support possible to make sure that our police have got not only men and women of the character required, and they do, but the resources, the technology, the facilities and the political backing to get it done. That is what we will deliver.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. In relation to the United Firefighters Union (UFU) log of claims to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), the current emergency services minister has stated that the demands are over the top, unaffordable and compromise community safety — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Eltham is warned now.

Mr GUY — I repeat: the emergency services minister has stated that the demands are over the top, unaffordable and compromise community safety; a past emergency services minister, André Haermeyer, has said that this folly will leave Victoria dangerously exposed; the equal opportunity commissioner has found that the UFU log of claims is unlawful; the CFA board has rejected the EBA on the basis that it is unlawful; and 60 000 volunteers are saying, ‘Get your hands off the CFA!’. Premier, you have not rejected the log of claims. What part of this message don’t you get?

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Mordialloc

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Mordialloc will withdraw from the house for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Mordialloc withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am not sure there was actually a question in all of that. I am absolutely certain there was not a question in all of that, but what I will say is this — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has just said that he did not think there was a question in all of that. I will repeat it: what part of that message, Premier, don’t you get?

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The Premier has hardly had an opportunity to respond. The Premier, to continue in response to a substantive question as put by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ANDREWS — The question, such as it was, spoke about the log of claims; it spoke about a range of different matters. What it did not refer to, Speaker, as a matter of fact is the guidance, the judgement and the advice of the independent umpire — the Fair Work Commission.

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Morwell

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Morwell will withdraw from the house for a period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Morwell withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Acknowledging concerns that have been raised by the CFA and others, we have enlisted the work of Craig Lapsley to perform

a monitoring and implementation role. He will have the powers that he needs, the accountabilities that he needs, and we are confident that his involvement — that process — provides us with a way forward to address each and every one of the concerns raised. That is the government's position. We could not be clearer about it.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The Premier is taking unprecedented steps to work against the best interests of Victoria's 60 000 CFA volunteers, so I simply ask: Premier, what does Peter Marshall have on you?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I can only respond — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, if I can get a word in, I will be happy to respond — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Benambra is warned. The Chair will not warn the member again. The Premier, to continue in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — I can only respond to the Leader of the Opposition by indicating to him that this government supports and respects in words, in actions, in policy, in budget commitments and in our leadership every single volunteer in our CFA, every single career firefighter in our CFA and Metropolitan Fire Brigade and, while we are at it, be clear about this, the State Emergency Service, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, the Red Cross — everybody who is there when we need them.

As a community, we fully, completely, utterly and passionately support them in the work that they do, the service that they offer and the commitment that they have to this great state.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Has the Premier concluded his answer? The Premier has concluded his answer.

I do understand that members have come back to this Parliament with a lot of energy and a lot of enthusiasm. However, I remind all members that the Chair cannot

adjudicate unless the Chair is able to hear questions and answers clearly. When the Chair is not able to hear, the Chair will then caution members and, if need be, apply standing orders as approved, accepted and embraced for and by the members of the Assembly.

Ministers statements: protective services officers

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — I rise today to update the house on the government's initiative to expand Victoria's protective services officer (PSO) network, which also includes an expansion of Victoria's transit police squad. On this side of the house we remain focused on ensuring and improving community safety, unlike those opposite, who are currently all about undermining community safety.

As a result, we have now fully funded and fully rolled out the additional 109 PSOs and 62 transit police. This is all about making Victorians, on a Friday and Saturday night, across 78 premium stations, feel safer. That is what the message is. The police see it as a win; the community sees it as a win. Of course this is in addition to the additional PSOs we are rolling out across our train stations seven nights a week — 6.00 p.m. to the last train.

On Monday last week I had the privilege of meeting some of those PSOs on the Seaholme station as an additional 20 PSOs were rolled out last week to five additional stations: Seaholme, Royal Park, Heyington, Wattle Glen and East Camberwell. I had a chance to speak to a number of those PSOs, who have incredibly issued something like 57 000 infringements since they started. It is a great chance, when you are out there, to hear the benefits for our police and the benefits for our community as a result of having PSOs on the stations.

Of course, because we remain committed to ensuring that Victoria Police has the resources it needs and the powers that it needs, we have got again a record investment — a \$596 million investment — for more frontline police. As I indicated to this house last sitting week, it is only Labor governments that fund frontline police, and we will continue to roll these police out to ensure a safer community.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. Noting that Commissioner Roe allowed the firefighters union 3 hours to present evidence on the CFA EBA, yet gave the CFA just 10 minutes and denied volunteers —

some volunteers who have been in the CFA for 60 years — a single second to present evidence, I ask: Premier, do you stand by your statement that the recommendation derived from this one-sided evidence is fair and balanced?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and I reject completely his characterisation of proceedings at the Fair Work Commission. He is obviously either misinformed or actively misrepresenting a process that has been going for months and indeed years, I think, in total terms.

Mr Morris interjected.

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

Mr ANDREWS — I completely and utterly reject his assertions. They are completely wrong.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Noting that Commissioner Roe is a personal family and political friend of your factional ally the Minister for Equality, Premier, can you guarantee that no member of your government has spoken to Commissioner Roe ever since he began hearing this matter in November last year?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Commissioner Roe and indeed the institution and all of its membership at the Fair Work Commission are people of, in my experience, integrity and probity, as is each and every member of my government. I would simply say to the hysterical Leader of the Opposition that this question — —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition! I will not ask the Leader of the Opposition to come and see me twice after question time; once will be enough. But I do request that the Leader of the Opposition respect the Chair and respect standing orders. The Premier, to continue, in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — Let me be very clear that in my judgement Commissioner Roe — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Kew

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kew will withdraw from this house for a period of 1 hour under standing order 124.

Honourable member for Kew withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Commissioner Roe and indeed all of those who work at the Fair Work Commission are people of integrity, as are members of my government. This question is beneath even the Leader of the Opposition.

Ministers statements: sexual offences legislation

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I rise to inform the house of a new initiative of the Andrews Labor government, being the introduction later today of the Crimes Amendment (Sexual Offences) Bill 2016. Sexual offences are amongst the most serious offences, yet many of them are complex, inconsistent and unclear. This makes it difficult for judges to explain the laws to juries and for juries to understand and apply those laws, and that leads to appeals and to retrials. Some offences are also outdated; they fail to reflect different ways of offending through changes in technology.

In order to address those concerns, this bill will clarify and modernise existing laws relating to sexual offences against children, to child pornography, to incest, to sexual offences against persons with a cognitive impairment and to a range of other sexual offences to make them more effective and to respond to technological advances. It will rename and expand child pornography offences, it will introduce the new offence of sexual activity directed at another person and it will introduce better jury directions on consent and reasonable belief in consent.

A significant change in this bill will be the replacing of the old term ‘child pornography’ with ‘child abuse material’ to reflect the true nature of that material and

the harm that it causes. The definition of child abuse material is clearer and, for the first time in Victoria, will also include material depicting a child as a victim of torture, of cruelty or of physical abuse.

This recognises that the trade in depictions of physical abuse of a child can be very harmful, like depictions of sexual abuse. This bill is part of the government's commitment to improving the response to the very serious problem of sexual offending. Clear, modern and effective sexual offence laws play a vital role in that effort.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. With the United Firefighters Union (UFU) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) proposals supported by Commissioner Roe stating that in integrated fire districts seven paid firefighters must be on the fireground before any volunteer firefighters can start to put a fire out, I ask: when a house is burning down and volunteers are forced to stand and watch it burn, Premier, can you tell Victorians what is fair and balanced about that?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question, and I reject each and every element of it. It is completely and utterly wrong, and the question as offered by the Leader of the Opposition serves but one purpose, and that is to show that he will stoop to any low he can —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition's conduct today is unacceptable by the Chair's standards. The Chair has requested repeatedly that the Leader of the Opposition respect the Chair and the standing orders.

Mr Battin — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is misguided in his answer on this, and it relates to the relevance of it and misleading the house. The log of claims clearly states that firefighters —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook will resume his seat. There is no point of order; the member for Gembrook knows that only too well. A point of order is not an opportunity for the member to repeat points or to debate. Again, there is no point of order. The Premier, to continue in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — I would again make it very clear for all honourable members, including the Leader of the

Opposition, that I reject each and every element of his question.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The UFU's EBA supported by Commissioner Roe prevents any person from going part time, including mothers returning from maternity leave, without approval from the union and specifically its head, Peter Marshall. Premier, what is fair and balanced about that?

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Members for Eltham and Ripon

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Eltham will withdraw from this house for a period of 1½ hours, and the member will also make arrangements to see the Chair after question time. The member for Ripon will also withdraw from this house for a period of 1½ hours. The Chair had been on his feet for a considerable period of time, and these members, amongst others, continued to interject.

Honourable members for Eltham and Ripon withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The diversity clause, as proposed by Commissioner Roe, is the strongest that the Country Fire Authority (CFA) has ever seen. And why would you not? Of course we know that the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission brought down a report that you could only say was damning. The fire services review, again, made very significant findings as to culture.

These matters of diversity, inclusion, respect and dealing with a suite of related issues are very important to the government, to me, to the CFA, to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and indeed to all Victorians. Again, the diversity clauses that are being

criticised are the strongest that have ever been advanced, ever.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional order 11(2) about responsiveness to questions. The question asked by the Leader of the Opposition related specifically to provisions of the proposed United Firefighters Union enterprise bargaining agreement. The Premier did not come anywhere near to responding to the question. I ask you to direct him to provide a written response.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the question was broad and raised a number of matters, including that of diversity, which the Premier addressed directly in his answer, and it is therefore totally in line with the requirements of sessional order 11(2).

Mr Watt — On the point of order, Speaker, raised by the manager of opposition business, I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair* of December 2015, page 164, where it specifically says:

Reply must address the question. When responding to a question a minister must address the question rather than responding generally.

I think that ruling would support the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business. Ministers cannot just respond generally to questions; they have actually got to respond to the question. I ask you, Speaker, to uphold the point of order.

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

Ministers statements: police mental health review

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — I rise to update the house on a government initiative to support our police personnel with the mental health support that they need. Last week I joined the Chief Commissioner of Police, the secretary of Police Association Victoria and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) to launch the report of the mental health review, a review that was initiated very bravely last year by the chief commissioner. In launching this, ‘fearless’ was the word I used last week, actually.

This review was led by Dr Peter Cotton and has raised some significant issues about how we respond and support our policemen and women who are confronting mental health issues. We know we have got mental health issues right across our community, but unfortunately in our police force we have a much higher rate. That means, if you look at this report, you

see that the reviewers talked to hundreds of policemen and women and heard their stories, and we need to do better. The chief commissioner has committed completely to implementing the 39 recommendations.

This is about changing what they call the ‘suck it up’ culture. It is about looking at new leadership, looking at new management strategies and putting in place more mental health supports. That is why in the budget we provided \$500 000 to implement the first year of that review to be able to increase the mental health support services. That builds on the \$300 000, which is a partnership between Victoria Police, the state government and the police association, for a smart phone app to help with that first aid and that first intervention that we know can make such a difference to people’s recovery and quality of life.

As I indicated on the day of the launch, this government will stand with Victoria Police side by side to make sure that the recommendations of this review are implemented and that the men and women in our police force, who put their lives on the line for us, are supported with the delivery of the best possible mental health care.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Minister for Equality. Does your government and will you support the findings of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, which says the United Firefighters Union’s log of claims on the Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement is unlawful and breaches the Equal Opportunity Act, including the fact that it discriminates against women?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — Can I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question — the first time that I have received a question from the opposition in this Parliament. I welcome the opportunity to explain to the honourable member the machinery of government issues around the portfolio of equality. What the honourable member misinterprets is in fact —

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Hawthorn

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn will withdraw from the house for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Hawthorn withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining
agreement**

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — As I was explaining, the equality portfolio is specifically to address the exclusion of LGBTI Victorians from so much of Victoria's public life. So — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister has taken the floor to answer the question. He did not raise a point of order when he could have, but he has chosen now to answer the question. The question was not about machinery of government; it was about the portfolio responsibility and his response to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. He has chosen to answer the question. I ask you to bring him back now to answering the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Members for Kororoit and Footscray

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kororoit will now withdraw from the house, and so will the member for Footscray. The Chair was on his feet; the members had established eye contact, may I say. They should respect the Chair.

Honourable members for Kororoit and Footscray withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining
agreement**

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — On the point of order, Speaker, I am not exactly sure what the Leader of the Opposition's obscure circular argument was, but in terms of — —

Mr Hodgett interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is now warned. I will not warn the Deputy Leader of the Opposition again. The minister, to be heard in silence, on a point of order.

Mr FOLEY — On the point of order, Speaker, I have barely begun my answer. I would, with the greatest of respect, indicate that in the preamble to his question the Leader of the Opposition addressed the issue of the equality portfolio, and it was perfectly open to me, on the substance of the question, to address that as a perfunctory issue before I returned to the substance of the honourable member's question, which if he had given me the courtesy of allowing me to finish, was precisely — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair does not uphold the point of order. The minister, to continue in silence.

Mr FOLEY — So having allowed for the Leader of the Opposition's appalling ignorance on the facts of how government runs in this state, let me address the flaw in the honourable member's — —

Mr Morris interjected.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Mornington

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Mornington will withdraw from the house for the period of 1 hour. The Chair will not tolerate ongoing interjections by the member.

Honourable member for Mornington withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining
agreement**

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — The flaw in the Leader of the Opposition’s question is indicative of his appalling, deliberate misinformation campaign in this whole issue. What the honourable member seems to conflate is a log of claims that was lodged in 2015 with the processes that the independent umpire, the Fair Work Commission, and the report from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission which dealt with around the culture of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in December. So he conflates, relatively speaking, ancient history with the processes that have been subject to that time.

As the Premier indicated in his earlier answer, we all know that there are substantial cultural questions to be addressed in the CFA, as there are indeed in many areas of Victorian life, and it is this government that is determined to deal with the issues around equality wherever we see them. As the Premier indicates, equality is not negotiable in an Andrews Labor government in this state. So for the Leader of the Opposition to have the temerity to suggest that somehow or other this government is not dedicated to pursuing the outcomes of equality wherever we pursue it is a serious misrepresentation of reality.

In the time left to me, Speaker, if I could perhaps point to, for instance, some of the achievements of the equality portfolio in this time. Whether it be the \$15 million pride centre, whether it be the removal of section 19A of the Crimes Act 1958 to deal with homophobic conduct, whether it be adoption equality that those opposite were only too happy to vote against — we could go on.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Tourism and Major Events is warned. The minister will not be warned again.

Supplementary question

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition, in silence on a supplementary question. The Chair has already warned the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. When the Leader of the Opposition is on

his feet the Chair would imagine that the deputy leader would allow him to go on in silence.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — I thank the minister for his willingness to answer CFA EBA questions, and setting the precedent for him to do so, and I note that his government has repeatedly stated that equality is not negotiable, and I ask him: do you support the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission’s advice about the CFA EBA, or do you support the recommendations of your good mate Julius Roe?

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — I tell you what, I will not be taking lectures of integrity from Mr Ventnor over here, let me tell you that right from the start. I will not be taking lessons from where you do — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister to come back to responding to a question as put by the Leader of the Opposition, in silence.

Mr FOLEY — In terms of the processes that the Leader of the Opposition again seems to conflate around — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! It appears to the Chair that today is a very important day. The Leader of the Opposition has asked questions repeatedly as provided by the mandate given by the people of Victoria — an important mandate given to the Leader of the Opposition — but equally the government does have another mandate, which is to be able to respond, and the Leader of the Opposition has not helped today. He did not allow sufficiently for the minister and other ministers to respond. I find that disrespectful of the Chair. The minister, to continue, on a point of order.

Mr FOLEY — On a point of order, Speaker, I take offence at the Leader of the Opposition’s accusation, and I ask him to withdraw. I ask the honourable member to withdraw the phrase that he hurled at me in an ill-advised fit of — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Hastings

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hastings will withdraw from the house for a period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Hastings withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining
agreement**

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

The SPEAKER — Order! On the point of order, the Leader of the Opposition will withdraw.

Mr Guy — I withdraw.

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

**Ministers statements: police intelligence
management system**

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to inform the house of a new government achievement, of progressing to the next stage towards procurement of the Victoria Police intelligence management system, announced in the 2016–17 budget.

The Department of Treasury and Finance has now considered and completed that assessment of the request for tender for this project, which is an important stage of the high-value, high-risk assessment process. The project will ensure Victoria Police's intelligence and analytical capabilities are fast, sophisticated and intuitive and will remain at the cutting edge of fighting crime. It is part of this government's budget investment of \$596 million in public safety and police response.

When we were elected in November 2014 one of the first things we did was fix the former government's funding crisis in prisons. It was a Labor government that spent \$120 million to fund the costs of running the beds in our prisons — costs the former government forgot. This year's budget included investment in equipment and technology like night vision and camera equipment for specialist units, mobile technology, body-worn cameras and anti-ballistic vests. We also

funded the hiring of 406 additional sworn police officers and 52 specialist staff. The opposition may talk about being tough on crime, but those who talk the loudest do the least.

We have invested more in new police officers in 18 months than the opposition did in four years. We said we would give Victoria Police everything it needs to keep Victorians safe — and we are getting it done.

**COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY
ENTERPRISE BARGAINING AGREEMENT**

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — I desire to move, by leave:

That this house supports Country Fire Authority volunteers in their call to keep the Country Fire Authority (CFA) operations under the full authority of the CFA executive officer and CFA chief, noting: the support of 60 000 volunteers asking Premier Andrews to refuse to agree to the enterprise bargaining agreement sought by the United Firefighters Union — —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook will resume his seat. The Chair consulted the Clerk. The Chair had not noticed leave had not been granted.

Leave refused.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Nepean electorate

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — (Question 7616) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. My question is: is the route 788 bus being considered specifically, not generally, for increased frequency and/or other service improvements? The reason I am asking this question of the minister is that the 788 bus is incredibly important to the people of the Mornington Peninsula. My electorate is the fourth poorest of the 88 state electorates, so many people within my constituency are unable to drive or do not have cars. There are a lot of elderly people, and the electorate has the oldest age profile as well.

The only way they can access services up the peninsula is by using the 788 bus. The geography of the peninsula means there is only one direction in which to go to access educational services, training, medical appointments and entertainment, and the other way direction is a very, very important route for the tourism industry. I ask the minister to answer: what is happening with regard to the future of that route?

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — (Question 7617) My constituency question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. How will the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) rollout benefit the community of Yuroke? According to the 2011 census nearly 9000 people in the City of Hume required assistance due to disability — over 5 per cent of the total population. In my electorate of Yuroke, this includes over 1100 residents in Craigieburn and over 400 residents in Greenvale.

Earlier this year the minister visited my electorate for a forum on the Hume-Moreland rollout of the NDIS, which is set to commence in March 2018 as part of the seven-year statewide rollout. With preparations for this rollout taking place, many local carers, parents and people with disabilities are keen to find out more about this important new scheme. I look forward to the response from the minister so I can share this information with the Yuroke community.

Mildura electorate

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — (Question 7618) My question is for the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer provide information on how the United Firefighters Union (UFU) enterprise bargaining agreement can be funded without increasing the fire services levy (FSL) or further cutting funding for volunteer firefighters? Despite a 15 per cent rise in the fire services levy since the Andrews government was elected, volunteers have had equipment funding slashed, delays in replacing ageing vehicles, essential maintenance delayed and access to training facilities restricted. Volunteer Country Fire Authority members in my electorate are frustrated at the continued budget cut rhetoric. While the FSL continues to rise and the UFU gets anything it wants, volunteers wait and wait.

Bundoora electorate

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — (Question 7619) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer to the significant transport projects being undertaken by the Andrews government in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, including the duplication of Plenty Road and Yan Yean Road, the duplication of the Hurstbridge line at Heidelberg and Rosanna and the extension of the South Morang rail line to Mernda. Further to these great projects is the need to consider a cycling path along the Plenty Road corridor connecting growth suburbs with the RMIT and La Trobe University campuses and the Darebin Creek cycling trail. So I ask: will the minister assist in bringing

VicRoads and the local councils in the region together to consider this cycling proposal?

Evelyn electorate

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — (Question 7620) My constituency question is to the Premier. My constituents are asking, in light of the well-reported lack of consultation with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) by the Fair Work Commission in relation to the hotly contested enterprise bargaining agreement dispute, did the Premier at any point either personally seek the views of any of the CFA captains in the Yarra Valley who played a leading role in the fight against the Black Saturday bushfires or direct the Minister for Emergency Services to canvass such views prior to the decision going to cabinet?

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (Question 7621) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. This year's state budget provides \$5 million for planning works to connect the Upfield and Seymour lines at Somerton. This infrastructure build will provide much-needed extra capacity for train services connecting Victoria's north-east to Melbourne, improving regional services and providing improved commuter services for Wallan, Beveridge and Donnybrook. I ask the minister: what will the scope of the planning work be, and is there any likelihood of commonwealth support for this important rail project?

Rowville electorate

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — (Question 7622) The constituency question I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. Only three months ago in this house I asked the minister on behalf of my electorate what the Andrews government is currently doing to progress the Rowville rail following her decision earlier this year to scrap high-capacity signalling on the revised Cranbourne-Pakenham line. Now, in an apparent backflip, it was reported in the *Age* last month that the government was:

calling for expressions of interest for high-capacity signalling on the Melbourne Metro rail project ...

and:

The high-capacity signalling will be installed on the Sunbury-Cranbourne Pakenham line and the new tunnel ...

I therefore ask on behalf of the Rowville electorate: considering the already 18-month delay and that the trials of high-capacity signalling are years from completion, why has the minister suddenly made a

decision to now install high-capacity signalling on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines, and can she advise the time lines for exactly when the signalling will be installed, thus allowing increased train frequency and putting in place what is a critical network for the Rowville rail?

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (Question 7623) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: can the minister provide a time line for the works to widen the Monash Freeway and provide any information about the impacts on surrounding residents during the construction process?

Residents in my electorate were delighted to hear the announcement of the Monash widening project late last year and to see a government building the important infrastructure projects the state needs and getting on with easing traffic congestion in the south-east. The widening from four to five lanes each way between the EastLink interchange and the South Gippsland Freeway will deliver significant improvements for Dandenong commuters. It will better link families in the south-east with jobs, education and other opportunities — and, most importantly, all toll free. Residents are delighted by this investment and are keen to hear from the minister what the time line for the project is and how the works may impact on them, particularly those who live abutting the road area.

South-West Coast electorate

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — (Question 7624) My question is to the Treasurer. Earlier this week the Treasurer ruled out open-ended engagements with Portland Aluminium over electricity subsidies for its smelter. My question is: what does this assistance look like? The Treasurer said he would find other ways to assist.

The smelter is the biggest employer in Portland, one of the major centres of my electorate of South-West Coast. For some time there has been talk the smelter would close. It is feared that without the electricity subsidy the smelter will follow the same path as the Point Henry smelter in Geelong and cease operations completely. The staff are concerned about their futures and recently voted to take a wage freeze for the next 12 months. The smelter is responsible for 2000 direct and indirect jobs, almost a quarter of Portland's population. Without the smelter the city will be decimated.

The Treasurer was quoted as saying the government would work alongside the company and consider other

assistance measures. Again, what will this assistance look like?

Narre Warren South electorate

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — (Question 7625) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and concerns the intersection of Pound and Shives roads in Hampton Park. I ask: when will construction begin on the long-awaited and much-needed upgrade at this notoriously dangerous intersection, an intersection that only the Andrews Labor government has been willing and able to fix?

After years of excuses and inaction under the previous, failed Liberal government, we have got on with it and provided \$5.2 million for this vital project. Countless local residents have contacted my office to express their joy and sheer relief that finally something is being done. For too long they have found themselves stuck in traffic, facing lengthy delays and bumper-to-bumper traffic after yet another avoidable accident. We are getting on with fixing this nightmare intersection and investing in upgrading and improving local roads to ensure that local residents spend less time in traffic and more time with their families.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I refer to the member for Bundoora's question, in which he asked a minister to assist in bringing people together. I suggest that that is actually out of order, and I ask that the Speaker review whether that is out of order. The other point I would ask about is — I think the Speaker has already ruled about information — that when members ask ministers whether they can provide information, that is an action, and I would ask that you maybe get members to reword their questions so that they do not ask, 'Can you provide something?', whether that be information or an update or some other action, because that is very clearly in the form of an action even though it is asking for information.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I listened to the honourable member for Bundoora, and his question was in order. There is no point of order.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Membership

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I have received the resignation of Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins, MLC, from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, effective from Monday, 6 June.

MELBOURNE COLLEGE OF DIVINITY AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910 to provide for the title, operation and status of the University of Divinity and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I ask the minister to provide a brief explanation further to the long title.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — The bill makes a series of technical amendments to the Melbourne College of Divinity Act 1910 to reflect the Melbourne College of Divinity's changed status as an Australian university of specialisation and new name of the University of Divinity.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (SEXUAL OFFENCES) BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Crimes Act 1958 in relation to sexual offences and certain other offences, to amend the Summary Offences Act 1966 in relation to sexual exposure and indecent, offensive and insulting behaviour, to amend the Jury Directions Act 2015 in relation to directions on consent, and reasonable belief in consent, in sexual offence cases, to make minor amendments to certain acts and for other purposes.

Read first time.

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Legal Professional Uniform Law Application Act 2014 and the Legal Profession Uniform Law and for other purposes.

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

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The bill makes a series of relatively minor technical and other amendments to the Legal Profession Uniform Law.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Powers of Attorney Act 2014 and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and for other purposes.

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

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The purpose of the bill fundamentally is to make some amendments to the Powers of Attorney Act that was passed by the last Parliament in 2014. Those amendments primarily relate to some implementation issues and some other practical concerns that have been raised by a range of stakeholders about some of the more intricate operations of the act. They are not in many respects changes that would be regarded as particularly substantive, but they are about making the regime that was implemented by the last Parliament work somewhat better.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

TRANSPORT (COMPLIANCE AND MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SAFETY) BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) introduced a bill for an act to repeal section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 and for other purposes.

Read first time.

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

That this bill be read a second time immediately.

I can advise the house that in accordance with standing order 61(2) the other parties and the Independent

member have been provided with a copy of the bill and a briefing.

Motion agreed to.

Statement of compatibility

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) 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 (charter), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016.

In my opinion, the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016 (the bill), as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of the bill

The bill repeals section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 (the act). Section 159 is a reverse onus provision, providing that in any prosecution against an owner or driver of a commercial passenger vehicle, if the prosecution proves that passengers were carried in such a vehicle for reward, the burden shifts to the accused to prove that the passengers were not carried for reward at 'separate and distinct fares'. However, the carrying of passengers for reward at 'separate and distinct fares' is no longer an element of any offence under the act. This has been so since 1941, when amendments were made to the former Transport Regulation Act 1933.

Section 159 therefore has no current application; its continued presence in the act has been a matter of drafting oversight. As such, it is now being repealed on the basis that it is redundant.

Human rights issues

In my opinion, the bill does not raise any human rights issues. I therefore consider the bill to be compatible with the charter.

The Hon. Jacinta Allan, MP
Minister for Public Transport

Second reading

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

On 18 May 2016 the County Court made a judgement that was portrayed in the media as a decision that legalised the operation of ridesharing services in Victoria. The advice the government has received is that the implications are far more significant. It undermines the enforcement of requirements imposed on commercial passenger vehicle owners and drivers in the interests of public safety.

The most serious implication is that where drivers are an obvious threat to passenger safety, for example, when an individual has a history of sexual assaults, the Taxi Services Commission will not be able to prevent them from driving a commercial passenger vehicle.

Part VI of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 defines a commercial passenger vehicle as being any motor vehicle which is used, or intended to be used, for carrying passengers for hire and reward. Under the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act, all commercial passenger vehicles are required to be licensed and all drivers are required to be accredited.

In the case brought before the County Court His Honour Judge Chettle was satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the passengers were carried for hire or reward. However, Judge Chettle accepted a submission put on behalf of the appellant that section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 provides a defence to the appellant to both charges and, accordingly, set aside the orders of the Magistrates Court and substituted a finding that the charges be dismissed.

The judgement is that it is a defence to any offence involving the carriage of multiple passengers to prove that a vehicle was not being used as a commercial passenger vehicle because passengers were not charged separate and distinct fares. Commercial passenger vehicles such as taxis and hire cars do not charge separate and distinct fares to each passenger so the effect of the decision, in construing section 159 as providing a defence, is significant and leads to perverse outcomes.

The bill provides for the repeal of section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 in order to preserve the integrity and validity of the regulation of commercial passenger vehicles in the interests of public safety.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

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

That the debate be adjourned until later this day.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — On the question of time of adjournment, this is a significant bill, and it is also a bill that raises a wide range of issues. As the Leader of the House has indicated, a briefing has been provided to the opposition parties in accordance with standing orders. It is clear to us, just on the opportunity that we have had to examine the bill this morning, that there are two key aspects to it, and it is important to seek a resolution to those aspects. The minister argues that there are issues concerning community safety and the safety of passengers travelling in vehicles made available for hire. Of course community safety is an important consideration; it is one that we on this side of the house support.

However, there is a second aspect to the bill as it has been brought to the house — namely, that it will also have the effect of significantly changing the legal position as it is now understood to be following a recent County Court decision in relation to Uber. Uber is an issue that has been under consideration by this government for some time. Certainly on this side of the house our view is that there needs to be an appropriate regime that properly provides both for Uber and for the fair and reasonable and appropriate treatment of taxidivers and others in the taxi industry. This house and the community have been waiting for a long time for the government to bring forward such legislation, but instead of bringing forward a comprehensive package to deal with this issue, including any safety issues that might arise in relation to Uber, we have the bill that is before us. It has been put forward on the basis of addressing urgent matters of community safety, but it is also drafted in a way that will overturn what the current legal position is understood to be in relation to Uber.

The view of members on this side of the house is that this legislation should, as it were, preserve the status quo in relation to Uber until the government can finally, when it is in a position to do so — we certainly hope that is sooner rather than later, as indeed does the community and the sector — bring forward that package. What we do not want to see is Uber's legal position being affected by stealth under the guise of legislation that is put forward ostensibly to deal with community safety.

We believe that there needs to be some time to resolve these matters. We are certainly happy and willing to sit down and talk to the government about a range of options that may achieve that result, but it is not something that can be done on an instant. The Leader of the House has indicated to the opposition that she has in mind that, if debate on the bill is adjourned until later this day, the debate will be resumed after members statements, in a relatively short space of time. We believe that would be inappropriate. We are keen to receive some commitment from the government that, if debate is adjourned until later this day, there will be adequate time allowed for some dialogue between the opposition parties and the government with a view to achieving an outcome that achieves worthwhile community objectives but avoids the adverse consequences that I have referred to.

If the government insists on bringing the bill on for debate rather than allowing adequate time for these sorts of discussions, then necessarily those matters would need to be canvassed at length in debate. It would be appropriate for there to be an extensive

consideration in detail of the bill at this stage. Even in those circumstances it would be very difficult to actually come up with a resolution. All that would be feasible would be to tease out the issues, and that would frustrate the government's objective of being able to get the bill through this house today. Whether the bill needs to go through this house today is another matter. It could potentially be debated tomorrow, and assuming it is, it does in fact have sufficient community safety implications to warrant urgent passage. But these are all issues that need to be resolved. As I say, the opposition parties are willing to engage in constructive dialogue with the government on that, but if the government is going to rush through the bill, that is not going to be possible.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — This bill goes to very important public safety considerations, and it is vitally important that it be expedited to prevent breaches of public safety that are extraordinarily serious. In my contribution on this bill I was hoping to touch on a very personal incident that I experienced. When I look at what the opposition is trying to do by delaying passage of this bill all I can think is that it essentially puts people at risk for longer unnecessarily. If opposition members are prepared to put people in danger for a longer period for their own gratification, then let that be on their heads, but I think it is vitally important that this bill pass sooner rather than later because it is not about Uber or ridesharing; it is about public safety.

This is about people travelling in vehicles that could potentially be very unsafe with drivers that could potentially be very dangerous individuals. As such, any attempt to hold up passage of this legislation is unnecessarily putting people in grave danger. It should be at the height of importance that once we become aware that something exists in legislation which essentially puts people at risk, we rectify it at the earliest possible time, and this is the earliest possible time.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — Can I say at the outset that we will support moves to enhance public safety but we will not be party to a stealth attempt to allow for prosecutions against the many Uber drivers. The minister contacted me at around 10 past 9 last night to provide details of the urgency of this matter, and she kindly provided information around the bill and the second-reading speech. After discussions with the minister, a briefing was organised this morning — —

Ms Allan — Except you didn't answer your phone.

