

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 8 November 2016

(Extract from book 15)

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 9 November 2016)

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

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Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, 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	Naphthine, 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	Owens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

¹ Elected 31 October 2015

² Resigned 3 September 2015

³ Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴ Elected 14 March 2015

⁵ Elected 31 October 2015

⁶ Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Tuesday, 8 November 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 and present, and other elders of other communities who may be here with us today.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER — Order! I would like to welcome to the gallery representatives from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Aborigines Advancement League, Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Services and Victorian Aboriginal Health Service. On behalf of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and all members, we welcome you to the gallery.

ABSENCE OF MINISTER

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I inform the house that the Minister for Local Government, who is also the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations, will be absent from question time today. The Minister for Planning will answer questions in the local government and Aboriginal affairs portfolios, and the Minister for Public Transport will answer questions in relation to industrial relations matters.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Parole reform

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. For the families and loved ones of murder victims, there is possibly nothing more traumatic than not having the body of their loved one to lay to rest. Convicted murderers who refuse to disclose where the body of their victim is do not deserve to be considered for parole. Despite this, three months ago the government voted against this house even allowing the Corrections Amendment (No body, no parole) Bill 2016 to be first read, let alone debated.

Today in the gallery are George Halvagis, Janine Greening and Lyle Allan. Mr Allan's brother, Keith, was murdered in 2000. His body has never been found, and his murderers so far refuse to assist authorities. Premier, how do you explain to Mr Allan the government's decision to vote against the no body, no parole legislation?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I had an opportunity to speak with Mr Allan just a moment ago. I have known Lyle Allan for many, many years, and what I would say to him, to the Leader of the Opposition, to all members of this place and indeed to all Victorians is, just as families like the Allan family live every day with the pain of the fact that a loved one is gone at the hands of a brutal criminal, just as they are entitled to see that person receive punishment, they are entitled wherever possible to answers and closure. The most important thing to do is to make sure that we legislate, and we legislate properly, and that we do not have a flawed set of arrangements that might give the appearance of providing that closure but in fact does not achieve that.

That is why the cabinet and the government are considering this matter and will introduce legislation for this house in the new year, and for the consideration of the other place as well, that will deliver exactly what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about today. But it will be done properly, and I hope in a bipartisan sense. I would hope that the passage of legislation that deals with each and every one of those people currently in custody who have not been cooperative and have not provided that vital information in some small way eases the very considerable — perhaps unthinkable — burden that so many families carry every day in the sad and tragic knowledge that nothing we do can bring back their loved one.

This is the right thing to do, but it needs to be done properly, and that is exactly what the government will do. It is what we have been considering for some time, it is what is being worked on as we speak, and it is what we will introduce into this chamber in the new year, being the beginning of the 2017 parliamentary year.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The passage of a no body, no parole bill by the Parliament may prompt murderers to assist authorities to find their victims' bodies. The no body, no parole law would help those grieving families to at least have a dignified farewell for their loved one, and surely that is worth it. Premier, following the government's decision not to support the no body, no parole bill that was introduced

into this chamber some months ago, will you now give families like Mr Allan's an undertaking that you will introduce laws that can be brought forward, not next year, but in the next two weeks through this Parliament and passed with the support of the opposition by the end of this calendar year?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Let us be very clear about this. A bill will be introduced in the new year. I would expect that it could be passed with the support of all members of this house and the other place. It will be a bill that actually delivers on the intention to give closure, justice and fairness — some modicum of closure — to families who are without that.

An honourable member — Support us now.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, the bill needs to work, and what is more — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr ANDREWS — The other point that I would make is that the advice I have is that there are seven individuals in custody for whom this may be relevant, and none of them is eligible for parole any time in the next 12 months. This bill will be passed in good time to give the good people of this state who carry such a great burden the closure they are entitled to.

Ministers statements: Hazelwood power station

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Last week was a very difficult time for so many families in the Latrobe Valley with Engie's decision to close its Hazelwood power plant and mine. I joined the Minister for Employment — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — If only they had made this much noise when Morwell was on fire. The Minister for Energy, the Minister for Industry and Employment, the Treasurer, the Minister for Regional Development and Ms Shing in the other place joined me to announce a package —

Mr R. Smith interjected.

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

Mr ANDREWS — of support to create the Latrobe Valley Authority —

Mr Southwick interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Caulfield will come to order.

Mr ANDREWS — to cut red tape, to bring jobs to the valley and to make good decisions — and make them in good time. There is \$22 million to support those 750 workers and their families with counselling, retraining — all the usual practical supports that are so important —

Mr T. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kew!

Mr ANDREWS — The following day, because we had done the hard work over many weeks and months, I was pleased to announce a total package of \$266 million — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Angus interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Forest Hill is also warned. The Premier is entitled to silence when making a ministers statement. The Premier shall continue, in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — There is \$266 million, a package that will create incentives for business to relocate and expand in the Latrobe Valley, giving them the regional incentives available in no other part of the state, such is the challenge we face in the Latrobe Valley.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr ANDREWS — There is \$174 million worth of infrastructure projects. All of this is about standing with workers in the Latrobe Valley and their families, as opposed to — —

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Ripon

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ripon will leave the house for 1 hour.

Honourable member for Ripon withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

Ministers statements: Hazelwood power station

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — As opposed to those who did nothing while Morwell burnt — did nothing — who have apparently — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr ANDREWS — They have apparently found their voice all these years later. We will not just talk it, we will deliver for the families of the Latrobe Valley.

Hazelwood power station

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, you said you would fight for every Victorian job, yet you have also said it is your policy to close the Hazelwood power station. Premier, what steps did you personally take to fight for the 1000 Latrobe Valley jobs and to keep Hazelwood open, or did you sit on your hands because at heart you have always wanted to shut this station down?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The CEO of Engie Australia, Alex Keisser, has been asked many, many questions.

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, the Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear about what the CEO of the company actually says — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will continue, in silence. A question was put to the Premier. The Premier is endeavouring to respond to that important question.

Mr ANDREWS — The CEO of the company, a private company — a company that owns the asset because it was privatised by the previous government — has made it very clear that just as Engie are getting out of coal in the Netherlands, just as they are getting out of coal in Belgium, just as they are getting out of coal in the UK and just as they are getting out of gas in Western Australia, they have made a commercial decision, given the age of the plant and the very considerable maintenance bill that that plant faces

for safety purposes. Companies tend to do that. That may be news to those opposite. What we have done — —

Mr T. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have warned the member for Kew.

Mr ANDREWS — We have done 266 million things; that is what we have done, standing — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — Oh, ‘Why didn’t you put that into Hazelwood?’ is the question from — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier, to continue in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — So the position of those opposite apparently is that we ought to have made a direct payment of \$266 million to the French energy company Engie and to — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — No, no, that is their position — and to the minority shareholder, Mitsui Group.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is unable to hear the Premier.

Mr ANDREWS — That is the position of those opposite. Instead what we are doing is standing with each and every affected worker and their family. It is a region with stubbornly high unemployment — a matter that was of no concern to the previous government, which for four years did nothing except ignore the place while it was literally on fire. It took the minister for disaster recovery, Minister Wooldridge, now the Leader of the Opposition in the Council, 30 days to visit the Latrobe Valley.

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has now been speaking for over 2 minutes. He has not yet begun to address the issue and the question that was asked of him about what action he took to keep the 1000 Hazelwood jobs. I ask you on a matter of

relevance to bring him back to answering that specific question.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier has been outlining comprehensively the very strong action this government has taken on this matter. He has been —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House, in silence.

Ms Allan — Thank you, Speaker. My next point was about to be the fact that those opposite could barely have heard a word that the Premier was saying, given the way they were shouting, ranting and raving over the top of him. I would suggest that the Premier be allowed to conclude his answer, and if perhaps those opposite were a little bit more quiet, they might be able to hear the answer.

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

Mr ANDREWS — In addition to developing a comprehensive package of support for those 750 workers, their families —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier is entitled to silence when attempting to respond to an important question.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, you have just given a ruling about the Premier answering a question that was put to him about what he did before Hazelwood announced it was closing. The Premier has immediately returned to answering what he is doing after Hazelwood announced it was closing. I ask you to guide him back to the question, which was about what he did before Hazelwood closed, not his response to its announcement.

Mr ANDREWS — On the point of order, Speaker, it may come as a surprise to the Leader of the Opposition that a \$266 million package was not developed minutes after the company made their announcement. It took months of work, which I was about to continue detailing —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Warrandyte

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

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Hazelwood power station

Questions and statements resumed.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is on his feet. All members are to remain silent. The Premier, to continue.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — For months and months the company had made it clear they were reviewing their operations. There were a couple of meetings in Paris — Minister Frydenberg met them in Paris, to no avail; the Treasurer met them in Paris, to no avail.

The company has made a decision. They have explained what drove that decision. Our job was to be ready for that decision, if it were made, and now to support Latrobe Valley families, unlike those opposite who did nothing but abandon them while they literally burnt.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Given the Premier has effectively said that he has done nothing to encourage —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Essendon and the Minister for Police will come to order. The Chair must be able to hear the supplementary question as it is about to be put by the Leader of the Opposition. All members will be silent.

Mr GUY — Given the Premier did nothing to encourage, negotiate or attract Engie to remain longer at Hazelwood —

Ms Thomson interjected.

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

Mr GUY — does this not show to the Latrobe Valley, Premier, that you are more interested in saving inner-city seats from the Greens than you are in saving 1000 jobs in the Latrobe Valley?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The answer is no. The Treasurer — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — He has not answered any questions for a couple of years — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will continue through the Chair.

Mr ANDREWS — The only one laughing seems to be the Leader of the Opposition.

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Geelong

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Geelong will withdraw herself from the house for the period of 1 hour. The Chair is on his feet and all members are to remain silent.

Honourable member for Geelong withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Hazelwood power station

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — The Treasurer, myself, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Minister for Industry and Employment and other ministers have been involved in both a task force to plan for the worst and also to make representations to the company and almost constant dialogue. The Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change has been in constant contact with the company for a long period of time.

The company has made it clear in the media. The Leader of the Opposition is unhappy about this because the company has made it clear that the policy settings of the Victorian government, or any government, had no impact on their decision. We will stand with this community, not play the games of those who abandoned it.

Ministers statements: Latrobe Valley employment

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Industry and Employment) — I rise to inform the house about the steps the government has taken to support workers and businesses in the Latrobe Valley affected by the closure of Hazelwood. Clearly, as the Premier has said, Engie's decision to close Hazelwood is a devastating blow for workers, their families and the community. Many of those workers of course have spent their entire working lives at the power plant. That is why last week the Premier announced a significant \$266 million package to support the communities of the Latrobe Valley, an unprecedented investment in the valley.

Workers and businesses in the Latrobe Valley will clearly need assistance, and that is what we are delivering. A worker transition centre has already been established in Morwell in partnership with the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council. This centre will act as a one-stop shop for individual support. Case managers will connect workers with career information, financial advice, employment workshops and referrals to other support services. Education and training options will also give affected workers the right skills they need for their next job.

Supply chain businesses will also be supported by grants to help them identify new opportunities and to develop a transition plan. We have already announced the Latrobe Valley Economic Facilitation Fund, which is a \$10 million fund to attract new investment and grow existing businesses. That fund has already produced results. Together with the Premier and Harriet Shing in the other place I was down there about a month or so ago to announce that a local abattoir, Victoria Valley Meat Exports, would expand their operations — a \$1.2 million expansion that will create 73 new full-time jobs. We have also announced a doubling of the number of government investment facilitation specialists in the valley from four to eight. We will work hard to support workers, obviously to support businesses and, importantly, the Latrobe Valley community.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier will come to order. The member for Frankston is warned.

Hazelwood power station

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, when you announced a tripling of the brown coal tax, forecast to rip a quarter of a billion dollars more out of the Latrobe Valley energy sector, Hazelwood's operator, Engie, said:

... this government decision takes \$20 million a year straight out of the Hazelwood business —

and —

... policies that continue to damage our business commercially will not help the community of the Latrobe Valley or the Victorian economy ...

Premier, in light of these warnings, why did you persist in your Latrobe Valley tax grab, knowing that it was putting the future of 1000 Hazelwood workers at risk?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the shadow Treasurer for his question. Now we are apparently able to quote Engie executives when it suits your purposes. Look at what the CEO of the company had to say —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House will come to order. Government members will come to order.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, if the Premier has any doubt about the provenance of the quote I used, it was from an article in the *Latrobe Valley Express* of 28 April this year headed 'Coal royalty rate criticised'. I seek leave to table the article from the *Latrobe Valley Express*. I seek leave.

The SPEAKER — Order! Leave is not granted. The member for Malvern will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — I direct the questioner and all honourable members to extensive commentary made by the management of Engie — the CEO, Alex Keisser, and others from the organisation — who I think have been asked a hundred different ways: did any government policy settings influence your decision? The answer is no. What is more, the company CEO went on to describe the Hazelwood infrastructure as 'ancient' — that is what he said — and he then went into some detail about the significant maintenance funding that would be needed, the safety concerns, the age of the infrastructure and the international policy

position that his parent company has taken in Holland, in Belgium and in the UK.