Mr HODGETT — I am not complaining; I am actually complimenting the minister. After discussion with the minister, a briefing was organised for 8.30 or 8.45 this morning, when some discussions were held, and we were briefed on that. We appreciate that. Let me be clear, though, we are not seeking to delay this legislation; we are seeking to adjourn the matter. If I go back, the outcome the government is seeking is to have this bill pass both houses this week. That can still be achieved if we adjourn it and have this debate tomorrow, allowing for some discussion over the next few hours.

We believe we have a position that we can put to the government as a compromise that will achieve the outcome it is seeking to achieve in relation to public safety but at the same time protect Uber drivers in relation to continuing to wait for the government to make a decision on ridesharing. If public safety has been a paramount concern of this government, we have to question why it has done nothing over the last 15 months to legalise ridesharing. If this is about public safety, we believe we can have some discussion about this and put a position to government that we actually believe can facilitate the outcome that the government wants.

If the bill could be debated tomorrow, it could then be sent to the upper house and the outcome could be achieved. So we are seeking to have this debate adjourned until tomorrow, which will give us the opportunity, following the vote now, to have some meaningful discussion with the minister in good faith to facilitate the passing of this bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a brief contribution in relation to the matter before us. I note that the manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, said that we should be looking at preserving the status quo in regard to Uber until a resolution is reached. The reality is that while this bill touches upon Uber, the core of it goes to consumer protections and safety.

Ms Ryall interjected.

Mr PEARSON — The member for Ringwood interjects saying 18 months. The reality is that we are responding to a matter that was raised by the County Court just recently. The County Court did not make a ruling on this 18 months ago; it did not make a ruling on this 6 or 3 months ago. The County Court just recently made a finding on this, in the last couple of weeks. The reality is that we have to look at removing section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 in order to address the serious

implications of a loophole. If we do not shut down this loophole, there is a very real risk that the Taxi Services Commission will not be able to enforce its regulatory regime against those people who are not compliant — for example, drivers who have been convicted of serious criminal offences, including sexual offences.

We have to, as legislators, move quickly when the court rules on a matter such as this. That is exactly what we are trying to do, and I think by ensuring that we deal with this matter quickly and expeditiously today it can then go to the other place. The reality is that the other place is almost in a parallel universe; it is a different place. We need to ensure that the other place also has the opportunity to debate this bill appropriately so it can be passed.

This is an important piece of legislation that is before us. Again, the County Court has ruled and identified that there is a problem here. We are seeking to address that, and we are seeking to address it quickly. That is why this matter must be brought on and dealt with today.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise too to speak on this urgent matter. The Nationals do not object to addressing this public safety concern; however, we object to debating this bill today. We think we need adequate time to consider this particular bill, and there are matters to be considered whether we support or oppose the bill. There is a possibility, after due consideration, of perhaps some amendments that could be negotiated through this.

Obviously this is urgent, but we do need to talk about the consequences. Particularly we note that the County Court judgement was made on 18 May, which was some weeks ago, and that this is not a complex bill. As we look through this particular bill, we see that it is about as brief as you can get — four clauses. I think if it was such an urgent issue, it probably should have been in the house during the last sitting week to allow for this debate, particularly as we have heard from the government how serious this matter is. Again it is a simple four-clause bill, and the introduction and repeal takes care of two of those clauses. In fact the only real clause is to repeal section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983.

I think that one day to adequately scrutinise the consequences of this urgent and simple bill that is before us is not an unreal request. We can still do this within the time frame and within the process of this house. We can come back tomorrow to debate this; it can be passed or be dealt with by this house and then

move on to the upper house and be dealt with there on Thursday.

I note that the Leader of the House did contact the Leader of The Nationals last night indicating that there was an urgent matter to be discussed and the briefing was this morning, but we do need some time for some consideration and consultation. As we heard from the shadow Minister for Public Transport, who is at the table, there is a compromise in the offing.

I think to rush this through and not give, through the democratic process, some opportunity to compromise or at least explore the compromise would be failing to deliver due justice to the people of Victoria. Waiting one day, considering that we have had quite some time since the judgement, is not too much to ask. The process can still work; it can still be dealt with urgently by this house. But I think to bring this matter on forthwith today is to deny time for there to be a full, comprehensive and informed debate.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I just want to add the Greens' contribution to this important debate. I understand the minister's arguments that this legislation is needed quickly to close a loophole in the law to ensure public safety and I appreciate that she did give me a call earlier today and also contacted our leader last night to say there was a matter of urgency, but given that the bill was only given to us quite late last night and we have only had a verbal briefing — although we have been offered another briefing as well — we do not feel that we have had sufficient time to consider the broader implications of the bill, particularly the broader implications around what it means for Uber.

Our position is that Uber should be legal and regulated, but it is hard to tell without further consideration exactly what the implications of this bill are for Uber and ridesharing in general because we have had less than 24 hours to consider the matter.

We feel that if it is such a serious issue, which it does seem to be — and I understand the minister's urgency — then Parliament needs to be given some time to consider it. I think it is not unreasonable for us to be given another day to get a sufficient briefing and to consider all the implications of the bill, not just the narrow implications that the minister has outlined, so that is the way that we will be voting.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 45

Allan, Ms
Andrews, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms

Knight, Ms
Lim, Mr
McGuire, Mr

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

Merlino, Mr
Nardella, Mr
Neville, Ms
Noonan, Mr
Pakula, Mr
Pallas, Mr
Pearson, Mr
Richardson, Mr
Richardson, Ms
Scott, Mr
Sheed, Ms
Spence, Ms
Staikos, Mr
Suleyman, Ms
Thomas, Ms
Thomson, Ms
Ward, Ms
Williams, Ms
Wynne, Mr

Noes, 38

Angus, Mr
Asher, Ms
Battin, Mr
Blackwood, Mr
Britnell, Ms
Bull, Mr T.
Burgess, Mr
Clark, Mr
Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hibbins, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
Morris, Mr

Northe, Mr
O'Brien, Mr M.
Paynter, Mr
Pesutto, Mr
Riordan, Mr
Ryall, Ms
Ryan, Ms
Sandell, Ms
Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Motion agreed to.

Debate adjourned until later this day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion

The SPEAKER — Order! Notices of motion 2 to 5 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Sandringham Hospital

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Bayside, Kingston, Glen Eira and metropolitan Melbourne draws to the attention of the

Legislative Assembly the possible plans to cut back emergency department services at the Sandringham Hospital.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the Victorian government to maintain the vital 24-hour emergency department services at the Sandringham Hospital to meet the health needs of the local community and the southern region of Melbourne.

By Ms ASHER (Brighton) (34 signatures).

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that Premier Daniel Andrews must not hand control of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) to the United Firefighters Union (UFU).

Volunteer firefighters have protected Victorians for more than 100 years across Victoria, and as a community we support the volunteers and send this message to Daniel Andrews and the Victorian Labor Party: keep your hands off the CFA.

By Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (522 signatures) and Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) (496 signatures).

Craigieburn Road West–Dorchester Street, Craigieburn

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Craigieburn and surrounding areas draws to the attention of the house the deep discontent of residents about the current state of the intersection of Craigieburn Road West and Dorchester Street in Craigieburn in the state of Victoria. In particular, we note that the intersection:

1. suffers from severe congestion during peak times as a major thoroughfare for all areas of Craigieburn and surroundings towns; and
2. is a safety risk for all pedestrians, motorists and cyclists utilising this intersection to go about their day-to-day lives.

Requesting that the Legislative Assembly through the minister for roads immediately fund and commence work on as a matter of urgency:

- a. the duplication of Craigieburn Road West from Dorchester Street to Lygon Drive;
- b. provided traffic lights at the intersection of Craigieburn Road West and Dorchester Street;
- c. safe and accessible sheltered bus stop outside Craigieburn golf course.

By Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (515 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Gippsland East be considered next day on motion of Mr BULL (Gippsland East).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Brighton be considered next day on motion of Ms ASHER (Brighton).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Yuroke be considered next day on motion of Ms SPENCE (Yuroke).

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 8

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert Digest No. 8 of 2016* on:

- Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**
- National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016**
- Owners Corporations Amendment (Short-stay Accommodation) Bill 2016**
- Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016**
- Rural Assistance Schemes Bill 2016**
- Tobacco Amendment Bill 2016**
- Victorian Funds Management Corporation Amendment Bill 2016**

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Crimes Act 1958 — Instruments of Authorisation under s 464Z (two documents)

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978:

Orders under s 17B granting licences over:

Footscray Park

Sandringham Beach Park

Order under s 17D granting a lease over Footscray Park

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

Ballarat — C197

Bass Coast — C82
 Boroondara — C255
 Campaspe — C106
 Cardinia — GC37
 Casey — C218, GC37
 Glen Eira — GC37
 Greater Dandenong — GC37
 Kingston — GC37
 Mansfield — C31, C33
 Melbourne — C287, C292, GC37
 Mildura — C79
 Monash — GC37
 Mornington Peninsula — C225
 Port Phillip — C107
 Southern Grampians — C33
 Stonnington — GC37
 Yarra — GC37

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 — SR 49
Essential Services Commission Act 2001 — SR 48
Road Safety Act 1986 — SR 50
Sex Work Act 1994 — SR 47
Supreme Court Act 1986 — SRs 51, 52

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 40, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52.

The following proclamation fixing an operative date was tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an Order of the House dated 24 February 2015:

Consumer Acts and Other Acts Amendment Act 2016 — Whole Act (except ss 23, 24, 30(1) and 31) — 1 June 2016 (*Gazette S162 24 May 2016*).

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent on 31 May to:

Confiscation and Other Matters Amendment Bill 2016
Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
Fines Reform and Infringements Acts Amendment Bill 2016

Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (A Stronger System) Bill 2015
Land (Revocation of Reservations — Metropolitan Land) Bill 2016
Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Community Safety) Bill 2016.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016
Rural Assistance Schemes Bill 2016
Tobacco Amendment Bill 2016.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

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

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 9 June 2016:

Justice Legislation (Evidence and Other Acts) Amendment Bill 2016

Road Management Amendment (Bus Stop Delivery Powers) Bill 2016

Rural Assistance Schemes Bill 2016.

I advise the house that, time permitting, during the course of this week we would also like to go back and allow a number of additional speakers on the take-note motion on the 2016–17 budget papers. If there is time available we may also come back to speakers on the motion to take note of the report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the apology for laws criminalising homosexuality and the harms caused.

I also want to touch on a matter that has come into the Parliament today that affects the running of this place for the course of this week. That is the bill I have just introduced in my capacity as Minister for Public Transport regarding an act to repeal section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983. We have just had a discussion in this place about when this second reading will come back into the chamber for debate, and with the indulgence of those opposite, I will just address some of those issues that have been touched on during the course of that debate, because

they go to the issues of why we want to address this matter today.

This is the first sitting day available to the government to bring this bill into the Parliament. Yes, the court case was on 18 May, and that has bought this issue about. However, in the issues around getting legal advice, getting that further clarified and quantified by the solicitor-general, that process was only concluded late last week, so this is very much the first sitting opportunity for this house to consider this matter.

I have great optimism that we can reach an agreement across the chamber that would enable this bill to be debated and, hopefully with the Parliament's support, passed by the end of today, and that allows some of the issues that the opposition has indicated it would like to discuss with me to be worked through. I think we can set ourselves a great efficiency dividend here — not push off until tomorrow what we can deal with today — and work through the matters, because I did anticipate that the opposition and other members of this place may, quite rightly, want to raise issues about how this bill affects issues around ridesharing and the industry more broadly.

I cannot be clearer than that this bill has to be dealt with, regardless of what happens with ridesharing and other regulatory issues associated with that, but I am very happy to have further discussion on this matter on the basis that that discussion could be concluded in a way that allows this bill to be put through this chamber today. My intention at this stage is that this bill would come on immediately after members statements. However, I am prepared to contemplate a little bit of extension of time beyond that, should there be some of those fruitful discussions across the chamber with members in this place.

There is a very simple reason why there is urgency to address this matter, because we as a Parliament, now that we are aware and have been advised of the risks associated with section 159 of the act being in existence, have been urged to move immediately — and we should move immediately; otherwise there are serious consequences.

As I said, I am very confident that we can have some strong discussions across the chamber between now and the bringing on of the debate. Ideally I would like to start the debate immediately after members statements. That continues to be my intention. However, I am prepared to contemplate a short period longer, provided we can work through the issues today in the chamber. I am very positive that we can work through the matters and set ourselves a gold standard, a

gold star, for cooperation and efficiency in this place. With that, I commend the motion to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition opposes the government business program. It is a sign of the disarray and disorganisation into which the government has fallen that it is bringing a program to the house that proposes to deal with only three bills and is refusing to debate other crucial issues that need to be debated, while leaving other pressing matters in limbo. Then of course there is the further complication of the bill relating to Uber and hire vehicles that the minister wants to deal with. We can perhaps grant that the latter may have come on unexpectedly, but there is no excuse for any of the other disarray that the government is evidencing in the way it brings this program before the house.

There are three bills which, as with all legislation, are significant in themselves, but those bills probably will not take up all the available time this week. What it seems to evidence to this side of the house is that the government just cannot make up its mind about what it wants to do. It has therefore scheduled very few bills to progress, allowing its legislative program — measures that presumably it believes are, and hopefully many are, important and significant to the community — to bank up both in this place and in the other place while it is preoccupied with its internal divisions and preoccupied with spurious manoeuvres and motions, both last sitting week and indeed on the notice paper this week.

Whereas what the government should have been doing was giving leave to the member for Gembrook to proceed with the important motion that he sought leave to move earlier, to debate the issue that is the focus of virtually the whole community at the moment in terms of what is the future of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the threat that is posed to CFA volunteers, the power that is proposed to be handed over to the United Firefighters Union and the disarray amongst government ministers as to what the position is. The Leader of the Government in the upper house is saying one thing, which appears to undermine what the Minister for Emergency Services said in a statement that was issued late yesterday.

These are the pressing issues of the time. We should be making space in the legislative program to deal with them so there can be proper consideration of these issues and the best way to ensure community safety. Instead of that, we have got a limited number of bills and a general indication that the government may or may not deal with various other matters that the Leader of the House referred to, including the take-note motion on the budget. We have got another notice of motion

sitting on the notice paper, and we have been given no idea where that is going to go. Last but certainly not least we have got the transport industry bill that the minister has referred to relating to hire cars. We certainly welcome the fact that the minister's response in relation to that matter while speaking on the government business program was a lot more constructive than what has come from the government side previously.

We reiterate the fact that we are very willing to work with the government to achieve a suitable outcome along the lines that I and other members on this side of the house referred to earlier. Notwithstanding the enthusiasm and willingness of the minister to quickly resolve these matters, she may well be putting a heavy burden on parliamentary counsel to be able to give effect to what an outcome might be. Be that as it may, the main concerns that we on this side of the house have is that this government is in disarray; the legislative program is in disarray; we have not been given clear guidance on the government's intentions; and, even more importantly, those intentions are defective in that the issue that we should be making time to debate is the future of our Country Fire Authority.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the government business program. The member for Box Hill indicated some concern that there are only three bills on the notice paper plus obviously the urgent bill that the Leader of the House has brought into this place. The reason there are now only four bills on the agenda is to allow for additional capacity for members to make a contribution in relation to the appropriation bill, which is what those opposite actually wanted. We are giving those opposite what they wanted, which is the opportunity to talk on the appropriation bill and on the recent state budget.

It is interesting to tease out the member for Box Hill's contribution, because the member for Box Hill, as many would know, was the understudy of a former Treasurer, Alan Stockdale, for seven years. If you follow the member for Box Hill's logic to its end point, you would say that we should be measured on the amount of legislation we are debating in this house and passing on a regular basis. So clearly if, as a Parliament, we were churning through 10 bills on a weekly basis, that would be a very good thing, and if we were doing only, say, 3 bills, that would be a bad thing.

I find that interesting because if you look at it, Alan Stockdale and the Kennett government were all about deregulation. They were about not having legislation.

They were about reducing the number of bills and acts of Parliament. So it is curious that the member for Box Hill would seem to suggest that the only measure we have of our work rate is the number of bills, and therefore that should be what we aspire to. This is clearly erroneous. I would imagine that if Alan Stockdale was consulted as to what his view would be, I think he would say the less legislation, the better.

But the reality is that we have got three bills. Again, that is to accommodate members in making a contribution on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016. The Leader of the House has introduced this urgent piece of legislation, which we must deal with because it goes to community safety — safety for people to be able to catch a taxi and to know that the person who is driving that taxi is a suitable and fit and proper person, that the person does not have a criminal record and is not a convicted sex offender. This is something that has just been identified by the County Court, and we are responding. It is also important that the house have the opportunity to the take-note debate on the outstanding report of the family violence royal commission as well the take-note motion on the apology in relation to homosexual convictions.

The government is trying to make this place work as efficiently and as effectively as possible. It is about making sure that we have an appropriate legislative workload before us; it is about making sure that members can talk about what they like about the recent state budget — a great budget — as well as talking a bit about what they think about the recent report of the family violence royal commission and on the apology. It is a good, solid government business program that reflects the needs of the house. I commend the government business program to the house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution in the government business program debate. As the leader of opposition business has said, the coalition will be opposing the government business program. It is a really light program. We have had 18 months of government, and there are three bills on the agenda. The take-note motion on the budget papers is welcome, as all members should be entitled to make a contribution on the budget. However, as far as the legislative program goes, we have had 18 months of government and we only have three bills.

Also today is like Groundhog Day with the introduction of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016. This is almost the same process by which the Local Government (Greater Geelong City Council) Bill 2016 was introduced: the opposition parties and the Greens were

called at 8 or 9 o'clock the night before and briefings were given at 11 o'clock in the morning. In fact, they even turned up half an hour late for that briefing.

These are very important bills. The opposition offered a way forward then, saying we should have come back and debated the bill on the Wednesday, which would have given us time to look through the bill in a more fulsome manner. The government used its numbers and rammed it through, then ate humble pie on the Thursday when the Legislative Council made the amendments that the opposition had proposed in the first place.

Rather than sitting here and working constructively with the opposition parties when this happens, we have the situation here which is almost identical to the situation that applied with the Geelong bill. The government has not learnt a thing, which is quite amazing. I find it hard to believe that it will be going down the same path yet again. Also, as the manager of opposition business quite often says, and I have always said, the government did make a commitment to make a consideration-in-detail stage standard practice in this house. Standard practice would imply that each bill would go into consideration in detail unless we were otherwise informed. We have only got three bills this week; you would think we could make the time to at least have one of them go into a consideration-in-detail stage, but as I have said and the manager of opposition business has said, the coalition will be opposing the government business program.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — It gives me pleasure to speak on the government business program. Further to the contribution made by my hardworking colleague the member for Essendon, I absolutely endorse his comments, and it reminds me of what has been attributed to Mark Twain:

No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the legislature is in session.

Is that what the Alan Stockdale philosophy is? My predecessor in the seat of Oakleigh, Ann Barker, tells a story that —

Mr Pearson — Good former member!

Mr DIMOPOULOS — A good former member she was, absolutely, and she is still very active in the community. She told me that when she sat with the then member for Burwood when he was in opposition, prior to him taking the office of Premier, he looked at all the books of statutes in front of where the current Attorney-General sits and said, 'I am going to get rid of all these when I am in power'. Those opposite believe in small

government, yet they are arguing today that we do not have enough government business items for us to have a proper government business program.

Well, this is a government that has introduced a huge legislative agenda, which it took to the election. Eighteen months in we have implemented most of our election commitments, and we have also been picking up the unfinished business of those opposite. A number of times I have come to speak on a bill that in the briefing notes referred to the fact that it was half-started by those opposite and did not get anywhere, because obviously Premier Shaw would not allow it to come through. Whether it was on the Parliamentary Budget Office or serious sex offenders, some of the work they started — not much — could not be completed. So in that context their argument about the government business program is really quite a weak one.

I am proud to have the opportunity this week to speak on the appropriation bills. As an earlier speaker said, it was the opposition's argument that we should be allowed and entitled to speak on those bills. I am proud that we have an opportunity to speak on the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the apology for laws criminalising homosexuality. They are both very important things. If the argument is that we are light on, what would those opposite remove from this agenda? What does not have ranking and status in their minds in terms of the agenda?

We have the Road Management Amendment (Bus Stop Delivery Powers) Bill 2016, which enables Public Transport Victoria to lawfully designate bus stopping points and install modified bus stop infrastructure. This is another clean-up that perhaps should have been done by the former government.

We also have the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016, as the member for Essendon and other members have said, which is a very important bill to ensure that we have safety from today on. Following that court decision, every day when someone gets into a taxi or another commercial passenger vehicle there is a risk to public safety.

We also have the Justice Legislation (Evidence and Other Acts) Amendment Bill 2016, which also seeks to implement some very, very important changes to how the criminal justice system operates.

We have also got the Rural Assistance Schemes Bill 2016. Again we are a government that has the best track record for investing in regional Victoria. This budget contains the biggest boost to regional Victoria given by

any government. The Rural Assistance Schemes Bill 2016 is just another element of our commitment to regional Victoria.

We have these important bills before us, but we also have the other important business of the take-note motions on the appropriation. I do not understand how opposition members have the audacity or cheek to come into this chamber, after all their unfinished business and all the unfulfilled commitments they made to the Victorian people when they were in government, and pick one week of the government business program out of 18 months and reflect on that as if it was symbolic. In my view this government business program is emblematic of how effective this government is on all fronts, both in legislation but also in other important measures that this chamber debates.

It is my great pleasure to support the government business program, and I look forward to a very productive week.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — I rise to speak on the government business program, and I indicate the Greens will not be opposing the government business program in this instance. I will just make some brief remarks. Of course there are only three bills on the government business program in this instance. There is the Justice Legislation (Evidence and Other Acts) Amendment Bill 2016, which I understand makes some changes in regards to giving evidence and also in regards to legal aid.

We have got the Road Management Amendment (Bus Stop Delivery Powers) Bill 2016, which I understand gives Public Transport Victoria the power to install bus stops. I am sure many members will take the opportunity to espouse the great benefits that buses bring to our community, so I look forward to those contributions.

We have got the Rural Assistance Schemes Bill 2016, which I believe provides for a Rural Assistance Commissioner. I also note that we have, as brought in today, the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016. As indicated previously by the member for Melbourne, it is our preference that further time be given to the consideration of this bill. We do not believe this would impact on the government's ability to pass this bill through both houses by the end of this sitting week, if it wishes to do so.

I note that there are some take-note motions, notably of course for the budget, which I am sure members will give very fulsome contributions on. I also note that

there is still a documents motion on the notice paper too, and I do not believe the government has given any indication of whether it intends to debate that particular documents motion this sitting week. The Greens welcome the government's new-found commitment to transparency in relation to documents, and I would certainly be interested to know whether the government intends to debate that motion this week.

The Greens will not be opposing the government business program in this instance.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 47

Allan, Ms	Knight, Ms
Andrews, Mr	Lim, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms	McGuire, Mr
Brooks, Mr	Merlino, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Nardella, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Neville, Ms
Carroll, Mr	Noonan, Mr
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Pakula, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Richardson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Richardson, Ms
Eren, Mr	Sandell, Ms
Foley, Mr	Scott, Mr
Garrett, Ms	Sheed, Ms
Graley, Ms	Spence, Ms
Green, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Halfpenny, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hibbins, Mr	Thomson, Ms
Howard, Mr	Ward, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Williams, Ms
Kairouz, Ms	Wynne, Mr
Kilkenny, Ms	

Noes, 36

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

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Keith Herring

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — I rise today to note the sad passing of Keith Herring, ASM, a community stalwart in my electorate of Yuroke. Keith will be fondly remembered for his leadership of the Craigieburn and District Ambulance Committee, which was formed in 1994 out of community frustration at the 40-minute waiting times for ambulance services. Keith was also a founding member of the local community emergency response team, known as CERT, the first of its kind in Victoria. CERT mobilised the community and continues to be an effective volunteer organisation that has saved countless lives. With a growing number of people moving to Craigieburn, Keith continued to fight for better emergency services, helping to successfully lobby for a local 24-hour ambulance service. His leadership and service were recognised in 2007 with a well-deserved Ambulance Service Medal.

Of course Keith's commitment to the community extended beyond emergency services. His contribution to the tennis club and the Craigieburn Festival helped what was once a small town on Melbourne's outskirts flourish into a growing urban centre. Keith's advocacy did not slow down in retirement when, as president of the Bridgewater Lake Retirement Estate Residents Committee, he campaigned for differential council rates for retirement villages. My thoughts and those of the community are with Keith's wife, Mary, an equally valued member of the community; their children and grandchildren; and the community of colleagues, neighbours and friends who will benefit from Keith's legacy for years to come.

Ryan Blunt

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I was honoured to attend a ceremony on 28 May to mark the presentation of a Queen's Scout Award to Ryan Blunt of the 2nd Mornington Sea Scouts. The Queen's Scout Award is the highest in the scouting movement. To qualify as a candidate Ryan has completed, to Queen's Scout standard, activities focused on service, leadership, the outdoors and expression. Ryan has proved himself to be a young man of substance and a future community leader. I am sure all members join me in congratulating Ryan on this achievement and wishing him well in his future endeavours.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr MORRIS — On another, less happy matter, I condemn the Andrews government, particularly the Premier, for its treatment of our Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers. Perhaps the Premier has forgotten Black Saturday and forgotten Ash Wednesday. In his reckless attempt to bulldoze through union control the Premier has demonstrated his contempt for CFA volunteers and for the critical role they play in protecting local communities, not just on big days but on every single day of the year.

Enterprise bargaining should be about pay and conditions. Enterprise bargaining should be about genuine consultation with all affected parties in the workplace, yet in this process 97 per cent of firefighters were excluded from participation. This is a claim endorsed by 3 per cent of the workforce — a claim calculated to drive the other 97 per cent out of the CFA.

Enterprise agreements should not be about ceding management control to the union, but that is exactly what this agreement would do and that is exactly what the veto clause would do. Union control can only lead to one outcome: the CFA will be unable to continue to function. My electorate has a very simple message for the Premier and his union mates: hands off the CFA.

National disability insurance scheme

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — Thank you, Acting Speaker Thomas, and I thank you for hosting me in your diverse and fantastic electorate last week for that wonderful creative industries seminar that you put together for so many people in your wonderful electorate.

I rise today with my disabilities ministerial hat on with a view to using this as an opportunity to follow up on some of the issues that have been brought to our attention as we are now just days away from the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme and the opportunities that will bring for so many people with disability right across our states. Let us not miss the opportunity, this generational chance, to transform the lives of people with a disability, their families and their carers on the back of a more than tripling by all levels of government of funding for specialist disability services.

Of course it is not just about more of the same; it is about making sure that we end the waiting lists for access to services. It is about making sure that we completely recast around a choice and control model

the opportunity for people with disabilities to take control of their own life and for them to lead the ordinary life that all of us have a right to pursue. That is why it is so important that not just all members of this place but all members of other parliaments, particularly the commonwealth Parliament, support the full and funded rollout of the national disability insurance scheme.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — Over recent weeks I have had a large number of Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers — several current captains and ex-captains and a number with decades of service — saying they will walk away from the CFA should the current enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) be adopted. My electorate is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world, and our CFA brigades are the backbone of many of our small rural and regional communities. Here we are with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) saying things have been misinterpreted and that this is simply scaremongering. In response to that I ask: why is it that the CFA board with its high-level legal advice says this is not the case and that the EBA in its current form will remove decision-making powers?

We also have the Minister for Emergency Services saying this EBA is unfair to volunteers. It is of grave concern when the Labor minister herself says that she has major concerns with the deal and that she supports the CFA but is overruled by the Premier. She is saying the threat is real, as are the CFA, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and CFA members. They are all saying this threat is real, because it is real. To the volunteers from brigades that have contacted me from Glenaladale, Mallacoota, Bemm River, Lakes Entrance, Maffra, Paynesville, Heyfield, Sarsfield, Woodglen, Bairnsdale and Hillside I say that we will fight to ensure they maintain their independence. Members opposite need to forget about the payback to the UFU members for handing out how-to-vote cards in the marginal seats. Give them a pay rise, but keep your hands off the CFA.

National disability insurance scheme

Mr T. BULL — Just in relation to the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme, I would also encourage the minister to hold an appropriate number of information sessions.

Youth homelessness

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — Recently I met with two inspiring young people, Taylah and Steve. They are both 17, and they came to talk to me about youth homelessness — something they know a lot about. For family reasons both have been homeless this year, but incredibly both have kept themselves in year 12. Education is something they feel strongly about. They both believe in the value of education and the need to stay connected with their school communities and peer support groups.

Their concern is that schools may lack knowledge about youth homelessness, housing issues and options and available and appropriate support services for students whose family situation has broken down. They would like to see more education for schools around these issues, and they want a greater focus by government on youth homelessness, in particular the very real and pressing need for young people to be able to stay close to their communities, schools and, where possible, their families when they have to leave home and to be properly supported to stay at school.

Since leaving home Steve has found a unit to rent close to school and works part time to support himself through year 12. Taylah has been in emergency accommodation which is a long way from her school and with poor public transport. This has made things difficult, but she has persevered and travels to school each day. Taylah is hopeful of moving home soon. Taylah and Steve are two of the most resilient, determined and responsible people I know. I want to thank them for sharing their stories with me and for opening my eyes to youth homelessness and the need for us to do much more work to support our wonderful young people like Taylah and Steve.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am outraged by the decision of the Fair Work Commission to side with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) against the Country Fire Authority (CFA), which not only will diminish the power and influence of the CFA but will cause further increases in the fire services levy to pay for the militant union's demands. It beggars belief that the commissioner, a known union man, failed to hear from the CFA volunteers before making such a game-changing decision.

I had the privilege of working closely with CFA volunteers through the experience of Black Saturday back in 2009. Without our CFA crews the devastation

would have been far worse. To give one example, the fire was spotted kilometres ahead, and a fire started close to a caravan park along the Warburton Highway. Gruyere CFA jumped immediately into action, roping in local farmers to help with tractors and bulldozers. Had the CFA waited for permission to act from the chain of command in the city, the fire most probably would have jumped Warburton Highway, gone through into Lilydale and then up into the Dandenongs.

Many in my community have been dedicated volunteer firefighters with the CFA for a lot longer than those who are career fighters with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. Warren Davis has spent 40 years at Lilydale; Don Bigham, 55 years at Gruyere; and Peter Burgi, 55 years at Gruyere. There are many, many more with long service. If anyone should understand this, it should be the member for Monbulk, who has hung the CFA out to dry yet is always on hand for an opening of a CFA station. The Liberals and Nationals will continue to stand by the CFA and fight the decision while infighting continues in the distracted Labor Party.

Broadmeadows

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — Despite his election slogan Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is refusing to designate one of Australia's most vulnerable areas an enterprise zone for jobs and growth. The failure highlights a perilous flaw in Australia's political system: that even when critical concerns, including national security, are at risk, the Liberal Party wilfully neglects blue-collar communities. My call is for a contemporary version of an enterprise zone providing tax incentives, the fast-tracking of infrastructure, high-speed broadband, innovation and other initiatives to complement the Victorian government's strategy for economic development in order to trigger significant private sector investment.

Put bluntly, it is folly that the biggest infrastructure program in Australia's history, the rollout of the national broadband network, is not being harnessed to drive jobs and growth where it is needed most. An enterprise zone for Melbourne's north is critical because the convergence of coalition governments at a state and national level has left the region's capital, Broadmeadows, with unemployment equal to the rate in Greece and youth unemployment higher than 40 per cent while denying access to almost \$1 billion to the poorest community in Victoria at its most vulnerable time after Australian Security Intelligence Organisation identified it as a potential terrorist recruitment hotspot.

The coalition is sandbagging marginal seats for self-interest against the national interest. Melbourne's north

will soon match Adelaide's population, yet the coalition is promising \$50 billion for jobs in Adelaide while dudding Melbourne's north. The *Australian Financial Review* yesterday revealed that the coalition has added more than a billion dollars in microannouncements to sandbag marginal seats. Liberal candidate Sophie Mirabella was right: if you do not vote Liberal, you are punished or neglected. Such cynicism is dangerous.

Police resources

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — This statement condemns the Andrews Labor government for attempting to rewrite history and denigrate the previous coalition government's proud record on the resourcing of Victoria Police in contrast to Labor's appalling record to date on frontline police resourcing. The facts are that the coalition fully funded and delivered 1900 extra sworn police and 950 protective services officers (PSOs) between 2010 and 2014 — the single largest police recruitment program in Victoria Police history. The new Minister for Police was blatantly wrong when she deliberately made several misleading statements to this house last sitting week, including that the coalition did not fund one sworn police officer.

When the coalition came to government in December 2010 it found that Labor had left a legacy of a diabolical financial mess. The state's finances were technically in the red, the state budget in 2010 only being in surplus due to having been propped up by the commonwealth's stimulus grant program. The coalition also faced massive revenue writedowns. In 2010 extra police were promised, but these police were only able to be funded and delivered due to the good economic management and budgetary discipline of the Baillieu and Napthine Liberal-Nationals governments. Without the hard budgetary decisions and the \$1.6 billion savings program, the promise of extra police would have never been delivered. I reiterate the coalition is very proud of its record of supporting Victoria Police.

Gisborne Secondary College

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — Last Friday year 8 students from Gisborne Secondary College staged a 5-kilometre fun run in Gisborne to raise awareness of family violence in our community. Congratulations to Remi Gibson, Remi McKeown, Dominic Minargo, Phillip Cornish, Shaun Patient and Reece Taylor from Gisborne Secondary College for their fantastic idea. The run took place at Dixon Field and was attended by 500 people from across the school and the broader community. Our Watch ambassador, Charlie Pickering, also appeared at the run and spoke to students at a school assembly earlier in the morning. I am so inspired

by our young people taking on important causes in our community, and this event is a credit to the maturity and leadership of these six Gisborne Secondary College students and the valuable impact that the government's respectful relationships curriculum is having in schools across the state.

Emergency services blood donation challenge

Ms THOMAS — On Wednesday, June 1, I had the honour of joining with the representatives from our fire services, the State Emergency Service, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria to launch the 2016 emergency services blood donation challenge. I was happy to roll up my sleeve and make a donation, knowing 400 millilitres from me can save up to three lives. Winter generally sees a drop-off in donors; however, the demand for blood does not stop. The Australian Red Cross Blood Service needs around 25 000 blood donations every single week in Australia. So my challenge today is to each and every one of you in this place: become a donor this week and head down during lunchtime. Not only will you be rewarded knowing you are doing the right thing, you will also get a nice cup of tea and the best biscuit ever.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — The saga continues for Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers across Victoria and in the Morwell electorate. Many local CFA volunteers took time on Sunday to protest on the steps of Parliament against the Premier's attempt to railroad Victoria's 60 000 CFA volunteers. As has been said many times, there is no disagreement on the fact that career firefighters deserve fair pay and conditions. There is, however, a major disagreement between a couple of people. They of course are the Minister for Emergency Services and the Premier. On the one hand we have the minister on the public record, as per the *Herald Sun* on 18 May, saying:

I certainly have grave concerns around the veto, around seven on the fire ground. I've made that very clear and I do support the CFA in those matters.

Yet the Premier contests that. He says there is no veto of powers and that CFA volunteers have nothing to worry about. The Premier should say that to the CFA, including its CEO, the board and 60 000 volunteers who have stood up and rallied against his desire to sign this agreement, an agreement that volunteers state would be to the detriment of the CFA organisation. Indeed one of our local CFA volunteers who attended the rally last Sunday said on Channel Seven news:

I believe people will walk out the door and they won't come back, and we need everyone we can get.

That is a pretty strong statement and reflects the sentiment expressed by many volunteers. I congratulate the CFA volunteers for standing up and speaking out on such important matters, because without their current service and commitment our regional communities will suffer from a substantial increase in risk when future fires occur.

President Mohamed Abdelaziz

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I pay my respects to Mohamed Abdelaziz, the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic President, who passed away on 31 May 2016. As one of the founders of the republic's independence movement, he fought against the Spanish and then Moroccan invaders. In 1982 he was elected President of the Sahrawi republic and directed more of his attention towards building the state-in-exile of the refugee camps. After 1991 he moved towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict through diplomacy.

The President developed the institutions of a modern democratic state with the participation of all adults living in the camps. Everyone took responsibility for the community in one of four main areas: education, food, health, and justice and social issues. Visiting British volunteers were fascinated to see a society without money, largely without cars and with an education system resulting in a 90 per cent literacy rate — the highest in Africa. Women take part in all levels of the society including being ministers and diplomatic representatives.

The President guided his people through many difficult situations over the past 40 years and held the population together and focused on achieving their inalienable right to self-determination. In this he has been helped by their fundamental sense of justice, their patience and love of peace. The President was determined to achieve justice for his people through international law and diplomacy, which contrasts starkly with the violence witnessed in other conflicts in the region. His vision of an independent Western Sahara lives on and it must now be realised by a new generation. Vale, President Mohamed Abdelaziz. Your people will miss you.

Youth Education Support

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I recently had the pleasure of attending the Youth Education Support Inc. (YES) annual awards night. It was a great night to celebrate the work being undertaken by the team at YES and to hear from individuals and organisations who have benefited from this work. I congratulate the

driving force behind YES, Julia Mosley, together with the board members and all the other volunteers, who work so hard to help members of our community. The opening of the second opportunity shop in Forest Hill has enabled the work of YES to expand even further. I particularly thank all those involved in giving their time and serving in both of the opportunity shops as well as those who help in various ways behind the scenes.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr ANGUS — Today's *Herald Sun* editorial headed 'Daniel Andrews' dirty deal exposed' perfectly sums up the current Country Fire Authority (CFA) United Firefighters Union dispute. It states in part that the Premier's approach to this dispute has:

... thrown into question his own capacity to lead the state.

It also states that the deal:

... exposed that he was willing to be politically bought.

And that:

... he autocratically insisted on his own militant union way or the highway.

This is no way for a Premier to be treating the countless CFA volunteers who daily give their time and risk their lives to protect their community. I am proud to stand with and support the CFA volunteers as a member of the coalition team. On behalf of my community in the Forest Hill electorate I thank the CFA volunteers for the tireless and courageous work they do for our state.

Glen Waverley Toastmasters

Mr ANGUS — I was pleased to recently attend the Glen Waverley Toastmasters 40th anniversary celebration evening. Toastmasters is an international not-for-profit organisation that is focused on communication and leadership development. It was a great night in which we heard from some of the original founding members of the club about the history of the club and some of their early memories of the club. It was also great to hear from current members and guests during various impromptu speeches that were given. I congratulate the current president, Alan To, together with all the current and former members who have worked together to support the club over the years. Membership provides a great opportunity for any individual to gain confidence in and learn the skills of public speaking.

Bendigo women's volleyball tournament

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I was thrilled to join with the City of Greater Bendigo mayor Rod Fyffe last week in welcoming players from the four teams that competed in the women's world grand prix volleyball tournament in Bendigo on 3 to 5 June at Bendigo Stadium. The Volleyroos played a round robin against Croatia, Columbia and Cuba. This involved six matches played over three days. All matches were broadcast on Fox Sports Australia, live streamed and packaged for worldwide distribution. This was a fantastic event for Bendigo to host, and it proved once again that Bendigo has a great reputation for hosting international events such as this at facilities that are world class. I was especially pleased to see women's elite sport front and centre, and the interest shown in the event was enormous.

It was particularly exciting to have Bendigo's own Volleyroos champion Karley Hynes home for the tournament. I congratulate Volleyball Australia, Volleyball Victoria and the Bendigo Volleyball Association for their efforts in bringing the event to Bendigo and for delivering a number of sport and community development activities over the course of the three-day event. The Andrews government provided \$25 000 from the Significant Sporting Events program to Volleyball Australia to support the grand prix, with an additional \$35 000 in in-kind support from the City of Greater Bendigo. Sadly, the Volleyroos were unsuccessful, with Croatia the overall winners. However, the crowds that turned out to support the players was evidence of how popular this sport is and how it is growing in reputation.

To cap off this great event there was an announcement last week by the Minister for Sport that Bendigo will host the Kookaburras and Hockeyroos hockey teams in a two-test series against India in November at our world-class Bendigo hockey complex.

Neighbourhood Watch volunteers

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — Today in Parliament I recognise all Neighbourhood Watch volunteers in MON 041 and 042 for their tremendous service to improving public safety. I was pleased to be able to join members of those Neighbourhood Watch areas to share some morning tea and raise funds for cancer research. Thank you to Judith Clancy, Joan Bungar and other volunteers who helped organise this worthy event.

Essex Heights Primary School

Mr GIDLEY — I rise in the Parliament to congratulate Essex Heights Primary School on successfully applying to be part of the Amateur Radio on the International Space Station program, the ARISS program, on Friday, 20 May. Astronaut Jeff Williams KD5TVQ answered 22 questions from 11 students. I congratulate the principal, Andrew Crosett, the school staff, the school council members and the parents on being part of this historic occasion.

Red tape review

Mr GIDLEY — Last sitting week the Auditor-General outlined major problems with the state's red tape review framework following the abolition of the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC). These problems are increasing costs for Victorian households and businesses. Major problems identified by the Auditor-General include the removal of independent scrutiny and verification of government red tape initiatives in excess of \$2 million, the absence of an appropriate replacement measure that can provide a satisfactory assurance of the Department of Treasury and Finance assertions on estimated costs savings resulting from changes in red tape and inadequate consultation with those affected by red tape programs.

The Auditor-General's report confirms the worst fears of those who argued against abolishing an independent agency to review the government's red tape initiatives, including the founding chairman of VCEC and the Victorian Liberal-Nationals. Unfortunately, Victorians are paying and will continue to pay the price for more red tape as a result of this decision.

Sandringham Hospital

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — Recently I had the privilege to welcome the Victorian Minister for Health to the Sandringham Hospital, alongside Clare O'Neil, the federal member for Hotham, and the state member for Bentleigh. Sandringham Hospital is an important hospital in our local community, particularly its emergency department, which services 33 000 residents each and every year out of a total number of patients going through the hospital of 41 000. Amazingly it supports the birth of around 1600 babies each year, and for me, nine weeks away from my own little one being born, I was very clucky at Sandringham Hospital during the visit.

But there was an important thing that we were there to discuss, and that was some of the federal cuts to health that are affecting our hospital and emergency services.

We were there to talk about the state Labor government's investment in elective surgery and its overall investment in public health, while at the same time we see from the Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health, Susan Ley, a cut in funding to health services. This is a vital hospital in our local community catering for over 30 per cent of City of Kingston residents, yet the federal government is trying to take \$173 million away for the previous financial year — money that has already been spent. According to my calendar there are about 20 days to go, and the hospital is still trying to claw back money from this financial year. We will stand up for Sandringham Hospital.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — I was pleased to join the thousands of dedicated volunteers who at short notice on Sunday changed their plans and made the long trip to Melbourne to rally here at Parliament in support of volunteerism and the Country Fire Authority (CFA). The over 70 brigades across the Polwarth electorate know only too well how much their community relies on them. For decades committed families and supporters of local CFA brigades have fundraised, had working bees, attended training and gone that extra mile so that should a fire, accident or disaster strike in their community they will be ready to put their lives on the line to keep people and property safe. The government's stalling on the current union-focused enterprise bargaining agreement is an insult to the thousands of volunteers right across Polwarth. People and communities will not be fooled. They know that this government is desperately trying to hide this issue until after the federal election. But again on Friday in Warrnambool, CFA communities will assemble to express their concerns at the undermining of a century-old tradition of volunteering and community goodwill.

Colac fitness centre

Mr RIORDAN — Last week I joined many Colac user groups and Colac Secondary College to urge the Colac Otway Shire Council to reveal its plans to get the long-awaited Bluewater Fitness Centre open. For over three years Colac Secondary College has had no undercover space for assemblies or sport, and the Colac Basketball Association has had no venue in its home town. For 12 months the facility has been completed but unopened, being mired in a contractual dispute with builders. Members of the community are sick of waiting, and they need the shire to give the community some certainty.

Community Crime Prevention Program

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — In May last year the then Minister for Police, the member for Williamstown, requested that I do a review of the government's Community Crime Prevention Program in my capacity as Parliamentary Secretary for Justice. During the course of my review I analysed local, national and international evidence on best practice in community crime prevention. I concluded that there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of targeting social disadvantage as one of the causal factors of crime. All the research I read and evidence I saw confirmed that hotspots of disadvantage within Victoria can be linked to offending behaviour.

During the course of my review I found that there is an increasing emphasis on the importance of targeting social disadvantage as one of the causal factors. A recent report from Jesuit Social Services entitled *Dropping off the Edge 2015 — Persistent Communal Disadvantage in Australia* and the report of the Victorian Ombudsman entitled *Investigation into the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners in Victoria* confirmed that hotspots of disadvantage within Victoria can be linked to offending behaviour.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Minister Noonan for his leadership and advocacy for the review into crime prevention. I also thank Julianne Brennan, the director of the Community Crime Prevention Program, as well as the then assistant director, Sue Clout, and Claire Tennent, the senior policy adviser and programs adviser in the Department of Justice and Regulation, for all the work they have done and all of the assistance provided to me during the course of this review.

I am very pleased that the last state budget delivered by the Andrews government committed \$19.4 million to targeting areas of social disadvantage — the biggest investment to date that the government has put into targeting crime prevention. From the minister down, we are all very proud of this. The government has backed this up with the dollars needed to make the investment that we require, targeting areas of disadvantage.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — Much of my electorate of South-West Coast is protected by volunteer firefighters. In fact district 5, which takes in Warrnambool, Port Fairy and up to Hamilton, has 94 brigades and around 4000 volunteers — the largest number of volunteers in any Country Fire Authority

(CFA) district in the state. But these volunteers are angry that their government is prepared to sell them out and hand control of the CFA to the United Firefighters Union. I have been fighting for volunteers on this issue since coming into this role six months ago because that is how important this is to our communities. This Friday volunteers across the south-west will rally in Warrnambool against the CFA losing control. I will be standing alongside them, telling the government to keep its hands off this proud volunteer organisation.

South-West Coast electorate roads

Ms BRITNELL — The condition of roads across my electorate continues to be a major concern for residents. With winter now upon us, it is feared roads will fall further into disrepair. The people who drive on these roads have been insulted by the government, which, rather than spending money fixing the cracked, distressed and potholed surfaces, will spend money putting up signs and lowering speed limits. It will do nothing to fix the safety issues that are already there. Lowering speed limits will just slow regional productivity down, and it treats country people with contempt and disrespect. I urge the state to match the federal money and start fixing the south-west's roads and filling our potholes.

Sunbury electorate roads

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — Thanks to the hard work and great advocacy of locals, last week I was able to announce that the Andrews Labor government will fix the Gap Road and Horne Street intersection. I joined the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, the federal member for McEwen and VicRoads to announce the \$6.4 million project.

The Andrews Labor government was elected to get on and deliver the projects Victoria so desperately needed after four wasted years under the Liberals. Under the project the existing roundabout will become a fully signalised intersection. The upgrade will include dedicated turning lanes from all directions, signalised pedestrian crossings and bicycle lanes on all approaches. Footpaths surrounding the intersection will also be connected to the new intersection, allowing local residents to safely access nearby shops, schools and public transport. This is outstanding news that could only be delivered by a Labor government. Incredibly, though, the Liberals have already been out trying to claim credit for it, despite ignoring the problem for four years and abandoning our 2010 election commitment to fix the intersection.

I want to thank the minister for roads and his hardworking staff as well as VicRoads for addressing this matter and getting it done for Sunbury.

Sunbury Community Health Centre

Mr J. BULL — In other great news for Sunbury, I joined the federal leader of the opposition and Rob Mitchell in the federal electorate of McEwen on Saturday at Sunbury Community Health Centre to announce that a Shorten Labor government will establish a child health hub in Sunbury. The \$2 million commitment would see paediatric, audiology, speech therapy, physiotherapy and more at Sunbury Community Health. Medicare was created by Labor, ensuring that everyone has access to affordable, high-quality health care. This is not just a Labor value but an Australian value. These services are vital for our growing community. Let us hope that on 2 July this can be delivered with the election of a Shorten Labor government.

Doreen Seniors Club Biggest Morning Tea

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to put on the record my support and heartfelt congratulations to the Doreen Seniors Club and its amazing work fundraising for the Biggest Morning Tea event this week, raising significant money for the Cancer Council. I had the privilege of joining these fabulous people and my federal parliamentary colleague Rob Mitchell at the Bridge Inn Hotel. It certainly was a big, big morning tea with over 300 people in attendance, and it seems that this group just gets bigger and bigger each year.

It was wonderful to catch up with so many friends old and, I dare say, some new after this event. In particular I think it shows the way that people communicate in this day and age. Many people said they were my Facebook friends and they felt that we knew each other, but we actually had not met face to face, so it was really delightful.

I am advised by the club that today members are all a bit tired but delighted with their efforts. The club is still counting the funds but can report at this stage that the funds raised will be well over \$10 000. It is always difficult ground to single out supporters when there were so many, but I am advised every trader in the Laurimar shopping strip and almost all those in Mernda donated to the event and the cause. The Bridge Inn has been a wonderful host. I want to put on the record the great work of Danni Trebiano, the club secretary, and all the many others who put in great efforts for this event. I look forward to next year.

BUDGET PAPERS 2016–17

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I move:

That this house takes note of the budget papers 2016–17.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today to inform the house of the many, many outstanding initiatives in this year's budget which really is, as the Treasurer has so correctly described it, getting the job done. I want to particularly reflect on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016 in terms of its building on the strong foundations that the Andrews Labor government built in its first budget last year. In doing so I will perhaps start by pointing to some of the portfolio initiatives that I have had the pleasure of supporting through the budget process and then reflecting ever so briefly on what it means for the electorate of Albert Park.

The 2016 budget will, in terms of how we go about building a better, fairer and more sustainable Victoria, have many applications when it comes to my portfolio responsibilities. I will perhaps start in the area of mental health, an area of policy that was so harshly dealt with under the former government. Indeed with regard to the two most recent federal budgets it was shamefully ignored and indeed hampered — although, to give credit where it is due, the promise of the public health networks, should they be actually funded, does give us some prospect for a closer alignment of state and commonwealth partnerships particularly in the area of community mental health work. I look forward to that prospect, whoever is returned to the federal government benches after the soon-to-occur election.

But in terms of what this budget means for mental health in Victoria, let us reflect that there is now an additional \$356 million being injected into our mental health system, including a historic \$27.5 million investment in suicide prevention strategies. That investment in particular will allow, if ever so briefly, for trials of intensive, community-based support for people who have attempted suicide and communities impacted by suicide incidents in a number of locations across our state. They have been selected based on data and on expert advice. There will also be local community approaches to prevent suicides across a further six local government areas. These trials will support communities to implement strategies in everything from workforce training, identification and school-based support to mental health literacy and community engagement strategies to make sure that communities, as that first port of call, are able to pursue mental health responses where it counts — early and locally.

We need to reflect that with over 650 deaths in Victoria last year that were identified as suicides and with that sadly increasing as a proportion of our population's deaths and sadly being the leading cause of death for young men in particular these are challenges that apply to all of our communities, and I know that all of our communities are up for this challenge. Over and above those particular targeted areas, the learnings from these programs through our 10-year mental health plan, our 10-year mental health strategy and the implementation expert task force chaired by the honourable member for Oakleigh will be particular opportunities for us to share and to transform those learnings right across our state.

In addition to that, in the mental health area there will be funding packages for a series of new services and organisational capacity and capital to build our mental health services around the state. There is the delivery of an election commitment of a further \$59 million to rebuild Orygen's youth mental health clinical and research facility in Parkville, led by a range of distinguished academics and practitioners out there. Through a partnership with some aspects of headspace there will be a further \$14.6 million to establish a new early-in-life mental health service in conjunction with Monash Medical Centre for a whole-of-state facility. I am particularly pleased to see the second women's prevention and recovery service as that step-up, step-down intermediary place between intensive and community mental health services in our northern suburbs, a women's only prevention and recovery care service.

Finally, there will be \$7.3 million for new statewide child and family mental health intensive treatment centres. We are building more mental health services and funding more mental health services and mental health beds so Victorians have better access to the mental health support, services and treatment that they need where they need them. We are confident that this funding will be a significant contributor to creating a healthier, fairer and more inclusive society. It is the next important step in our promise to deliver on our 10-year mental health plan.

The budget also contains a number of initiatives to assist Victorians living with disability in what of course will be a historic year as the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) starts to roll out across our state, starting in the north-east of Melbourne in a few short weeks. In addition to the 2013 commitments inherited from the former government, which will see over \$2.5 billion in recurrent income contributed to the NDIS in partnership with the commonwealth, we will see \$45.3 million over the next four years to fund 398 packages for school leavers with a disability to

make sure that they do not fall through the cracks in the transition to the NDIS. We have found from experience that, particularly as young people leave disability support that they might have in families or in school, the prospect of them falling through the cracks after leaving school is very real. We are confident that some of the most needy students with disabilities, as they transition away from school, will be supported by this program.

There is also \$61.9 million for the first stage of the NDIS rollout, including, I might say, support for the closure of Colanda House residential services outside of Colac, which remains Victoria's last significant disability institution, and an additional investment in supported accommodation to assist those people in that service to transition into their community. I take this opportunity to thank the staff and the community of Colac for their support, but I think, as they themselves would be prepared to admit, that, in the modern world and in a world that seeks to make sure people with a disability have the opportunity to live that goal of an ordinary life, the model of Colanda residential services is one that no longer fits. We will work with those workers, with those families and, most importantly, with those people with a disability to make sure that they have the opportunity of that ordinary life in the community.

There is also \$3.3 million to support the rollout of the 2017–2020 state disability plan, which of course is a legislative obligation on us. It includes greater civic participation, a much stronger advocacy sector and, in an important program, the substantial improvement of the changing rooms for people with disability through the Changing Places program. In that regard, amongst a range of other highlights, the disability reform program I am sure will not just be a major support for the 105 000 people who will have access over the next three years to the NDIS but for the more than 1 million people who will be impacted through families, carers and supporters of those people as the NDIS rolls out.

There is also, in other aspects of my portfolio responsibilities, new investment in facilities and services for those vulnerable Victorians in housing crisis and housing stress. Most particularly there is the \$152 million announced by the Premier to respond to the housing blitz called for in the family violence royal commission final report to assist women and children who are escaping family violence. That work is well underway with the housing implementation task force from the family violence royal commission. It is important work, it has already started and it is already seeing a number of prospects of that rollout in the

market, and I am hopeful of some very positive announcements in the very near future on that.

But of course that is not all. There is the delivery on the election commitment of \$10 million for a number of rooming house upgrades. There is \$500 000 for the Homes for Homes program and the programs for the now happy 20th birthday for many of the homeless groups that work around our community. There is \$4.5 million to assist young people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness to continue training and education opportunities through a range of formats, most particularly through the youth foyer programs, which quite rightly have a focus on education and training and a secondary focus as places for housing crisis.

We are building, literally, on the good start that we made when it comes to ending the sell-off of public sector aged-care facilities that we inherited from our predecessors; we are delivering on our election commitment to halt that. That is why I was pleased last week to go to Kew to, along with St Vincent's Hospital, announce the \$57.6 million public aged-care facility that will be built there. This facility will be a combination of aged-care and psychosocial aged-care beds. This comes on top of the \$29 million for home and community care services for some of our most frail and vulnerable community members — a new investment in this community — along with the investment made by my friend the Minister for Health in contestable regional and rural funds for similar works.

No-one can doubt that this is a government that is committed to the equality portfolio. That is why in this budget there were announcements that were particularly important for a number of long-neglected areas. There is a \$4 million grants program to strengthen the sustainability of LGBTI community organisations and support LGBTI community leaders who want to make sure that all Victorians live free from discrimination and stigma. There is \$2.5 million for initiatives that will combat homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, with a strong focus on regional and rural programs. This will be led by the commissioner for gender and sexuality and will provide LGBTI community members living outside of Melbourne with better access to services.

Coming on top of the suitable funding last year of the Royal Children's Hospital gender dysphoria program, there is now \$6.4 million to make sure that the Monash Health gender dysphoria program, which really acts as a de facto national centre, can deal with similar demand pressures in our adult population when it comes to trans Victorians and trans Australians. There is \$1.15 million

for the further expansion of the Healthy Equal Youth grants, which will provide positive mental health programs and the assertion of a positive framework for young people in the LGBTI community of Victoria.

To finish up in this particular area, most particularly there is the \$15 million contribution towards Australia's first pride centre, which will showcase the rich variety of LGBTI and community organisations, co-locate LGBTI health and support services, and feature community spaces to ensure a safe and supportive environment for LGBTI Victorians to meet and socialise. In that regard I am very pleased to support those aspects of the budget.

Finally, in terms of the creative industries portfolio, the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016 will provide a record \$152 million to deliver greater support to Victoria's creative and cultural sector. At its heart is the \$115 million Creative State package — our first ever creative industries strategy and indeed our first cultural and arts policy for some 11 years. Highlights in this year's budget include \$33.7 million to increase participation and access, particularly for small, medium and individual organisations — not just locally but to grow international engagement; a substantial contribution towards a Bendigo cultural and creative industries hub; a \$23 million expansion to the state's cultural collections storage, including a new facility in Ballarat; and a \$50 million boost for the State Library of Victoria, the Arts Centre Melbourne and the Melbourne Recital Centre to ensure that they can continue their good work.

In the allotted time available to me these are but brief snapshots of the many initiatives contained in this year's budget that will make a real difference to the lives of many Victorians in the portfolio responsibilities that I have. In the remaining moments available to me I note that when it comes to education the investment in the electoral district of Albert Park is unprecedented. There is now more building of school projects in my electorate than there has been since the 1880s. We are now seeing schools popping up out of the ground from one end of my electorate to the other, which puts the former government's commitment in this area to shame.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is a great privilege, as it always is, to stand in this place to represent the great people of Lowan and to provide my response to the take-note motion in regard to the 2016–17 budget papers.

We saw a generous title given to the budget papers this year, which is 'Getting the job done'. Certainly after

hearing what was in the budget the people of my electorate felt as if perhaps the job was being done on them. They raised some interesting secondary titles with me that should perhaps go underneath ‘Getting the job done’. Perhaps it should be ‘Getting the job done by paying back our union mates’. That is certainly something that we are hearing loud and clear through the enterprise bargaining negotiations with the Country Fire Authority (CFA). It is all about paying back the unions for handing out how-to-vote cards because of the sheer terror of the federal Labor Party that if these people work against it, it could lose the election. Labor will lose seats over this because it has let down our 60 000 CFA volunteers.

I heard a comment in the chamber today deriding somebody who had a 60-year service medal, saying they should give it to somebody else who deserves it. That was absolutely appalling. I will stand by every single CFA volunteer, particularly those who have CFA service medals and who have spent 60 years of their lives — they are probably at least in their 70s, if not their 80s, by now — putting their time, effort and energies into protecting our people by getting up in the middle of the night and being the first people on the firegrounds and going to car accidents involving family members and perhaps people they know. These people are absolutely the salt of the earth and have made an enormous contribution — —

Ms Edwards — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, this is a budget reply. I ask you to bring the member back to addressing the budget reply.

Mr T. Bull — On the point of order, Speaker, the budget reply speeches that have already gone on the record in this Parliament have been very wideranging and have covered a number of areas. Funding of a particular agency or organisation is very, very pertinent to the budget papers. I ask you to allow the current speaker the same scope that others have been afforded in this debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! There is no point of order, but I remind the member to stay with the matter before us.

Ms KEALY — Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I do hope there is a sensible resolution to this, because if we are looking at the budget estimates to see how much this agreement may cost in its current format — and let us remember this is a format that up until yesterday the Premier supported in full — then we need to look at the costings. We know who is going to pay for that; it will be our people, who will pay through the fire services property levy. It is simply not good

enough that we have one person, the Premier, doing a payback to his union mates at the cost of everyday taxpayers who will have to put their hands in their pockets after this shady deal.

Another title I have heard is, ‘Getting the job done by doing over country Victoria’. If we look through the different elements of this budget, whether it is roads, public transport, education, health, the agriculture sector or even regional tourism, there is no doubt that there are ongoing cuts. For this Labor government to consider that it has some growth funding in this year’s budget is absolute nonsense. Government members need to have a good look through their budget figures or perhaps get some education to understand how to read a profit and loss statement and how to read their own papers. Maybe they can get a briefing themselves.

I will go through some figures today which I think are absolutely terrible and truly show that a vote for any Labor MP is a vote to kill country Victoria. Let us firstly go through the roads budget. In 2014, the budget last delivered by the coalition government, the road asset management budget was \$486.4 million. In this budget we have seen a cut of \$46 million. Last year we saw a 17 per cent cut to this budget line; this year we have seen a 10 per cent cut. It is not feasible that this continue. It is absolutely appalling that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety says he has growth funding. I am sorry, but the minister cannot read his own papers, or he is absolutely deceiving every single country Victorian, because he has continued to cut the road asset management budget. We can see that through the condition of our country roads.

It was only yesterday that I put a question up on Facebook asking people to nominate the worst road in the Lowan electorate. I was absolutely blown away by the sheer number of comments that came through nominating roads. I have driven on all these roads; I know that they are in terrible condition. Yet again I will put the invitation out there to the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety: ‘Get out of Melbourne and come and drive on our roads, see what they are like and fix them up’.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms KEALY — I noticed that there were some comments from the other side of the chamber saying we were in government for four years. Guess what? Labor has been in government for 13 of the last 17 years, and its members could not expect us to fix up their mess in those four years, particularly when they are now making cuts.

Imagine what is going to happen in another couple of years. What are we going to come to in 2018 in regard to the condition of our roads? They will be even more dangerous. We will have more people killed. We will have people going to great expense to fix their vehicles. Further to that, it will increase the cost of freight. Regional economies rely on agriculture and the moving of freight around the place. We do not have an extensive train network; we rely on our roads to truck items around. When it takes longer to ship something from one place to another, when there is extra cost to take into account, then of course the cost of freight goes up.

Who pays for that? It is rarely the end user; it is usually the trucking company that has to pick it up. Families are risking their lives by going to the footy on a Saturday, and people are taking extra time to get to and from work, which means they have less time to spend with their families. They are the people that are paying the price for the government's continual budget cuts. I cannot see how government members can possibly say that this is a good thing or that it is making improvements. The government is an absolute disgrace when it comes to country roads.

How about we look at road operations and network improvements? That budget has gone from \$1.064 billion to just \$983 million this year — that is an \$80.1 million cut in one year alone. If you look at these two cuts — the cuts to the road asset management budget and to the road operations and network improvements budget — you see it is a \$127 million cut that Labor has delivered to country roads in just one year. I blame every single pothole and every single shoulder that is crumbling on the government. We see line markings fading. We now see speed limits being reduced. This is actually Labor's new strategy for how to deal with a diminishing roads budget in country Victoria. We have got the Towards Zero strategy, which might be called the Towards Zero Funding strategy, because we are seeing diminishing numbers coming through year after year. Perhaps it is Towards Zero Speed.

We now have a statement which is attributed to the Premier and to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety saying, 'We would prefer to review the speed limits on our country roads and to reduce the speed limits than inject the money that is needed to fix them up'. They want to spend more money on signs concreted into the ground for permanent speed limit reductions to reduce our travel speeds from 100 kilometres an hour down to 80 kilometres an hour, or maybe down to 60 kilometres an hour or 40 kilometres an hour. Who knows when it will stop? What we do know is that under Labor,

country Victoria is grinding to a halt. The fact that it has a single strategy that points that out and brings attention to it is absolutely astonishing.

I cannot believe the hide of Labor members in trying to sell this to country people. I do not know whether they think we are stupid and do not notice or perhaps that we cannot read the figures, but I can tell them that we can pick it up. It is very, very obvious; it is in black and white in the government's own pages. The fact that we have silence from the other side of the chamber probably indicates that they are ashamed of what is being delivered and that they are ashamed that not enough money is being put into our country roads. When we see another life lost, another accident, somebody falling off the road — more damage done — we know that this Labor government is to blame.

Of course we do not have the choice in Victoria as to whether we travel on our roads. I will just go through some of the roads just so I can outline them. We have the Wimmera Highway. Whether it is from Murtoa to Rupanyup, Horsham to Natimuk or Dooen to Murtoa, it is all in terrible condition. People are being bounced around; motorbike riders in particular are contacting my office. This is an extremely dangerous section of road. It needs to be fixed, and the only way VicRoads can fix it is by Labor delivering more money for the roads budget.

The Henty Highway, whether it is Dimboola to Warracknabeal, Horsham to Hamilton or Hamilton to Cavendish, desperately needs more money. The Glenelg Highway between Casterton and Coleraine and around the Streatham area is absolutely appalling. And of course there is the Portland-Casterton Road. It has been ripped up by logging trucks and is in an appalling state. It desperately needs to be fixed. No matter what happens — I have put in many requests — the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Premier refuse to come and look at it. They are ashamed because they know that their cuts to country roads budgets mean that these roads are falling apart.