The problem for the questioner is that he is very much selectively quoting. The quotes in relation to the actual decision, the decision made by Engie last week, are those from the CEO, where despite being asked a hundred different ways, a hundred times, 'Were any state or federal government policy positions the reason for your closure?', the answer was no. So I would simply direct the shadow of a Treasurer to what the company has actually said. In the meantime —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr ANDREWS — I will tell you what was not funny. What was not funny was taking a month to get yourself to Morwell when the place was on fire.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Ivanhoe. The Chair is on his feet; all members shall remain silent. The Premier to continue, in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — Some have found their voice in very recent times. When the mine was on fire the policy response was, 'Here is a mop and bucket'. When the mine was on fire, here was the response: 'We'll give you a vacuum cleaner'. When the mine was on fire it took the recovery minister 30 days — she was in Kew; that is where she was — 15 days to set up a health response, 15 days to set up a community information response.

In stark contrast, this company has made a decision. It is a sad day for those families, but they can be confident that their government will stand with them every hour of every day to grow jobs and opportunities, to stand up for them and to protect them and to make sure that the valley has a strong and bright and prosperous future, not one of abandonment, which is the legacy of those opposite.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Premier, with your Treasurer —

Ms Green interjected.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Yan Yean

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

Honourable member for Yan Yean withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

Hazelwood power station

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — Premier, with your Treasurer boasting in April that power companies can easily absorb the extra \$250 million in tax imposed by your government, and given the role of this tax increase is already costing 1000 jobs in the Latrobe Valley, I ask: will you immediately scrap this job-destroying tax increase to protect the remaining Latrobe Valley energy jobs, particularly at Loy Yang A, Loy Yang B and Yallourn, or will you not fight for those jobs either?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — The people of the Latrobe Valley well remember who sold their power stations, and they well remember those opposite when in government — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will continue, in silence.

Mr ANDREWS — They well remember those who left the valley on its own to recover, to transition and to deal with that privatisation decision. They have got form on abandoning the valley — —

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the question specifically asked the Premier: given the damage this tax increase has already caused, will he now scrap it to help save those remaining Latrobe Valley jobs? The Premier is giving us a wrong history lesson about the 1980s. He is not answering the question about the tax increase.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Malvern has concluded his point of order. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — The shadow Treasurer, the member for Malvern, is simply wrong. Much as he would hope to be able to blame the current government — —

Mr M. O'Brien interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Malvern will come to order.

Mr ANDREWS — As much as he would hope to do that, the CEO of the company has made it very clear what drove this decision, and I would refer the shadow Treasurer to those comments. But everyone in the Latrobe Valley knows who abandoned them, and they are all sitting over there.

**Ministers statements: Latrobe Valley
employment**

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to inform the house about the actions of the Andrews government in the Latrobe Valley following the announcement of the impending closure of the Hazelwood power plant. On Friday the government announced that our Back to Work scheme will be reopened for the hiring of workers in the Latrobe Valley.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Andrews — It's funny apparently.

Mr PALLAS — The loss of jobs in the Latrobe Valley is a source of great mirth for those opposite, but we take it seriously.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Eildon is warned, and so is the member for Bass.

Mr PALLAS — Let us not forget, when they were last in government — —

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Kew

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

Honourable member for Kew withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Ministers statements: Latrobe Valley
employment**

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — Let us not forget that when they were last in government they promised 3000 jobs to the valley.

Mr Paynter interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass has been warned.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is both misleading the house and debating the issue. I ask you to bring him back to making a ministers statement and informing the house about matters relevant to his portfolio, not engaging in fabricated attacks on other parties.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, it is an uncomfortable truth for those opposite — a deeply uncomfortable truth for those opposite — that the history of the challenges in the Latrobe Valley resides in those opposite when they were in government in the 1990s. We understand that they do not like that. However, it is an important context for what the Treasurer is putting to the house today.

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the Treasurer to come back to making a ministers statement.

Mr PALLAS — Yes, Speaker. We have heard much from those opposite about the jobs that are being lost of course in the Latrobe Valley and the jobs that this government is committed to working towards sustaining in the long term, jobs that that community ultimately needs. But let us not forget that 10 000 workers lost their jobs when those opposite were last in government — 10 000 workers in the Latrobe Valley, while they were out there talking up their capacity to create jobs.

As part of our \$266 million Latrobe Valley package, \$50 million will be provided as incentives to companies that are actually looking to start or to expand their businesses. That is not all of course. As a government we recognise that these challenges are substantial. They need a government that will actually stand with them and provide real solutions, not talk up the creation of 3000 jobs — as the former Treasurer, the former member for Malvern, did when he was last in government — for the Latrobe Valley. And how many

jobs were lost in the Latrobe Valley when they were last in government? Ten thousand jobs they lost — 10 000 jobs. Pathetic.

Latrobe Valley employment

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — My question is to the Premier. Todd is a worker at Hazelwood who, along with his wife and three children, lives locally. Todd has written to you about the closure of Hazelwood and has said that due to the closure:

I am already seriously considering trying to sell up and move at considerable loss.

This is so unfair, me and my family love living where we do.

I feel we have been misled and let down by our state government.

Workers at Hazelwood do not want charity; they simply want a job into the future. Premier, Todd is in the gallery today with his wife, Michelle, and son Tyler. Can you tell Todd, Michelle and Tyler why you did not bother fighting for Todd's job?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Morwell for his question. My message to Todd and his family and to all families across the Latrobe Valley is that Engie have made a decision. It is not the decision that anybody — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — I am certain that Todd is more interested in this answer than those opposite.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

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

Mr ANDREWS — What I am indicating to him and to all those 750 workers, both contractors and direct employees, their families and others that will feel the brunt of this decision in the broader Latrobe Valley economy and community, is that this is a decision that has been made by a private company. These are very difficult times, and the most appropriate thing for us to do is to support, where appropriate, retraining, counselling and advice, and then to work as hard as we possibly can to make sure that businesses have every reason to establish and expand in the Latrobe Valley, to employ more people and to make sure that problems in the valley that have been there for many, many years are —

Ms Ryall interjected.

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

Mr ANDREWS — once and for all addressed: issues of disadvantage and above-average unemployment. These are issues that were there before Hazelwood and no doubt are made more acute by the decision of Engie last week.

There have been interjections from others about policy. The CEO of the company, not those opposite but the CEO of the company, has made it very clear this is not a decision that was the product of any policy settings other than those set by his international board in Paris.

Mr Northe — On a point of order, Speaker, in terms of relevance, the Premier is talking about things that will occur after the decision. The question was about why the Premier did not fight for Todd's job prior to a decision being made.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Roads and Road Safety will come to order. The Premier, to continue. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — The member for Morwell is incorrect in the assertion he makes. The fact of the matter is that the company has made a decision. All of us, whether it be the federal government, the state government or indeed local government, all of which I have spoken with, from the Prime Minister to the newly elected council — and ministers in our government have spoken with Minister Chester, for instance, as well — all levels of government need to be less concerned with playing the politics of those opposite and more concerned with standing with the affected workers and the broader Latrobe Valley community.

I will just let Todd know that when I was speaking with the member for Morwell on Friday he was not quite as angry as this. He instead, I thought, in an act of great leadership, made the point to me that we should work together, and I said to him that I am happy to make that commitment. But he crosses the green carpet and suddenly it is all about the politics.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREWS — I will work with the member for Morwell; I will work with the people of Morwell. We

will not be playing politics with this; we will instead be delivering. Instead — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — And we will not be shouting and screaming either, like the Leader of the Opposition.

The SPEAKER — Order! In the Premier's remaining 3 seconds there is a point of order; the manager of opposition business is entitled to make it.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is in clear defiance of standing order 118 about personal imputations against the member for Morwell. It should be beneath his dignity to attack the member for Morwell when — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The manager of opposition business is entitled to silence when making a point of order. The Chair must be able to hear the member for Box Hill in order to adjudicate on a point of order. The member will continue.

Mr Clark — The Premier should not be engaging in these personal attacks when the local member is seeking answers about questions concerning the jobs of his constituents. I ask you to bring him back to compliance with standing orders.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House, on the point of order.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, I think the manager of opposition business is using standing order 118 in an inappropriate way to make this point of order. The Premier was going through a range of conversations he had had with, I think he mentioned, from the Prime Minister to local government and the local member about working cooperatively on the issues around the Latrobe Valley. I would have thought that was entirely appropriate information to provide to the house, and as a result the point of order should be ruled out of order because the member is misinterpreting standing order 118.

Mr Nardella interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair warns the member for Melton. The Leader of The Nationals is entitled to silence when about to make a point of order.

Mr Walsh — On the point of order, Speaker, I support the point of order by the member for Box Hill. The Premier made a great point about actually being

bipartisan about this and then started the whole issue of playing politics, and I — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals will continue. The Leader of The Nationals is entitled to silence when making a point of order. The Leader of The Nationals, to continue.

Mr Walsh — I would ask you to bring the Premier back, in the very short time that is left, to actually answering the question about what he did to save Todd's job rather than just playing dirty politics.

Mr ANDREWS — On the point of order, Speaker, it is for all of us, whether it be the federal government, the state government, the local government, government members, ministers, parliamentary secretaries, members of the backbench, opposition frontbenchers, the local member — all of us ought to be working together to support the people of the Latrobe Valley. That is what I thought the member for Morwell supported. It is what I support. I will work with the member for Morwell for the people of Morwell. I cannot be any clearer than that.

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The Chair does not uphold the point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — Let us all work together for Todd and his family and for every family across the Latrobe Valley.

Supplementary question

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — Premier, given it is your policy and was your policy all along to close Hazelwood, did your government ever do any research to find out how many workers like Todd will have to sell up and leave the Latrobe Valley when Hazelwood closed, and if not, why not?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — There are a number of assertions in the question, and I reject those. A private company has made a decision about an asset that is owned by them and some minority shareholders. What has the government done? There is a cabinet task force. I chair that task force. I will continue to chair that task force, which was established before because a review has been underway for some months, so as to be ready in the event that the company did what they had indicated was very much possible because of that important review.

We have conducted all manner of research. There will be further work done to map and track the supply chain — every business — to provide support for every affected family based on their individual circumstances. That is what we will do — not abandon the valley. There was enough of that by the previous government. We will support each and every affected family — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, it is a fact. The place burnt and you were stuck in Kew; you were stuck in Kew while the place was on fire. It is a fact, and they are so wounded by it — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Gembrook

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is on his feet. All members will come to order. The member for Gembrook had been warned and he repeatedly insisted on interjecting. The member for Gembrook will leave the house for 1 hour.

Honourable member for Gembrook withdrew from chamber.

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition, the Chair is on his feet. I remind the Leader of the Opposition of the standing orders as adopted unanimously in this house. When the Chair is on his feet, under standing orders, all members, including the Leader of the Opposition and members of the government, will remain silent. The minister, to make a ministers statement.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Questions and statements resumed.

Ministers statements: Hazelwood power station

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) — I rise to update the house on how our government is preparing to modernise our energy system. The national energy market, as we know, is undergoing a significant period of transformation. That is a reality. Since 2010 there have been nine coal-fired power stations closed in

Australia. In March next year Victoria's Hazelwood power station will also close.

As the federal Minister for Environment and Energy himself acknowledged on Thursday, it is closing because — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Andrews — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is a couple of feet away from me and I cannot hear the answer she is providing because of the abuse and the lack of respect being shown by the Leader of the Opposition. I would ask you to remind him of his obligations under standing orders and to stop shouting down the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change — as is his way — or anyone else who dares to stand at this box.

Mr Katos interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South Barwon will allow the Leader of The Nationals to make a point of order in silence.

Mr Walsh — On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier cannot hear because the Premier is the one who is constantly interjecting and showing absolute disrespect for the thousand people in the Latrobe Valley who are losing their jobs because of his decision to close Hazelwood. I ask you to rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair understands from time to time when members interject with each other, but the Chair will not accept that members interject when the Chair is on his feet. Currently the Chair is the custodian of this office and of standing orders and I have every intention of making sure that these rules are upheld. The Premier made a very good point: the Chair was unable to hear the minister. The minister will continue, in silence.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — As the federal Minister for Environment and Energy himself acknowledged last Thursday, Hazelwood is closing because Engie is divesting from coal worldwide. This was an independent, commercial, business decision. These are the facts. That is why Hazelwood is closing — —

Mr M. O'Brien interjected.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The independent market operator has also clearly stated that the closure will not impact on the reliability of Victoria's energy supply. These closures demonstrate the importance of governments working together to ensure that we modernise our energy system.

Mr Burgess interjected.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Even the federal government's own chief scientist, Dr Alan Finkel, said that 'governments must navigate change rather than lock into the status quo'. How about that for a comment from the federal government's own person? This is why our government is investing in the new energy technology sector — \$20 million for a strategic jobs fund. We are getting on with ensuring that we have a reliable, sustainable and affordable energy system for all Victorians.

Latrobe Valley employment

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — My question is to the Minister for Industry and Employment. In April next year Todd will be one of 1000 people your government's desire to close Hazelwood will impact personally. Minister, your policy was to close Hazelwood. Now that you have got your way, will you now tell Todd and the 1000 workers like him what real jobs you will have waiting for them in April next year?

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Industry and Employment) — I thank the member for Morwell for his question. Indeed again in his question he asserts that it was the government's decision to close Hazelwood. Indeed it is very clear that — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, by way of relevance. The minister has made an assertion about the question. He obviously did not listen to the wording of the question, which talked about the government's policy desire to close Hazelwood. That is what the question said. The minister has not interpreted that at all correctly. I ask you to bring him back to answering the sensible question, which was about real jobs that will be available at the closure of Hazelwood in March.