We have an alternative. We can of course go out and have a look at the public transport review and see what alternatives are out there for families who do not want to travel on our roads. All we saw in this review was an upgrade of a couple of bus stops, one in Horsham and one in Hamilton. There is no commentary in the review at all about returning passenger rail to these areas. There is no upgrade of the line between Ararat and Ballarat. The standardisation of that rail line is essential. There are absolutely no new bus services, and we desperately need to have a connection between Horsham and Hamilton. In fact no services are going to

be increased under the Andrews Labor government. The government is cutting our roads budget so that we cannot get anywhere. It is not doing anything in regard to improving public transport. Basically country Victoria is just being let go. Looking again at the title for the budget 'Getting It Done'. The government is doing that by doing over country Victoria. I cannot think of a better title for this budget.

Let us go through the other elements of how this government is pulling apart country Victoria. The regional development budget has been cut. In the last year of the coalition government it was \$203 million. That has been cut to \$180 million, about a 25 per cent cut to that budget. Looking at the agriculture budget, that has been cut from \$376 million to \$352 million by this Labor government. That is a \$24 million cut.

Then there is trade, which is essential for business. We need to be able to export our products overseas to make sure we continue to be not the food bowl to Asia but the delicatessen to Asia. We need to be able to access those international markets. What is Labor doing about it? It has cut the budget allocation that the coalition set in 2014, the actual expenditure, from \$35 million to \$22 million this year, a cut of 40 per cent. That leaves our sector to flounder. It is appalling that this government is just continuing, no matter what section you look at, to make cut after cut after cut.

When it comes to regional tourism we hear Labor skiting about the \$100 million regional tourism fund. Over \$50 million of that has already been spent on the penguins. We would be able to afford a three-bedroom house for every single penguin living down there for the money that has been put in. Why would this government not put some money into building on the Grampians Peaks Trail? Why would there not at least be funding for a wayfinding system so that our tourists can find where walks start? Why can we not put some money into the top end of the Grampians so that there is a linkage between Wartook and the start of the Grampians Peaks Trail? Why has the government not provided funding for the link between Mount Sturgeon and Dunkeld so that Dunkeld can get the full benefit of the financial opportunities arising out of the Grampians Peaks Trail?

This Labor government does not understand. It wants to support daytrippers out of Melbourne rather than support the economy in rural and regional Victoria and ensure that we get people to come out of Melbourne, stay in the country and spend their dollars locally, making sure that we get economic growth out of Melbourne. It is essential that we see that.

We have seen some funding come through, which is fantastic. We saw some funding for Warracknabeal Secondary College and the Warracknabeal Special Development School, a total of \$6 million. The coalition committed \$8 million before the last election, but unfortunately Labor again got it a little bit wrong. It has given money to the secondary college for redevelopment of its site, but the college does not actually want to redevelop its site, it wants to develop the Warracknabeal education precinct. It has not been given the flexibility to move and be co-located with the primary school. The Labor government has completely ignored the department's advice and advice from the local community. Of course there is also the special development school. The special development school has been given \$2 million for redevelopment, but it is on private land so it cannot spend the money. It is ridiculous that the government thinks it got this right when it managed to stuff it up.

Dimboola Memorial Secondary College desperately needs an upgrade, but there has not been a dollar from this Labor government. The coalition would have contributed \$1.2 million. The school needs funding sooner rather than later. The Rasmussen Road campus of Horsham Primary School desperately needs funding for an upgrade. I went through the school this week and it is absolutely terrible; it desperately needs to see some money come through. As for Baimbridge College, there is another planning study rather than the money we contributed prior to the election.

It does not matter what it is when it comes to this Labor government. It does not matter whether you are looking at roads and public transport and it does not matter whether you are looking at education, health, agriculture or regional tourism — things that will benefit our local economy — this Labor government ignores country Victoria. We see over and over again examples that the further you live from Melbourne the less Labor cares for you. Everyone who is voting in the upcoming federal election expects the same from this government's federal counterparts. A vote for Labor is a vote to kill off country Victoria. This is a Labor government that continues to fail country Victoria. We need to make sure this government fails soon.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I cannot stand here without responding to the member for Lowan, but first I would like to point out that I am very pleased to make a contribution to the motion to take note of the budget papers for 2016–17. Those on this side of the house have not forgotten who cut \$66 million from the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) budgets, and it is outrageous, disgraceful and absolutely hypocritical that suddenly

now they care. It is pure, blatant politically expediency, and the people of Victoria can see it for what it is.

I feel very sad for the current member for Lowan because she has cast terrible aspersions on her predecessor, the great Hugh Delahunty, a member of Parliament from 1999 to 2014. As the member for Lowan and as a minister around the cabinet table he failed to deliver anything for his electorate — no roads funding at all.

Ms Kealy — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I think I made it quite clear during my contribution to the take-note motion that Labor has been in government for 13 of the last 17 years, and I think the comments about Hugh Delahunty were quite offensive. The Nationals will continue to deliver for country Victoria in my seat.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! There is no point of order.

Ms EDWARDS — Hugh Delahunty failed to deliver better roads for his electorate in all of that time.

I am very proud to stand here today as a member of the Andrews government and as the member for Bendigo West. I am extremely proud of the actions and policies of this government — our progressive social agenda, our enormous investment in education, our investment in new environmental initiatives, our investment in health and our plan and investment to grow jobs and improve our public transport system.

But what I am most proud of is our government putting regional Victoria and regional Victorians at the centre of these policies, plans and investment. This budget builds on the government's regional statement from last year, a statement about creating jobs, providing a better start for young people and supporting a brighter future for families and communities to build a strong, resilient and prosperous rural and regional Victoria.

Regional Victorians are big winners from this budget, with the \$325 million jobs package; supporting the growth of our tourism industry with the \$101 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund that will create 1700 jobs; with improvements in water infrastructure, mobile blackspots and streetscapes; with important planning work for local projects; with the boost to marketing programs; and with a massive boost to the growth of future industries across regional Victoria.

After the four-year hiatus under the previous Liberal-Nationals government Victoria started to go backwards. Unemployment was the highest on mainland Australia, and youth unemployment in regional Victoria reached its highest level in over a decade. I heard the Leader of

The Nationals' contribution to this debate a couple of sitting weeks ago, and I was astounded that he claimed this government has no jobs plan. It was a defining moment for The Nationals, to mention jobs — finally! It was something the party failed to do for four years, and then at the very tolling of the bell before the last election it scrambled together a plan that looked eerily similar to Labor's jobs plan that had been made publicly available two years earlier.

Our \$320 million reinvestment in TAFE is already seeing results: the youth unemployment level is coming down and the overall unemployment figure for Victoria is now below the national average. What is just as exciting as seeing our TAFE system get back on track is our \$116 million investment in 10 new tech schools across Victoria. I am excited that Bendigo will have a new tech school based at La Trobe University. It has been an absolute pleasure to chair the task force for this project. It has brought together educators — public, private and tertiary — industry, business and community leaders.

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

Quorum formed.

Ms EDWARDS — As I was saying, I am excited that Bendigo will have a new tech school. One representative said to me last week that he cannot ever remember such goodwill and shared vision among Bendigo educators as has been shown during the work being done on this project. It is about innovation and new technologies that will give kids across Bendigo a hands-on approach and head start to employment in the jobs of the future.

Making Victoria the education state has been a priority for this government, and it is heartening to hear from educators across my electorate how excited and thankful they are that this government has taken education out of the back cupboard, where it was gathering dust under the Liberals and Nationals, and put it front and centre. I am thrilled that schools in Bendigo West have shared in this funding, and I am especially thrilled for Kalianna School Bendigo. School principal Peter Bush, along with teachers, parents, carers and the broader Bendigo community campaigned hard for a new school. I was proud we were able to deliver \$1 million for planning in last year's budget and even more proud to deliver the good news to this school community that there is \$4.3 million in this year's budget for stage 1 of the new build.

The kids at Kalianna are all fantastic. They have varying special needs, but they love their school and their teachers. What they do not love are the outdated and crumbling buildings they have to work in. They are all very excited about this new phase and are very engaged in the building plans. I want to thank the Minister for Education and the Treasurer for giving this school community a future to look forward to and state-of-the-art buildings to work in.

As the member for Lowan mentioned, 20 specialist schools across the state received funding in this budget, including one in her electorate. I think this is a fantastic budget announcement because it means that students with a disability will be able to access the best facilities. This is so important to these schools and these students. Every child, no matter their background or circumstances, deserves the same opportunities. Kids with special needs are most wonderful kids. They are challenging at times, but they are also very engaged in learning, and they deserve a bright future, just like everyone else. I am very proud to be the government's ambassador for the special needs plan.

In the budget there is \$87.3 million to support an additional 1750 students who are expected to be eligible for the program for students with a disability in 2017, to increase numbers of support staff, such as speech pathologists, and to provide language programs and language screener tools for students with autism and dyslexia. On top of this is the \$43.8 million for the Doctors in Secondary Schools program so that students can have access to the health care they need.

I am also pleased that Marong Primary School is included in the list of 35 schools to share in \$12 million to plan upgrades. Marong is a big growth area of Bendigo, and the Minister for Education and I visited this school last year. School principal Russell Jeffrey was pretty excited because it was the first time an education minister had visited the school in 20 years. What was clear was the need for this school to expand to meet the projected demand on enrolments over the next couple of years. This funding is about making sure that our schools are able to meet those growing demands. It is about thinking about the future and the needs of these schools and the students who will attend them.

I recall the malaise and anxiety in our education sector under the previous government. I recall schools being gagged if they spoke out about problems. I recall them being devastated by the lack of maintenance funding and the lack of communication from the minister and the department. I recall schools in my electorate being isolated by the ridiculous decision to close our regional

office, sack staff and make Coburg the central location for the whole Loddon Mallee region. It was not just about the lack of funding, though; it was also about a deep sense of abandonment that many schools in my region felt. That is why this government is providing an additional \$1.1 billion in this budget to build, upgrade and maintain schools.

It was pretty exciting to have the Minister for Education come to Bendigo West again recently to visit Chewton Primary School, which was a successful recipient of National School Pride funding. The \$16 million in the budget for the School Pride and Sports Fund will strengthen community pride in schools and build sporting facilities for students.

This is an exciting time to be a student, to be a teacher or to be a parent in Victoria, because education has now become and will continue to be a major focus so that kids can have the best education that will lead to better futures and — those opposite might like to hear this — to jobs.

This budget reveals that this government is about caring for those who need support the most, and that is why there is the biggest increase ever in health funding: a record \$2.45 billion for health. We know how the elective surgery waiting lists blew out under the previous government, and I know how many of my constituents were frustrated and waiting in pain to get the help they needed. Between the last coalition government here in Victoria and a federal Liberal government right now that continues to rip funding from health and to try to dismantle Medicare, there is a real need to put Victorian patients and hospitals first, and that is exactly what we are doing here in Victoria.

We also know how the previous government went to war with our ambulance services and our hardworking paramedics. No-one will forget that. That was a difficult time for our paramedics, but this budget includes \$200 million for a Regional Health Infrastructure Fund and \$27.3 million to rebuild and upgrade ambulance stations and purchase additional vehicles.

I note that the Minister for Mental Health is in the chamber today, and I am really pleased that this government is investing for people with mental illness, focusing on providing better access to services and a big investment in prevention. An additional \$132 million will go towards assisting with the management of critical demand in the mental health system and making sure that people with mental illness receive the specialist intensive care they need.

The Loddon Mallee region of Victoria, including Bendigo and Castlemaine, has the highest number of suicides and attempted suicides in Victoria. Our 10-year suicide prevention framework aims to halve the number of suicides over the next decade, and \$27.5 million will be provided for new suicide prevention initiatives. This is just so important, and I want to thank the Minister for Mental Health for this investment and this approach to tackling what is a very challenging crisis in regional Victoria.

I am also really pleased that there is a significant investment in social housing and aged care and for services for people with a disability, including \$60.9 million for the first stage of the national disability insurance scheme rollout. I quote from the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc. newsletter of May 2016:

The Victorian budget 2016–17 sends a strong message that the Andrews state government remains committed to people with a disability.

There is much in this budget that I would like to speak on, but I am obviously running out of time. I have spoken before in this house about the problem of rising toxic groundwater under Bendigo as a consequence of mining activity that occurred historically. This was a problem that landed on my desk, and then the desk of the new Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, now the Minister for Water, just days after the last election. It seems that this problem was ignored by the former water minister, or alternatively just put in the too-hard basket. It had reached a critical point at that time, and it is indeed a critical issue for Bendigo and will be for eternity. However, thanks to the fast action by the now Minister for Water and an additional commitment in this budget of \$14.1 million this problem will be dealt with, and Bendigo people can have confidence that this problem will be fixed.

This is an environmental and health issue, but it is part of a bigger picture, and when it comes to energy, the environment and climate change, this government has actually made a difference. Here is a compare and contrast: in the federal budget three weeks ago there was not one mention of the environment, renewable energy or climate change. Here in Victoria, though, this government is getting on with investing in renewable energy, because unlike those opposite we have acknowledged that the jobs of the future, particularly in regional Victoria, are dependent on this.

That is why there is a \$12 million investment in renewable energy in this budget. It includes support to transition Victoria's wholesale electricity generation stock to renewable energy, encourage more households

to install solar energy and battery storage systems, and help more community renewable energy projects, like the one we have started planning for in Newstead, get off the ground. These are just some of the initiatives that will improve our environment and reduce our energy consumption.

Also this budget provides a massive investment in improving public transport, and I thank the Minister for Public Transport for the work she has done in this space over the last few months. It has been a very challenging time, but I am really excited and pleased that the Bendigo metro rail will be up and running on 26 June. Bendigo will also receive \$7 million for a new arts and culture hub, and this is fantastic news for Bendigo. We already have a brilliant reputation for attracting great exhibitions and events, and this will just put Bendigo on the map even more.

I want to say that this is a great budget for all Victorians, and I want to say that it is only with great leadership that budgets such as this can be delivered. I thank our Premier and our Treasurer for their vision and for handing down what in many people's words to me is indeed a genuine Labor budget, one that encapsulates fairness, equality and respect for everyone: a true Labor budget.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — It is always a pleasure to speak on the budget. What I will do is start with some of the small amounts that were received in my electorate and then I will go to a broader analysis of the budget, but before I go there I do want to say that I agree with the member for Bendigo West when she says that this is a genuine Labor budget. It is a genuine Labor budget: it is a budget where everybody gets done over if they do not vote for Labor.

Just to start with my electorate, one of the things you do when the budget comes out on budget day, as generally most of us here have the ability to get online, is you jump on and look for the budget online, and you actually start looking for suburbs in your electorate so you can see whether you got anything in your electorate. I must say I did that. I had a look, and I noticed that Camberwell High School got a little bit of money — about a third of the amount of the commitment that was made by the Napthine government at the last election. That is not actually in my electorate, but I will give credit: there are funds for Camberwell and that actually did come up. So Camberwell did get a sum of money, about a third of what was on the table at the last election from the Liberal-Nationals coalition government.

I looked for Parkhill Primary School. I noticed Parkhill, one of the schools in my electorate; I am acknowledging the things that the government has done. I want to acknowledge Parkhill Primary School. I do have some concerns, however, that the \$5.3 million that has been allocated by the government is not going to be enough to do all the things that the government said it was going to do in its press release. Watch this space, because we want to make sure that the government provides the money for what it said it would cover. I know it said the funding would cover modernisation, replace relocatable buildings with permanent facilities, construct a new flexible learning precinct and modernise the administration and library buildings. This is in Ashwood. I have been campaigning on this for some years. I do note that the government did come up with some money, but I am concerned that it is not going to cover what the government said it would.

I want to acknowledge Ashburton Primary School, which is in my electorate and which is a great school, as is Parkhill Primary School. The only money in the budget that comes to Ashburton Primary School is actually for an existing project that was funded by the Napthine government, not this government. Ashburton gets diddly. When I looked for Ashburton I also found Solway Primary School, another great school in my electorate, which got \$2.6 million from the Napthine government. The school community there is doing some great things. That school is going to have its opening very soon, and I am very proud of the fact that I will be able to attend the opening of a project which was funded by the Napthine government and which is due to be completed, as I note on page 45 of budget paper 4.

I also note that Ashwood secondary college, which changed his name to Ashwood High School before the budget came out, is still listed in the budget papers as Ashwood Secondary College. Nonetheless, the school has an existing project that was funded by the previous government. As a local member I got funding so that the school could be rebuilt. That is another \$5 million. I note that that project has started and the construction is still going on. Stage 1 has already opened with funding that was provided by the previous government. I am proud of the fact that I was able to achieve some of that funding.

When I look through the budget, I note that Glen Iris fire station was given funding by the previous government. It is not in my electorate but some of my constituents would be affected by that. This government has botched the implementation and construction of that station to the extent that fire trucks

cannot be put in the station because it will not handle the load. That is a botched project by the current government with money that was allocated by the previous government. As I look through the budget, I note that that is pretty much the extent of funding for my electorate.

I also want to acknowledge that the government has talked about the — —

Mr Gidley interjected.

Mr WATT — The member for Mount Waverley reminds me about cuts to the Monash Children's Hospital. Monash Children's Hospital was funded by the previous government. This government has decided to cut its funding to the bone. We are talking about no dedicated emergency department and no statewide sleep centre. It is a disgrace that this government, the Andrews Labor government, is cutting funding to hospitals that service the south-eastern corridor and cover many of the electorates of members who are sitting on the other side of this house. It is an absolute disgrace. Here we have the Andrews Labor government cutting once again.

The government scrapped the east–west link, which it said would not cost single dollar — not one dollar. We know it did not cost one dollar, because we know it cost 1.1 billion single dollars. We know that we cannot trust what those opposite say. Turning to look at 'Service Delivery', budget paper 3, members will note that I have got a lot of tabs in this document because I have got lots of things to say about service delivery. I turn to page 55 and the section headed 'Western Distributor'. The western distributor is a project that I have talked about a number of times in this chamber. The western distributor is a project for the people of the western suburbs. It is a project for the Treasurer to get from Parliament House to his electorate office and from wherever he lives to his electorate office, and for his constituents to get into the city. It is not a project that my constituents will benefit from, because they will not use it — they simply will not use it. But I tell you what they will do: they will pay for it!

There was an article in the *Herald Sun* two weeks ago, an opinion piece by the Honourable Jeff Kennett, who was a fine Premier and a fine member for Burwood. The article says:

We are told the contract will go to Transurban because it came up with the idea. We are told part of Transurban's costs will be offset by the government extending the company's right to collect tolls on CityLink for another 10 or 12 years, to about 2045. That would be a generous gift and the most financially irresponsible act against the public interest since tearing up the east–west contract.

Mr Nardella — Who was that?

Mr WATT — You tore up the east–west contract — that is who tore it up. You tore it up.

Mr Nardella — Who did you quote?

Mr WATT — It was Jeff Kennett. You guys tore up the east–west link contract. Let me get back to the western distributor. Here we have a project that the people of Burwood will be paying for through extensions in tolls but will not use. At the end of the day we are not going to use it, so why are we paying for it? The people in the western suburbs should pay for it through tolls on their road, or maybe the government should actually fork out the money rather than getting it out of the pockets of people in my electorate.

I also note on page 116 of budget paper 3, ‘Absentee Landowner Surcharge’ that it states:

A landowner who does not ordinarily reside in Australia is liable for an absentee landowner surcharge in addition to any other land tax payable. The absentee landowner surcharge will be increased from 0.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent from the 2017 land tax year.

Most people might look at that and say, ‘It does not affect us’, but it does. At the end of the day, when you rent the costs that go into this get put on to your rent, just like the land transfer duty surcharge on residential properties gets put on to your rent. There are lots of people in here who should know about this. The member for Melton, over his time, has had a number of properties. He says he currently only has one, but over time he has had a number of properties. I am sure the member for Melton would understand that when you get costs added on as the landowner, whether you live in Australia or not, you pass them on. So essentially this is a renters tax. You increase the costs of a property for people who own it, regardless of whether they live in Australia or not. It is a renters tax.

I turn now to the brown coal royalty. The government calls it a brown coal royalty, but I know that the member for Mount Waverley and others, including myself, simply call it an increase in the price of electricity. It is an electricity tax. The brown coal is not used for exports; it is used for electricity here in Victoria. Again, we had the Premier before the election saying, ‘I give a solemn guarantee that we are not going to increase taxes. No increase in taxes, no increase in surcharges. No, no, no. I solemnly swear I won’t do it’. Well, here we have a renter’s tax and more renter’s taxes and now we have got an electricity tax. We know we cannot trust this government.

I was listening to the Minister for Creative Industries — —

Mr Katos interjected.

Mr WATT — I did, I have to say to the member for South Barwon. I actually did listen to his contribution. During his contribution the minister talked about a number of agencies that were getting increases in their funding. Unfortunately for the member for Albert Park, the Minister for Creative Industries, I have actually read the budget papers, particularly budget paper 3. In budget paper 3, at page 129, the total output costs for the creative industries portfolio’s agencies are listed. This output promotes, presents and preserves our heritage and the creative industries through Victoria’s cultural agencies: Arts Centre Melbourne, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Docklands Studios Melbourne, Film Victoria, Geelong Performing Arts Centre, Melbourne Recital Centre, Museum Victoria, National Gallery of Victoria, and the State Library of Victoria.

I do need to note that in the 2014–15 budget, the last budget of the Napthine government, the actual expenditure that year on the creative industries portfolio’s agencies was \$343.1 million. If I look at last year, I can see the government cut the budget. The budget or target was \$337 million, but the government outdid itself because it said it was going to spend \$337 million but actually spent only \$328.9 million. But this time what the government is doing is actually cutting it again — again.

Mr Foley — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the honourable member is misleading the house. The honourable member is misquoting the budget papers. The budget papers clearly show a \$152 million increase in the outputs for the creative industries portfolio. I would ask that you bring the honourable member back to order.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! The member, to continue.

Mr WATT — If the minister would like me to, I can give him my copy of budget paper 3 when I finish. It is actually marked. I have got it tabbed so he can have a look to see that the creative industries portfolio agencies’ budgets are cut — a cut last year, a cut in the actual expenditure and again a cut this year. Cut, cut, cut!

Moving along, let us talk about jobs. Some members wanted to talk about jobs earlier. I think it was the member for Bendigo West who talked about jobs. Let us look at budget paper 3, page 131, headed

‘Employment, industry and growth’. For employment resulting from government investment facilitation services and assistance in 2014–15 we were talking about 6120 and now we are down to 4800. That is a cut from when we were in government. If you want to talk about new investment resulting from government facilitation services and assistance, when we were in government the number was \$2319 million. This year that has been cut to \$2200 million. That is a cut.

Let us keep going. There are so many here. I will skip a lot of this because what I need to get to are the bits that talk about drug treatment and rehabilitation. The episodes of drug care will decrease from 11 957 when we were last in government to 6508, this year. What we do know is that drugs are intertwined with family violence. This government keeps going on about family violence. I do not know how many government members have read the family violence royal commission’s report, but the words ‘drug’ and ‘drugs’ are mentioned 447 times in that report. The fact that the government is actually cutting the amount of services to people who are affected by drugs is an absolute disgrace. Government members should read the budget paper — budget paper 3, page 243 — where the number of residential bed days is down from 127 686 to 107 310 — —

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

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — I rise to speak in the debate on the take-note motion on the 2016–17 budget papers. We have seen again a state budget handed down by the Treasurer, a budget that delivers for all. When I say for all, I am extremely proud to be part of a government that will continue to deliver key projects in my electorate of St Albans. This budget confirms again the Andrews Labor government is delivering for St Albans and the west.

We have already seen the commencement of the works to remove the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings. Let me say that has been a joy for the community, not only for the people of St Albans but also for the people of the west. The removal of the two level crossings will create over 200 jobs, but it has also lifted the morale of the locals, who have been ecstatic over the last 12 to 18 months. We have seen not only minimal disruption to services, but also, let me say, I have received minimal complaints from local commuters and traders. The removal of the level crossings has resulted in a very united front and the construction workers on site have received such a great welcome from the local traders. I can also report that on one morning construction workers received cupcakes

from the locals. That is the sort of excitement there is in St Albans.

There is no doubt that the removal of the two level crossings will remove the congestion but the most important aspect is that of safety. There have been accidents and fatalities occur on these unsafe level crossings and their removal will help to reduce the road toll for the St Albans community. We made a pledge before the November 2014 elections, and let me say I am happy to stand by that pledge. As I was campaigning in St Albans, it was clear that the difference between Labor and those on the other side was that Labor would remove both level crossings and commence the works together — that is, the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings. I am very happy that we have delivered these two key infrastructure projects for the people of St Albans.

Not only that, since January we have seen over 40 truckloads of concrete, or about 258 cubic metres, poured for the new Main Road bridge. The new bridge will allow traffic to flow normally from Main Road while the construction team dig out and develop the new train tunnel. The removal of the two level crossings will include brand-new stations for Main Road and Ginifer. This has all commenced, of course, under the watch of the stakeholder communication group, which is a group of local residents, stakeholders and traders who have been meeting on a regular basis to make sure that we have the appropriate train station and infrastructure in place.

Recently I also reported to the house that we will include a respectful memorial to the lives that were lost at Main Road and Furlong Road, so this will also be part of the project. Let me say we are very proud. If it were not for a Labor government, St Albans would still be struggling and would still have the problems that it faced before the Andrews Labor government took office.

Of course there is also good news in the form of our new hospital, the new women’s and children’s hospital in Furlong Road. What this means is that for the first time ever we will see a new women’s and children’s hospital out in the west.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms SULEYMAN — Absolutely. The west will have an additional 32-bed surgical inpatient ward to increase capacity for elective surgery, 12 surgical short-stay recovery beds and increased capacity in our emergency department with the provision of 20 further short-stay beds and cubicles. Of course this

infrastructure also means jobs — jobs for the west, confidence in the west. It gives hope. It gives an opportunity for the locals to say that someone does really care. As a resident myself for many, many years — I have spent all my life in the west — for the first time ever I am getting locals saying, ‘We really believe in a government that says one thing and actually does it after being elected’.

Under those on the other side you never heard of a new hospital in the west, I can tell you that much. What does this mean for the west? This means over 7000 patients in the west, and of course the hospital will be named after Joan Kirner. What a fitting tribute to a pioneer of the west to be able to acknowledge in that way her contribution to our state.

There is no doubt there are many more things I could talk about from the budget, but in this short period of time I will also say that we are commencing in the next couple of weeks the stakeholder community group. We are meeting because we want to see these works commence as soon as possible, and I am happy to report that we will be commencing the construction this year and that I will be chairing the stakeholder community group. Most importantly we have also already tendered the contracts, so we are ready to get on with this project and make sure that it is delivered in a timely manner.

Also, it is a small one, but I had the pleasure last year together with the Minister for Education for the first time in a long time — —

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

Quorum formed.

Ms SULEYMAN — It is a small project, but it is something that the locals value very greatly, and that is the additional car spaces at Keilor Plains station. Of course this is a station that is highly used and is very popular. In particular with the construction on Main Road and Furlong Road we are seeing much more use of Keilor Plains station, so I was delighted to see in this year’s budget some funding to make sure that we get additional car spaces. I believe the works have already commenced, as there are bulldozers there and fencing has been placed around Keilor Plains station.

On another note, education is extremely important for the people in the community of St Albans. Last week I had the pleasure of having a listening post and talking to some locals. One key thing that comes out again and again — of course they are very grateful for the level crossings — is the provision of education for their

children. That is really important for the people of the west. People want their kids to get a good education to set them up for the future.

I had the great honour, as I said, last year to attend and visit, which I often do, University Park Primary School out in St Albans with the Minister for Education. Let me say how grateful that school community was. They have not seen a minister visit their school for over a decade, so to see a minister actually walk into their school was an absolute delight. I was happy to again report that in this budget \$70 000 was included for the school. It is a small amount of money, but it goes a long way for the school community at University Park Primary School. What that means is they will have — and let me say this for the record — an outdoor safe area for kids to have lunch in. This is what we are talking about. An outdoor safe area for kids to have lunch in. I am delighted that we were able to fund that vital project for this particular school. I want to commend Andrea Federico, the principal, and the staff, who do such a tremendous job and who are dedicated to the kids. It is challenging, and they are passionate in their efforts to make sure that University Park students receive everything that they can possibly get.

On another matter there is Furlong Park School for Deaf Children. This is not a school for St Albans only; this is a school that is regional. It provides valuable services for children who are deaf. It received \$500 000 in this budget. That \$500 000 will go a long way for a school that has not had the appropriate level of funding for many, many years. Some of these schools have not received any form of funding for a very long time. This is what this budget means to people and to school communities that have not seen any form of real funding for a very long time. Without mentioning a name, I know a principal who was close to tears when the announcement was made. That is the level of emotion and the level of dedication we see.

Let me also note that the St Albans electorate, which includes Sunshine, Keilor Downs, Albion, Ardeer and many other suburbs, has a community that can only go up, up and up. What we are seeing now in the community is a real sense of belonging. It is not just about removing the level crossing; there is a real sense of faith in the community. A government has actually taken a step; it has not just been about talk — because unfortunately previously we saw four years of nothing in relation to these issues. In 18 months we have seen cranes working, and we are halfway there towards making sure that we see the back of the level crossings which have caused so much heartache for the community for over 50 years.

I think that says a lot — and it says a lot about this budget. I want to commend the Treasurer for handing down such a fantastic budget for the people of the St Albans electorate. They are ever more grateful, they are thankful, and we know that we will continue on delivering to people because they matter. It does not matter what postcode you live in, it does not matter what suburb you come from; at the end of the day each project and each priority is based on merit, and this is a highlight for the St Albans people — that we have been able to deliver on projects that have true merit. Quite frankly I am very happy and excited about this budget. I commend the budget to the house.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I rise to make some comments on the Victorian budget for 2016–17. There is no joy in this budget for the people of the Caulfield electorate. When you go through the budget papers and have a look at some of the commitments that have been made, you see that it is nothing more than a tax grab by the Treasurer. We are just seeing tax hikes, and we are certainly seeing no real investment in education, health, law and order or the things that really matter in this state.

If you dig down in the budget itself, you see that we have some \$3.7 billion in tax jumps, which is a 20.7 per cent increase in two years — money which is coming from Victorian families and going straight into the coffers of this government. You see these sorts of tax grabs in stamp duty, which has gone up by \$1.6 billion in one year. Insurance taxes are up 6.3 per cent in 2016–17 to \$1.2 billion, and land tax is increasing by 28 per cent to \$2.2 billion. When you break those figures down, you see that it is not just a tax grab, because taking this money from where it is being taken also stifles investment, particularly in the property sector, which has been a significant contributor to growth in Victoria. As we know the construction industry contributes significantly — up to about 10 per cent of our GDP — and having these tax increases, particularly the foreign ownership tax for people coming to invest here in Victoria, will certainly harm investment in Victoria and stifle the construction industry.

A report that came out today from the Urban Development Institute of Australia speaks about price being important to Chinese investors and looks at when the Chinese invest in property. The sorts of things this government is increasing in terms of the tax grab certainly do affect investment in Victoria. We have seen a huge tax grab by this government. We have seen public sector wages go up by 15.2 per cent, or \$2.8 billion, since the last election, and we see total public sector wages blow out from \$18.4 billion to what

is now forecast at \$21.3 billion. If we see an increase in taxation and various property taxes, you would think that there would be a whole lot more money around to be able to spend in services, but that is certainly not the case.

This budget is headed ‘Getting It Done’, but in fact I think it is getting it done by paying back union mates, and we have seen evidence of that today with the United Firefighters Union. The Country Fire Authority and the 60 000 volunteers are being done over by the Premier and his union mates, again at the expense of volunteers and good, hard workers. This is what this is about. This budget is really paying back the people that looked after Labor, that handed out at the election booths how-to-vote cards, that dressed up as ambulance workers and fireys, only to be now putting their hands out and saying, ‘Will you pay us back for the investment that we’ve given you by standing out in front of your polling booths?’. Well, Victorians will not cop that, and we saw that over the weekend with many thousands of volunteers standing up and saying that it is just not good enough and that what the Premier is doing to all Victorians in taxing them, harming them and looking after his union mates is just not the way things should be done here in this great state.

When it comes to my electorate of Caulfield there is very little being offered there. I will say that Glen Eira College has continued to be funded, as there was an election commitment from both the coalition and the government going into the election of \$9.5 million to upgrade the school. At the last budget the government was embarrassed by actually having only funded \$950 000, which had left a zero off the actual amount. After we went out there and highlighted this point we finally, after many calls to this government, got it to open its pocket up and give a little bit more to Glen Eira College. We will be holding the government to account and ensuring that that money does get committed to the school. It is a great school in my electorate that is deserving of this funding, and I will certainly be holding the government to account to make sure that it delivers on its election promise.

But that is about it in terms of any money that has been spent in my electorate. If you look at transport, particularly the Ormond level crossing removal project, you can see how much money is being expended there in the current budget. I was not surprised to find that there has actually been zero — —

Mr Staikos interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — It is in my electorate. Although the member for Bentleigh keeps claiming it is

not, it is in my electorate. There has been nothing expended forward in this budget, and ironically nothing in the last budget, and one would ask why the member for Bentleigh and others are standing up and saying what a fantastic project it is that they have funded. It is because we funded it, and it is now up to this government to deliver on the funding that we have given for this level crossing removal.

There are already a whole lot of problems in terms of its implementation. We have traders down the Ormond shopping strip who on this Wednesday will be without power and who were only given 24-hours notice to say that they would be without power. It was only a week ago that there were other power disruptions. There are traders who in December were told that works would be brought forward and who were shut down in a peak period of trade, costing them thousands of dollars.

That just shows you how poor this government is at implementing projects. We have even given it the money to do the projects but it cannot implement them properly, and it is a damn disgrace that we have it claiming credit for projects like Ormond when it cannot even do the project properly. But I can tell you that when it comes to opening it, government members will be there to cut the ribbon and say how well they did spending our money and implementing this project.

Unfortunately this will be a legacy project because it will be one of the last level crossings that will be done properly in this state if Labor continues to be in control. That is because we went to the election promising level crossing removal and so did the Labor Party. It tried to up us in terms of the number it was going to do, but of course it left out the hidden clause — the fact that while we were going to do them properly, it was going to build them over the top with sky rail. We are seeing a second-rate project rolled out by the government, and the Ormond level crossing removal will be a legacy project because it is being done properly, whereas sky rail will be the legacy for all those people on the Pakenham and Cranbourne lines and our friends in Mordialloc and all those people along that line who will have sky rail in their backyards. Therefore I am sure the good voters of Mordialloc will be very happy to go to the election in 2018 and tell the government what they think of sky rail.

These are the sorts of projects we are seeing under this government — second-rate projects to save a bit of dough when it has got record money in the kick. The government has the port sale with record money there, and the money is effectively being whittled away in poorly executed projects.

The government is good on spending money on announcements and glossy brochures, and through them we see that health is a key area. They talk about a record boost to health and hospitals. Unfortunately I can announce today that when it comes to Alfred Health in Caulfield, one of the great hospitals in our state, have there been hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars allocated? No. Not one dollar has been given to Alfred Health in Caulfield.

This is a hospital which I would love the Minister for Health to visit. I would like her to take a walk through some of the wind tunnels connecting the buildings. They were built back in the war days and they have not been upgraded since, and that hospital desperately needs some basic capital works to bring the building up to standard. It is disappointing that there has been no funding, and I throw the challenge out for the Minister for Health to come out and visit Alfred Health in Caulfield with me and have a look at the great work it has done. A state-of-the-art acquired brain injury unit was established there in collaboration with the Transport Accident Commission. It is doing internationally recognised work in terms of research and treating patients with acquired brain injuries, and this is being done without resources or any funding thanks to this Labor government.

In the area of police and community safety, this is front and centre in the government's glossy brochure, but when you dig into the detail there is less funding for police, less funding for resources and fewer police on the beat, and that has contributed to more than an 8 per cent increase in crime in Victoria in 12 months, and a 22 per cent increase in crime in the area of Glen Eira. As I have stated on many occasions in this Parliament — I will continue to make this point every time I stand here until this government does something — the City of Glen Eira has one divisional van for 140 000 people, compared with the City of Kingston which has four divisional vans for 90 000 people, and we have had a 22 per cent increase in crime. So if anybody desperately needs more frontline police, it is the people of Glen Eira.

I call on the new Minister for Police to come out and meet with residents, to talk to locals and hear just how scared they are due to the increased burglaries and midnight assaults that are happening in our area. It has been well and truly targeted. People are living in fear and people deserve a basis of law and order and safety in our state. So I would certainly ask the minister to do something at least when it comes to law and order.

There is, however, something when it comes to community safety in this glossy brochure. I read that

the government will be spending \$37.1 million to continue and expand the emergency medical response program to 35 Country Fire Authority brigades to ensure firefighters are dispatched at the same time as paramedics, which will increase survival chances for critical patients. I am wondering how this \$37.1 million will go with the current enterprise bargaining deal that is being negotiated with United Firefighters Union. Does making these 35 brigades first responders in terms of paramedics mean that they have to wait until seven Metropolitan Fire Brigade firefighters or professional firefighters are called first? I am not sure whether this has been thought out properly. It is good to be able to release money like this, but if we truly support those such as our volunteer firefighters, we need to ensure that we have got the ability to allow them to do their jobs and respond as they do locally when they can.

Turning finally to the portfolio area of energy and resources, we have seen transition plans in the budget for the Latrobe Valley, but unfortunately there is no detail about what this transition plan will actually mean for the Latrobe Valley. But what we do know is that we have a \$252 million tax on electricity that has been delivered for not just the Latrobe Valley but through the Latrobe Valley for every single Victorian, which will push up household bills and electricity bills. This is a tripling of a tax which will not differentiate between the rich and the poor, between those who can and those who cannot afford their electricity. What it will mean is that those who are really struggling will have to decide whether they heat their homes or put food on the table. It is another example of the government having no real regard for those Victorians who are struggling but instead deciding it will just do a tax grab and go hard after those who are really hurting the most. We have seen it with hardship laws, we have seen it with disconnections, and now it is doing it with this electricity tax.

Mr Staikos interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — This is a tax that will hurt all Victorians, make no mistake, and that includes the member for Bentleigh. He is not standing up for his constituents, and it is time that he stood up and all Victorians stood up and did something to ensure that those people will be well and truly looked after. This is a tax grab by the government, and government members have been silent in this regard. They are very happy to take the money of ordinary taxpayers and to back the unions, but unfortunately they are not happy to look after their own constituents, the people who put them here, and they are the people who will be judging them in 2018 on this ordinary, horrible budget that has been delivered to Victoria.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SPENCE (Yuroke).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

TRANSPORT (COMPLIANCE AND MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SAFETY) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I rise to speak on the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016, one that we on this side of the house want to ensure is not the Labor government's anti-Uber bill. When this government drops a bill on you at 9.00 p.m. the day before Parliament sits, saying it is urgent, the bullish antennas immediately go up. It raises suspicion about what the bill is about, and you have got to ask what the real intentions of the bill are and why it is urgent, especially with this government, which is clueless, hopeless and dragging the chain on implementing ridesharing legislation in this state, the last in Australia, when every other state or territory has taken a position. You have got to ask yourself what the bill is really about, what it is trying to achieve, why this Labor government hates Uber or why it does not address the whole ridesharing issue at once.

By way of background, the County Court handed down the Brenner decision regarding a prosecution against an Uber driver, on 18 May this year, which many interpreted — or the media certainly interpreted — as a step towards legalising Uber. You have got a government that all of a sudden is concerned about public safety and concerned about public safety on transport. I accept, and we understand, that there are public safety implications here. We have, thanks to the minister, who organised a briefing this morning, looked at a number of issues. We understand a number of issues that were outlined in terms of public safety, that section 159 has no current application and that that section is redundant — a view that we do not necessarily disagree with — but if the government really is playing the public safety card, you have got to ask why it is not bringing forward legislation to legalise or regulate ridesharing and Uber in Victoria, something it has sat on for the last 15 months. Why has it worked for the last few weeks on urgent legislation to repeal section 159 as opposed to directing resources to actually bringing forward legislation on Uber and ridesharing? This would give certainty to the industry.

When we talk to the industry — to taxidriver, the transport industry, passengers, users and Uber drivers — its members all want certainty. Every other state — New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia, even Tasmania and the ACT — has taken a position on Uber. We in Victoria are going backwards, and for the life of me I cannot understand why the government is sitting on its hands and dragging the chain when Uber has certainly been adopted well and truly by people here in Victoria. We believe there should be a framework set up under which both taxis and Uber can coexist here in Victoria.

You have got to ask where the government's priorities are. The member for Gembrook tried to move a motion in support of 60 000 Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers at the end of question time today. We would have argued that that was urgent — a matter that should be dealt with and debated here in the house in support of our CFA volunteers — but of course the government gagged debate and shut down the member for Gembrook, the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, who was trying to move that motion, because it does not support that motion and does not support the CFA.

If the government wants to play the safety card, we on this side of the house are more than happy to listen, to consider and to support public safety improvements on transport. The Liberal-Nationals support any moves to enhance public safety, but we will not be party to a stealth attempt to legislate against Uber drivers. All public transport passengers deserve a safe ride to and from work, home at night, after hours and home to their families. Every passenger on public transport deserves a safe ride.

The Liberals and Nationals introduced protective service officers (PSOs) at train stations and have a long, proud record in this area. The PSOs were opposed by those opposite. They called them 'plastic police' — insulting to the hard, decent, honest work that our PSOs do. Of course having the PSOs on our public transport system at stations in and around Melbourne from 6.00 p.m. to the last train at night has been a policy that has been well received, so we have a proud track record on community safety. We are more than happy to entertain governments if they are fair dinkum about making improvements to public transport as opposed to using a bill — an anti-Uber bill — because they did not like a court decision or to continue to ban Uber here in Victoria.

I think the minister has been caught red-handed trying to re-outlaw Uber by stealth. There is nothing to stop the minister or the Premier from changing their

proposed legislation or, as I said, directing resources to ensure passengers are kept safe by protecting the thousands and thousands of jobs created by Uber. I would have thought at a time when the government is imploding over the CFA crisis, with the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport both trying to sneak through this to clean up a mess of their own making, it does raise suspicions. The bulltish antennas do go up immediately, and you do wonder about this in what is a chaotic and dysfunctional government that is lurching from one disaster to another.

The government's media release today talks about section 159 and again raises suspicions. It says that:

Section 159 has been part of the act since decades and has existed through governments of both persuasions, and the recent taxi industry inquiry, which did not recommend its removal.

The judge in the County Court matter referred to section 159 as an 'historical artefact'. It was only due to the court case that this situation came to light and it needs to be addressed.

It should not be in the legislation, it should have been dealt with decades ago and the legislation introduced today will remove it.

This legislative amendment is not relevant to considerations in relation to ridesharing. The government continues to work through the details of this complicated matter in the interests of passenger safety, access and fairness, and equity to existing operators.

Our suspicions go up when the government is wrong again. Section 159 was in fact amended, I am told, in 2009. It raises suspicions amongst us on this side as to exactly what the intent of this is. Is it all about public safety? Is it an anti-Uber bill? If it is, we are not going to support that.

This government has sat on its hands for 15 months. It has now been dragged kicking and screaming into the Uber ridesharing debate. You have got Fiona Patten, a member for Northern Metropolitan Region in the other place, bringing a private members bill in, which as I understand it will be introduced to the house tomorrow morning. You have got an upper house inquiry with a reference in relation to Uber and ridesharing looking at those matters, all because this government has sat idle and done nothing.

If you compare this with the New South Wales situation, you see that the Victorian minister set up an inquiry with terms of reference, a ministerial advisory committee reported back to her and a report has been sitting in her in-tray since July of last year with nothing being done on it. In the same time Mike Baird in New South Wales set up an inquiry, completed his inquiry, made a decision in relation to the inquiry and is

introducing legislation to take a position on Uber. You have got to ask yourself: why is Victoria last in this debate? Why is the government being dragged kicking and screaming into this debate, and why will it not do something to legislate and give certainty around ridesharing and Uber?

As has been suggested to me, if the minister were so concerned about public safety, she would have acted to introduce sensible, safety-based regulations for ridesharing within the last 15 months. It is in fact almost offensive that the government is being permitted to use public safety as a wedge to force this issue through because of its own incompetence and the loss of a court decision. Do not get me wrong. We understand the options the government has — or certainly the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has — in terms of appealing that decision and the time frames around that, and we would hope that we will get some sort of certainty from the minister and from the government on the direction in which ridesharing is heading in this state. We will continue to put pressure on in relation to that. We welcome Fiona Patten's bill, which will be dealt with tomorrow, and we welcome the upper house inquiry continuing in its work to bring about debate on this issue to at least get the government to act.

If the Parliament can spend time debating this bill today and bring it in urgently — as I said, I was contacted at around 9 o'clock last night, we had a briefing this morning between 8.30 and 8.45, all the parties had to be briefed, it has been introduced and we are debating it now — and if the government can lift itself enough to make this an urgent matter, we would be asking why it cannot spend some time and direct some resources towards regulating ridesharing. It would give the taxi industry some sort of certainty. It would give transport users some sort of certainty. It would give Uber and its drivers certainty. It would give passengers certainty. We would not waste time in the courts with Uber drivers who are legitimately going about trying to earn a living. They get a job and are being dragged into court. We implore the government, whilst it is bringing this bill through, to give some thought to that.

If it is a safety issue, why has the government done nothing about it for the past 15 months? Again, I repeat, there was a report that has sat in the minister's in-tray since July last year. We know she has got a lot on her plate. She is trying to find funding for the Melbourne Metro project. She is trying to deal with the V/Line crisis. She is trying to deal with Uber. She is trying to deal with public service wages. The minister is trying to deal with this. We understand that the minister has got a lot on her plate, but we believe Uber and ridesharing

are priorities that the minister should be directing her attention to. We are sure she will, and we are happy to help in any way we can in regulating the industry and getting Uber on the move here, giving people employment and certainty in Victoria. Because the fact is that we are the last state to be moving on the issue.

In fact I note that the Premier on his recent excursion to the United States — I think he was going to Apple or to an innovation event — realised how embarrassing it would be to rock up and to make an innovation announcement and be asked about where the great state of Victoria is on Uber and ridesharing, and then to say, 'We're last. We're doing nothing. We're actually trying to stop it. We're trying to ban it', when he was over there spruiking innovation. It was somewhat pleasing that the Premier or his advance team realised that before he got to his event and said, 'Look, you'd better say something positive about Uber, otherwise you're going to look a bit of a dill here'. I must say the Premier's comments were encouraging.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HODGETT — You could argue he still looked a bit of a dill, but the Premier's comments were encouraging in terms of where we might be heading in getting some sort of certainty around Uber and ridesharing here in Victoria. Everyone wants certainty, and we cannot wait to be debating an Uber ridesharing bill in this place. Maybe that could become a priority, and we could facilitate urgent debate on it in the house.

Let me draw to a conclusion. In terms of support for this bill, I have put on record that the Liberal-Nationals coalition on this side of the house supports improvements to community safety in transport. That is not what this bill is about. What we are concerned about is that we want some sort of certainty from the government or the bureaucrats in terms of how this will impact on Uber and what it might mean for Uber, Uber drivers and Uber users. So we are looking for the government to give an undertaking or facilitate an understanding or make a commitment and give some certainty around the following issues.

Prosecutions that are currently underway in relation to ridesharing providers will be suspended unless and until the Court of Appeal has made a determination on the point of law, so if the DPP decides to appeal that County Court decision, then until that decision is made as to whether it appeals or not the outcome of that appeal is known — and we understand that could take many months — if we were going to support this bill, we would want some undertaking from the government that any prosecutions of ridesharing providers that are

underway would be suspended until that process is out of the way.

We would also be looking for and would be encouraged by any announcement that the government might make on its pathway to regulating ridesharing. We would support that. We would look for any indication there. We understand the government has got processes to go through, but for heaven's sake! Every other state can make a decision on it, yet we are 15 months in and there is still uncertainty and taxpayers are wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars on court cases. It is time to get some sort of regulation here. The government could give a sign or a signal similar to or strengthening the Premier's words spoken while he was in New York about regulating ridesharing in the future. That would be welcomed and encouraged.

Regulating ridesharing and a future enforcement regime would be one of the matters that we would like considered. We would also like an undertaking from the government in terms of us supporting this bill that the government will put a moratorium around enforcement against ridesharing until it looks to regulate it. Because it is one thing to say that existing cases under prosecution will be paused or postponed, but people still get fined — Uber drivers still get fined — and then there are decisions about whether to prosecute them and take them to court.

If the government is fair dinkum about community safety, if it is fair dinkum about making improvements to community safety and repealing section 159 and it wants our support through both houses, we would be asking that there be a moratorium of all enforcement against ridesharing until the government can come back with some sort of certainty about what its position is going to be in terms of regulating ridesharing or Uber or otherwise.

We support public safety, but we want an accompanying guarantee for ridesharing so that the half a million Victorians who use ridesharing to get from point A to point B and the thousands of Victorians who earn an income from ridesharing can see a positive step, a forward step, from the government, not a backward step or using this bill to further beat Uber around the head and saying, 'If you don't like the court case, we'll find another way to ban Uber'. We want to see this as a step forward and we will be looking for encouraging accompanying statements or guarantees from the government so that ridesharing and Uber can exist in a regulated framework, with taxis, here in the state of Victoria. Let us end the uncertainty and get on with it. On that note we are happy to support public safety and

the bill if we can get the government to give that undertaking.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — It is my pleasure to rise in support of this extremely important bill. It is difficult to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition waxing lyrical with his conspiracy theories, although even having been in this place for such a short time I have come to the conclusion that that is the best I can hope for from those opposite. There is not a lot of substance, but there is a lot of bullfish, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would say.

The purpose of this bill is fairly straightforward. The provisions in the bill are essential to correcting a historical anachronism in current legislation. Many in this place will be aware of the recent County Court decision involving Uber driver Nathan Brenner. The government has sought and received advice about the impact of this decision. The legal advice we received raised serious concerns about the impact of a certain provision in the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983, being section 159. This provision has existed in the legislation for decades, but as a result of the recent case its consequences have only recently been understood and those consequences are potentially terrible for passengers.

Unfortunately media coverage of the Brenner case has not highlighted the wider implications of the decision. Therefore members of the public remain largely unaware of the dangers it represents to their safety. I think people deserve to know what those consequences are.

By way of background in the Brenner case, Mr Brenner was carrying more than one passenger in his vehicle, and I will get to why that is relevant shortly. The decision in the Brenner case focused, as I said, on section 159 of the transport act, a section the judge in the County Court case described as 'an historical artefact'. The decision to construe section 159 of the transport act as a defence ultimately has the effect of undermining the enforceability of licensing requirements where there is more than one passenger in a vehicle.

This essentially means that if an accused can prove that each passenger did not pay a separate and distinct fair, then the vehicle is not a commercial passenger vehicle. As anyone who has travelled or does regular travel in a taxi or hire car will know, passengers in those vehicles are not charged separate and distinct fares, so this defence could ultimately be used successfully by all alleged offenders carrying more than one passenger. This means that the Taxi Services Commission (TSC)

will not be able to commence new prosecutions or issue infringement notices for commercial passenger vehicle offences such as operating vehicles unlicensed or driving without accreditation. This is clearly absurd.

Here is where we come to the serious safety concerns that those opposite have been making light of. Where drivers pose an obvious threat to passenger safety — for example, individuals who have a history of violence or sexual offending — the TSC will not be able to prevent them from driving a commercial passenger vehicle. Let me just reiterate that and focus on it: where drivers pose a threat because they may have a track record as a sexual or violent offender, the TSC will not be able to prevent them from driving a taxi or a hire car. So you could find yourself getting into a car with someone with a known track record of violent or sexual offence or something incredibly dangerous to your personal safety.

Safety in commercial passenger vehicles is something that resonates with me personally and which I am extremely passionate about. This is why I spoke earlier about why the passage of this legislation needed to be expedited and treated with some urgency. I am disappointed that those opposite have made light of public safety in this instance; I have to say I feel quite personally aggrieved by that, and this is why.

In 2009 I found myself in a taxi with a driver who was refusing to take me home. He was insisting on sexual favours. As the trip went on and I had no way of exiting the cab safely, and as my phone's battery drained and eventually died, I felt incredibly vulnerable. Meanwhile he kept refusing to take me home. That driver used his shield around his driver's seat to his advantage and grabbed my left arm when I was sitting behind him. He was protected by the plastic from any blows I may have been able to land from my right. He licked and kissed me and refused to let me go.

Eventually I pulled free and ran from the taxi, but he got out as well and he intercepted me around the back of the car, grabbing both wrists and pushing me into the back of the taxi. I had — thank God — a very heavy backpack with me that day, and it was slung over one shoulder. Because of the weight of that bag I was able to swing and break his grip, and then I ran. He followed for a short distance and then obviously worked out that it was not worth it. I ended up in a police station reporting the encounter and so I went through another pretty awful process, made somewhat easier by some fantastic police officers whose assistance I remain deeply grateful for.

I do not know if that particular driver had any priors; it was extremely difficult for the police to locate him. But having been on the receiving end of some pretty threatening actions, I understand well the importance of ensuring as best we can the safety of passengers in commercial passenger vehicles. If we know certain individuals pose a threat, they should not be able to occupy these positions, full stop. It is that simple.

It is important that we rectify this anachronism that allows these dangers and which is ultimately a provision that puts the very safety of passengers at serious risk, and that is why we seek to repeal section 159.

I also want to make the point that the amendment in this bill is not relevant to considerations about ridesharing, despite what those opposite will try to tell us. It is misleading, it is fearmongering, it is all the things that we know they do frequently and it is, quite frankly, getting boring. The government is continuing to work on ridesharing; we know that. The minister is working through details in the interests of passenger safety, access, fairness and equity to existing operators. To pretend this is a simple matter, as those opposite do, would be foolish. It is complex and it is important that we get it right. There are significant dangers to rushing in or acting impulsively, and I think the different approaches across Australia — the lack of legislation across Australia — demonstrates this pretty well.

There will be separate legislation to address ridesharing in time, but not in this bill today. I think to confuse the two is disingenuous. But independently and unrelated to that, this bill is necessary and therefore it would be unconscionable to postpone these amendments and put Victorians at risk by doing so. I would have thought that those opposite would be keen to ensure that others do not have the same kind of experience that I did. Many have, with worse outcomes than that which I experienced. I would have thought those opposite would have been pretty eager to ensure those sorts of things do not happen to people getting into a taxi or hire car if they can be prevented.

As representatives in this place we should ensure that we do all we can to make sure that we do not actively make that possible. Lingering and allowing this provision in the act to remain so those opposite can politick and have fun is absolutely unconscionable. It is disappointing that public safety is clearly not a priority for those opposite. As I said, the mindless and petty politicking that prevails over meaningful and sensible reform is absolutely unconscionable. But, again, it is what I have come to expect from those opposite.

This is an issue about public safety. It is about making sure that we continue to prevent people with serious criminal records from driving taxis or hire cars. It would be negligent to allow this to continue for any length of time so the decision has been made to rectify it as a matter of urgency, and that is, without doubt, the right decision. To be clear, this bill is not about ridesharing and it is not about Uber. It is about ensuring public safety and taking that seriously.

I note that the Victorian Taxi Association (VTA) supports this bill and recognises the risks posed by retaining section 159 for any further length of time. The VTA CEO David Samuel stated:

... we do not want people convicted of serious —

sexual —

offences to be in the position where they are able to offer commercial passenger vehicle services ...

And that is right.

I thank the Minister for Public Transport for her work in getting this bill introduced in the quickest possible time following the advice we received after the recent County Court decision. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — This is a bill about passenger safety, but it is also a bill about ridesharing. I take strong exception to the remarks of the member for Dandenong, who suggested that this side of the house is raising false concerns or is wrong in suggesting that the bill is about ridesharing. The bill before the house applies equally to the taxi industry, hire cars and those engaged in ridesharing. For months now the government has allowed what is in effect a two-tiered system to operate in the public transport sector — the first being the regulated taxis and hire cars and the second being the unregulated Uber. Frankly, it is really only because this recent Brenner decision in the County Court has implications for the regulated sector of taxis and hire cars that the bill has come before the house.

As we in the opposition have said repeatedly both in this chamber and publicly, we fully support the objective of protecting community safety, and we take great exception to the suggestion to the contrary, but at the same time as protecting community safety we need to make sure that this does not have unintended consequences for ridesharing while the government continues to take its time in coming up with a policy decision to deal with ridesharing. That has been the position that various opposition speakers have put in

earlier debates today and that the lead opposition speaker has put in debate on this bill.

We need an outcome that will ensure that action can be taken to exclude those persons who are unsuitable to be taxidriviers or hire car drivers or indeed to participate in ridesharing activities while at the same time not slamming the brakes on Uber or pre-empting the legal position and legal rights of the people engaged in Uber or other ridesharing activities. That is the outcome that we on this side wish to achieve. We believe it is achievable, but it will take some goodwill and common sense from the government side of the house in order to achieve it. The remarks of the member for Dandenong do nothing to promote a sound and reasonable outcome. Fortunately, the Minister for Public Transport has been more willing to engage with us in seeking a sensible outcome, and certainly we on this side remain willing to engage with the government in the course of this debate, in discussions with the minister and, if necessary, in the other place.

The Brenner decision is an interesting one. It is based on a particular interpretation of section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983. The conclusion of the learned judge in that case is not one that all legal experts agree with. If an appeal proceeds to the Court of Appeal, it will be very interesting to see what the outcome of that appeal is. But in the meantime, as I referred to earlier, even though the Brenner case related to ridesharing, it has broader implications for the capacity to regulate all aspects of vehicle public transport, including taxis and hire cars.

In the broader context of this bill, what we need in Victoria, and what we have needed for a long time, is a regime that is open to and that facilitates new and innovative forms of service provision to the community, such as Uber or other ridesharing activities, while at the same time being fair to those who have operated for many years in the regulated sector and have made very large financial commitments in order to do so. It should not be beyond the capacity of government to resolve these matters and bring forward a package of legislation to the house. We have seen it done in other jurisdictions; it should not be beyond the capacity of the Victorian government to do likewise. Arguably, if the government had acted a lot earlier and with a lot more commitment and diligence in this area, there would have been a broader regulatory package on the statute books and this issue would not have arisen.

The Premier has a lot to say about supporting innovation, particularly when he is overseas, but my understanding is that the Premier has never in fact met

with representatives from Uber. If that is so, it is perhaps a sign of his lack of genuine commitment to exploring those opportunities. That is of course in stark contrast with this side of the house, where the Leader of the Opposition has for a long time now recognised that if Victoria is to have a productive, thriving, innovative and progressive economy, we have to have a regime that is open to new forms of service delivery such as Uber, Airbnb and others while at the same time, as I said, ensuring that those who have a considerable and very legitimate financial commitment in the existing regulated sector are treated in a just and fair way.

This side of the house has been leading in the calls for reform in relation to ridesharing and the huge potential benefits it can bring to individuals and to businesses in the community as well as making a contribution to reinforcing Victoria as an open and innovative place in which to do business. It is regrettable that the government has not been able to get its package of reforms to the Parliament up until now, both for the sake of on the one hand providing certainty to new and innovative businesses such as Uber or other ridesharers and on the other hand providing certainty and protection to taxidriviers, taxi owners and operators and others whose livelihoods and financial investments have been put in limbo by the government's inaction in this area.

We certainly look forward to further discussions with the government. We believe there is a way in which community safety can be properly protected under this bill, while at the same time preserving the status quo in relation to Uber and other ridesharing services until either the matter is resolved in the Court of Appeal or the government's ridesharing reforms at last see the light of day.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — It gives me pleasure to speak on the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016. Before I commence my contribution I just want to acknowledge the courage of the member for Dandenong in sharing a personal contribution, because it is through such personal stories that we get a far more insightful understanding and view of why these things are important.

To be clear, for me this bill is about public safety. It is about cleaning up a problem of the past. Essentially this bill arises from the result of the recent County Court case that other members have talked about where the accused was essentially acquitted — in my interpretation — because of a technicality. The legal advice that we have gives us cause for concern, and this is why the bill is before the house. It effectively has

serious implications in that the regulator does not appear to have the power to prevent drivers who have been convicted of serious criminal offences, including, as we have heard, sexual offences, from driving a taxi or hire car.

The advice is that section 159 of the principal act should be immediately repealed. I think the judge referred to it as a 'historical artefact' — my word is 'anachronistic' — and that is why it is important that we do this. As the member for Dandenong said, nothing stops a person who has been convicted in a way that would otherwise disqualify them from being registered as a taxi or hire car driver from getting behind the wheel if they are driving two or more passengers. It is a really strange distinction, but that is the distinction we are talking about.

This is not about ridesharing regulation, and I acknowledge the opposition's support on this important bill. Ridesharing needs fuller and more comprehensive investigation than the time allocated for this bill allows. This bill just fixes one very important issue concerning public safety, but of course the opposition has jumped onto it as a reason to re prosecute an argument about why we have not got to ridesharing regulation yet.

I want to make a couple of quick comments about taxidriviers and hire car drivers generally, and I know many of them. The overwhelming majority are law-abiding, responsible, effective businesspeople and workers who do not go around causing concern for their passengers. This legislation obviously covers the small number of drivers who are a cause of concern to the community. I think there are over 5000 taxidriviers in Victoria. There are probably more, but there are 5000 licences, and more when you include the hire car drivers. Generally they are law-abiding and effective workers who pride themselves on the work they do.

While I said this legislation was not about ridesharing, and it is not, I cannot resist the temptation to respond to some of the comments made by the opposition. As I said, ridesharing is a complex issue that requires detailed and separate consideration. I do not think it is reasonable to come to this chamber and just say, 'Regulate ridesharing' without looking at the other side of the same coin, which is a fair deal for taxidriviers and hire car drivers who have over many years invested in getting Victorians around, including the most needy Victorians in terms of those with physical or other disabilities, people with concession cards and a whole range of others such as those covered by the multipurpose taxi program, and taking into account all the work the industry has done over many years to support Victorians in the essential service of

commercial car provision. You cannot not address those issues. You cannot just say, 'You need to regulate ridesharing'. Of course we need to regulate ridesharing. We know that, and the minister has stated that.

I also want to address a point made by the manager of opposition business. Victoria is not last — I think he asked, 'Why does Victoria have to be last?'. Victoria is rarely last on anything under this government; in fact we lead the way on most things. I know that sounds parochial, but it is so true. Just to demonstrate that point — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — That is right. Queensland has actually legislated to crack down on Uber, ahead of further consideration. The Northern Territory has announced it will ban Uber. New South Wales, to which people often refer, last year said it would provide for ridesharing, but six months later there is no legislation. South Australia has announced that it will provide for ridesharing — again it has said it 'will provide for ridesharing' but has not put forward any legislation.

Uber has said it will not accept the intent of the legislation. Western Australia and Tasmania have announced they will provide for ridesharing. Have members noticed the future-focused language around this? It is not about them having done it five years ago. The ACT is the only jurisdiction to have put forward legislation providing for ridesharing. Victoria is not last. We want to do it well. We want to do it effectively. We want to do it recognising all the things that the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport have said about a level playing field and a fair and reasonable approach. I think that is absolutely the way to go.

Again I commend the opposition's support for this bill, but that being said, I want to also remind those opposite that they have zero credibility when it comes to the taxi industry in this state. I had taxi owners expressing red-hot anger to me during the last state election campaign, as they have done ever since, about the absolute decimation of the industry by those opposite, who now talk about how important it is to regulate ridesharing. While this bill is not about ridesharing, it gives rise to questions about it. I support ridesharing. I think it should be regulated. I have a particular view about a company that does not pay tax, does not obey laws and, as ABC radio presenter Jon Faine said, comes into a jurisdiction and says, 'We'll set up shop, thanks very much, and you catch up when you can, democratically elected legislature'. I do not think that is an appropriate way to conduct a business. Anyone who respects the

laws of the country or state they operate in will have my business, and until Uber does so, it will not.

I just want to quote quickly an article by James Robertson in the *Sydney Morning Herald* headed 'Why you were wrong to mock woman who paid \$720 for Uber'. This article was published several months ago when the Uber price surging issue came to light. The quote is:

Ordering an Uber does not make you a participant in guerilla war against the establishment. It makes you a client of a \$63 billion global monolith backed by venture capital.

Its triumph is going to give it freer rein to set the price of our rides and determine the way in which that happens.

It's worth thinking again whether that's something we ought to be so glib about.

I mention this only for the following reason: this is far more complex than those glib calls to regulate seem to give light to. This is far more complex for the taxi industry and for ridesharing. People do have a right to rideshare, absolutely. I acknowledge that a lot of Victorians support ridesharing, but it is far more complex than just calling for regulation.