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

Mr NOONAN — Let us be clear: it is not the policy of the government to close Hazelwood. It was a commercial decision of Engie.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr Guy — Sorry.

The SPEAKER — Order! I take that as an apology to the Chair, the statement that was just made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Guy — Yes.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair accepts the Leader of the Opposition's apology. The minister will continue, in silence.

Mr NOONAN — On the issue of jobs — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government members will also come to order when the minister is making a statement.

Mr NOONAN — Let me say I think one thing we do welcome out of last Thursday was a commitment by Engie to retain 250 workers, both direct workers and contractors. There is indeed a significant amount of work, and the member will know this, around the decommissioning of the power plant. There is also a significant body of work to be done about the rehabilitation of the mine. That rehabilitation work could probably take up to 10 or 12 years. So we do welcome the decision by the company in relation to their workforce to keep workers on. Bearing in mind that this work could be done by contractors at the lowest cost, we think that this is a positive thing to do. So in relation to the other workers who will in fact — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is responding to a question, in silence. The minister to continue.

Mr NOONAN — In relation to the other workers, what I would say very clearly from the work that we have done is we actually understand that there is an older demographic among that workforce. I think about one in three of their direct-hire employees are over the age of 55, so a significant number may choose not to work again. But what we want to explore with the other generators is an opportunity for the potential redeployment of workers, and we will take on those discussions and that responsibility without delay.

In relation to jobs more broadly, again, I have mentioned before in this place that as a result of our state budget in April we committed \$40 million for an economic development and transition plan, and without waiting, it is already paying dividends. Those 73 jobs that I have talked about will be at Victoria Valley Meat. They are jobs that are coming as a result of this government's investment in the valley, and indeed there will be more. In the coming weeks and months there will be more jobs, more blue-collar jobs available. Indeed the member will know, because we have spoken about this in the past, of the importance of a high-tech precinct, for example, in the Morwell area. Indeed there is a business case being developed.

We are in a very good position as a government to continue to invest with the local community to create the jobs of the future for the valley as a result of work we are doing and as a result of the work that the community are doing. We will work closely with them.

Supplementary question

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — Minister, in less than two years under your government unemployment in the Latrobe City Council area has risen by nearly 50 per cent and in Morwell it has risen to 19.7 per cent — and that is before Hazelwood closes in March. So even before the closure, the Latrobe Valley community has an unemployment crisis which you have not been able to solve. If you cannot find the jobs for those — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr NORTHE — A rise of 50 per cent in unemployment. If you cannot find the jobs for those who have already lost their jobs under your government, how can workers like Todd and his family trust you to find them a real job by April next year?

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Industry and Employment) — If we want to talk statistics —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ferntree Gully has been warned and will not be warned again.

Mr NOONAN — in the four years of the previous government 5500 jobs in total were created in regional Victoria — 5500 across the four years. In the less than two years we have been in government we have created more than 26 000 jobs in regional Victoria, against 5500 across four years — that is their record.

Mr Richardson interjected.

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

Mr Northe — On a point of order, Speaker, in terms of relevance. The question was about how can workers like Todd and his family have faith and trust in this government given we have seen unemployment rise in Latrobe city by approximately 50 per cent in less than two years. If the minister wants to talk about statistics, 11 900 full-time — —

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

Mr NOONAN — The other point I would make here very clearly is the contrast in interest in energy versus what this mob over there did when the automotive industry announced their closure — thousands and thousands of jobs, no care whatsoever — —

Mr Northe — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is defying your ruling and is straying from the question that was asked. I ask you to bring him back to the unemployment crisis we have in Latrobe city and what he is going to do to support people like Todd.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair does want the minister to return to asking the question.

Mr NOONAN — Unlike those who abandoned the auto industry, we will not abandon the people of the Latrobe Valley.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair asked the minister to return to answering the question. The Chair requests the minister not to challenge the Chair's ruling. The Chair asks the minister to remain on answering the question.

Mr NOONAN — Thank you, Speaker. Let us be clear: this \$266 million package for this region is unprecedented.

Ministers statements: Latrobe Valley education and training

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I rise to outline to the house the Andrews government's commitment to future training and educational opportunities for the people of the Latrobe Valley. Of the \$266 million package announced by the Premier, \$22 million will go towards workers and their families, including support services and employment services, skills and training, counselling and financial advice. The services will be delivered in partnership with the

Gippsland Trades and Labour Council and our skills and job centres. It will also include subsidised training in jobseeking, resilience, language literacy, digital literacy and government-subsidised vocational education and training placements for impacted workers to upskill or retrain where required.

Since coming to office the Andrews government has committed an additional \$11.7 million to Federation Training, the Latrobe Valley's TAFE institute. Those opposite tried to cut our TAFE system down.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Malvern has been warned.

Mr MERLINO — The Andrews government has also in our first two budgets invested \$58.7 million in school infrastructure in the Latrobe Valley — that is almost \$30 million a year. That compares with \$1.6 million a year for two schools. Not one school — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Government and opposition members will allow the minister to continue in silence. The minister is entitled to silence when making a statement. The minister will continue.

Mr MERLINO — Not one new school in the City of Latrobe under those opposite — that is the damning legacy of the member for Morwell.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair requested silence for the Minister for Education when making a statement. The Minister for Education, to continue in silence.

Mr MERLINO — He is no advocate for the people of Morwell — no advocate at all. We will stand with the people of the Latrobe Valley, unlike those opposite.

The SPEAKER — The time for questions without notice has now concluded.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on 31 August I raised a question on notice for the Minister for Police regarding consultation around the Burwood police station. I note that this is the third time I have had to stand here and raise a point of order asking for the minister to actually answer the question and to give the constituency of Burwood an understanding as to when she consulted or when the police consulted before they completely closed the

Burwood police station. It is unacceptable that this is the third time I have had to stand up here and raise a point of order asking the minister to actually answer the question. She is well beyond the time line that is required for her to answer this question, and I call on you to ask the Speaker to get her to actually answer the question.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will pass on that request directly to the Speaker to follow that up with the Minister for Police.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Brighton electorate

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — (11 940) My question is for the Minister for Public Transport, and my question is: when will she improve bus services in the Brighton and bayside areas, specifically in relation to frequency and to directly servicing railway stations at the time trains are actually arriving at the railway stations? I would refer the minister to a document produced by the Bayside City Council called ‘Public transport advocacy statement’ of June 2016, and that will explain the council’s desire in full on this particular issue. I would also add that I recently met with the then mayor and deputy mayor and they indicated this is one of their most significant issues, so my question to the minister is a simple one: when will she effect these frequency and service improvements?

Narre Warren South electorate

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — (11 941) My question is to the Minister for Creative Industries, and it concerns the City of Casey. I ask how the partnership between the Municipal Association of Victoria, Creative Victoria and local governments promotes and supports the arts and our creative industries within the City of Casey. It is a diverse and growing local community that is home to many exceptional and talented artists, many of whom I have had the pleasure of meeting. I really admire their work and have bought some of it as well. They certainly deserve our support and encouragement, and through Creative Victoria, Victoria’s first ever creative industry strategy, we can do just that.

Gippsland South electorate

Mr D. O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) — (11 942) My constituency question is to the Minister for Health, and my question is: in the wake of the Duckett review, can the minister confirm that the government remains committed to supporting and maintaining rural birthing

services that meet the required criteria in terms of clinical safety and governance? There is concern in my electorate about maternity wards in particular, and we are seeking some clarity that the government is committed to maintaining those rural obstetrics services in small country towns. I have a number in my electorate that provide a very good service and underpin wider services within the hospital and the local community, given the skills and the clinical experience needed for those maternity wards. Again, the question is: can the minister confirm that the government remains committed to supporting and maintaining rural birthing services that meet the required criteria in terms of clinical safety and governance?

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — (11 943) My question is to the Minister for Local Government, and I ask: what improvements to transparency and accountability should local residents expect from the newly elected Hume City Council as a result of the government’s important code of conduct reforms? As a former councillor and mayor of Hume, I know that residents have a high expectation of their local government representatives. There is no doubt that people expect their councillors to act in the community’s best interests when making decisions that affect residents’ lives. It is unfortunate that there have been examples across the state of these expectations not being met, which is why these reforms were so welcomed by my community. The recent election has delivered a new team for Hume council, with 7 of the 11 councillors being elected for the first time. I look forward to working with this mix of experience and new perspectives. I am sure that all councillors and residents would welcome advice from the minister on this important matter.

Rowville electorate

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — (11 944) The question I wish to raise is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety on behalf of residents in my electorate of Rowville who are fed up with the terrible condition of our local roads. Minister, I received a complaint regarding a stretch of potholes on Ferntree Gully Road, Knoxfield, a major arterial road in my electorate. A retired couple were driving at night, in the rain, and they drove over several deep potholes in the turning lane into Bunjil Way, leaving their car with two flat tyres and damage to the wheels, and them with a hefty bill. The accident could have been worse, particularly if a motorcycle had driven over these potholes. When driving on a major arterial road results in such damage to a vehicle, VicRoads simply cannot accurately claim

to have maintained this road to a safe standard. The potholes were filled with screed once the complaint was made, but no permanent repairs have been done. Minister, when will VicRoads properly fix this stretch of road to ensure accidents like this do not happen again?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Can I ask honourable members to ask questions at the beginning rather than the end?

Bundoora electorate

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — (11 945) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and my question is: is it possible for the minister to request VicRoads to improve the sequencing of traffic signals along Plenty Road in Bundoora and Mill Park?

Following the failure of the previous government to provide any improvements in transport in the Plenty Valley area, the Andrews government has set about delivering a raft of projects, such as the Mernda rail extension, the Hurstbridge rail line duplication, the widening of sections of Yan Yean Road and Plenty Road, new high-capacity trams along Plenty Road and more car parking at the Watsonia railway station, as well as better bus services. While we are getting on with the job of delivering this work, one of my constituents has asked if the sequencing of traffic signals along Plenty Road can be improved to help the traffic flow, and I ask the minister if this is possible.

Prahran electorate

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — (11 946) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What is the government's plan to ensure safe pedestrian access for students between Prahran station and the new Prahran High School? A number of constituents have raised with me safety concerns regarding commuters crossing High Street from Prahran station and the adjacent tram stop. With Prahran High School having a capacity of 650 students and due to open in 2019, the danger of pedestrians crossing High Street from Prahran station will only get greater.

Whilst there are controlled pedestrian crossings around 160 metres to the east and west of the station, the reality is that many commuters coming from the station or tram stop are not using them, creating a clear risk. I note that the crossing to the west of the station serviced the old Prahran primary, which closed in 1990 and is now a set of apartments. Some residents have raised with me the prospect of relocating this crossing closer to the new high school. Pedestrian facilities on Porter

Street are minimal, increasing the chance of conflict between students and vehicles. With the construction of Prahran High School due to begin next year, now is the time to plan, fund and implement improved pedestrian facilities to ensure the safety of students.

Pascoe Vale electorate

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — (11 947) My constituency question is for the Treasurer, and the question is: what has been the uptake of the Back to Work scheme by businesses in the Pascoe Vale district? Today the Treasurer updated the house with new information regarding the Back to Work scheme. Under the previous Liberal government 10 000 people lost their jobs. The introduction of the Back to Work scheme by the Andrews Labor government signalled the important first step on the journey to create economic and employment growth throughout this state. The Back to Work Act 2015 provided a lifeline to unemployed youth and long-term unemployed, many of whom live in the district of Pascoe Vale, where youth unemployment is amongst the highest in the state, at 18 per cent. So I ask the Treasurer: what has been the uptake within the district of Pascoe Vale?

Burwood electorate

Mr WATT (Burwood) — (11 948) My question is for the Minister for Planning. The Markham public housing estate was a housing estate that the minister is well aware of and used to consist of 56 units. Recently it was announced that 252 units are going to be built on the estate, including seven storeys plus an underground basement car park. Prior to the last election the Labor Party denied they would be building such a large-scale development and committed to consulting with the local community before any decision was made about the future of this site. So I ask: what consultation was undertaken with the local community to determine the appropriate size and scale of the development before deciding on the number of units and the reduction in the ability for public housing tenants to get onto that site?

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (11 949) It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Burwood. I direct my constituency question to the Minister for Families and Children in the other place. I ask the minister: what is the latest information on what the government is doing to prevent vulnerable children from disadvantaged families missing out on kindergarten access?

I read with interest the comments made by Harold Mitchell in the *Age* from 4 November this year, an article headed 'Food for thought: Kids benefit more from primary than high school'. Mr Mitchell refers to research the Mitchell Institute commissioned, which found that formal preschool learning needs to commence a year earlier. In his view, it needs to commence at the age of three rather than four. Mr Mitchell refers to international studies indicating that up to the age of 24, 25 per cent of those who started primary school behind their peers are not in full-time education or training. Interestingly, Mr Mitchell also indicates that most six-year-olds can actually understand Donald Trump, which I think says something. I would be quite interested in the minister informing me on this matter.

CREATIVE VICTORIA BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Creative Industries) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to establish the office of the chief executive, Creative Victoria, and to repeal the Arts Victoria Act 1972 and for other purposes.

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

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Creative Industries) — This is a bill that delivers on the government's election commitment to establish the Creative Victoria chief executive officer position and for a range of modernisation and updating provisions of what was previously the Arts Victoria Act 1972, which will be repealed and replaced by the Creative Victoria Act.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

HERITAGE BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to re-enact with amendments the Heritage Act 1995 to provide for the protection and conservation of places and objects of cultural heritage significance, to establish a Victorian Heritage Register and a Heritage Inventory, to establish a Heritage Council, to create offences and other enforcement measures to protect and conserve cultural heritage and to establish a heritage fund and for other purposes.