In conclusion, I strongly support this bill. I think it is important, and I am glad the opposition also supports it. The bill is important for every single passenger who takes a taxi or a hire car, and that includes UberBLACK, from this day forward in a context where there is more than one passenger in that vehicle and in relation to their ability to remain safe and the state's ability to regulate the drivers carrying those people. I wish this bill a very speedy passage through the Parliament.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I rise to make some comments about the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Amendment (Public Safety) Bill 2016. Members of the government have been talking about the fact that ridesharing, particularly when we talk about driver safety and public safety, is not really part of this bill and also about the fact that Victoria is actually not behind when it comes to ridesharing. We have just heard the member for Oakleigh state that there are many jurisdictions that have not done anything when it comes to ridesharing. I would like to correct the record for the member for Oakleigh by saying that there are in fact a number of jurisdictions that have led the way and have left Victoria right at the back when it comes to ridesharing and innovation. We can talk the talk but we cannot walk the walk when it comes to innovation here in Victoria.

Examples such as the ACT, Tasmania and New South Wales, whose Parliament is introducing legislation this week on ridesharing, show that other states are acting when it comes to ridesharing and sadly Victoria is being left sadly behind. It is interesting that we would have the Premier of this state head over to America on a trip, travel around in his jeans, his suit jacket and his open-necked shirt like he is Bill Gates himself, and talk up innovation and start-ups — a bit like the member in the other house, also in his jeans and his open-necked shirts, who was talking up start-ups and innovation — but of course when it comes to actually doing anything about it, this is a classic case of a government that is completely missing in action when it comes to innovation. We have good people wanting to get out there, have a go and create jobs for themselves instead of relying on taxpayer money to do this.

Mr Dimopoulos — They should pay tax.

Mr SOUTHWICK — The member for Oakleigh says they should pay tax. Well, if we legislated to allow them to be legalised here in terms of operating in Victoria, we would have the ability to have something going. That is exactly the point in terms of missed opportunity. We have a group out there that is being completely left on the side. All we are doing is fining it, but we are not finding a way to actually allow it to trade here in Victoria.

The member for Dandenong gave a very heartrending account of a personal situation in which, again, an assault took place in a taxi, highlighting why we need to have protection when it comes to this sort of transport. It is another example of why we need ridesharing legislation. We cannot be dragging our heels. The government has had 15 months to introduce ridesharing legislation, and it has done nothing. It has turned its back on Uber. It has turned its back on the taxi industry. It is doing nothing, saying, 'We need more time'. It needs more time so it can continue to have an unregulated market and so it can still have a situation of uncertainty. When there is uncertainty, there is the potential for a lack of safety. That is why we need the government to act and to do something.

The member for Oakleigh was talking about how we are not at the back when it comes to this sort of stuff with innovation. Another example: in South Australia driverless cars are being trialled by Google. Again, this government is doing nothing when it comes to looking at the way forward when it comes to innovation. It has a plan to create 100 000 jobs. These are the sorts of situations where we can create jobs and where we can give people the opportunity to take up a way of being able to create an income for themselves.

I have met many Uber drivers in my travels, and the great thing that you talk about is the fact that they are creating an income for themselves, that they are up for the next business opportunity and that they have pride in what they do. They have pride in what they do because of the model of being rated and monitored while they travel from pick-up to drop-off time. This model uses technology that is, unfortunately, far ahead of the current regulated marketplace. In fact there are many families that are choosing to send their children in an Uber because they know that their children are monitored from the time that Uber picks them up until the time they are dropped off.

When it comes to safety, as the member for Dandenong points out, the market is taking care of itself in terms of a lot of this sort of thing because the protection and the technology allows it. This is the sort of technology that should be used not just in the ridesharing industry but in the taxi industry as well. There is an opportunity lost here because this government is missing in action when it comes to ridesharing. The legislation we have before the house is a missed opportunity to talk about ridesharing.

In my remaining minutes I just want to point out the case of Uber driver Nathan Brenner, who won his landmark appeal. Mr Brenner, who used to manage rock groups Men at Work and Split Enz, was one of the dozens of drivers charged by the Taxi Services Commission. He is also a constituent. He has been to my office in the past. He is also a great example of somebody who has gone out there and said, 'Well, I want to earn an income. I want to get a job. I am going to do this, and this is going to be my way forward'. Mr Brennan went out and did things thinking he was doing the right thing. In fact he was doing the right thing in many instances, as we now see in terms of this appeal. But he was fined \$900 in his battle with the Taxi Services Commission. His conviction was overturned because it was wrong, and because of that there is this uncertainty that this bill addresses.

So congratulations to people like Nathan Brenner who stood up against this government and said, 'It is wrong for me to be targeted because I am going out there and actually trying to create a job — to create an income for myself'. This government needs to actually do something, stop talking about innovation, stop going out there and opening other people's businesses who are actually doing the work themselves. They do not need the government to turn up and cut another ribbon; they need the government to get out of the way and do something, to provide some legislation in this chamber that is actually going to be forward thinking and that will give the opportunity to people like Nathan Brenner

to operate in a legalised framework that provides safety and security for all Victorians.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to join the debate. I was listening with interest to the member for Caulfield's contribution, and in many ways what he said made eminently perfect sense. I say that because if you were to take the point of view of a consumer, you would say, 'Of course, it's the private sector, and disruptive business models are becoming increasingly common'. We have gone from always buying our books from, say, Collins to now buying more of our books on Book Depository. It is just a function of a modern society — a modern, dynamic, global economy. Of course you would say that consumers should have the right and the freedom to choose how they wish to procure goods and services. But what the member for Caulfield fails to appreciate or acknowledge is the fact that this particular market is a regulated market, and it has been regulated by the state government of Victoria for decades.

Why that is important is that we have had in our society and in our community people who were first-generation migrants, who started to drive taxis in, say, the 1960s and 1970s and who through their sheer hard work were able to build a life for themselves and for their families, and create wealth — real wealth. They may have, for example, said, 'Well, I'm going to shell out some money that I have saved to buy a set of taxi plates'. They might then have bought a second lot of taxi plates. They may have had the cash to do so; they may have been very fortunate in the way they ran their business, but in many cases they would have had to go to the bank.

They would have had to go to the bank and say, 'I require capital to buy this asset in order for me to grow my business'. That is fair and reasonable. Why would you not do that? Based upon the fact that it is a regulated market, that there is a known number of plates in the market, a known population and a guaranteed tariff, if you were a banker, you would look at that and you would say, 'Well, that sounds fair and reasonable. You want to borrow half a million bucks to buy a set of plates to operate in a regulated market where you are going to get a fixed return, and you pay off that half million dollars over 30 years? Of course; why wouldn't you?'. It would make eminent sense.

The problem — and what the member for Caulfield fails to appreciate — is that there are many families in our community now who borrowed money in good faith and who purchased an asset in good faith because they had regulatory certainty that they could repay that debt incurred. What Uber has done is basically throw

that model out of the window and say, 'It's all a brave new world'. So those people who may have borrowed half a million dollars to run a business in good faith and to service that debt over the life of 30 years are now in a position where they might have negative equity.

Mr Watt — Are you against Uber? Do you want to get rid of Uber?

Mr PEARSON — The member for Burwood pipes up, 'Do you want to get rid of Uber?'. I will speak slowly so he understands. This is complicated. It is not simple. It takes time. Do you understand?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PEARSON — I would have thought that the party that purports to support small business might have some sympathy for those who have gone out and borrowed money to build a life. It is just appalling!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PEARSON — You are a bunch of economic hillbillies! Fair dinkum. You are an absolute disgrace! Have some empathy.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PEARSON — Have some empathy for those who have gone out and borrowed money in good faith on a regulated asset that is now worth less than when they borrowed. You are an absolute disgrace!

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Blandthorn) — Order! The member for Essendon is entitled to be heard in silence.

Mr PEARSON — Honestly, I would have thought the party of small business might have had some empathy for those who have borrowed money in good faith to run a small business and now find themselves in a set of circumstances where they are struggling to repay it or that there may be a problem in repaying that debt. I would have thought there would be some empathy there. Clearly the member for Burwood has no empathy, he has no understanding and he has no appreciation.

The point I am trying to make is that this is actually a very complicated area, and it requires time and consideration. The interesting thing I find is that I do not think anyone can name a perfect model in the rest of the world. I do not think there is a model in a particular jurisdiction that has done it better. There is no jurisdiction — —

Mr Watt — If it is complicated, why are you rushing it through?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Blandthorn) — Order! The member for Burwood!

Mr PEARSON — Because we are talking about passenger safety, member for Burwood, particularly in relation to the repeal of section 159, as a consequence of a recent County Court decision. Honestly, I think the village wants its idiot back! And I hope the record reflects that.

The reality is that we have to move quickly now because we are trying to protect the safety of consumers in relation to using taxis and hire cars. The reality is that we need to make sure that the Taxi Services Commission can actually do its job to properly regulate this market and make sure that convicted sex offenders or people who have got a criminal conviction cannot now be employed as drivers. It is about the safety of passengers. I am not sure if the member for Burwood was in here earlier when the member for Dandenong made her contribution, but I would have thought that might have elicited a degree of appreciation and understanding in relation to the way in which people have been made to feel unsafe. We need to address that.

I am pleased, despite the mutterings and murmurings and the comments from the member for Burwood, that the opposition has recognised and appreciated the fact that this is a piece of legislation that requires the urgent attention of this place and the other place and that we are seeking to ensure that we are in a position where we can ensure that passengers will be able to procure these services safely and that the people who offer them are not convicted sex offenders and do not have a criminal conviction.

I think all of us have got people who are near and dear to us, people who may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons if they were picked up by a taxi. We would want to make sure that they are conveyed home safely and quickly, that there are no problems and that they are not the victim of an assault or an attack. I appreciate the fact that the opposition does recognise that and is working to address this quickly. The member for Caulfield in his contribution talked about ridesharing and said, 'Why aren't you addressing ridesharing now?'. I simply make the point that this is a complicated area. It requires careful consideration. When you have got people who have bought an asset in good faith, who have borrowed money — —

Mr Gidley interjected.

Mr PEARSON — Again, the voice from the IPA is saying, 'It's too hard'. Why does the member hate small business? The member for the IPA is the anti-small business person. We want to make sure that people's assets are recognised and protected and that is what this — —

Mr Gidley — Coming from a government that's done close to nothing for two years on payroll tax!

Mr PEARSON — Let the record reflect that the member for Mount Waverley said this government has done nothing on payroll tax in the last 18 months. Can I just say: I have had the wonderful experience of sitting in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee for two weeks, so I would like to point out that we have increased the payroll tax threshold from \$550 000 to \$650 000 over the course of the next four years. Clearly the member for the IPA cannot read a set of budget papers. After six years this bloke is still stuck on the backbench. Why am I not surprised? The member for the IPA is innumerate and illiterate — he has got the quinella. It is extraordinary!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Blandthorn) — Order! The member for Essendon!

Mr PEARSON — I appreciate the fact that this is an important piece of legislation. It will be passed quickly. It is important to recognise, though, that we are protecting public safety, but in terms of the contributions made by those opposite I would again highlight the fact that this is a complicated area. It requires careful consideration, and there is no first-mover advantage in relation to this matter. I commend the bill.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — We in the Greens have carefully considered our position on this bill. In doing so we have weighed up the information that was provided to us by the minister and we have also tried to get information from other sources as much as we could in the short time that we were given. The Greens' very clear view is that Uber should be legalised and regulated, as should all ridesharing services. It is a complex matter, as many people have said. We must take into account passenger choice, passenger and driver safety, workers rights and fairness for drivers in the taxi industry as well as those in the ridesharing industry, and we must ensure that no company dodges their tax responsibilities.

It is a complex issue, but the government has had 15 months since the election and many years in opposition before that to develop its position, and Victoria does lag behind. The ACT has legalised

ridesharing — a Labor-Greens government with the excellent Greens minister, Shane Rattenbury, playing a role there. As other members have mentioned, Tasmania, New South Wales and other jurisdictions have moved in that direction as well. Yes, it is complex, but a lot of decisions that governments make are complex and these governments have been able to deal with it. We have had enough time, so I am disappointed, I guess, in seeing that Victoria has not moved in that direction.

The argument the minister has put to us is that we need to close a loophole to protect public safety and stop people driving cars or taxis who should not be doing so. Of course public safety is of paramount importance. As many other members would have been, I was moved by the story of the member for Dandenong when she related her account of a very dangerous taxidriver. I am very, very sorry that that happened to her, but what we are unclear about is whether this bill is just about public safety or whether it will do more than the minister is saying it will do — that it will actually outlaw Uber. In that case it is something that we could not support.

The government's rushing through of this bill means that we have not had time to properly consider its consequences, whether they be intended by the government or otherwise, and particularly the consequences for Uber. Because it was given to us very late last night we have not had time to seek our own independent advice on what this bill will actually do in practice. Instead of just bringing this bill to Parliament in isolation the government could have brought it to Parliament together with a bill to legalise and regulate Uber and other ridesharing services. I know the minister says that is coming, and I did note the Premier's comments in the United States about supporting the legalisation and regulation of ridesharing. I understand that the legislation was not ready in time, but surely 15 months in government and many years in opposition before that is enough time. This is not an issue that has just arrived in the last couple of weeks — the issue of Uber versus taxis or ridesharing versus the existing taxi industry. The issue has not just popped up; it is something that has been around for a long time, and I think government should see these kinds of issues coming down the line and deal with them.

I do not know if this is correct, but I have heard reports that Uber has tried to seek a meeting with the minister and the Premier in the last little while to talk to them. That may be incorrect. I would love some advice from the minister on whether that has happened or not, because, as I understand it, the minister has not been able to meet with Uber and neither has the Premier,

apart from one meeting in February 2015. I do not know if those claims are true, but if they are, I would ask why a meeting has not happened if the government does intend to move forward to actually regulate Uber and if it has good intentions.

I am a little bit unsure about the motives for the bill — if it is just for public safety or if it does have the intended consequence of outlawing Uber. But even if the motives are pure — and maybe they are — I am not convinced on the potential unintended consequences. The Greens will have another look at the bill before it comes to the upper house. We will have another briefing with the government tomorrow. I look forward to that and thank the minister for providing that briefing. In the meantime we will be considering our position before the bill comes to the upper house, but many of our concerns about the potential for outlawing Uber remain.

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I am pleased today to speak on this urgent legislation designed to protect both taxi and other hire car passengers in Victoria. This legislation is not about the regulatory framework that some people would like to see for Uber, myself included. I know from people in my electorate that people want that to happen, and I am confident, as the member for Melbourne just pointed out, that the Premier's comments in the United States indicate as much and that we will actually get to that point.

This bill is about an urgent need in that a recent decision of the County Court exposes the inadequacy of section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 — that is, the recent County Court decision brings into question the power of the relevant authorities to enforce existing taxi and, importantly, all hire car regulations. Under the existing Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act, all commercial passenger vehicles (CPV) are required to be licensed and all drivers must be accredited.

On 4 December 2015, Mr Brenner, as mentioned by others here today, was convicted in the Magistrates Court of driving an unlicensed CPV and driving without accreditation. He successfully appealed that decision to the County Court using section 159 of the act as his defence. The final paragraphs of the judgement handed down by His Honour Judge Chettle go to the crux of the matter, and I quote:

It is clear that the intention of s.158 is to capture the conduct of the appellant on 19 August 2014. But for the existence of s.159 I would have no problem finding the case proved.

However, s.159 must have a purpose. It preserves what historically was a defence to previous versions of the current s.158 —

that is —

... that the issue of separate and distinct fares has been removed as an element of offending in the current act. However, the concept has been preserved in s.159. Why that is so has been central to this appeal

I am satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the appellant was the owner of a commercial passenger vehicle that was operated in a relevant sense on 19 August 2014. Secondly, the operation was for hire or reward. Thirdly, the passengers carried by such a vehicle at the relevant time were not carried for reward as separate and distinct fares for each passenger. Fourthly, the appellant therefore has a defence to both charges by virtue of s.159 of the act.

This goes to the crux of the matter.

A dangerous loophole has been exposed through this decision. The County Court judgement undermines the regulation of commercial passenger vehicles, both taxis and other hire cars, under the transport act because it provides that if the accused is able to prove that each passenger did not pay a separate and distinct fare, then the vehicle is not a commercial passenger vehicle. Passengers in taxis and hire cars cannot be charged separate and distinct fares so the defence that has been construed is likely to be used successfully by all alleged offenders, whatever the offence may be.

The most serious implication of this potential loophole, and it is the most serious implications that I am concerned about in this debate today, is the power to prevent drivers convicted of serious criminal offences, including sexual offences, from driving a taxi or hire car in all of the circumstances. This is obviously a very serious situation with very serious implications, and this government is absolutely committed to urgently passing legislation through this house with the intention of addressing those serious implications as a matter of public safety.

This bill repeals section 159. It will remove this absurd defence, which is particularly important when we are dealing with rogue taxidriver. We know that there are rogue taxidrivers out there unfortunately. The County Court decision exposes a weakness in the legislation for dealing with them. It provides this absurd defence. Some of the examples of rogue drivers who have had a non-paying passenger and could claim such a defence include those people, particularly my constituents, who have written to me in support of Uber. One person wrote:

I have had so many bad experiences using regular taxis in Melbourne. I've had drivers flirt, watch me through the rear-view mirror, and even ask for my number. Another driver told me that my boyfriend was probably cheating on me and I should go out with him instead.

The worst experience of all was when my friend put me in the front seat in a taxi when I was drunk. (I never usually sit in the front. It doesn't feel safe.) When he arrived at my house, the driver leaned over and started kissing me. I was stunned. Putting me in a cab was supposed to keep me safe. Instead it just made me prey. My eyesight was too blurry to read his ID number (which they often remove I have noticed many times — they lend their cars out to family and friends and you don't know who is actually driving you). When I fled the car, he screeched off so I couldn't read his licence plate either. I was shaking and left my keys in the door, on a major road, because I was in shock.

Indeed when researching articles this morning, my electorate officer told me of a good friend of hers who was sexually assaulted by a taxidriver when he was driving on another taxidriver's license, and it took a long time for him to be tracked down.

There was also an article which appeared in the *Herald Sun*. A document attached to that article was headed 'How rogue Victorian taxidrivers are preying on female passengers', and it referred to an incident not in my electorate but quite close to it. It said:

The driver of the taxi offered to pick me and a friend up at around 3.45 a.m. on Saturday, 28 September, on Dawson Street, Brunswick, near the corner of Sydney Road. I was hesitant because I had a bike with me, and we were only a short trip from home. The driver insisted it was not a problem ... and I attempted to pay him \$10. The meter had not been running and he refused to take my money. I thought he was just being nice. However, he then started to question why I had been kissing my friend, and told me I should be with a nice man. He then asked me out on a date. I politely refused. He then asked if he could kiss me. I refused. He was quite insistent that I should and he refused to take my money and leave. It was only because I was holding my bike between him and me that I could stop him from getting any closer to me. After asking him nicely to leave several times, it was only with the threat of making a complaint or calling the police did he leave.

He was not physical; however, he was clearly trying to take advantage of a young woman who was intoxicated, and his actions were predatory. I was left feeling incredibly uncomfortable, and worried as he then knew where I lived.

In this case section 159 could have been used as a defence because not every passenger had paid their fare. So there are rogue taxidrivers out there, and that is why many people suggest that they are turning to Uber. One constituent wrote to me saying:

There are many reasons I choose to use Uber X instead of taxis ... to date I have not had any bad drivers, which I cannot say for taxidrivers.

Somebody else wrote:

Out of principle I now refuse to use the local taxi services as I don't wish to support that culture of behaviour.

That is not to say that newer car hire options, other commercial vehicle options, are not without concern. Indeed there was a Mamamia article which discussed the pros and cons of the taxi industry versus Uber and other types of cars. However, I think it is clear that all reasonable people accept that there needs to be a regulatory framework, but that is not what this bill is about. Some constituents have written to me suggesting that there should be sensible ridesharing regulations which address both the taxi industry and other commercial vehicle options that might be out there. But what is clear is that this bill is not about that. This bill is about the safety of people who are getting into vehicles at this point in time where there may be offenders driving those vehicles and ensuring that they do not have what is an unreasonable defence by virtue of there being a loophole in the legislation.

This urgent bill is all about public safety. It is about making sure that we keep our passengers safe. Section 159 has been a part of the act for decades and has existed through governments of both persuasions and the recent taxi industry inquiry. But what is clear from the decision of the judge in the County Court matter is that section 159 is a historical artefact. It was only due to the appeal in this case to the County Court that this was exposed. But it is important today, and it is important going forward, that we remove that loophole so that we can ensure the safety of all people who use commercial passenger vehicles, whether they be taxis or otherwise, and that we do so immediately in the interests of public safety.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I rise to make a very short contribution on this bill. It seems to me that there is a remarkable simplicity in a piece of legislation that repeals just one section. I have had the opportunity to be briefed by both the minister and her advisers. I have also had the opportunity of viewing the Solicitor-General's advice on this issue. My understanding is that the advice to government is that it should act immediately and that there are serious issues of public safety in not doing so. On the basis of that I am satisfied that I will support the bill.

I think there are many times in our lives when we are prompted to act in a very rushed manner and sometimes there are very good reasons for doing so. I know in my life I have often had to telephone the police to come and intervene in circumstances where family violence is taking place nearby.

It is very easy to slip into the mentality of, 'Look, it'll settle down. I shouldn't interfere. It won't matter if we wait another hour, another 2 hours, another week, another three weeks. I should not butt in'. While this is

not exactly that analogy, I think that when you are cautioned to act on something on an urgent basis or on the basis of strong legal advice, then you should do so. For those reasons I support the bill. I think there are many other issues around ridesharing and Uber that need to be addressed by this Parliament and our community more widely. We have aired those at great length this afternoon, but I do not see them as being relevant to this particular bill, and I think we should proceed with this bill promptly.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — In summing up the debate on the legislation, as I believe there are no further speakers on the bill, I start by thanking those members who spoke on the bill and thanking the Assembly more broadly for its support and cooperation in having this matter dealt with expeditiously today in this chamber to ensure it heads to the upper house by the end of today. Many members touched on the safety aspects of this, which obviously go to the issue of urgency, and again I thank members for their cooperation and seeing that that issue had pre-eminence when it came to this basket of goods that surrounds the taxi, hire car and ridesharing issue and that we needed to focus on that for a moment while we also consider the broader issues.

If I can just touch on those broader issues, many members spoke about wanting a bit of clarity, I think, both on the government's position around the regulation of ridesharing and also where that fits with the legislation we brought forward today. In terms of the impact of this bill on ridesharing in Victoria, the County Court decision of 18 May did not challenge the proposition that unless you are an accredited and licensed driver, you are outside the law in Victoria. As such, you could argue that UberX remains outside the law in Victoria.

The section we have been debating — section 159 of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 — was held to be a defence to all commercial passenger vehicle charges. The government's legal advice is that that decision is one that needs to be considered and appealed. The repeal of section 159 does not change the accreditation or licensing regime in Victoria as it applies to ridesharing services. That is the important distinction between the issues around what has happened with section 159 and the broader regime that applies to ridesharing. It removes the defence that would be available to taxi, hire car and ridesharing providers if prosecutions were brought against them.

I indicate to the house — this is something that I have had long conversations about with the shadow Minister for Public Transport, the member for Croydon, and the

manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, and I thank them for their conversations — that prosecutions currently underway in relation to ridesharing drivers and providers will be suspended unless and until the Court of Appeal has made a determination on the point of law in the Brenner case or there is a change to the legal regime. The government has announced already that it is on a pathway to regulating ridesharing, and the future enforcement regime will be one of the matters considered.

If I can pick up on one of the points made by the shadow minister, he made what I think was a pretty fair characterisation that he, on behalf of his collective opposition, did not want this to be seen as a backwards step on that pathway to regulating the industry. Indeed he wanted to get a sense from the government that it was on the upward trajectory, that it was marching forward. Can I say that we are certainly moving down a path to regulating ridesharing. We intend to come back in the future to the framework.

I have had the opportunity to talk to members today about the complexities that sit with that framework, and I think today's debate and discussion probably puts us in a great position for when we come back and have that conversation about the complexities with the legislation that regulation will require. It puts us in a good place to do that. I am limited as to what I can say further around what will happen between the passage of this bill in terms of prosecutions and when the government will announce further details around the regulation of ridesharing, but I can say to the opposition in particular that we understand very clearly its desire to ensure that this is moving forward down a regulatory path for ridesharing, not going backwards. I hope that can be made well understood.

There are some other issues. I think the member for Melbourne talked about wanting to better understand if there are any unintended consequences. Again, I understand the need for that additional information. There is going to be a follow-up briefing tomorrow morning on some of those issues to, I hope, secure support from members in the upper house for this to pass as quickly as possible. I also thank my department officials and representatives of the Taxi Services Commission who have done a lot of work over the last few days and weeks and who have been available to brief members of Parliament. That offer will continue to be available as we work through this and the basket of goods that comes with the complexities of taxi, hire car and ridesharing industry regulation.

There is a lot more work to be done in this space, but right now we need to deal with the very immediate and

urgent issue that has been brought about by section 159 being put in the spotlight and the problems that causes the commission in being able to do its work. I again thank members of the house for their cooperation and support today.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

BUDGET PAPERS 2016–17

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing):

That this house takes note of the budget papers 2016–17.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am really pleased to speak about the 2016–17 budget. Amongst all of the other business that has been going on in the house today I cannot think of a more exciting and interesting topic I would like to talk about. If I can start on how this has been a fantastic budget for the wonderful community of Bendigo East that I represent in this place. The budget provides a tremendous boost to public transport services, investment in roads in the growing Bendigo area and support for schools and jobs in our community. It is great to once again be a member of a Labor government that continues that tremendously strong support of investing in the regions. We have seen the way that places like Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Latrobe Valley and, in time to come, Shepparton, are growing and thriving as a result of a government that is backing them, backing their vision and backing it with investment.

I will start by bringing to the house's attention that there have been some great investments in my public transport portfolio in the electorate of Bendigo East and indeed in the central Victorian community. Like many areas in regional Victoria the Bendigo corridor will share in the delivery of extra off-peak services on the Bendigo line. Indeed Bendigo will be receiving 28 extra weekday train services between Bendigo and Melbourne. If anyone has caught trains recently in regional Victoria outside the off-peak times, they will have seen that they are also incredibly busy at those times and that there is growing demand for more train

services in the off-peak period. We have listened to that and we have delivered on that in this year's budget.

I would encourage those who want to learn more about these sorts of issues and demands that are coming up in regional Victoria to check out the Regional Network Development Plan that I had the pleasure of launching on Monday a week ago in Warragul. I have since had the chance to talk to the Shepparton, Wangaratta and Bendigo communities about the detail in the plan. Not only is this budget delivering now for the regions in public transport, it is also looking to the future. There is much more to come in terms of the need to do some planning work now to build on sustained investments into the future so we can continue to step forward with improvements to rail in regional Victoria.

As well as needing to put on more trains we have got to make sure passenger amenities are also keeping up to speed. That is why the budget has also provided \$16 million to upgrade the Bendigo and Eaglehawk train stations. We have many beautiful historic train stations across regional Victoria, but with that history come some contemporary challenges in terms of needing a modern train service and meeting the modern expectations of the services that people can find at train stations. So there is a significant amount of work to be done at both of those stations. Work is already underway in terms of some master planning and development, and I look forward to very soon releasing the master plan for the Eaglehawk train station. Again, as we are putting on extra services for those communities we are making sure that the station services and amenities keep up.

The Bendigo corridor will also share in the extra train carriages. In this year's budget this government has funded and put on an extra 27 train carriages, which builds on the 21 VLocity carriages that it funded in last year's budget, bringing to a grand total of 48 the number of train carriages that the Andrews Labor government has funded in its first two budgets. I ask you, Acting Speaker, how many train carriages did the former Liberal-Nationals government fund in its first two budgets? Was it 48? Was it 20? Was it 15? Was it 5? I can tell you that it was zero. It was zero. So we have turned that ship around. We have turned that around, and we now have in our first two budgets 48 extra train carriages on order. Do you know what also makes it special? They are made right here in Melbourne — right here in Victoria. They are manufactured out at Bombardier in the electorate of Dandenong, and I have been out there many times. It is great to see what you can achieve when you have got a government that is investing in train services and in rolling stock and is making sure that its local content

requirements are there to be manufactured here in Victoria.

I also mentioned that there were some big investments in this budget for roads in Bendigo.

Ms Ward interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I am really pleased to hear the member for Eltham's enthusiasm for road funding in the Bendigo area. It is great to hear that enthusiasm. We made an election commitment in 2010 to duplicate the Midland Highway, or Napier Street as it is known locally, between Weeroona Avenue and Scott Street. We made that commitment in 2010 because the northern corridor in Bendigo was growing rapidly. Four years later we came back and made exactly the same commitment because those opposite in government did nothing in terms of addressing the busiest road corridor in Bendigo. They did nothing to address the growing demand and the congestion that has been caused on that road. I was so pleased that not only did we make that election commitment and not only am I proud as the member for Bendigo East to be delivering that commitment but we have secured \$30.4 million in this year's budget to get the job done. Now, it is a complex job. Duplicating one of the busiest streets in Bendigo is going to cause some disruption, and we will see those works start in 2017, but it will also be an important project to keep pace with the growing needs of the Bendigo community.

Another rapidly growing area of Bendigo is of course the community of Strathfieldsaye, where there are also many traffic challenges. Another example of shocking neglect in that community was the neglect by the previous government in not addressing the notorious intersection of Strathfieldsaye Road and Tannery Lane. This year's budget provides \$4.5 million to address this intersection and to look at the best traffic solution. There will be some concept designs released shortly to the local community, because we think they should also have their say in how some of these road issues are to be addressed in their local community.

I have talked about transport, but let me talk about that other really important area of investment for regional communities, which is of course schools. It is just so great to once again be able to visit schools in my electorate and talk about positive investments — not about cuts and closures like we have too often under Liberal-Nationals governments but to talk positively about investments in schools. As part of that record investment for regional school communities that the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education has driven through the budget process, I was so thrilled to visit

Spring Gully Primary School on budget day and meet with the principal to talk about how the school has secured planning funding so that it can do the work that it needs to do and put in place the plans to secure future funds in years ahead to get capital works done at the school.

Spring Valley is another example of some of the pressures of growth we have in our regional areas. It is a growing community, it is a great school, and I look forward to working with them on that planning work. Of course there was also that great occasion of the announcement of \$4.3 million that has been secured for stage I of the new Kalianna School Bendigo. Kalianna is a great school with great staff who are passionate and committed and who need new, modern facilities for the very strong work they do with students with special needs. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, the member for Bundoora, has some knowledge of this. He has done great policy work in this area with the Minister for Education, and members of the school community certainly had a great celebration when they heard they were securing those funds for stage I.

It comes hot on the heels of funding for Bendigo Senior Secondary College and the establishment of a tech school for Bendigo. Bendigo is one of the 10 locations around Victoria where a tech school will be housed. Funding was also made available in the budget for another area that is about supporting jobs and the life of the Bendigo community, and that was the \$7 million for the Bendigo arts precinct. I think it is now becoming very well understood that Bendigo is, I am going to claim, the cultural capital of regional Australia.

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Ms ALLAN — Are you making a claim for Wonthaggi down there?

Mr D. O'Brien — No, I don't represent Wonthaggi.

Ms ALLAN — No? Who do you represent down there? Sale? Are you making a claim for Sale? I am going to strongly disagree with the member for Gippsland South in that I think Bendigo might have a little bit of an edge on Sale, as much as Sale is a fantastic community. Indeed I should say we have a terrific network of regional art galleries in Victoria. I think it is one of the unsung strengths of regional Victoria's ability to attract tourists. You can go to many of what would be called 'country towns' by city folk, and go to their art galleries and see wonderful collections, and they do bring many tourists into those towns.

I think there is that very strong understanding now that the creative industries, as they are now known, are incredibly important and add great value to our vibrant regional Victorian community, but they also bring with it many jobs through the many tourists that visit those towns. They are attractive because of the cultural facilities and the jobs that they bring through those facilities to the retail and hospitality precincts, and that further enriches the creative activity that is going on in those centres.

This is a really exciting policy area, and the Minister for Creative Industries is doing some really exciting work with the release of Australia's first ever creative industries strategy. It is just terrific, and I am so pleased that Bendigo was able to secure \$7 million to develop the arts precinct and to further entrench its position as the cultural capital of regional Australia. It has been a tremendously exciting budget for Bendigo and central Victoria.

I should also mention something that was announced before the budget, which is on the very northern tip of my electorate, and that is the support that the government has provided for what is known as the South Loddon pipeline, connecting the water grid across northern Victoria. It is known as the missing link of the water grid, and this is a part of the state that is really struggling with the drought and has been for a couple of years now. I remember the communities of Wedderburn and those areas first met with me a few years ago and started talking about the need for this connecting pipeline to be constructed, and it was great to see that gain support through \$20 million from the Andrews Labor government — in fact I think it was \$40 million. I will have to go back and check my numbers.