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

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — The Heritage Bill 2016 repeals and re-enacts with amendments the Heritage Act 1995 to provide improved processes and protections for state significant heritage places and objects, underwater cultural heritage, including shipwrecks, and historic archaeological sites.

Mr M. O'Brien — And pubs.

Mr WYNNE — If we want to talk about pubs, we can talk about pubs.

Mr M. O'Brien — We are greatly interested in pubs.

Mr WYNNE — No more than I am interested in pubs, I can assure you — and it is going to be rebuilt brick by brick, even if I have to do it myself.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

OWNER DRIVERS AND FORESTRY CONTRACTORS AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

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

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Owner Drivers and Forestry Contractors Act 2005 in relation to certain industry councils and their membership and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — Albeit the minister is acting for another minister, I would ask if she could assist the house by providing a brief explanation as best as she is able.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I will do my best. The bill makes some minor amendments to the Owner Drivers and Forestry Contractors Act 2005. It goes to the issue around membership of industry councils and the way that vacancies are filled.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION BILL 2016

Introduction and first reading

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

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to repeal the Small Business Commissioner Act 2003 and to re-enact the law in relation to the Small Business Commission with amendments, to establish the Small Business Commission so as to enhance a competitive and fair operating environment for small businesses in Victoria and for other purposes.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — Again I would ask the minister, to the extent that she is able, to provide the house with a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — The government went to the election with commitments to strengthen the support for the small business commissioner role, and this bill gives effect to that and other changes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Notice of motion 1 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:

Domestic animals legislation

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the House their collective concerns with respect to the proposed amendments to the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

We are passionate about animal welfare. We do not believe the proposed changes will solve the problems they are intended to address; however, we do believe that these changes will negatively impact both animal welfare and the pet industry.

The petitioners therefore requests that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria not support the aforementioned changes to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and instead call for the bill to be referred to a parliamentary inquiry or the relevant upper house committee to review so that an evidence-based

approach to issues around animal welfare and the pet industry can be achieved.

By Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (250 signatures).

Pearcedale Primary School

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

We the undersigned citizens of Victoria draw to the attention of the house community support for the need to install 40-kilometre per hour electronic school speed limit signs for the Pearcedale Primary School to protect the safety of local schoolchildren.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls on VicRoads to install permanent 40-kilometre per hour electronic school speed limit signs at the Pearcedale Primary School speed zone on busy Baxter-Tooradin Road, Pearcedale.

By Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (403 signatures).

Tabled.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 15

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert Digest No. 15* of 2016 on:

**Crimes Legislation Further Amendment
Bill 2016**

**Energy Legislation Amendment (Feed-in Tariffs
and Improving Safety and Markets) Bill 2016**

**Family Violence Reform Implementation
Monitor Bill 2016**

**Housing Amendment (Victorian Housing
Register and Other Matters) Bill 2016**

Road Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2016

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

Working with Children Amendment Bill 2016

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

CenITex — Report 2015–16

Coronial Council of Victoria — Report 2015–16

Court Services Victoria — Report 2015–16

Game Management Authority — Report 2015–16

Judicial College of Victoria — Report 2015–16

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Electoral Matters Committee's Report on the Inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian State Election

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

Cardinia — C188

Casey — C222

Colac Otway — C93

Greater Shepparton — C177

Melbourne — C299

Mornington Peninsula — C161

Moyne — C60

Port Phillip — C127

Southern Grampians — C50

Stonnington — C244

Victoria Planning Provisions — V9

Warmambool — C83

Yarra — C197 Part 1

Professional Standards Council — Report 2015–16 (two documents)

Public Prosecutions, Office of — Report 2015–16

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 123, 127, 132, 133

Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*:

Ministerial Order 948 — Amendments to Ministerial Orders 55 and 382 on Structured Workplace Learning and Work Experience Arrangements

Ministerial Order 949 — Amendments to Ministerial Orders 723 and 724 on Structured Workplace Learning and Work Experience Arrangements

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal — Report 2015–16

Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine — Report 2015–16 (two documents)

Victorian Law Reform Commission — Report 2015–16 — Ordered to be published.

The following proclamation fixing operative dates was tabled by the Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 24 February 2015:

Delivering Victorian Infrastructure (Port of Melbourne Lease Transaction) Act 2016 — Division 1 of Part 8 — 31 October 2016; remaining provisions — 1 November 2016 (*Gazette S325, 25 October 2016*).

POWERS OF ATTORNEY AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Council's amendment

Returned from Council with message relating to amendment.

Ordered to be considered later this day.

VICTORIAN FISHERIES AUTHORITY BILL 2016

Council's amendments

Returned from Council with message relating to amendments.

Ordered to be considered later this day.

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent on 2 November to:

**Corrections Legislation Amendment Bill 2016
Estate Agents Amendment (Underquoting)
Bill 2016**

**Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional
Victoria Land) Bill 2016**

**Legal Profession Uniform Law Application
Amendment Bill 2016**

**Melbourne College of Divinity Amendment
Bill 2016.**

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

**Family Violence Reform Implementation
Monitor Bill 2016**

Road Legislation Further 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, 10 November 2016:

Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

Housing Amendment (Victorian Housing Register and Other Matters) Bill 2016

Road Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2016

Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016

Working with Children Amendment Bill 2016.

In regard to the government business program motion that I have moved in the house today, when we conclude this debate, hopefully successfully, and move through member statements it is the government's intention to deal with the two bills that were just returned from the Legislative Council with amendments as items 1 and 2 on the agenda and then proceed with the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The government has already indicated to the opposition that it intends to circulate some house amendments in relation to that bill.

There have been — I would hope the manager of opposition business agrees — some productive conversations in recent days and weeks about how the Parliament as a whole operates and how to ensure that legislation is considered in both houses and progressed appropriately. That has been good to see. Also I anticipate, having had prior warning, that the opposition will seek a commitment from the government to go into consideration in detail on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016 and the Road Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2016. The government has considered those requests and will agree, probably on Thursday afternoon ahead of the 5.00 p.m. closure of business, to make an appropriate amount of time available to consider those two bills in detail.

I am sure that will be greatly anticipated by the chamber as an opportunity to examine what I think, given I am responsible for one of those bills, is a great bill which I hope is supported. I welcome the opportunity to have a further conversation on and analysis of that bill during the consideration-in-detail stage. With those few observations, I commend the motion to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition does not oppose this week's government business program. We believe there has been encouraging progress in relation

to the consideration of bills in detail. As the Leader of the House indicated, the government has responded to the opposition and will make time available for consideration in detail in particular of the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016, and also — for the lesser amount of time we believe will be necessary and appropriate for consideration — of the Road Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2016.

As I said, the opposition believes that the fact that these two bills are to be considered in detail is a welcome step forward in relation to not only the commitment that the government has given about consideration in detail but also the more effective operation of this Parliament and hopefully the performance by this Parliament of its function of scrutinising and passing legislation in the best possible form for the good governance of Victoria.

We expect, as I have foreshadowed previously, that when bills are able to be considered in detail in this place and issues are able to be resolved and clarified in this place that that will naturally mean that less time, if any, needs to be applied to those bills in the committee stage in the Legislative Council. It will also of course, through examining issues and identifying any concerns that may exist in this house, provide an opportunity for the government, if it sees fit, to consider potential amendments and indeed for the community and all interested parties to be better aware of the issues that may arise in relation to bills and the government's response to concerns that may exist. That is a welcome sign of progress.

In other respects the program proposed for this week is a reasonable one in terms of the overall volume of business proposed, and for those reasons the opposition parties do not oppose the government business program.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the government business program. Is it not magnificent? It is spring, the sun is shining, we are nearing the halfway mark of this fantastic term of the 58th Parliament and we are getting on with it. We are embracing everything in government that is coming our way and we are getting on with it. That is why we are considering five magnificent pieces of legislation this week. It is fantastic legislation, and I am absolutely delighted that the member for Sunbury is in the house, back from his nuptials. It is fantastic to have the outstanding member for Sunbury in our midst. He was so keen he did not go and see the Government Whip and ask for a full week's sojourn overseas in Europe. No, he is back here. He is back here and, like

me, he is absolutely excited to be able to make a contribution on this magnificent legislative program.

That goes to show the esprit de corps, the passion that we have on this side of the house for getting on with delivering progressive administration for this great state. We are embracing it every day. Spring has sprung, the winter is in our wake, we have got two years in front of us and we are not wasting a moment, as evidenced by this magnificent government business program.

I am not quite sure — I should have consulted with the whip's office before I rose to my feet — but I think we are now in triple digits in terms of the number of bills that have been passed by this chamber. It is well over 100. While I would not necessarily argue that volume should be confused with productivity or efficiency — sometimes less is more; sometimes it might be the case that you want to reduce the level of legislation — nonetheless this demonstrates the fact that this government has got on with implementing the agenda that was bestowed upon us by the people of Victoria and that we are also looking at dealing with those issues that arise from time to time in the normal course of government administration.

With those brief words, can I just say that it is fantastic to have the Deputy Speaker in the chair today. It is fantastic to be in government and to be surrounded by my hardworking colleagues. Life is good, and on days like today when I am afforded the magnificent opportunity to contribute to the debate on the government business program, which is indeed relevant to the fortunes of this outstanding administration, I want to say that it is a great business program and I commend it.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution on the government business program. As the manager of opposition business has already stated, we will not be opposing the program, and I think a large part of that has got to do with the government finally going into consideration in detail on bills, with the transport and road bills being considered in detail by the Assembly. I certainly look forward to making a brief contribution on the amendments to the fisheries bill. That is an issue that is fairly dear to my heart, after 20 years in the industry.

One thing I have raised in previous government business program debates and have yet to receive any sort of timetable for or response to is that there are more than a dozen members of the parliamentary Liberal Party who have not been able to make a contribution on this year's budget, the Appropriation (2016–2017)

Bill 2016. The take-note motion on the budget papers remains on the notice paper, and I would welcome a member of the government letting us know when members on this side of the house, and indeed members on the government benches, who have not made a contribution, will be able to make a contribution on the budget, one of the most important bills that comes before this house each year. With those brief words, as I said, we will not be opposing the government business program, but I would like some clarification on when we will return to the take-note motion on the budget.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — The government business program addresses critical issues to improve economic development during a time of unprecedented population growth, deliver added protection for vulnerable children, help families on housing waiting lists, improve infrastructure to increase productivity and increase benefits for workplace injury and accident compensation. Put simply, this is an important mix of economic and social initiatives defining the values and priorities of the Andrews Labor government. The Leader of the House has declared that she will take her significant reforms to Victoria's transport system into consideration in detail, as the Attorney-General, who is at the table, did with his bill during the last sitting week. I hope this has addressed the complaints concerning consideration in detail and I acknowledge that the manager of opposition business has taken that on board. We will be doing the same thing with the Road Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2016.

We are making progress. There seems to be a renewed proposition about bipartisanship, and I think that is important. I look forward to the Leader of the House taking the bill that looks at what we are going to do to integrate the transport system and to try and respond to the need to move more people and goods around the state and this will be important for regional and rural Victoria as much as it is for the heart of the city. This also goes to the major planning issues that we have to address as a state with population growth. I want to specifically commend that proposition.

I do want to also address one of the other issues that concerns how we protect vulnerable children. We have had a bipartisan proposition in the 57th Parliament and in the 58th Parliament on what our responses should be to take care of children who are being abused or are at risk. I just want to provide the context of the Working with Children Amendment Bill 2016, which is that the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has made recommendations on working with children checks. The report was that it preferred the commonwealth government to facilitate a

national model. Unfortunately that has not yet occurred, and I want to commend the Andrews government, the Attorney-General and everybody involved with this on bringing this legislation to this Parliament to expedite the issue. I think it is critical that we do not wait and that we act as soon as we can. I think that is an important response to child sexual abuse. We have had bipartisan support for this, so I welcome that and I think that this will be an excellent initiative. I commend the government's business program to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to speak on the government business program. The Nationals in coalition are not opposing this program. There are five bills before the house: the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, and I understand there are some house amendments to come forward on that particular bill; the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016, which is to undertake some changes in the transport sector, and many Nationals will be very anxious to speak about our transport systems; the Working with Children Amendment Bill 2016, which is mostly to amend the definitions around direct contact and child-related work, and this is an issue that regularly comes up amongst country members too when we go and have our community forums about how organisations struggle to meet those requirements; the Housing Amendment (Victorian Housing Register and Other Matters) Bill 2016, which is really about how we administer our social housing and again is a topic that I know a number of people have some interest in; and the Road Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2016, which is one that will go into consideration in detail and has many aspects to it, one of which is to tow away any stationary vehicle left on a road. I can probably give the corporation responsible for that a list of burnt-out wrecks along a number of roads that I would be very pleased to see moved on, and I am sure VicRoads would be as well. The bill also deals with a number of licensing and pricing issues.

These are the bills on the program. I welcome the opportunity to deal with hopefully two of these bills in consideration in detail. It has long been my view that consideration in detail of a bill is democracy at work and at its best. I look forward to this house being able to undertake those tasks.

I would also like to take this moment to wish the member for Brunswick a speedy recovery on behalf of my colleagues. We all wish her well at this time. I could probably wax lyrical, as other members have, about water, weather and harvests, but I will not at this time. The Nationals are not opposing the business program.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I think we all appreciate those sentiments and that decision.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Timber industry

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — On the back of the massive job losses we are about to see in the Latrobe Valley after the closure of the Hazelwood power station, the government needs to be aware that a further 65 direct and many more indirect jobs currently sit in the palm of the hand of the Minister for Agriculture.

Brickworks, the parent company of Auswest Timbers, has threatened to close its East Gippsland operations and said in its annual report that this was due to the inaction of the Andrews Labor government to provide timber supply security. Brickworks annual report reads as follows:

After many years of negotiation, the Victorian state government continues to frustrate efforts to make the required investments in our East Gippsland timber mills, by denying certainty of log supply.

These operations now have only nine months supply contracted, with no clarity being provided beyond that term ... if an acceptable log contract is unable to be secured, the East Gippsland facilities will be closed.

Minister Pulford needs to be aware of this pending crisis and know that it is now decision time on these jobs. She needs to provide timber supply security to East Gippsland businesses.

Bairnsdale Racecourse

Mr T. BULL — There have been two big events at the Bairnsdale Racecourse in a matter of five days. On Tuesday the club staged its ever-popular Melbourne Cup Day races, with a large turnout, great attractions for all ages and some good racing on the track. It was a terrific day. Then on Saturday the Bairnsdale Show was held. Very well done to the revamped committee, led by Jack Peterson, for a great day, after the show was forced to be cancelled last year.

Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club

Mr T. BULL — Lakes Entrance Surf Life Saving Club recently marked 60 years of beach protection at Lakes Entrance with an anniversary ball. Well done to all involved in the running of a great local club, which caters for so many.

Ambulance services

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — Recently I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ambulance Services, in my community to recognise the latest ambulance performance data. Our paramedics each and every day put themselves on the line to protect the community. It is a dangerous job. It is a highly demanding job, with hours worked of 14 hours on or 10 hours on. It really pushes our paramedics in our local community. You need a government that supports our paramedics and our health system, and that is exactly what this government is doing with record investments in supporting our paramedics.

Seconds matter when it comes to saving lives. I can say to the house that a 37-second reduction in ambulance response times has been achieved in the City of Kingston, which means people will be safer in our community. At the same time we had some welcome data on elective surgery — and while I say ‘elective surgery’, some of this surgery is for hip replacements and knee replacements for people who have worked all their lives and who have contributed to our community and built up our community and are at a stage in their life where they need that urgent support. I am pleased to advise the house that a 10 000-person reduction in elective surgery waiting times has been achieved in the last four years. That matters to our community and our people. This is vitally important for our region, supporting Sandringham Hospital, Monash hospital and Frankston Hospital, which service our communities. We will continue to invest in health and ambulance services for the betterment of our local area.

PenBus service

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I rise to again raise the issue of the cancelled PenBus service and the inadequate 887 route which purports to replace it. The PenBus service provided a 90-minute journey time from Rosebud, through Mornington and Frankston and to the Monash University Clayton campus. It was replaced at the start of this year with a totally inadequate service, the 887, which in contrast to the PenBus it replaces, travels only to Monash Frankston. Any students travelling on to Clayton must now transfer to the Monash shuttle, with a consequent significant increase in travelling time.

None of this is news to the house. I have raised this issue repeatedly with the Minister for Public Transport, as has my colleague the member for Nepean. A constituent recently wrote to me and confirmed that on at least two occasions in one week the 7.15 a.m. service

from Mornington did not arrive in time to make the transfer to Clayton. His email noted:

The 887 is always empty, whereas the PenBus that used to operate would see hundreds of students using it each day.

If it was a decent service, it would be well patronised. The government’s failure to fix this issue demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the needs of Mornington Peninsula students. The simple constraints of geography mean that most students, including the vast majority of those undertaking degree courses, need to travel off the peninsula. The actions of the government are making life much harder for them, and without the regular and reliable service that PenBus provided they must consider whether in fact it is possible for them to continue their studies.

The government must reverse their decision to replace a great service with a very ordinary one, reinstate the old PenBus and ensure that Peninsula students enjoy the same opportunities to access tertiary education as their metropolitan peers.

Walk to the Valley

Ms WARD (Eltham) — Sunday was a beautiful day in my community. At 10.00 a.m. nearly 1000 people gathered at the Heidelberg Cricket Club and Heidelberg Football Club oval to walk the nearly 8 kilometres from the oval to the Lower Plenty cricket and football clubs in Montmorency. They gathered because they wanted to not only show their support for the Cronin family and their ongoing remembrance of Pat but they also wanted to take a stand against the coward punch — and what a stand they made. It was fantastic to see the hundreds and hundreds of white Walk to the Valley t-shirts stream onto the oval, join together as a community and share icy poles, live music and snags at the end of their walk.

This was a very successful event and was organised by two young men, Luke Anderson and Nick Carlton, and I not only congratulate but thank them for their terrific efforts in organising Walk to the Valley, raising \$35 000 for the Pat Cronin Foundation. I also want to commend Matt, Robyn, Emma and Lucas Cronin for their tireless work with the Pat Cronin Foundation and for spreading the word that there is no excuse for violence and for all of us to ‘Be Wise’.

Run for the Furies

Ms WARD — The sun shone on my community on Sunday, including on the nearly 700 participants in the Research Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Kangaroo Ground CFA annual fun run, Run for the Furies. Every

year since 2009 this fun run has continued to grow in support and strength. This year saw around 100 participants from the Diamond Creek Runners and a huge number of Westerfoldians, along with runners from Eltham College and elsewhere. The money raised will go towards specialised firefighting vehicles and equipment, maintenance, training and facilities improvements for firefighters. It was a tremendous privilege to be able to give the trophies out to those who won on the day. Well done to the two CFA brigades on a great morning, and thank you to Eltham Lions Club for their sausage sizzle, Eltham Woolworths for supplying packets of water, Swisse for their donated goodies and all other sponsors who support our local CFAs. It was a terrific community event.

Protective services officers

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — The previous coalition government did an outstanding job creating and implementing the highly successful protective services officers (PSO) program. The Liberals and The Nationals recognised a sensible law and order policy needed to be funded and resourced to prevent a further rise in crime, particularly on public transport. The PSO program began with an election commitment from the Liberal-Nationals opposition to introduce 940 PSOs on Melbourne's train stations. The then government delivered 950 by November 2014 and funded a further 96.

Only two years into the Andrews government there has been a huge increase in crime being committed at train stations. Crime at railway stations has gone up overall by 20.5 per cent in the last year. At nearly 30 stations crime has more than doubled. The Labor government has introduced 24-hour public transport on weekends but has not provided sufficient extra PSOs to make it safe. Not surprisingly, Flinders Street and Southern Cross railway stations are the two worst railway stations for crime. After two years of the Andrews government, passengers on public transport are regularly victims of crime, and successful law and order programs, like the PSOs and Neighbourhood Watch, and like Victoria Police themselves, are overstretched and underfunded — or, in the case of Neighbourhood Watch, entirely defunded. The Liberal and Nationals parties are absolutely committed to the PSO program.

Hume City Council

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — Last night I attended the statutory meeting of the newly elected Hume City Council, with the election of the mayor, and I congratulate Drew Jessop on his election to the position of mayor and Ann Potter for her election as deputy

mayor. I would also like to thank our outgoing councillors Chandra Bamunusinghe, Casey Nunn, Alan Bolton, Helen Patsikatheodorou, Adem Atmaca, Vic Dougall and Jack Ogilvie. Each of them has made an invaluable contribution to our community.

Likewise I congratulate all candidates who nominated for election for the passionate ideas that they shared throughout the campaign. Eight councillors have been elected to represent the constituents of the Yuroke electorate at a council level: Carly Moore, Drew Jessop, Joseph Haweil and Jodi Jackson in Aitken ward and Karen Sherry, Jana Taylor, Geoff Porter and Naim Kurt in Meadow Valley ward. I am also delighted that Ann Potter has been re-elected in Jacksons Creek ward, along with Leigh Johnson and Jack Medcraft.

Our new council includes three councillors under the age of 30, and 5 of the 11 are women. I know that our diverse council will work to improve services and infrastructure in our community. I wish them all the very best and look forward to working with them over the coming term.

Manmeet Alisher

Ms SPENCE — On another matter, I would like to extend my condolences to the family of Manmeet Alisher, a Brisbane bus driver and Queensland Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) member who was tragically killed at work on Friday, 28 October. At 11.00 a.m. tomorrow there will be a gathering at the eight-hour day monument on Russell Street to honour Manmeet in a national day of respect for public transport workers organised by the RTBU and the Transport Workers Union. My condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

Cyril Molyneux

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — Eighty-one years a member of the Hawthorn Football Club — when you hear Cyril Molyneux's history it may sound strange to start at Hawthorn as the intro to a statement after the passing of this wonderful man, but it is how I remember him, as a proud and passionate Hawk.

Cyril passed away aged 98 years old. He served his country in the defence of Darwin. He left the service in 1953 as a lieutenant. He was a community man through and through, having been involved for more than 50 years with the RSL, a City of Berwick councillor from 1981 to 1991 and a mayor for the community he loved from 1985 to 1986. Cyril played a major role in securing the acquisition of the Old Cheese Factory, an icon in the area. He promoted international

relationships with sister cities Berwick-upon-Tweed and Springfield, Ohio. Cyril's community support included 10 years as an honorary magistrate, a decade on the board of St Margaret's School, being an inaugural member of the Hallam High School, 38 years with the Berwick Rotary club and 40 years as a board member of the Berwick Bush Nursing Hospital.

Cyril was one of the most respected men in the Berwick area. He was a proud Liberal. He worked with anyone to benefit his local community. His late wife, Thelma, left his side many years ago. Cyril was a family man, and you only needed to listen to the stories on the day to understand his life was devoted to his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His legacy is not the park named in his honour; it is the community of Berwick, the City of Casey, the place I am proud to call home that is better because we had Cyril Molyneux love his community the way he did.

Banyule City Council

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I rise to congratulate Tom Melican, my local Ibbott ward councillor, who was last night unanimously elected mayor of the City of Banyule. In a heartfelt speech to over 100 local residents last night at Heidelberg's historic town hall, Cr Melican thanked his parents for giving him a great start in life. In public life Tom has always advocated for others. His modest yet determined attitude will stand Banyule in good stead. I was pleased to serve as a Banyule city councillor under Tom's leadership in 2008–09. He is highly regarded in the community and respected across the local government sector.

My congratulations to newly elected deputy mayor Mark Di Pasquale and re-elected councillors Rick Garotti and Wayne Phillips, a former member for Eltham. I welcome new councillors Peter Castaldo, from the Greens party, who defeated Cr Jenny Mulholland, and Alison Zandegu. I look forward to working with Banyule City Council in the best interests of our community.

In a footnote, I note that it is disappointing but not surprising that the outgoing mayor and Olympia ward councillor refused to act as temporary chair of last night's meeting, which is customary, and ignored his responsibilities to accept any council committee positions. Service above self is something he may wish to reflect on. The churlish behaviour witnessed last night does him no credit and did not go unnoticed by the hardworking ratepayers and community members of the City of Banyule. We should all be very thankful to serve, whether we are in local government or are in either state or federal parliaments, such as my good

colleagues Jenny Macklin and the members for Bundoora and Eltham. We will continue to work hard into the future with Banyule council and the community we all represent.

Native forest logging

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — Today I am here to implore the Premier to end native forest logging in Victoria and create the Great Forest National Park. I first got involved in the campaign to end native forest logging in Victoria when I was a student. I was absolutely shocked and appalled to learn that our government logs, bulldozes and firebombs our precious native forests. That was more than 12 years ago, yet here we are to this day still logging our forests at the rate of seven MCGs every day. What is more, taxpayers actually pay for this as the government subsidises this destruction.

These forests are some of the most carbon dense in the world and the only habitat left of the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum. Experts tell us that if we keep logging at this rate throughout this summer there will be very little Leadbeater's possum habitat left, and that is simply unacceptable. The Labor government cannot stand by while a critically endangered species goes extinct on its watch. The Premier said he would fix this problem through his task force, yet two years later we still have no commitment to end native forest logging. Premier, the community is getting impatient. They expect you to protect the environment and our endangered species, not condemn them to extinction, so I implore you to show courage and create the Great Forest National Park before it is too late.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Before I call the honourable member for Frankston — I did not want to interrupt the honourable member for Melbourne — I note that honourable members must be referred to by their correct title, rather than calling them by their names, and members should not refer to 'you', because when they say 'you', they are referring to the Speaker or the person in the chair.

Frankston City Council

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — Congratulations to the councillors elected to represent Frankston for the next four years. Yesterday evening all the councillors were sworn in. Cr Brian Cunial was elected mayor — congratulations — whilst Cr Steve Toms was elected deputy mayor; congratulations to him. With so many exciting projects happening in Frankston, I very much

look forward to working with the current crop of councillors.

Long Lunch on Wells

Mr EDBROOKE — I actually had the chance to meet some of our passionate, newly elected Frankston City Council councillors at the Proudly Frankston Long Lunch on Wells 2016, a very successful event inspired by traditional community long lunches in European towns and cities. The event was a fantastic way to celebrate how proud we are of our beautiful city.

Frankston Football Club

Mr EDBROOKE — In other news, I have secured an agreement with the state government, one of the Frankston Dolphins football club's largest creditors, to waive 90 per cent of the club's debt to the state government. This puts the club in a remarkable position to move forward and reclaim their VFL licence in 2018. This increases the likelihood that up to 35 people will keep their jobs and local businesses can at least get some of the money owed to them, and the club will not be going into liquidation.