Mr Edbrooke — It is a big amount anyway.

Ms ALLAN — It is a big amount — thank you for that save, member for Frankston. It is great news for those communities and further entrenches the great work that was done by previous Labor governments in investing in the water grid. The work was done under former Premier John Brumby and others in the past because they understood the need to invest in the water infrastructure to ensure that when communities are hit with drought we are not seeing water wasted and indeed we are putting in place opportunities to help those communities through those really tough times.

There are so many areas where the budget and the different portfolios have touched the Bendigo community in a really strong and positive way, and if you are coming into Bendigo to see the Marilyn

exhibition at the Bendigo Art Gallery, I would encourage you to drive past the wonderful construction that is going on at the Bendigo Hospital. That hospital was started by the Labor government, and it will be finished by the Labor government, and it will mean a massive investment in infrastructure. It is bringing a tremendous number of construction jobs, but into the future it will serve the communities of Bendigo and northern Victoria so well. It means that tertiary hospital services will be available to people much closer to home. It will be great for Bendigo, but it will also be great for people who live further afield — people who live in Kerang or Cohuna or Swan Hill, who will be able to travel to Bendigo for their medical services rather than having to travel all the way to Melbourne. It reduces a little further that stress on families when they have difficult times if a member of the family is sick and it is compounded by needing to travel long distances.

I have spent a vast amount of my time today talking about the wonderful budget initiatives for Bendigo East. That is not to suggest that I am not incredibly proud of the tremendous support that we have received through the budget for the public transport portfolio. I think it is pretty well documented now that the Andrews Labor government has secured every single dollar it needs to build the metro tunnel. It has all been delivered in this year's budget, and that is terrific. It means we were able to go out the day after the budget and release the tender material for the major construction piece — the construction of the twin 9-kilometre tunnels and 5 station boxes — a massive public-private partnership project that is again going to deliver jobs. Yes, it is going to cause some disruption through the streets of Melbourne, and we are going to have to all work together through that period of time, but it is a project that is going to transform our city and our public transport service. It is a project that is needed for all of Victoria's public transport network, and I am so proud that it is the Andrews Labor government that is investing in these projects for Victoria's future.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I, too, am pleased to finally get a chance to speak on the take-note motion on the budget, but before I do I welcome my colleague the federal member for Mallee in the gallery, along with a number of his friends and supporters from the Mallee region. It was good to hear the member for Bendigo East acknowledge that there is land beyond Bendigo. Generally from the Labor Party we only hear about Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, but the federal member for Mallee is of course doing a great job up there and we wish him all the best for the forthcoming federal election.

I want to briefly pick up the member for Bendigo East on a couple of things she said. She talked about the regional network development plan, and I am actually wondering if anyone on that side can tell me what the theme of the budget was this year. Was it 'Getting It Done', was it? That is right. I saw that slogan 'Getting It Done'. We were all looking forward to the regional network development plan coming out, which would outline a great new plan for the regional rail and bus services, but when it came out last week it crossed my mind that perhaps rather than 'Getting It Done', the theme for the regional network development plan should have been 'Having a little bit of a think about it', because that is really what it was all about. It was a lovely glossy brochure which highlighted a lot of things that the coalition government committed to at the last election, so 18 months down the track the government has come up with a few new ideas that it has pinched from the previous coalition government, but the rest of it was a whole lot of generic stuff that 'We think we might do in the future sometime'. So it was very disappointing from that perspective.

But on the budget itself, while I am talking about it, there was nothing beyond Traralgon in Gippsland as far as rail and bus services are concerned. Again, there were some vague promises that 'We might put some money towards planning for duplication of parts of the line', but the Stratford bridge certainly was not done, and there are no additional services if you happen to live beyond the major regional centres. As The Leader of The Nationals said, this budget just highlighted the fact that the further you live from Melbourne under Labor, the less you get.

It is not all bad, though; I have to confess it is not all bad. The budget, I must say, was a bit like watching your footy team play in a draw, because you walked away ultimately disappointed, but it could have been worse. From my perspective in the electorate of Gippsland South, there were some good things that I have been working on very strongly with the community over the past 12 months, having been elected in a by-election in March 2015, and probably the no. 1 community win of those was the funding of the new Yarram Primary School — \$4 million allocated to rebuild the primary school through the great work of the community. I tabled a petition a few months before the budget with over 900 signatures on it. The principal, Penny Earle, her staff and the school council have done a fantastic job over a number of years.

I must say there has been a little bit of criticism: 'Well, we delivered it — and you had four years and you did nothing'. I might add that Yarram Primary School was

highlighted by the department as being in need of rebuilding in the late 1990s, and we had Labor governments in power from 1999 through to 2010. It took until 2007 for the then Labor government to invite Yarram Primary School to put in a bid for funding for a new school, and where did it go? Nowhere. It had another three years in government but failed to even put forward money for a business plan for design and development works for Yarram Primary School. It was through the efforts of my predecessor that the now member for Nepean provided funding in our last budget for that design and development work, which enabled the now Labor government to come in on top of that, having not funded it in last year's budget, and provide the funding for the Yarram Primary School rebuild in this year's budget.

I give the Minister for Education credit on that one; he has worked with me over time. There were a few times when the department really wanted to shunt it off and not have anything happen. I am pleased that that has now been delivered. We look forward to that project getting underway later this year.

Equally, there is the Macalister irrigation district (MID) phase IA upgrade, which is a continuation of the MID 2030 program, with \$20 million committed previously by the government as part of the port of Melbourne lease transaction — again, a connection that I have said a number of times in this place did not need to be made. The previous government funded the first phase of the MID upgrade project without any qualifications, but ultimately with agreement on the port of Melbourne lease that will now proceed, so it was pleasing to see that in the budget.

The other one — and the minister and previous speaker spoke about it — is water projects. I also have been fighting for a long time for funding for the northern towns project, which connects the towns of Korumburra, Loch, Nyora and Poowong to the Lance Creek Reservoir and if necessary to the Melbourne system via the Cardinia Reservoir in the future. I emphasise here, as I have done many times, that that does not require the desalination plant to be switched on, but connecting to Lance Creek, which is a bigger storage, will provide water security to those towns which are growing and have growing businesses — in particular, Burra Foods and GBP Exports, the abattoir at Poowong.

What is concerning is that the business case for the northern towns project was delivered to the coalition government I think in November — or, at the earliest, October — of 2014, clearly too late for us to fund it in a budget. But the ask at that stage was for about

\$20 million from the coalition government, so it is rather alarming that in just 18 short months the project's size and scope had blown out so considerably that now \$30 million is being provided by the government. I do wonder about the cost of that project, but I am absolutely pleased that it has been delivered. Of course it has rained quite a bit in that area since the announcement, but nonetheless the longer term water supply for Korumburra, Loch, Nyora and Poowong and the businesses in those towns is certainly important.

There were three good things, but there was also plenty of bad. Despite all the crowing over yonder about the education spend, Korumburra Secondary College is in desperate need of a rebuild. The previous coalition government funded the stage 1 at \$5.6 million and committed a further \$9 million going into the election. But in two budgets now there has been no further funding for Korumburra Secondary College. That is one that continues to be an issue and that I will continue to keep fighting for. Likewise the completion of the rebuild at Leongatha Secondary College — there is no funding for that.

Three of the town fire brigades in my electorate have been desperately fighting for new fire stations but, alas, there is no money for these stations. I have raised this with the minister. I have written to the minister about Mirboo North, Foster and Yarram, all of which are in need of new fire stations. I appreciate the minister has probably been a little bit preoccupied when it comes to fire issues in the last couple of months, but nonetheless we did need to see a substantial block of funding provided for new stations in those towns. It is unclear where the \$10 million that I think has been allocated will go and what it will go to, but it certainly is not going to be enough to do the job.

Importantly, there is the Black Spur realignment of the South Gippsland Highway. It is a dangerous, windy section over the Black Spur Creek between Koonwarra and Meeniyan. Again, a business case was funded by the former coalition government and the federal government, but there was no funding for that in this budget. I fear that the minister has deliberately put off the business case so that he did not have to fund it in this year's budget, but that is an important one for safety and for economic development in South Gippsland. For tourism in particular it is the main road to Wilsons Promontory and we do need that funded.

I mentioned no new services or rolling stock for the Gippsland rail line beyond Traralgon. The other issues I was concerned about include no more residential beds or services for drug rehabilitation in Gippsland, including for those suffering from ice addiction and,

most particularly, a cut continuing in the road maintenance budget. It was a 17 per cent cut in the road maintenance budget from our last budget to the first Labor government budget last year, and it still remains 10 per cent below the amount that we spent on that last year. We have heard from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety time and again about this wonderful plan — \$1 billion over eight years for rural and regional roads and likewise for metropolitan roads — and it is nowhere to be seen in the budget.

I have had the pleasure of joining you, Acting Speaker Pearson, in the budget estimates hearings for the last two years. I say ‘pleasure’ advisedly — with the greatest respect to you, Acting Speaker, we all know that two weeks of the estimates process is a gruelling time. I asked the Minister for Roads and Road Safety over and over again, ‘Where is this \$1 billion you promised?’, but he has not been able to deliver. So it is another broken promise, and this is clearly an important area for my electorate where the roads are in a fairly ordinary state. We have been calling for more money, and in fact we are getting the opposite.

The government cut the country roads and bridges program altogether. It has cut the roads maintenance budget. Even when it tried to do something good and announced a new country bridges program, we found subsequently that a large chunk of the money — I think it was about a quarter of the money — was actually spent on bridges in the Premier’s electorate of Mulgrave. We have heard time and again, ‘These are bridges on the freeway. It’s to help freight get to the port’. If you wanted to do a freight bridges funding program, then call it that and make it that, but this was supposedly a country bridges program. Only Labor could spend money through a country bridges program on bridges in the electorate of Mulgrave.

We had the port of Melbourne lease, and the proceeds of that are highlighted in the budget. I have to say — it is a little bit disappointing to me — that there are no regional MPs from the other side in the chamber at this stage. It was only the Liberal-Nationals coalition that stood up and said, ‘If you’re going to sell the port of Melbourne and get \$6 billion to \$7 billion for that sale, you must deliver some of that money back to country Victoria’.

So I wonder, where was the member for Macedon in this? Where were the members for Wendouree, Buninyong, Bendigo West, Bendigo East and Yan Yean? The member for Melton has a lot to say about The Nationals and the country. The member for Geelong, the Minister for Sport, the Minister for Police and the Minister for Agriculture in the other place —

none of them stood up and said, ‘We need proceeds of this sale to be delivered into country Victoria’. It was The Nationals and the Liberals in coalition that said, ‘No. If you’re going to do this, you must make sure that the gains from the sale are spread around the state’, and 10 per cent was an absolute minimum from my perspective. I think the government has a lot of work to do to convince us that it is in fact going to meet that commitment. It is in the legislation now, but I am concerned that the government will pull a few swifties and try to get away with not spending that money in country areas.

With the overall budget, I am concerned at the way the surplus is crafted, not the fact that we have got a surplus — that is a good thing — but we have seen this government get extremely lucky. We have got windfall gains with stamp duty up 37 per cent since the last year of the coalition government. Payroll tax this year is up 10 per cent, land tax is up 20 per cent since 2014, and of course there is a \$1 billion windfall on GST revenue. But despite all of that increase in revenue, despite a 20 per cent gain overall in state taxes, the government still thought it important that it add a \$252 million coal royalty increase on power prices, on electricity and on the generators in the Latrobe Valley.

Not only is this a new electricity tax but the government somehow seems to think it will not be an issue. When Hazelwood’s owner only a few weeks ago suggested that it may consider closing the plant, the government said, ‘It’s still nothing to do with us, this \$35 million a year impost on Hazelwood, they’ll just absorb it into their business and it won’t harm the business and it won’t harm power prices’. That is some voodoo economics. The member for Essendon was talking about economics before, and clearly he needs to go back to school if he thinks that this \$250 million tax can be absorbed and everything will be right, everyone will be happy. This is an attack on Latrobe Valley and Gippsland jobs as well, and it did not need to happen.

I hear the Twittersphere goes ballistic whenever you defend the coal companies in the Latrobe Valley, but these are companies that provide jobs. They provide 90 per cent of our power. People say, ‘The big polluters should pay’. Ultimately the big polluters will just pass that cost on to the market, and the market ultimately is us. It is businesses, it is small businesses, it is households. AGL I know has estimated that it is a \$25 a year impost just on this tax alone.

As I said, this is a budget that has been disappointing for country Victoria. There are some good things in it for my electorate.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The regional road funding was appalling, Minister, as you go past. This is a budget that will be forgotten I think very quickly.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — How can we start a conversation about the Ivanhoe electorate without making reference to the \$140 million investment in the rail duplication between Heidelberg and Rosanna on the Hurstbridge line? We know under the former member for Polwarth, the transport minister under the failed Baillieu and Napthine governments, there was a business case and a metropolitan network development plan to do the Heidelberg to Rosanna 1.2-kilometre rail duplication, this pinch point on the network that has been there for a century and that has undermined our capacity to run a consistent timetable on the train line from Hurstbridge to the city, undermined our ability to provide a regular service and extra peak hour services. What we have needed is the \$140 million rail duplication project between Heidelberg and Rosanna to be funded, and of course it has taken the Andrews Labor government to provide that funding.

My colleagues the members for Eltham and Bundoora and I have worked closely, as we always do in the Jagajaga federal electorate. The three of us have always worked closely on delivering significant infrastructure improvements across the north-eastern suburbs. The funding also includes investigations and planning works for the duplication of the Hurstbridge line between Greensborough and Eltham so that we have got costed, planned-out proposals that we can invest in in the future, and a big part of that is getting underway with the business case work that has been developed and done between Heidelberg and Rosanna.

That \$140 million investment ticked off in this year's budget is a credit to the Minister for Public Transport and Leader of the House, the member for Bendigo East. It is a credit to the Premier, who made a personal commitment to pursue, understand, investigate and advocate for this issue within the government, understood it from his local MPs, drove this project and made sure that it is being delivered for the long-term benefit.

For those of you who do not understand how the Hurstbridge line operates — and I am happy to explain it — the Melbourne Metro project, as great a project as it is, does not have a material benefit in the direct sense for commuters on the Hurstbridge line. Fortunately as part of the Clifton Hill group we are able to buzz in and out of the city with our colleagues on the South Morang line without getting engaged and involved in the

broader metropolitan loop system, and that is a great advantage for those of us on the Hurstbridge and South Morang lines.

The investment to remove the pinch point between Heidelberg and Rosanna will provide great benefits in a more consistent and reliable timetable so we do not have trains trying to work their way through this single-track pinch point on the Hurstbridge line. When one train is late, everyone is delayed. We can run more peak-hour services through that gap. This is a sensible project that is being invested in. It is an absolutely massive investment in public transport in the Ivanhoe electorate.

We are following through on our commitment to remove the level crossing at Rosanna station, where my electorate office is located. This is a train station at which I have been catching the train for some 25 years; I have been getting trains there since I was at university at RMIT, and I have sat there during those delays over that time, as many residents of Rosanna have. We have seen those delays between Heidelberg and Rosanna that corrupt effective public transport on the Hurstbridge line.

When we make that investment to remove the level crossing at Lower Plenty Road in Rosanna, on top of the \$140 million rail duplication works between Heidelberg and Rosanna, we are looking at something like up to a quarter of a billion dollar investment in public transport in the Ivanhoe electorate over just a few kilometres. This will improve property values in those suburbs, it will improve the commuter experience and it will create new opportunities for people in my electorate to get to and from metropolitan Melbourne and the inner suburbs, let alone those who travel much further to my colleagues' electorates in Eltham and Bundoora. It is a magnificent project.

I do not mind quoting from an article in the *Heidelberg Leader*. It states:

The long-awaited duplication of the Hurstbridge railway line will start this year, with the state government promising more than \$140 million for the major project.

The duplication of the century-old track between Heidelberg and Rosanna railway stations is part of the \$3.2 million public transport infrastructure projects across Victoria from the 2016–17 state budget last week.

There was also a \$40.8 million investment in our beloved Austin Hospital in the Ivanhoe electorate. Of course the Austin Hospital will be familiar to many people in this house from when the Kennett government chose to privatise it, which cost the former member for Ivanhoe, Vin Heffernan, his seat in this

place. He was a great local advocate, but he was a victim of the Kennett government's privatisation mania that was dressed up as economic management. Just flog off everything that is owned by the people of Victoria and claim that that is somehow economic management is what Alan Stockdale, the former member for Brighton, chose to do. That \$40.8 million investment in the Austin Hospital is very significant and will go a long way to again establishing the credentials of Labor in government as the advocate of public health in the Ivanhoe electorate.

We are also about to see the conclusion of the emergency department rebuild at the Austin Hospital. We have seen the final works done at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, again under the Andrews Labor government. The savings from that project were invested in the redevelopment of the emergency department at the Austin Hospital, which we are about to see concluded.

In relation to education I would like to pay tribute to the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education, who came out to Rosanna Golf Links Primary School, the only school that had a financial commitment for capital works under the four years of the dysfunctional Baillieu and Napthine governments. Only one school in the Ivanhoe electorate received any capital works funding, and of course it was given belatedly, in the final budget of its four-year term. In its last six months it finally allocated some \$5.6 million for the redevelopment of Rosanna Golf Links Primary School.

The now Minister for Training and Skills in the other place was Parliamentary Secretary for Education in the Brumby government. He helped us allocate funding for master planning works at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School many years ago. By the time the Liberal government got around to funding this project, it was massively underfunded and undercosted. I was very pleased to report to Rosanna Golf Links Primary School after a visit from the Deputy Premier that we had allocated an extra \$680 000 in the budget to complete its fully funded redevelopment and rebuild. Can I tell members that the school community is super thrilled, including Kelly Morrow, the principal.

The school is also the regional deaf facility in the north-eastern suburbs, and it is across the road from my daughter's kindergarten, Interlaken. Daily we have been watching the investment resulting in the works coming out of the ground at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School. It is a school of great diversity and a school of choice in the Ivanhoe electorate. It has an extra \$680 000 on top of that \$5.6 million, which is a

massive investment in the 600-plus students who attend the school.

On top of that there was a \$2 million investment in Ivanhoe Primary School. This school was built in 1923. It is a traditional red brick building. It has been a school of choice. My mother, Therese, taught at the school for many years. It is a great school, with a significant increase in enrolments to up around the 600 mark. When you are trying to provide a 21st century education with very well qualified, professional, enthusiastic teachers and leadership team, it is very difficult to do that in buildings that were built last century. These buildings are nearly 100 years old. To allocate \$2 million to start the redevelopment works at Ivanhoe Primary School is to the great credit of the Deputy Premier, who also visited the school and understood very clearly the necessary works that were needed in the short term.

This is on top of the Banyule Primary School's provision plan which we committed to at the last election and which has been resourced in this budget. It will demonstrate what the education needs are in the Ivanhoe electorate and what the demographics are like. Let us leave the talk and the anecdotes to one side and get to the facts. Let us have a look at what is driving enrolments across the Ivanhoe electorate and then let us do the work in the Banyule provision plan to make sure we understand where we need to invest. That is driving our \$680 000 investment in this budget, which will conclude the \$5.6 million project at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School. It is driving our \$2 million investment as a starting point at Ivanhoe Primary School.

The budget also included \$5.5 million for Melbourne Polytechnic — the old Northern Metropolitan Institute of TAFE — for a lot of its community service obligations. Just across the way we have a campus of Melbourne Polytechnic in West Heidelberg. I was pleased to make that announcement on behalf of the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Training and Skills at the Preston campus of Melbourne Polytechnic, which is at the site of the old Batman TAFE. I know how important community service obligation are. My mother completed her secretarial course at the facility on St George's Road; she did a clerical course there. She was working as a nurse, and then I came along and so she could not quite complete it. She had a chance to go back to Batman TAFE, as it was then known, to do her secretarial studies. She then worked as a secretary for a principal in a school and then went off to what was the Phillip Institute of Technology to get a teaching degree and forged a career of her own. She got her start at TAFE.

To be there on behalf of the Minister for Training and Skills was a very profound experience for me. I understand that my own life has largely been shaped by the investments that Labor governments have made under premiers Cain, Kirner, Bracks, Brumby and Andrews. They have made sure that the opportunities that families need in the northern suburbs are provided not only for parents and for many people who have only been in the country for barely weeks or months — many of whom I met the other month — but also for those of us in future generations to be able to make some progress in our lives. This is because of the opportunities that TAFE provided for our parents and for many newcomers to this country.

From a profoundly personal point of view I am very pleased with the investments that the Andrews government has made in education and health in this budget, particularly in the Ivanhoe electorate.

Can I also touch on a couple of other matters, and in particular around my portfolio support responsibilities with the member for Bellarine, who now has other responsibilities, but certainly in the water space, and also with the member for Mill Park, who has now picked up those environmental responsibilities, I will just touch on our investments in the 2016–17 state budget of some \$468 million in extra funding to support infrastructure investment, particularly around the water grid. We have seen some \$222 million to improve the health of our waterways and catchments and some \$59 million to promote sustainable agriculture through improved on-farm water efficiency. I tell you what, Acting Speaker, you do not need to convince farmers about the effects of climate change. They live it. They know it. It is all about their lives and the profession that they are involved in and the careers that they are pursuing. They live it every day. They understand the value of an investment to promote farm water efficiency.

There is also \$30 million to extend the water grid in Gippsland South — we did not hear much about that from the previous speaker, the member who represents that neck of the woods — to connect the towns of Nyora, Loch, Korumburra and Poowong. That is really important work. My in-laws are up in Bendigo, and they talk to me about the goldfields super-pipe and the investments that the previous Brumby Labor government and others have made in regional Victoria. They would be scratching around on bottled water if we were to go down the path of those opposite. It is Labor governments that invest in those big projects, and those opposite would do well to remember that.

Also there is some \$25 million to better prepare communities for floods. We have seen what havoc climate change and those issues have wrought in places like Sydney over the past few weeks. There is some \$14 million in additional funding towards managing rising groundwater in Bendigo, a project that the member for Bendigo West has been intimately involved with.

There is also some \$5 million to ensure that Aboriginal values and knowledge are included in Victoria's water management framework. That is really important work. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is doing a lot of work to improve employment practices for members of Indigenous communities in that department, because they are the people who are committed to the work we do in environment and water.

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise to make a contribution on this motion, and I do it with a heavy heart because it reflects on a disastrous state budget not only for the state of Victoria but also for my electoral district of Mount Waverley — and I take no joy in that — compared to other budgets between 2011 and 2014 that did deliver for our state.

I want to go back to prior to the 2014 state election, because in politics it is very important when people in senior positions in a government or a potential government go on the record and make promises and solemn commitments to the people of their state or their country that they be judged and measured according to those commitments. I want to go back to the Channel 7 interview with the member for Mulgrave, the now Premier of the state. He was asked whether or not he would increase state taxes and charges. I want to go through the wording in particular. The question from Peter Mitchell was, 'Daniel Andrews, all the polls say you will be Victoria's next Premier. If you are, do you promise Victorians here tonight that you will not increase taxes or introduce any new taxes?'. The Premier said, 'I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian'. He did not say, 'Maybe' or 'We'll try, based on the budget position', or 'We'll do everything that we can'. I will repeat it: 'I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian'. It was an unequivocal promise, which we know now was a blatant lie from the now Premier of this government.

Let us have a look at what revenue the first two years of state taxes and charges in the state of Victoria has generated compared to what the now Premier indicated. In two years, taxes have increased from \$17.9 billion to \$21.6 billion, representing a state tax increase of 20.7 per cent. I will say that again: a state tax increase

of 20.7 per cent, against the promise that the member for Mulgrave and now Premier made. What worries me even more is that there is no relief in sight for households, families or small or medium size businesses of substance. You only have to look at the 16 per cent increase in stamp duty on property transfers which is forecast over the next four years — —

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr GIDLEY — If members opposite want to have a look at the budget papers, they will see a 16 per cent increase in stamp duty on property transfers over the next four years. That is not relief; that is higher taxes, higher charges, on households, families and small and medium size businesses.

If we take the most recent budget handed down by this state Labor government, what particular measures do we know it has taken that will hit household budgets, families and small and medium size businesses and make it harder for them to get ahead? We know that it has increased electricity bills for every household and every small and medium size business in the state going forward, because it has tripled the tax on brown coal in Victoria, the greatest contributor of electricity to the grid. It has increased the brown coal tax by 300 per cent, an effective electricity tax that not only flows through directly to electricity bills but also to every good and service that has an energy component to it. We know it has hiked the fire services property levy by another 7.3 per cent. Again, that will be paid by commercial property owners, households, families and small and medium size businesses, and it will flow through the economy.

But this is the figure that jumps out the most — it is even indefensible by those spendaholics opposite — that is, a land tax increase of 28 per cent, nearly one-third, which again we know will flow through the entire economy. Compare that to the promise: ‘I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian’. What a crock!

Insurance taxes have increased by 6 per cent. Many households and families have got multiple insurance policies, whether that is household insurance, building insurance or motor vehicle insurance, and they have been hit yet again — 6 per cent. Payroll tax has increased by 5 per cent — again, another increase in payroll tax revenue across the state.

Then there are motor vehicle taxes. How many households have multiple vehicles, particularly across the south-east? We know that the figures are very clear. In Victoria, whether people like it or not, we have a

heavy reliance on motor vehicles, particularly the further out you go. We have had a motor vehicle tax increase of 5 per cent this year alone.

If you put all of those things together in the environment of relatively low income growth which we are operating under, what does that mean? It means that members of households — for example, if they are going to the local bread shop and buying bread — will be hit by higher prices and higher taxes and charges because there will be higher electricity costs to run a bakery. There will be higher costs for insuring motor vehicles, there will be higher costs for insurance on buildings and there will be higher state government taxes and charges to register a motor vehicle. In the end, what is very clear is that under this government if you are a member of a family, a household or a small or medium size business trying to get ahead, you will be pushed back. You will pay more, it will cost you more and this government will spend more of your money because it believes it knows how to spend it better than you do, and it has no respect for the work ethic that might have generated that income.

Outside of that, have a look at the increase in the stamp duty surcharge payable by foreign purchasers of residential property in Victoria, which has gone from 3 per cent to 7 per cent, and the land tax surcharge payable by absentee owners of Victorian land, which has gone from 0.5 per cent to 1.5 per cent. Again, regardless of the intent of that particular tax measure, if you measure it against what the then Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote, ‘I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian’, that is anything but being true to that commitment. When you look at the increases in taxes and charges in this budget alone that I have outlined, there is simply no excuse.

What makes things worse is that this massive increase in taxes and charges on households, on families and on small and medium size businesses builds on massive increases in last year’s state budget. Last year the Victorian Labor government hiked the fire services property levy by 7.2 per cent, increased payroll taxes by 6.2 per cent, raised insurance taxes by 5.4 per cent and increased motor vehicle taxes by 4.5 per cent. On so many measures, whether it is in this state budget or last year’s budget, households, families, small and medium size businesses have been hit. The household budget has been hit, and those who are seeking to do the right thing, to become less reliant on the state and build a future for themselves, their children and their grandchildren, are not being assisted by this state government. They are being punished. We should be incredibly disappointed, particularly when you relate

that to the promise that the then Leader of the Opposition made.

Let us go back to the electricity tax that we know will generate over four years around \$250 million. Industry observers have very clearly stated that it will flow through to electricity prices, and I quote the Minerals Council of Australia, for example, which said:

There is no doubt that energy suppliers will be forced to increase costs to consumers in Victoria as a result of this decision. Claims that electricity producers have the capacity to absorb this royalty increase fail to understand the reality of the electricity market.

This decision has nothing to do with paying a fair share and everything to do with a revenue grab.

These are not members on this side of the house but clearly people in the industry who understand the issue. The nonsense of a tax increase having no impact on household electricity bills is almost akin to the nonsense of former Premier John Brumby saying massive increases in land tax would not be passed on to consumers. What an absolute crock.

If you look at payroll tax revenues, you see that they have increased by 5.4 per cent. That is interesting because we know that this government has been dragged kicking and screaming before doing anything on payroll tax relief. It has been forced to do something after yet another year of inaction on a highly unacceptable level of general payroll taxes. It introduced minor measures that are really just tinkering with the edges. Industry at its kindest calls it ‘modest reform’, with the threshold increased to just \$650 000 over four years.

Craig Whatman, a partner at Pitcher Partners says:

The increased Victorian threshold will still be below the New South Wales threshold of \$750 000 and well below the Queensland threshold of \$1.1 million.

So this tinkering at the edges, this supposed payroll tax cut, is a fraud, particularly when you look at the fact that the budget has a surplus profile. This government should have done far more to stimulate employment and far more to look after those who are seeking a job. As I said, I and a number of industry groups last year called for payroll tax to be cut in last year’s budget. The government did not do it, and it should have. That could have made a real impact on reducing unemployment. There have been missed opportunities on employment, on cost-of-living expenses, on insurance, on electricity, on motor vehicle registration and on a range of other aspects.

In addition to the devastating impact this budget is having on cost-of-living expenses for families and on small and medium size businesses, you can see at a local level the impact that has been experienced in the Mount Waverley electoral district. In education we have had the Glen Waverley Primary School rebuilding program, a \$6 million commitment signed off by the previous Victorian government, cut — \$6 million for Glen Waverley Primary School cut. What adds insult to injury is the now Deputy Premier and the then Labor candidate going out to the school, acknowledging the needs of that school and saying, ‘We will listen to you. We will do everything we can’. What did the government do? It delivered the renovation of a school hall — not a rebuild, which they at the time indicated was clearly needed.

Mount Waverley Secondary College was undertaking a stage 2 rebuild following a \$10.58 million commitment by the previous Victorian government. It was in place and ready to go. What have we got under this Labor government? The program has been cut. Stage 2 of the Mount Waverley Secondary College rebuild at \$10.58 million has gone under this government — and the commitment to look at stage 3 at \$8.370 million has also gone.

The stage 1 rebuild of Brentwood Secondary College at \$8 381 000, committed to by Victoria’s then Liberal-Nationals government, has been cut by this government. The Mount Waverley Secondary College rebuild has been cut. Funding for Glen Waverley Primary School has been cut. Then we move on to the clear, aggressive agenda against non-government schooling in my electorate and other electorates. There is no question that it represents a clear hatred of the non-government schooling sector by this government, which is doing everything it can to remove the right of parents to have a choice as to where they send their children, including to non-government schools that teach their children the values and principles that they wish.

We have seen that very clearly with the government’s continuing attempts to remove equal opportunity laws and exemptions, its continuing state-sanctioned intolerance and its continuing attempts to remove freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech in those areas of education. In the end those opposite do not support non-government schooling, and they do everything they can to undermine it.

We have had protective services officers (PSOs) cut from Syndal and Jordanville for night-time and evening train services. We used to have a situation where PSOs

were present for the last train service of an evening at Syndal and Jordanville. They have now gone. In health we had the savage cuts to the Monash Children's Hospital, which have ensured that rather than being able to access a dedicated emergency department at the Monash Children's project, children will need to use the existing, outdated emergency department which is being put forward for use by adults. What that means is that children who need emergency care will have to attend an emergency department filled with adults who might be drug or alcohol affected. The whole purpose of Monash Children's Hospital was to have a dedicated emergency department. As part of the government's \$177 million cut to the Monash Children's project, that has gone. Those opposite had to be shamed at 5 minutes to midnight to reinstall the helipad they tried to take out from the hospital.

There have been cuts to Monash Children's Hospital in the Mount Waverley electoral district and cuts to public safety. We know the government wants to put at least an extra \$40 000 burden on residents who use the Monash Freeway to get into the city to pay for the western distributor. As the member for Burwood very eloquently put it, it is another tax and charge for residents in my district for a road in the western suburbs. On top of that there is the continued refusal to fund Waverley Gymnastics Centre. This is a budget that cuts, cuts, cuts. It disenfranchises my district and will lead to higher taxes, charges and costs of living for residents.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — It is indeed a pleasure to rise to make a contribution to the debate on the budget appropriation. I have heard members from the other side talking about there being no jobs plan in the budget. What are they talking about? It is right there. All they need to do is read it. This comes from the mob that did not have a jobs plan for almost four years and took Victoria to the highest unemployment on the mainland. We have created jobs at three times the rate those opposite ever did. They had four years not to talk about it but to act. They had four years not to say something but to show something. They had four years not to promise but to prove something to the people of Victoria — and the people of Victoria gave them the boot because they did not.