I would like to acknowledge the community's unwavering support and the hard work of the Frankston City Council CEO and his staff, the members of the Save the Frankston Dolphins Steering Committee and the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and her staff.

Paterson's curse control

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — On Friday night I attended a celebration marking 30 years of Landcare and natural resource management in the Goulburn Broken catchment in Euroa. The evening was a great celebration of the 12 networks, 96 groups and 6905 Landcare members across the region. A number of people raised concerns about the infestation of Paterson's curse across the Strathbogie Ranges this year. Landholders in the Sheans Creek and Balmattum area have undertaken an aerial spraying program, but it comes at significant cost. I urge the Andrews government to increase funding to assist Landcare groups to control this infestation, which is a risk to the region's productivity. The government is also failing to undertake adequate enforcement activity. It needs to start issuing penalty infringement notices to ensure landholders fulfil their obligations in controlling weeds like Paterson's curse.

Euroa Cup

Ms RYAN — On Sunday the Euroa Cup was held at the Benalla Racing Club. I was proud to be the major sponsor of the event this year and was particularly delighted by the strong showing of local horses. The cup itself was won by Squeaky Squirrel, a horse that has been bred, trained and raced by Benalla trainer Russell Osborne. I want to recognise the efforts of the Benalla Racing Club, particularly president Greg McNulty and track manager Cameron Symes, along with Dennis Rebbeck and the rest of the Euroa Cup committee.

Euroa Football Netball Club

Ms RYAN — I would like to urge the Minister for Sport to support a bid by the Euroa Football Netball Club to construct a second netball court in town. The club has more than 100 registered players, including six teams competing in the Seymour District Junior Football Netball League and four senior teams within the Goulburn Valley Netball League. Sport forms a vital part of country communities — —

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

Local government elections

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — As I indicated in my inaugural speech, I want to use my time in this place to write women's names into *Hansard* and correct the historical record, which for too long refused to acknowledge the incredible contributions made to our communities and to this state by women and girls.

Today I want to send my congratulations to newly elected Macedon Ranges shire councillors Natasha Gayfer, Mandi Mees, Janet Pearce and Helen Radnedge and to returning councillor Jennifer Anderson. The Macedon Ranges community has spoken and has increased the number of women on the council from two to five, and I am thrilled that the Macedon Ranges Shire Council now has a majority of women to lead it — women with diverse professional experiences, deep community interests and impressive records of achievement.

Congratulations also to newly elected councillor Fiona Robson and returning councillor Kate Redwood in Birch ward in Hepburn shire and to returning councillor Christine Henderson in Coliban ward in Mount Alexander shire. I look forward to working productively with each and every one of them in the best interests of our constituents over the years to come.

AFL Women's league

Ms THOMAS — AFL CEO Gill McLachlan has described women's football as a revolution, which it is, and I congratulate Kate Darby from Macedon, a former junior footballer with Riddells Creek, who has been drafted to Carlton, and Ainslie Kemp from Kyneton Football Netball Club, who has been drafted to Melbourne. To Ainslie and Kate: you are making history — go girls!

Savannah Roberts

Ms THOMAS — Congratulations to Savannah Roberts from the 1st Gisborne Scouts, Mitchell troop, on being awarded the Australian Scout Medallion and Green Cord at a fantastic ceremony on Thursday night at the Gisborne Scout Hall. The Australian Scout Medallion is the highest award in scouting, and only around 5 per cent of scouts earn this award. That tells you a lot about Savannah and her leadership qualities.

Hillary Clinton

Ms THOMAS — While we are smashing glass ceilings, I take this opportunity on behalf of the women and girls in my electorate to say to Hillary Clinton: Hillary, we are with you!

Daniel George

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — We promise you, Daniel, your death will save lives. Today marks the impending second anniversary of the death of Daniel George, who died following the ingestion of two puffs of a synthetic drug called Kronic. In the words of his sister Jenny Wilson:

My big brother made a silly decision; he had two puffs of Kronic, synthetic marijuana and those two breaths took my only sibling, my parents' only son, Kate's soulmate, Lucy's daddy. My niece will never know her daddy and how much he loved her. Our family is permanently shattered with a gaping hole in all of our hearts, never to be repaired. I beg you to please use your position to save any other family from going through what my family has endured. Please blanket ban synthetic drugs.

Today a demonstration was held on the steps of Parliament calling for action, which is supported by politicians from around Australia, senior police, ambulance services and emergency departments, along with ex-AFL footballers, ex-Olympians, Life Education and Sober Living Housing. Jenny made a vow to her brother that his death would not be in vain, that it would in fact save lives. She will not stop until the legislation is changed and these deadly synthetic drugs are not available for sale online or in shops. Jenny seeks the

support of this Parliament. We promise you, Daniel, that your death will save lives.

Linda Burney

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — It was a great privilege to have the first Indigenous woman elected to the House of Representatives, the federal member for Barton and shadow Minister for Human Services, Linda Burney, in Geelong last week. The federal member for Corio, Richard Marles, and I spent the day with Linda meeting with Aboriginal people and community organisations. Clearly Linda is very much an inspiration for Aboriginal people. She is also a great role model for women, and her determination and grunt at all levels of community and politics is why she is admired so much.

We had the great privilege to have lunch with the elders and board members at the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative. When I go there I am always impressed by the work they do in their community, and it is exceptional. Aunty May Owen and the CEO, Rod Jackson, hosted the event at Wathaurong and showed Linda around the centre. We also visited Wathaurong Glass and met with the workers. Linda was presented with a piece of Wathaurong glass which symbolises her country in New South Wales. In the evening we held a community dinner at the Geelong Trades Hall with a welcome to country ceremony that included Corinna Eccles, Norm Stanley on the didgeridoo and the Deadly Dancers. Richard and I, along with the Geelong West branch of the ALP, presented a matching piece of Wathaurong glass symbolising Wathaurong country.

Linda's first speech in the federal Parliament was a significant and moving event. Born to an unmarried mother, she spoke of her first decade of her life as a non-citizen in her own country and of not meeting her father until she was 28 years old and finding out that she has 10 brothers and sisters. She also shared the story of returning to the 150th anniversary of the school she attended when a man said to her — —

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

Tinternvale Primary School

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — Congratulations to the Tinternvale Primary School students and their visual arts teacher, Kelly Stutsel, on their very first art show. Showcased was a range of art produced by the students that demonstrates their skill and expression in so many ways. Such colour and creativity throughout the hall

brought much joy to parents, friends and family members. A fabulous effort.

Eastern Volunteers

Ms RYALL — Congratulations to Eastern Volunteers on their rich history of 40 years service to the community. Where would we be without the staff, volunteers and hard work of all involved with the Eastern Volunteers resource centre? They provide transport to residents, volunteer training and placement of volunteers into organisations. Thank you so much for the wonderful work you all do. Our community is indebted to you.

Norwood Secondary College

Ms RYALL — My congratulations to the students of Norwood Secondary College for their participation in my annual schools debating competition held in the Legislative Assembly at Parliament House. Their contributions to the company tax debate were considered and well thought out. I look forward to Norwood's continued participation. Well done!

Our Lady of Perpetual Help School

Ms RYALL — Our Lady of Perpetual Help School and parish held their community fete on Saturday, 22 October. Despite the huge rainfall, the fete was well attended, and the school and parish community worked so hard in difficult conditions. My thanks and congratulations go to all who contributed to providing a fabulous day, ensuring that the fun, goods, food and entertainment were well run to ensure all community members were able to have a great time.

St Albans level crossings

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) — The dangerous level crossings at Main Road and Furlong Road in St Albans are now gone for good. The Andrews Labor government has delivered for the St Albans community. We promised and, quite frankly, we delivered. The Furlong Road and Main Road level crossings were two of the most dangerous crossings in Victoria. We have seen both St Albans and Ginifer stations demolished and are seeing new stations now being built. I thank commuters, traders and the St Albans community for their patience and understanding over this period.

Bell Environmental

Ms SULEYMAN — Recently I was happy to join Minister for Emergency Services James Merlino at Bell Environmental in Sunshine North to hand over new

heavy tankers to the Country Fire Authority and support 110 local jobs in the west.

Australian Islamic Leadership Conference

Ms SULEYMAN — On Wednesday, 2 November, I was happy to attend and speak at the Australian Islamic Leadership Conference. The conference discussed many issues, including the positive contribution Australian Muslims make in our community. There are great achievers from industry, community and professional life — role models such as Ahmed Fahour, CEO of Australia Post, TV personality Waleed Aly and Captain Mona Shindy — and many more silent achievers amongst our community. I would like to thank Farrukh Hussain, president of the Asian Leadership Network of Australia, for organising the conference and Huss Mustafa, OAM, for helping facilitate debate.

St Albans Primary School

Ms SULEYMAN — I would like to congratulate St Albans Primary School for winning the primary category of the Sunshine Short Film Festival with their documentary *Harmony*.

Markham Avenue, Ashburton, redevelopment

Mr WATT (Burwood) — On more than a dozen occasions I have raised the Markham estate in this place. I have raised it during constituency questions, during the adjournment and also in debate. I noted that at the last election there was talk of a plan from the Labor Party for 194 units on the Markham estate, where there were only 56; at that time there was talk of 80 public housing units on there. Over time it has changed and had a number of iterations. Earlier this year I heard of 242 units, with 62 public housing units. Only recently I have discovered that plans for 252 units have been drawn up. I note that on 14 April this year I asked the Minister for Planning about his comments on 774 ABC radio about seven storeys being suitable. I note in his answer he said:

As you note, plans for the Markham estate redevelopment are not finalised, and will not be finalised until after the local community, Boroondara City Council and other stakeholders have been consulted.

I do note that there are engagement activities organised for Wednesday this week at 7.30 in the morning, Monday at 7.30 in the morning at a shopping strip that does not have many people there at 7.30 in the morning, next Wednesday at 6.30 at night and the following Saturday at 12.30 p.m. I also note that the number of units is not likely to be changed. They make

it very clear that they will only consult on the paint, the driveway and which trees they are actually going to put into this estate.

Music Victoria Awards

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) — While most people were thinking about voting in local government elections in the last week there was also other voting, and that was of course for the Age Music Victoria Awards. I was very happy to cast my vote for what I believe to be the best regional venue in the state, and that is Karova Lounge. You cannot doubt how awesome Karova is. Here are just some of the many highlights coming up: this Thursday night is British India; for some of us of a perhaps different generation the Troggs are coming as well — who can forget *Wild Thing* — and then, moving perhaps back to this century, in really exciting news, Yacht Club DJs are reforming and will hit the stage on Saturday, 17 December, for the 3350 Street Party. It is just so fantastic. Good luck to Karova Lounge on its nomination for best regional venue in the state. I want to thank all the team at Karova for the incredible work they do for live music in Ballarat and in fact for putting Ballarat on the music map. Live music venues contribute not only to the local culture but also to the local economy, and they really help to keep young people in regional Victoria.

Quickly, while we are on the subject of great music in Ballarat, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds will be performing at the North Gardens on 15 January. Tickets are on sale now. I know the member for Macedon has her ticket, and I am sure that you will all get yours — but just remember that crowd surfing is prohibited!

Ripon electorate ambulance services

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Last week the latest ambulance response times were released. All response times in Stawell and Ararat have deteriorated in the past 12 months. Ambulance response times across Ararat and Northern Grampians are failing to meet the government's targets and have gone backwards. Northern Grampians code 1 response time has increased by 5.9 per cent to over 16 minutes. Locals with life-threatening conditions, the most urgent code 1 patients, are waiting too long for an ambulance, and yet all the government can do is attack the Liberals.

It is time the Premier and the Minister for Ambulance Services stopped being argumentative and political and instead actually tried to improve our local ambulance response times. In Ararat and Northern Grampians only 63.4 per cent of code 1 ambulances arrived within the target of 15 minutes, and both local government areas

have seen a deterioration in this number over the past 12 months. In code 2 response times both Ararat and Northern Grampians have blown out significantly in the past 12 months by 9.4 per cent and 27.8 per cent respectively. It is well time that this government actually started taking the health of the people in Ararat and Northern Grampians seriously.

Glen Huntly Primary School

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I would like to acknowledge a wonderful school in my community, Glen Huntly Primary School, which last Friday officially opened its new learning space. My good friend Philip Dalidakis in the Legislative Council and I visited the school to see the new learning space, and it is an excellent space for young students. I am proud to have assisted in securing some of the funds for this important building. The school has a few other building projects on the agenda, and I look forward to supporting them with those. I commend the leadership, passion and dedication of principal Libby Alessi and the wonderful teachers, staff, parents and students at Glen Huntly Primary School, as well as the Minister for Education.

Oakleigh Glendi festival

Mr DIMOPOULOS — I had the pleasure to attend the annual and remarkable Glendi festival on Sunday, 30 October. The member for Bentleigh and I commend the wonderful work of the Greek Orthodox community of Oakleigh and the Monash City Council for putting on such an incredibly well-attended event, which showcased Greek culture. It was open to the broader Oakleigh community, who came in droves to participate in the festival. The member for Bentleigh and I were very pleased to represent the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Premier and were proud to support the festival through the Andrews Labor government's \$100 000 contribution over the last two years.