Great things never come from comfort zones, and that is one reason I am very proud to be part of this government. In our first and second budgets we have shown that we are pushing the boundaries. We are reflecting what our community wants. We are not just sitting on our bums and doing nothing, as per the previous government.

We have the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, who is also the Minister for Women, in the chamber at the moment. That is a position that only Labor could have created. We have had \$572 million put into the budget to implement the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations, and we will act on every single one. Changing the culture actually takes some guts, and it is hard. It takes vision, it takes a strategic plan, and, yes, being an ex-teacher, I believe it takes a Safe Schools program. It is one thing to be seen to be doing the right thing — that is very simple — but it is much harder to put the rubber on the road and actually reach the goals. In this case it is cultural and generational change that is needed at a school level.

Frankston has the highest police family violence call-out statistics in the state. That is something we are obviously not proud of. But the Labor government's family violence package puts victims at the heart of our reform. It includes \$152.5 million to begin a housing blitz to shelter more victims so they do not have to choose between homelessness and returning to an abusive relationship. That is very important. Work will commence on building and redeveloping family violence refuges, expanding crisis accommodation and rapidly funding up to 130 new social housing homes. Victims will also be kept safe at home through innovative options, such as help accessing the private rental market.

Also allocated is \$122 million to keep children safe from harm and give them the best start in life by expanding a new program that provides intensive support to children in their own homes. The budget contains \$103 million for specialist family violence services, such as crisis support and counselling, to cope with the unprecedented demand. I can keep on going: \$61.6 million has been allocated for family violence prevention aimed at where Victorians live, work, play and learn. This includes expanding our respectful relationships program to protect the next generation, introducing Victoria's first gender equality strategy and helping local communities play their part in preventing violence.

Also provided is \$25.7 million to work with Aboriginal communities in addressing family violence, including prevention and early intervention programs, new approaches to dispute resolution and expanding programs for Aboriginal women, along with \$23.9 million to begin reforming the justice system so it protects victims and holds perpetrators to account. This includes expanding legal services for victims, providing more men's behaviour change programs and developing ways to improve victims' experiences at

court. The funding will of course be spread across metropolitan, regional and rural communities. Again this is bold, this is innovative, and this is what our community demands of us. This is what we did not have for four years.

We have got other massive budgetary commitments. It is in stark contrast to what we have heard for the last 15 minutes. Melbourne Metro is fully funded. Why would we wait for the lazy feds? Twenty-five per cent of Australia's population lives in Victoria, but only 9 per cent of the federal infrastructure funding reaches us. We have a jobs plan for the state. I think the jobs plan from the Naphthine-Baillieu-Shaw government came in about a month before the election. We have got one, and it is working. We are bringing the unemployment rate down from what it was under the previous government, when it was the highest in mainland Australia.

In our first budget we gave Frankston Primary School a much-needed \$800 000 for redevelopment. Thank you to principal Morry Rubinstein and his dedicated school community. They are just fantastic. I get there whenever I can because I am still a frustrated teacher at heart, and I do love to have a bit of fun with the kids. Monterey Secondary College received \$4 million in the last budget, and I would like to thank principal Stuart Jones and his staff. I consider some of these principals to be the most important people in Frankston. The reasons are obvious: they help raise happy, healthy and resilient kids with a government that is supporting them. These kids are the future of Frankston, Victoria and, I dare say, the nation and the world as well. We have also been supporting these schools with brekkie clubs.

In this budget we are continuing to create the education state, something we are all very proud of. For the first time ever I have seen government signs in schools. Schools are actually putting up 'education state' signs because they back this initiative so much. Schools are actually seeing proof that the education state initiative is working. They are seeing tangible results on their property, and they are supporting us with those signs.

In this budget we were able to give McClelland College \$5.8 million for a new gym. This is vital for that school. It is a growing school in a disadvantaged area, but those kids need to reach a certain level of education as a baseline, just as in any other school. We are supporting that. They will reach far higher than that baseline, I would imagine. Thank you to Amadeo Ferra and the members of his strong, resilient school community, who have taken on so many different projects of their own initiative with very limited funding. It is amazing

when you visit this school to see just what they have done with what they have. They are definitely fighting the good fight, and they are giving their students the best chance in life. I am sure that across the chamber here we can all agree this is a fantastic thing.

We also funded a new kitchen for Mahogany Rise Primary School because we have a brekkie program in this school. It is fantastic, but we have kids for whom that might be their only meal of the day, if not until the next day when they have brekkie again. We decided that an initiative that the school planned was a worthwhile project. It involved providing some documents and some architect drawings relating to how the school could be altered to feed kids lunch as well as breakfast, which is very important.

Kids with empty tummies cannot concentrate and are less likely to learn and achieve. I would like to thank the principal, John Culley, and his school community, who work so hard to make such a difference in the lives of students. It was fantastic to attend the school with the education minister not long ago, because I think even the minister was stunned at just how much some of these schools do with how little they have. It is just fantastic to be able to fund them. There are a great many schools in my electorate educating fantastic kids who will definitely be competitive not just on a national level but certainly on the international level.

Also locally in Frankston we have funded \$85 000 for the Eric Bell Reserve netball courts, which is where the Pines Football Netball Club plays. It is a fantastic club with fantastic people in an area where we need support. It has been overlooked quite a bit in the past, and it deserves all the attention we can give it in Frankston.

The biggest budget item in Frankston is of course the \$50 million for the Frankston transit precinct upgrade, which has very slowly evolved into almost a CBD rejuvenation with the amount of stakeholder interest and the number of partnerships we have developed delivering in total \$63 million. Boy, does that project create some jobs as well! The \$50 million was locked in in this budget, and to those who have said we could not do it — they have been hitting their heads against the same wall for 40 years — well, we have. To those who said we could not, would not, should not: we just have, and it is about to happen. Later this month we will turn the sod on the Young Street redevelopment, and the amount of interest we have had from all types of developers and people interested in living, learning and educating themselves in Frankston is phenomenal.

We have had some nay-sayers about Frankston, claiming that no-one will ever invest in Frankston. One

person said, ‘No-one will ever invest in Frankston because it is too far from the city’. Well, with a bit of stubbornness and hard work — and, I guess, making some foes along the way, because when you do your job right, you do actually put people’s noses out of joint sometimes — we are in a situation where we can actually choose appropriate investors because they are knocking at our door. I guess our biggest issue is that we did not expect quite as much early interest.

We have had more investment, more opportunity and more confidence in Frankston shown by this government in the past two years than we have seen in any years before. I am keeping score in Frankston, as I am Frankston’s government representative of course. I fight for everything we can get in Frankston because we need it. I could be accused of being partisan, but my community knows it is totally true: I am definitely partisan towards Frankston and will fight to the end for Frankston.

The other interesting thing we have going on in Frankston relates to health. We were let down by the federal government when it cut our Medicentre, which I have spoken about in the chamber quite a bit before, but it is quite unbelievable it could just take that away from a community like Frankston that relied on that service.

Despite his talk about innovation, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced that the federal government would not support the Andrews Labor government’s request for a \$60 million contribution towards the Aikenhead Centre for Medical Discovery.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Halfpenny) — Order! I remind members that if they are interjecting, they should be sitting in their own seats.

Mr EDBROOKE — This centre is intended to be a research and education hub, concentrating on fields as diverse as organ and tissue regeneration, drug design, next generation biomedical devices and prosthetics. The centre will bring together the best doctors, nurses, researchers, scientists and engineers in a state-of-the-art facility here in Victoria’s St Vincent’s Hospital. This facility is one of a kind in Australia, and it will focus on chronic conditions that need research, such as cardiovascular disease, arthritis, cancer and diabetes, and the advanced, cutting-edge treatments and technologies that are coming through, including robotic hands, heart tissue engineering and spinal cord repair. These are massive, massive things that we have budgeted for. This centre will also create thousands of jobs: more than 1000 during the development and

construction phase, and around 10 000 jobs over the next 15 years.

I would like to thank some people for their incredible work in our government. I guess I should actually thank all the ministers in the government for the crazy amount of work they do, but especially in Frankston we have had a lot to do with the Minister for Education, the Minister for Public Transport, the Minister for Health, the Treasurer, the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. Through working with some of these people I have learned that the secret to obtaining good and meaningful change in Frankston is not to focus all your energy on fighting the old but actually to put your energy into building the new, which is what we are doing in Frankston.

As I said, we will be turning the sod on a particular project in Frankston that will change the face of Frankston forever later this month. Just to reiterate what Frankston won in this fantastic state budget: \$50 million for the transit precinct upgrade and \$1.8 million for the elective surgery boost at Frankston Hospital. I heard somebody talking about hospitals before, and I wish to note there was a \$350 million injection into our state hospitals to make sure we get people off the waiting lists for public health care. We have committed \$5.8 million for the McClelland College school hall, \$200 000 for the Mahogany Rise Primary School kitchen facilities and \$85 000 for the Eric Bell Reserve netball courts.

These are all things that are fantastic for Frankston; they will help change Frankston for the better. We have a great community. Like I said, it was overlooked in the four years of the previous government. It does take some time to plan and put in place good change. It is not just knee-jerk reaction. The plan is in place, and we are definitely getting on with it and getting it done. We can tell that people in Frankston are liking what we are doing, because they come up to us in the street. We walk down the street to get lunch, and we hear, ‘Love what you are doing in Frankston. What is happening next?’, and we are able to reel off a list because we have a big plan of things we need to do and it is all budgeted for. The previous four years were spent talking about something instead of doing it; we went through this stage where people actually did not believe it was going to be done because they had heard so much before. But they are realising that it is being done.

It was fantastic last weekend to be there for the opening of the Frankston District Netball Association netball courts as well. They have been totally resealed and are ready for action and ready for A-grade competitive

netball. It was a fantastic event, and it seems that in Dunkley at the moment, besides having a federal government that is ripping \$24 million out of our schools in Dunkley, effectively by breaking a promise to fund Gonski, we have a Labor state government that provides us an alternative. That is literally \$1000 per head for each child who goes to school in Dunkley that the parents will have to pay because the schools effectively — if I know the schools — will have to pass that on. That is going to come out of people's pockets, and that is not good. For the federal election we have a very, very clear decision in Dunkley, whether it is cuts or whether it is actually doing something for our community and having someone who is passionate and dedicated to our community like candidate Peta Murphy.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on the take-note motion on the budget papers that is before this house tonight. I am also happy to be able to say how pleased I was for my electorate with the 2016–17 budget. For a long time, through successive governments and successive budgets, the Hume region of north-eastern Victoria and particularly my electorate of Shepparton district had not been receiving an equitable share of state investment, particularly when it came to investment in major infrastructure. I note that in this budget the Hume region, of which Shepparton is a part, received the third-highest spend out of the five regions.

My constituents and I are delighted that the principal spend in our region was the funding for the redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health. That is \$169 million for a project that has long been waited for, so I thank the government for listening to us. I and many constituents of my electorate have lobbied long and hard for funding for the redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health. This is a project that my community has long been advocating for, and whenever a minister came to town we showed them our hospital. We have had the Minister for Health visit on a number of occasions; the Treasurer visited and went through; and of course the Premier came to announce the pre-budget election commitment of \$169 million.

The redevelopment includes a four-story tower with three new operating theatres, two additional new wards, an extended emergency department, a refurbished maternity unit and a special care nursery that will be new, as well as expansion of dialysis and medical imaging services. It should be noted that our hospital currently has 11 cubicles in its emergency department. It will be getting something like 30, which is just what it needs. The redevelopment is anticipated to commence in 2017 with completion in 2020, and of

course by that stage we will be lobbying for the funding of the second stage of the hospital.

I would like to speak about public transport. In May last year the Minister for Public Transport announced that a Regional Network Development Plan would be established to discover and plan for public transport needs in regional Victoria. We have now seen the results of that review, and it takes a systematic approach to deal with longstanding, chronic inadequacy on many regional public transport routes. I am pleased to note that we have an additional rail service from Melbourne to Shepparton commencing in January 2017. This will be an extension of a Melbourne to Seymour service. It represents a small but promising improvement in the current three train arrivals and four train departures at Shepparton station. We still have very long way to go to achieve the services that Shepparton deserves and needs and which are enjoyed by other regional areas, such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley. Indeed even Seymour, a town of around 6000 people, has 20 services a day to Melbourne. It is these services that Shepparton really needs to be connected with, and we need some significant creative thinking around how that should best occur.

But more than this, Shepparton is a major regional city in a major transport corridor. It forms part of the inland highway route between Melbourne and Brisbane and connects the Hume Highway, Goulburn Valley Highway and the Newell Highway to the Queensland border. It is instructive to understand that a large proportion of the New South Wales rice and cotton crops are trucked to Shepparton, where they are stored for warehousing and ultimately delivered to the port of Melbourne for export. It is quite galling in some ways to stand here and hear the Minister for Public Transport talk about 28 new services for Bendigo on top of all the other services that Bendigo already has. Shepparton would certainly appreciate many more, and I will be lobbying very hard and long to ensure that we get the services we need. We need about \$90 million spent on our tracks and infrastructure between Shepparton and Seymour to get them to a state that in any way equates to what our region deserves.

In education there was an announcement from the School Pride and Sports Fund, and again with pleasure I note that out of the 15 schools that received a share of \$16 million three of the schools are in my electorate and three are on the border: Congupna, Harston, Invergordon, Undera, Waaia Yalca South and Zeerust. With this funding small local community schools that are very often the hub of the community and centre of life for those communities will have an opportunity to

make some real improvements to their school environment.

On the topic of education, I would like to remind my parliamentary colleagues that the Hume region, including my electorate of Shepparton district, has some of the lowest school retention rates in the state and is desperately in need of support in this regard. Shepparton in particular has the largest Indigenous population in country Victoria and the largest new arrival community, the great majority of whom are refugees rather than skilled migrant 457 visa-holders. Actual numbers of Indigenous and refugee residents is way ahead of Australian Bureau of Statistics statistics, particularly the refugees, most of whom are making their way to Shepparton as secondary migrants from capital cities. They already form more than 10 per cent of the population according to the local ethnic council. This is placing a great strain on our schools, health and welfare services and the local job market. Shepparton is a tolerant and accepting community that has so far absorbed and nurtured these new arrivals, and it serves as an exemplar of good practice in this regard, notwithstanding that state and federal government support has been very limited. The significant Gonski funding into our region last year was very well received, and it recognised the significant disadvantage in my electorate.

There remain many things that are needed in my electorate. These include funding for the neighbourhood schools project. This project is based in three of the most disadvantaged local schools in Shepparton. It identifies children at risk, many of whom have suffered significant trauma and are desperately in need of trauma counselling. The three schools have combined to provide a share of funding for the training of four trauma therapists and their subsequent engagement across the schools to treat these young children, who have been identified as suffering from trauma because a range of things. Many are refugees. Others suffer from dreadful environments where family violence is rampant. Also many of these children are clients of the Department of Health and Human Services, and many are also Indigenous.

It is essential that the children in our community are given the best chance in life to get ahead and I will be pleading with the government to look hard at this project and find the additional funding needed to support it. It is well known that intervention that occurs earlier in children's lives will lead to better outcomes.

The Better Together alliance has also benefited from funding. This project is a collaboration between the principals of four senior secondary colleges. They are

looking to share resources and share professional development. They have been able to appoint an assistant principal as a coordinator between the four schools in the hope that they can continue to attract more funding to achieve better outcomes for our secondary students.

The Shepparton bypass remains an item on the agenda for ongoing funding. There has been a lot of discussion around this and the fact that it is a project that requires substantial federal funding as well as state funding.

I would like to touch on the issue of payroll tax. I note that the government is increasing the payroll tax threshold from \$550 000 to \$650 000 over four years. This is barely in keeping with inflation. I have to say that, as a former partner in a small business, this tax is very regressive and mitigates employment creation. The threshold is easily reached when the major input for practically all small businesses is the wage cost. It actually holds back progress and expansion, as once the threshold is reached a large payment to the state is triggered so most businesses try to survive under the threshold. Ten staff on an average wage will easily see the threshold reached. Successive state governments have grappled with this issue and I would like to suggest that this government seriously consider using the significant revenue stream from stamp duty on property sales to begin offsetting this much-unloved tax.

Every year we have seen stamp duty increases deliver a bonus to the revenue bottom line. I ask the government to start putting it to work to start addressing the payroll issue. The higher the threshold, the more business we will attract to the state and the more expansion of existing small businesses will occur. More jobs will be created and more general tax revenue will follow.

I have also had the benefit of being on the Family and Community Development Committee over the past 18 months. We have just completed and tabled before this Parliament the report of the inquiry into abuse in disability services. That report has identified a number of areas where government support will be required.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Nepean Highway–Forest Drive, Mount Martha

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I raise a matter this evening for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I am seeking from the minister is that he direct VicRoads to undertake such works as are necessary to resolve the significant safety issues that exist at the intersection of Nepean Highway and Forest Drive in Mount Martha. Deputy Speaker, this is an all too familiar story, one I am sure you would be familiar with, of a situation where we have population growth and we have traffic growth and of course the inevitable conflict that occurs as a result of that. Quite often — and certainly that is correct in this case — the arterial roads are fine. They are more than capable of carrying the volume of traffic. But there are intersections with lower order roads where the intersection itself is not able to cope with the volume of traffic going through it. That is the situation at this particular intersection.

This is the third time I have raised this issue in this Parliament. Forest Drive is the main egress from the southern section of Mount Martha. There is really only Forest Drive or the Esplanade, which is an old two-lane winding road built in the 1930s and in danger of collapsing into the bay unfortunately in some sections. People generally only travel it if they want to have a look at the view, which is spectacular I have to say. But traffic that wants to get out of the southern section of Mount Martha, particularly travelling to Peninsula Link but also travelling to the Nepean Highway, uses this intersection. There is a further complication because there is a third street, Hopetoun Avenue, which just makes it a little more challenging.

Prior to Peninsula Link opening, traffic turned left into Nepean Highway and then travelled to Craigie Road, Moorooduc Road and thence to the Frankston Freeway. Now that we have Peninsula Link most traffic is not heading to the Frankston Freeway. It is heading further north so we now have traffic coming through the intersection that largely does a right-hand turn and travels south down the hill on Nepean Highway to get to Peninsula Link, so there is significantly more conflict there. There is an alternative and that would be to open up access from Craigie Road to do a right-hand turn across Peninsula Link. If the government wishes to address that, I will leave that with it, but I am focusing on this intersection.

I worked with the former government to reduce the speed limit from 100 kilometres per hour to 80 kilometres per hour. The former roads minister took a keen interest in this matter. Further development was under discussion and there was an expectation that the works would be funded in early 2015. I put a notice of motion on the notice paper while we were still able to do that in December 2014. I raised the issue again in a members statement in February 2015. Nineteen months on there is still no action on this front so I do urge the minister to direct VicRoads to undertake works before it is too late.

Mount Clear College

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I raise a matter with the Minister for Education, and I ask that the minister visit Mount Clear College to talk to principal Lynita Taylor and other staff and students from the school. Mount Clear College is a terrific school in my electorate. Built in the 1970s, it was built with a very modern design at the time featuring lots of timber. It was built alongside the Canadian State Forest as it has been but is soon to become the Canadian Regional Park, which I am very pleased about. But that is another story.

In terms of Mount Clear College, it has been going for over 40 years now so there are times when schools like that built with lots of timber need significant upgrade works. I am pleased that in a former term of Labor government we were able to get some funding to upgrade science classrooms and other rooms within the school, and in a term of the Bracks and Brumby governments the site over the road from the school saw the new earth education centre built as a science technology centre. This centre has benefited Mount Clear College students as well as others across the region. The former federal Labor government provided funding for a language education centre, also over the road from the school, which again meets the needs of the school and other schools for students to undertake language education, particularly in Chinese.

Mount Clear College offers a terrific range of experiences to try to maximise the educational opportunities for its students, including attracting international students to the school. That is great. It has a link with Gelibolu High School, which is terrific because that provides the school with opportunities to understand issues in Turkey and issues in regard to our war involvement there. But if the minister comes to visit the school, which has been allocated \$2.1 million in the budget, the school community will show its appreciation for that funding and show him how that

money is likely to be expended. I think this would be a great outcome.

Community building insurance premiums

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for the Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is that the minister urgently intervene and assist local communities in the Ovens Valley electorate. I note the former Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, who is at the table, pricked up her ears, but this one will move on.

Just as some background, the Rural City of Wangaratta, in light of the rate capping imposed on local councils, has ceased paying for insurance on buildings that are not on its land. The council has done a big stocktake and has found that there are lots of buildings that are on land managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, so it is refusing to pay for their insurance. I get that. I am not critical of the Rural City of Wangaratta, but these groups have had their insurance paid by the council before and now the bills have been thrust upon them. I will give you some examples, Deputy Speaker.

Greta-Hansonville hall committee president Adrian Younger got a quote for insurance, which was between \$2000 and \$2200 per year, compared to the \$590 that was paid by the council. The hall has an income of about \$2000 per year, so its entire year's income would be going on its insurance. Tarrawingee hall president Graeme Norman got a quote for insurance which was \$2700 compared to the \$450 that was paid by the council. He said it is ridiculous. It is a sum they have no hope of paying. The choice is to close the hall or to have no insurance at all. Lyn Lewis from Cheshunt hall is in the same situation, with a quote of \$1500 to \$2500 compared to the \$318 that was paid by the council.

Springhurst hall, Glenrowan Recreation Reserve — the list goes on. There are 24 rural halls for which the Rural City of Wangaratta, in the last financial year, paid a total of \$8000. All these community groups would be paying between \$30 000 and \$50 000 as individual groups. Obviously I am seeking some support from the minister to either assist them in paying their bills — and they understand that they are their bills — or the other option is to maybe even talk about how we can assist them by taking out an insurance policy that can be paid on an across-the-board rate, where each community group would pay a portion of it but still be paying only \$400 or \$300 rather than getting slugged the \$2000 that they are all getting slugged when they go and see their respective insurers. With that I ask that the minister

look into this. There are 24 in the Rural City of Wangaratta alone, so this is going to spread deeply right across Victoria if other municipalities choose to do it. The government can choose to assist us financially in that respect or at least oversee a policy where we can get a fair deal for our community groups so that they are not spending every bit of their revenue just to pay their insurance for the year.

Macedon electorate kindergartens

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — The matter I wish to raise this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs in the other place, and it concerns two kindergartens in my electorate — one in Romsey and one in Gisborne. During the 2014 campaign the minister joined with me to announce that if elected, an Andrews government would commit \$120 000 to each of these kindergartens for significant upgrades. Now that works are well underway the action I seek is that the minister join me to visit these kinders when the upgrades are completed.

Romsey and Gisborne are growing and remain very popular with young families looking to raise their children in the foothills of the Macedon Ranges. As a local representative I will continue to advocate for the early childhood and education services our children need. I am also delighted that last week the minister launched the revised Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework at the annual Together We Grow early childhood education conference. This revised framework reflects the latest research, practice and policy and provides a high benchmark for early childhood professional practice in the education state. The framework describes what all children should learn between birth and age eight, outlining the knowledge and skills that lead all children to become confident and engaged lifelong learners. This framework will guide the work of early childhood professionals, including maternal and child health nurses, educators, primary school teachers, playgroup facilitators, cultural organisations and specialist support staff.

Not only is this government investing in the facilities our children need but it is also ensuring that early education in the education state is of the highest quality possible. I am well aware of the minister's commitment to investing in the futures of our youngest Victorians by giving families the flexible, high-quality, accessible and affordable kindergarten and childcare services they deserve, and I would welcome the opportunity to share with her just some of the results of this government's investments in our youngest Victorians on a visit to my electorate.

Seville Primary School

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — My adjournment debate matter is directed to the Minister for Education. The action I am seeking is for the Department of Education and Training to fund the cost of connection to mains sewerage at Seville Primary School. In March this year the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) conducted a licence compliance inspection at Seville Primary School's sewage treatment plant, which has been discharging wastewater. As a result of the inspection the EPA recommended connection to the nearby reticulated sewerage system in accordance with the state environment protection policy. It is anticipated that the EPA will formalise this through a notice very soon. The discharge is a problem because it is occurring on a surface area where children frequently play. This wastewater can contain micro-organisms that can be harmful to humans, animals and the environment. These include viruses, bacteria and fungal and parasitic organisms. In a small school population where children and teachers handle the same objects, that can lead to outbreaks of avoidable illnesses such as gastroenteritis and hepatitis and infection of the skin, eyes and other organs.

Seville primary has previously spent \$15 000 on new pipes for its sewage treatment plant as a result of another system failure, which is becoming increasingly problematic given the age of the system. The Department of Education and Training stated it would reimburse Seville Primary for the \$15 000, which could have been put to use on other worthwhile initiatives for the students. Almost two years later Seville primary has not received this money. Now Seville primary is up for a further \$220 000 to reconfigure internal plumbing, remove the existing treatment plant, connect to the reticulated sewerage in Valley Road and pay relevant water authority and consultant fees. This could be an environmental hazard, with sewage run-off having a direct path to the Wandin Yallock Creek and the Yarra River. Accordingly I ask that the Minister for Education direct the Department of Education and Training to prioritise this health hazard and fund the necessary connection to mains sewerage at Seville primary.

Sandringham Hospital

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to update my community on the health investment that is being made in our public hospitals, particularly Sandringham Hospital, through investment in elective surgery. Sandringham Hospital was visited by the Minister for Health in the last week along with the

member for Bentleigh and the federal member for Hotham, Clare O'Neil, so they could see firsthand the professional care and support it provides to our local community. It is amazing that 33 000 people each and every year go through the emergency department at Sandringham Hospital out of a total of 41 000 patients. Interestingly 1600 babies are born each and every year at Sandringham Hospital.

But what we have seen federally recently are not only the big cuts that the federal government made in the 2014 budget under Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey but also the recent peculiar situation where the federal government is trying to retrospectively claw back funding from our public health system, which could particularly affect hospitals like Sandringham Hospital. It is trying to retrospectively take money back when it has already been spent by Alfred Health. When that investment has already gone directly to patients, the federal government is trying to claw that funding back. It is an absolute outrage that this is happening. We are 23 days away from the end of the financial year, and this is happening. It is unconscionable.

It sees the Victorian government take the federal government to court on this very issue, and we continue to this day to fight out this matter on behalf of Victorians. We have not heard one statement from the member for Sandringham or from the Leader of the Opposition, who went down and stood out the front in the garden but did not bother to go on a tour to talk to the people who each and every day deliver much-needed care to patients and my local community. Over 30 per cent of the City of Kingston is supported by Sandringham Hospital. We can contrast that with the investment the Andrews Labor government is making in our health system and in supporting my constituents in the City of Kingston in elective surgery and the special care nursery that will be vital for our local community. For my adjournment matter I ask the Minister for Health to update my community on how the investment in public health, particularly elective surgeries, will benefit Sandringham Hospital and my local constituents.

Forest Hill College

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I raise a matter of importance for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to provide funding to Forest Hill College to enable the school to construct a circular driveway and additional car park to address its current traffic and parking issues.

Forest Hill College, in my electorate of Forest Hill, is a popular and fast-growing secondary school in the

suburb of Burwood East. The school currently has approximately 670 students, up from 500 in 2013. Enrolments at Forest Hill College continue to increase, heading towards more than 720 students in 2017. This growth has resulted in an increase in the number of families within the school community, as well as more teachers and other staff being employed at the school. The school is currently facing significant challenges with traffic management and car parking issues. There is space available within the school boundaries to enable the current driveway to be extended and for a circular driveway to be constructed to assist in rectifying this situation.

The school facilities are used very extensively, obviously by the school staff and students during school times but also by 79 local community organisations that access the school at various times. This very extensive use of the school's facilities is a good thing, but it results in great pressures and congestion in the traffic management and parking areas. The construction of additional car parking and a circular driveway to accommodate the families, staff, students and numerous other users of Forest Hill College would go a long way in relieving some of this congestion. I look forward to hearing from the Minister for Education and receiving favourable consideration of this request to provide the funding needed to extend the driveway at Forest Hill College and result in a circular driveway and additional car parking being constructed on the site.

Narre Warren South P-12 College

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education and concerns Narre Warren South P-12 College. The action I seek is that the minister joins me in visiting this fantastic local school to meet its talented musicians. The school has recently established an exciting and innovative Fusion music program for its year 7 students. This has already led to the school winning the junior category of the Battle of the Bands competition, and the students will be heading off to the state championships later this year. I saw the kids in action recently; they really are something else, and I wish them well.

I noticed when I visited the school that the school auditorium probably needs a bit of a makeover too, and the Narre Warren South community, which is a very diverse community, would also benefit from a fit-for-purpose performing arts space, so I will be working on this project with the school to achieve that in the future. I have met with the hardworking principal, Rob Duncan, to discuss this proposal, and I

know he is ready and willing to make this vision a reality. He wants to see his students, all 2030 of them — yes, 2030 students — have access to the very best facilities, which would match the school's outstanding educational programs. I do hope the minister will join me in visiting the school to see how successfully the school is using its equity funding to provide enhanced and innovative learning opportunities for every one of its students. I have no doubt that he will be starstruck by the talent on display.

Porthaul

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Industry and Employment, and the action I seek is for him to meet with Porthaul, a bulk transport company in Portland, and to assist it in attracting employees to regional Victoria. On 9 December I asked the former Minister for Employment what the government was doing to assist Porthaul to attract the 56 new employees it needed to meet its operational requirements. The response was that Regional Development Victoria had been working with the business and all recruitment issues had been solved. I have since been told that this is not the case. The owner, Brian Williamson, tells me he has had no contact from any minister's office or with any Victorian government department.

Porthaul still has a desperate need for staff. Despite already filling 25 jobs on its own, there are 10 positions vacant right now, and Mr Williamson anticipates that he will need to fill a further 12 positions in the next two to three weeks to meet contract commitments. Mr Williamson does not want a handout; he just needs a bit of help to find employees and attract them to regional Victoria and perhaps with some training. The business has already invested in a program to ensure its drivers are well trained — a very necessary part of the job given they are in charge of driving loads of up to 80 tonnes, with the added challenge of navigating the worst roads in Victoria according to VicRoads data. These roads are shared with families, school buses and other people going about their daily business.

With the state government's promise of 100 000 jobs floundering, I would have thought it would have been bending over backwards to assist. Mr Williamson tells me the South Australian government has been more than willing to assist, already helping him to fill five positions. The South Australian government has been so helpful that Mr Williamson is now seriously considering relocating his business across the border to Mount Gambier. That would see more than 100 jobs ripped from Portland and Victoria and planted in South

Australia, putting another dent in the government's promise.

With Portland Aluminium receiving the bad news from the Treasurer that he will not help it, thus putting 2000 direct and indirect jobs at risk, another employer leaving the city is the last thing anyone wants. I would imagine a growing business exiting regional Victoria and taking away more jobs is the last thing the government would want. The action I seek is for the minister to meet with Porthaul and discuss with it ways to assist to ensure this strong and important local business remains based in Portland and Victoria.

State Emergency Service Broadmeadows unit

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action I seek is that the minister consider the application for funding of the Broadmeadows State Emergency Service (SES) under the volunteer emergency services equipment program. The volunteer emergency services equipment program is an ongoing program funded by the Victorian government, providing local emergency services volunteer groups with access to grants for operational equipment, vehicles, trucks, tankers, watercraft, trailers and minor facility improvements.

The Broadmeadows State Emergency Service services my electorate, the minister's electorate of Brunswick and also the electorate of the member for Broadmeadows. It has submitted a grant application under this program for a light rescue truck. If successful with its application for funding, the Broadmeadows SES intends to replace its current medium rescue truck with a light rescue truck. As the Broadmeadows SES services all three electorates, I know that both the minister and the member for Broadmeadows share an interest with me in this application, and indeed both of them have also witnessed, as I have, the great contribution the Broadmeadows SES team makes in our local community.

Members of the team are often the first to arrive at crime scenes, floods, fires and storms, and they provide vital frontline assistance to our emergency services. I am sure that the minister also recognises that, due to the limited resources at its disposal, the Broadmeadows SES team has developed a great degree of resourcefulness in its operations — sourcing and servicing a lot of its own equipment, materials and supplies. However, funding for a new light rescue truck would ensure that the Broadmeadows SES is provided with the modern equipment it requires in order to optimise its fleet and maximise the support it provides

for our community. I know that the minister joins me in acknowledging that local volunteers like these serve our community and that we depend on them to defend and protect us from danger and threats.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge that Shane Lapworth, who was the unit controller of the Broadmeadows SES, has finished his time in that role and that Ms Connie Lapworth has assumed that role, and I congratulate her accordingly. I ask that the minister provide due consideration to the application for a light rescue truck.

Responses

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — A number of members have raised a number of issues for a range of ministers, and I will pass those issues on to those ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.23 p.m.