Local government elections

Mr DIMOPOULOS — I congratulate the successful candidates in the recent local government elections for the municipalities of Glen Eira and Monash. I commend the unsuccessful candidates, including those former councillors, for their service and willingness to stand for election. I am incredibly pleased the community has elected a majority progressive council in both Monash and Glen Eira, and I look forward to working very productively with both councils for the benefit of the communities we jointly serve.

POWERS OF ATTORNEY AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Council's amendment

Message from Council relating to following amendment considered:

Clause 13, lines 25 to 31, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert—

- “(b) if the person was given notice of the hearing of the application at first instance but was not a party to the hearing of the application, with the leave of VCAT; or
- (c) if the person was not given notice of the hearing of the application at first instance and the person has a special interest in the affairs of the principal, with the leave of VCAT; or
- (d) if the person is the Public Advocate, without the leave of VCAT.”.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That this amendment be agreed to.

In doing so, I would just make some very brief comments. Clause 13 of the bill clarifies section 130 of the principal act to make clear that the public advocate has the right to apply for a rehearing under division 4 of the principal act before the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) without having been a party to the hearing of the application in the first instance.

At the moment only people who were previously a party to the hearing or who have the leave of VCAT can seek a rehearing of an application, but in the other place Ms Pennicuik indicated that she wanted to move an amendment seeking that a provision be included to allow that a person who had not been notified of an application but who has a special interest in the affairs of the principal should be able to apply for a rehearing with the leave of VCAT.

The government agreed that that proposal had merit and prepared a house amendment that operated slightly differently to Ms Pennicuik's draft amendment but which had the same effect. That means that as amended the bill will now allow the following people to apply for a rehearing at VCAT: a person who was a party to the hearing of the application in the first instance; a person who was notified but who was not a party to the hearing, with leave from VCAT — that is new subparagraph (b); a person who was not notified but who has a special interest in the affairs of the principal, with the leave of VCAT — that is new

subparagraph (c); and the public advocate, without the leave VCAT, and that is new subparagraph (d).

The proposed amendment is compatible with the charter and does not impose any limitations on the rights contained in the charter. Enduring powers of attorney operate to protect the interests of people with a disability. The right to apply for a rehearing of a matter, especially by the public advocate, is intended to allow possible misconduct or erroneous decisions to be rectified.

The amendment that the government has moved — and we do thank Ms Pennicuik for bringing this matter to our attention and for agreeing to allow a house amendment to be moved in lieu of her own — strengthens the right for people with a disability to be protected from discrimination and be treated as equal before the law under section 8 of the charter. It does that by broadening the ability of interested parties and the public advocate to apply for a rehearing where they were not notified of the initial application and therefore may have been unaware of an order that was potentially injurious to the interests of a principal with a disability.

This is an amendment that is minor in its nature but which may have a significant effect in individual circumstances. As I say, we thank Ms Pennicuik for bringing that to the attention of the government, and I commend the amendment to the house.

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — The opposition parties will not be opposing this amendment. On the face of it, it appears to make sense. It is a matter of some curiosity that it was not addressed in the work that led up to the principal bill, but nevertheless we think the change has merit.

We understand that somebody who was not notified but who has a special interest in the affairs of the principal should be given an opportunity to at least apply for leave from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to contest relevant matters.

To the extent that special interests will need to be developed over time, we will wait and see how that phrase is applied in the circumstances where this subclause will be invoked by those wishing to seek the leave of VCAT, but certainly we think that there is a case for doing that.

As a matter of drafting, it is not entirely clear that the amendment needed to take the form that it has. I do not say that other than to make the point that it might have been easier just to expand the existing subparagraph (b). Nevertheless, we are quite happy to see the amendment go through.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — The Greens will be supporting this amendment because I understand it was a Greens amendment that was originally moved to be part of this bill in the upper house. The government looked at the amendment, agreed with the principle and then introduced its own amendment.

The amendment primarily deals with the situation where a family member may have a hearing at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) to seek changes to the scope of a power of attorney or make other changes without other members of the family who have a special interest in the person who was given the original enduring power of attorney knowing — and where those members, upon finding out about the hearing, may have a view — that what was sought might not be in the best interests of the family member who was the subject of the power of attorney and so might wish to seek a rehearing.

Given that they would not have been notified in the first instance — possibly deliberately — by the person who appeared at VCAT, the original bill did not necessarily allow the family member any right to seek a rehearing at VCAT when they certainly should have had that right.

This amendment provides that if a person has an interest but was not advised of the earlier hearing they can apply for a rehearing with the leave of VCAT. The aim is to improve the bill to make sure that we are protecting the interests of the principal person and the people who are looking after their interests where a mistake has been made in regard to notification or in cases where it was done deliberately.

It is unfortunate that there may be some people who deliberately want to do this sort of thing, but this amendment aims to protect the person who is having their financial and other affairs looked after under a power of attorney, so we will be supporting this amendment.

Motion agreed to.

VICTORIAN FISHERIES AUTHORITY BILL 2016

Council's amendments

Message from Council relating to following amendments considered:

1. Clause 22, page 15, line 12, omit “science.” and insert “science; and”.
2. Clause 22, line 12, after this line insert—

“(k) fishing industry operations; and

(l) recreational fishing.”.

3. Clause 25, page 21, line 2, omit “science.” and insert “science; and”.

4. Clause 25, page 21, line 2, after this line insert—

“(k) fishing industry operations; and

(l) recreational fishing.”.

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That these amendments be agreed to.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — The minister at the table obviously went into a very lengthy explanation about the bill. Given he actually did not say anything at all, I might make a few comments on this. The amendments that are before us came back from the upper house. One was instigated by the Liberal Party and The Nationals; the other was instigated by the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. I suppose it goes to the issue of the skills that are required for a board of the new Victorian Fisheries Authority. Inserted into the other requirements are fishing industry operations experience and recreational fishing experience.

I suppose one of the things in moving the amendments that we did was to maintain the integrity of the bill in that those who have a current licence should not sit on the board, but there are plenty of people out there with fishing industry operations experience who are not licence-holders now who could make a very good contribution to the board of the Victorian Fisheries Authority. I think the same can be said for the recreational fishing sector as well. There is a cautionary note about the recreational fishing sector, in that it should be people who have a strong history and interest in recreational fishing but not necessarily those who operate major recreational fishing businesses at the moment, because they obviously have a pecuniary interest as well. We as the opposition support these amendments and look forward to their passage through this house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to speak to the amendments from the Council with regard to the Victorian Fisheries Authority Bill 2016. It is something that I certainly spoke about in my contribution to the bill when it was in this house, particularly about the need to have someone with commercial sector experience. I am probably the only one in the Parliament who has had 20 years experience in the commercial sector. There is so much knowledge in that sector that it is important to have someone on that board who has experience in the commercial sector.

Obviously the pecuniary interest sections of the bill will cover any conflicts of interest.

I also think the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party amendment is quite sensible in getting someone with recreational fishing experience on the board. They have got a lot to offer as well. So I am very pleased that the Council has brought forward these amendments. I am more than happy to support the amendments before the house.

Motion agreed to.

COMPENSATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 12 October; motion of Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance).

Government amendments circulated by Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) under standing orders.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to open the batting for the opposition, the Liberal-Nationals coalition, on the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The bill of course proposes a number of amendments to the legislation that broadly govern the compensation framework for workers compensation and makes a relatively small change in the Transport Accident Act 1986. While the opposition has some reservations about some aspects of the bill, particularly with regard to the proposed changes to the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service (ACCS) and its transformation from a body where the conciliation officers are appointed by the Governor in Council to a very different structure, we do not believe that those reservations warrant us opposing the bill. I am happy to say right from the start that the opposition will not be opposing this bill.

The changes here are largely uncontroversial. There are changes to four principal acts. The change to the Accident Compensation Act 1985 effectively confirms the removal of an opportunity to seek compensation because of a breach of an act, not just in the state of Victoria but across the federation. The bill also makes minor changes in regard to the payment of compensation to those who attain the age of 65 years. Were this legislation not changed because of separate changes proposed by the commonwealth to the aged pension, those affected would find themselves between the two support areas. Those things are reasonable as well.

There is a minor change to the Limitation of Actions Act 1958, simply to write the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 into that act. There are some changes to the Transport Accident Act 1986, effectively reversing the decision the Parliament took during the Christmas period in December and then again in February in the other place with regard to the application of the American Medical Association's guides. While I say it is a reversal, it is a welcome reversal and I certainly acknowledge that. I will have a little bit more to say about that as well — nicely, I add. I will note at this point that the changes follow the concerns that the coalition expressed when that legislation was before the house. The changes are welcome.

There is also a minor change to allow for the payment of expenses for travel and accommodation to attend a funeral. Again it is something we are reasonably relaxed with. The changes to the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act is largely about the ACCS and the manner in which that is structured. There are a range of matters, all of them reasonably important to the people concerned, but none of them are earth-shattering in the context of the whole state of Victoria. They are important issues to be dealt with by Parliament nevertheless.

With regard to the Accident Compensation Act 1985, effectively the changes relate to the entitlement, as I mentioned, to compensation where a conviction exists for particular traffic offences. There is currently an opportunity under the act to not provide compensation if a law of another state or territory is declared to be a corresponding law under section 47A(2) of the Road Safety Act 1986, but the bill adds the words 'or a corresponding law', and as identified from line 10 on page 3, the bill also inserts into the Accident Compensation Act the capacity to gazette a particular law as being applicable. Those changes, as far as we are concerned, are entirely reasonable and to a large extent, I think, consistent with the intent of the changes that were made in 2010, but they simply tighten that aspect of the act.

The second change under the Accident Compensation Act relates to retirement age. Certainly I have had at least one member of the public contact my office — I know the member for Burwood has also had contact — with regard to the issue of people who have not yet attained the age of 65 years but would attain that age in the period after the appropriate age to receive the age pension had started to rise, so they would have found themselves in circumstances where their very necessary compensation payments had dried up and they were not

yet eligible for the age pension. This is certainly a welcome change in that regard.

The next principal act that is changed by this bill is the Limitation of Actions Act 1958. I think the most that can be said about that amendment is that it is a necessary change. Again, we have no issue with that.

Part 4 of the bill relates to the changes under the Transport Accident Act 1986. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I want to make some comment about this. Those members who participated in the debate on the changes — I think it was in December last year — will recall that one of the issues that was raised was whether the changes that were proposed, which effectively mean that the American Medical Association guides are a hard and fast rule in terms of assessment of degree of impairment, had the effect of, while not undercompensating anyone, potentially placing a person who may have had multiple spinal fractures but little or no impairment in a situation where they were compensated at a much higher level than someone with a painful and debilitating injury that was simply not assessed to be of the same magnitude because of the application of the guides.

The Napthine coalition government had sought to make some changes to the regime. We had a regulatory impact statement (RIS) on exhibition, which was due to be signed into effect in December 2014. The Minister for Finance, as the new minister, elected not to sign that statement into operation, as of course was his right. Then in December last year the authorising provision of the act was also removed.

I did make the point in that debate that this was in my view a clear anomaly and one that really impacted on the equity of the scheme. It is a scheme in which participation is not optional; if you want to drive on the roads, then you need to be driving a vehicle that is covered by the scheme. Given that it is compulsory, there is a need for equity in outcomes. Unfortunately the impact of the bill that passed this house in December and the other place, I believe, in February was to create a situation of inequity. Of course it is always open to the courts to interpret legislation, but I have said repeatedly in the almost 10 years I have been a member of this Parliament that in my view it is the Parliament that needs to make the law, not the courts. The courts certainly have a proper and appropriate place, but they should not be acting as de facto legislative bodies through judgements.

I am pleased — and I am very happy to say that I am pleased — that the government has picked up the points that were made in that debate, considered the issue and

gone some way towards resolving it. I did not question in the briefing as to whether any regulatory impact statement was undertaken for the guidelines that have now been introduced. If a RIS was not undertaken, I think that is potentially problematic, not for any other reason than that I certainly do not consider myself qualified to read the guidelines and say whether they are reasonable or not. Presumably someone of authority has done that, but of course there is not the opportunity under this legislation to vary the guidelines simply by the use of regulation.

If the guidelines are to be varied in any way — if they are not perfect in the form that they are written — then that matter will have to come back to the Parliament. We might all say that that is a good thing. I am certainly not going to stand up and suggest that something should not come to the Parliament; more often than not I am the one saying that things should be brought here and executive government should not have the power. But in this case it does reduce the flexibility. It is a point of issue, but it is not a point of concern. I want to make that plain: I am not concerned about it, but I think it is a point that we need to be aware of in considering the legislation.

The final significant change the bill makes — this really is the meat of the bill — is to the ACCS. It is interesting to look back at the history of the service and the various forms in which it has existed over the years. Of course it was an initiative of former finance minister Roger Hallam back in the days of the Kennett government, and it took its current form under Mr Cameron back in I think it was December 2001 — —

Ms Edwards — Great minister!

Mr MORRIS — I was not in the Parliament for long with Minister Bob Cameron, and certainly not when he was Minister for Workcover. His role in my time was as police minister, and I think even Bob would say it was not really the best time to be in the police portfolio. But this was some nine years before that service in the police portfolio. I think it is worth reflecting on his commentary in the second-reading speech for the Accident Compensation (Amendment) Bill 2001. In the second-reading speech he acknowledges the important role conciliation officers have played and, as I say, I give all the credit for that to the former finance minister Roger Hallam and the work he did, and I know he did a lot of work on it.

It is also interesting that the then minister, Bob Cameron, talked about the process and the necessity of ensuring the independence of the service. The vehicle

that was chosen to achieve that independence was appointment by Governor in Council, so the senior officer and the other conciliation officers were all to be appointed by the Governor in Council, and obviously the current legislation provides for removal.

It is interesting that in the second-reading speech Mr Cameron indicates that, at the time, the government had received advice that under the legislation that then prevailed if the removal of an officer were needed, in fact that removal could only occur as a result of a resolution of both houses of Parliament. Effectively the changes that were introduced in 2001 lowered the bar, because obviously passing such a motion through both houses is a very, very drastic measure, and were it a contentious decision, it would take a considerable toll on the individual concerned, whether guilty or innocent of the charges they were accused of. The Bracks government in 2001 lowered the bar but did not lower it too far. They lowered it to Governor in Council, and that I think is more than enough for any reasonable person.

The current minister, both in his public remarks and conversations we have had around this matter, has been keen for some time to effectively bring the model of the ACCS into the 21st century and to bring it into line, as the second-reading speech identifies, with contemporary standards of public administration. This bill achieves that. However the concern that does exist is whether the safeguards to independence that are proposed in the bill are adequate to achieve that independence, and only time will tell. I find no fault with the words that are there but we know from experience that where there are loopholes people will find them, and any change brings with it a risk of not getting the legislation quite right, the risk of unintended consequences. So I make that point.

A more contemporary model of administration is probably desirable. It could equally be argued: if it ain't broke, why fix it? But I recognise the intention here, and it is a reasonable one. While I am concerned that there is the potential for unanticipated loopholes to arise, there is nothing overt in this bill with regard to the proposed restructure of the ACCS that gives me reason to pause and say, 'Perhaps not quite yet'.

In that regard the amendments that are proposed are also quite helpful. The removal of the reference to contractors is helpful. I understand that, while there will no longer be a specific head of power in the bill, there is in effect a residual power of the new body to use contractors. In that regard I raise an issue which arose after I was briefed on the amendments this morning when I had the opportunity to sit down with the draft

amendments and the bill and go through it — and I have mentioned this privately to the minister. On page 24 of the bill, proposed section 536C(2) — under the amendments that have been circulated, that will become section 526B(2) — currently reads:

The Minister must not direct ACCS or any of its employees, contractors or agents as to the exercising of their discretionary powers under this Act, or the outcome of a specific conciliation or conciliations.

The proposal under the amendments is to remove the words 'contractors or agents'. The issue I raise — and it may be possible to investigate this further between the houses — is whether removing 'contractors or agents' from this clause is appropriate given that the ACCS apparently will still have the capacity, although not explicit in the bill, to hire contractors. I recognise why the specific reference was removed. I think it is a sensible change and I support the amendment as far as it goes, but I think it is probably worth the government having a look at that and making sure that it is not a change that drafting would clearly recommend to be consistent with the removal of the capacity to use contractors explicitly in the bill, but may in fact be inconsistent with the practical powers of the body.

The other change canvassed in the amendments is effectively lowering the bar but, again, an entirely reasonable thing with regard to proposed section 524(4)(e). That is, rather than having:

- (e) a person with significant experience in administering a workers' compensation scheme ...

that 'administering' becomes 'working with'. Again, that seems to me to be entirely reasonable given that there are not that many people around who have experience in administering workers compensation schemes; there just are not that many in the country, and I suspect not even in the world. We want this to be a board position that is capable of being filled by an appropriate person, but not setting the bar at an impossibly high level. So, again, I think the change that is proposed with regard to that clause in the bill is entirely reasonable.

I reiterate that the opposition is not opposing the bill. We are very pleased to see the changes to the Transport Accident Commission legislation and to see that the apparent anomaly that arose as a result of the earlier legislation has now been dealt with. I am not able, and certainly not qualified, to comment on the content of the guidelines that were gazetted last month. Hopefully others who are qualified have looked at those and signed them off and the various stakeholders will be happy with that. I have had no advice to the contrary, so hopefully that has all been dealt with.

The opposition also indicates that, while we do not oppose the changes proposed to the structure of the ACCS, we draw to the attention of the house the danger that always exists when you change the structure of an organisation like this. You do need to make sure that the safeguards and the independence of the officers concerned are absolutely watertight. On the surface it appears fine, but it is also a matter of — assuming the legislation goes through — keeping a close eye on the operation and making sure that the ACCS continues to operate effectively and for the good of the people affected as it has done, not only for the last 15 years of its history, but since the service was first implemented, not under that name, by Roger Hallam. On the basis of those few comments, the opposition will not be opposing the bill.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Once again the Andrews Labor government brings before this house a very important amendment bill. These amendments are directly related to improving the lot of people who may have to be on WorkCover through WorkSafe amendments, those who may have been injured in transport accidents, and makes amendments to the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).

The bill actually covers a whole range of areas, and I will just quickly go through them. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Accident Compensation Act 1985, the Limitation of Actions Act 1958, the Transport Accident Act 1986 and the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013. These are all to improve the operation of and the benefits under Victoria's transport and workplace accident compensation schemes, to make some minor necessary amendments and to address drafting errors in and omissions from legislation of the previous government.

The amendments include aligning WorkSafe and Transport Accident Commission schemes with changes to the commonwealth qualifying age for the age pension to ensure entitled injured workers and motorists continue to receive their weekly benefits until they are eligible to access the age pension; improving the government's arrangements for the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service (ACCS); as the member for Mornington mentioned, adopting the *Spinal Impairment Guides modification document* for spinal impairment assessment in the TAC scheme; and providing additional TAC benefits for immediate family members to attend funeral services. That is just an overview of the bill.

I note that the member for Mornington referred to his concerns about the independence of the ACCS board. I refer the member to some amendments that have been put forward that further strengthen the provision that gives independence to the conciliation officers and increases their decision-making powers to ensure there are no unintended consequences arising from the transfer of powers of the senior conciliation officer and conciliation officers to the ACCS board. The amendment will make it clear that the board's management of a conciliation officer's performance and the minister's ability to issue guidelines do not impact a conciliation officer's ability to issue decisions on the outcome of conciliation. I think that probably addresses the member for Mornington's concerns.

This bill will indeed strengthen the operation of the TAC and WorkSafe schemes to deliver timely, fair and affordable benefits to those unfortunately injured at work or in a transport accident, including members of their immediate family. No-one wants to see their family members injured at work, killed at work or indeed involved in any kind of transport accident.

I recall my mother telling me a story. When I was about one year old my father was involved in a very serious workplace accident. He was building the brick chimney at the old Maryborough hospital and the chimney collapsed and fell on him. He broke his back and was out of work for about a year — in fact, bedridden for a year. Back in those days there was no WorkCover. There was no support for workers who were injured at work. So my mother, with four children to feed and no income, relied heavily on my father's workmates to support the family through that period. Just how far we have come in terms of supporting people who are injured at work is a credit to the government, particularly, I would say, the Labor government, which has been instrumental in making sure that WorkSafe and WorkCover are front and centre when we legislate. And every time we legislate, it is to improve those schemes and to improve the lot of workers.

From July 2017, which is next year, the qualifying age for the federal pension will progressively increase to age 67 by 2023, so we will all be working longer. This legislation ensures that those receiving weekly benefits for road accidents do not miss out on income support, and it increases the maximum age that income benefits are ceased under the TAC scheme to align with forecast changes to the eligibility age to receive the age pension. This is a very important change because if this was not legislated to change, those who are currently on TAC pensions would lose those pensions should they turn 65. This will of course come at a small cost to the

scheme, but it is absolutely affordable and it is imperative and the right thing to do.

There is some associated legislation which, as I said, aligns the entitlement age with changes to the federal age pension. While the federal coalition has moved to make us all work longer by increasing the pension age, Victoria indeed has stepped up to ensure that those injured at work still receive their compensation entitlements. Under the current legislation the weekly benefits paid to Victorians injured in a workplace accident normally cease when they turn 65 and, as I said, they would become ineligible when they become eligible for the age pension. This bill will align the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act with the commonwealth Social Security Act 1991 to ensure there is no gap between a WorkSafe claimant's eligibility for weekly benefits and their eligibility for the age pension.

I think what is important to note around all of that is that here in Victoria — in this government — we look after our own, and we will not let those injured at work fall through the gaps. This is a really important change because it upholds our election commitment to invest surplus from the WorkSafe scheme into improvements to benefit injured workers. We are not putting it back into consolidated revenue.

Importantly these changes will not impact on the WorkSafe scheme's viability. They are very important measures to ensure no Victorian is left behind. There are changes, as the member for Mornington mentioned in his contribution, to the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service. These are also important changes because they provide an alternative dispute resolution service within the workplace accident compensation scheme, and for most disputes, as we know, it is a compulsory step before proceeding to court.

Before the election we committed to ensuring the ACCS was well resourced, independent, fair, transparent and with strong legislative authority. This bill upholds that commitment by establishing the ACCS as an independent statutory body with a board of management with the skills to manage Victoria's independent workers compensation dispute resolution process now and into the future.

There is quite a bit to the bill, and I do not have time to cover most of it. But I do want to point to this government's commitment to protecting Victoria's common-law rights; this change will correct some anomalies to ensure that these rights continue to be upheld. The member for Mornington mentioned a former Minister for WorkCover and former member for

Bendigo West, Bob Cameron, and what a great WorkCover minister he was. Indeed he introduced common-law rights into this house to protect workers.

While I am talking about protecting workers, I want to mention briefly that unlike the coalition government federally, we are absolutely, 100 per cent committed to looking after our workers. The government that took us to a double dissolution election based on the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) bill was a disgrace, and the bill has not even come before the house yet. The facts of the matter are that the reintroduction of this bill will lead to further construction deaths within the industry. There is absolutely no doubt about that, and the research and the facts prove it. It will not lead to improved safety in the construction industry. In fact the last time it was implemented under the Howard government, it oversaw a rise in construction industry deaths, and that is outrageous.

It is a flawed bill; the federal government's bill is flawed. That amendment will not support workers, and for those on the opposite side of the house to claim that they are the worker's friend is outrageous. They have never been the worker's friend, and they will never be the worker's friend. That is proven by what their mates at the federal government level are trying to do by reintroducing the ABCC bill, which will worsen safety and fatalities on construction sites because workers will be avoiding attending safety meetings and speaking out about safety concerns. This is a despicable act, and it will certainly be a backward step.

I commend this bill to the house because the Andrews government is absolutely committed to workplace safety and of course to road safety. I commend the Minister for Roads and Road Safety on our Towards Zero campaign. These are key priorities for this government because every Victorian deserves to return home safely to their loved ones.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I too am pleased to rise to speak on the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. To a small degree I will pick up where the member for Bendigo West left off with respect to road safety, which I will address a little in my contribution on this legislation. The Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, as both previous speakers have identified, amends a range of acts with respect to both the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and WorkCover — so that includes the Accident Compensation Act 1985, and in particular to reflect the change in the retirement ages proposed by the commonwealth with respect to the age pension. That is of course a sensible move to ensure that those

who on benefits in the future — it has not happened as yet — either from the TAC or WorkCover, will continue to receive those benefits until the revised retirement age, which is going up from 65 to 67.

There are amendments to the Limitation of Actions Act 1958 and to the Transport Accident Act 1986, and I will come to those in a moment. The amendments to the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 effectively re-establishes as a statutory authority the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service (ACCS), and I understand the Minister for Finance has circulated an amendment to make it clear that the new board that will be established under this bill does not have the power to direct conciliation officers or the chief conciliation officer with respect to particular issues. Although that was in the bill, we take on notice that the amendment that has been circulated will clarify that particular aspect. So there are in some respects a number of minor changes, although as the member for Mornington said, they are very important changes for those whom they directly affect, in particular those affected by workplace accidents or traffic accidents.

I must say that in getting up to speak as the member for Gippsland South I have somewhat of an inferiority complex knowing that my predecessor, the former member for Gippsland South, Peter Ryan, was probably the expert in this Parliament on this particular issue, having been a plaintiff lawyer who specialised in this area. He knew the Transport Accident Act 1986 inside out and back to front, but more particularly he understood the issues that this legislation is addressing with respect to the evaluation of permanent impairment and evaluation of injuries. He knew that very well.

I recall a time when I worked for the former member for Gippsland South when we went through a crisis of confidence, particularly in country Victoria, with respect to public liability insurance. A lot of that was driven by increased payouts with respect to claims for injury, and I know that Peter Ryan at the time not only agreed to but in fact pushed a lot of changes to personal injury and tort law that really went against his grain. He did not feel comfortable with them at all, and I know he made himself a little bit of a pariah at the time with some of his erstwhile colleagues in the legal fraternity, but it was important that those changes were made then to ensure that public liability insurance premiums were affordable. At the time we were seeing a significant impact on events, as I said, particularly in country Victoria but throughout the state. Various festivals, events and other activities simply could not get insurance cover because the cost was prohibitive and it was beginning to cause a significant problem for our regions.

I segue from that to the importance of the TAC and its sponsorship of some of those events. Recently we had a very successful event in Mirboo North in my electorate of Gippsland South — the third annual Blessing of the Bikes — which, as it sounds, is the blessing of motorbikes by representatives of a number of different denominations. It was organised by Marcel and Sabine Widmer from the Inline 4 Cafe in Mirboo North. Marcel came to me earlier in the year and said, 'We need assistance to run this and we really would like TAC sponsorship because one of the key messages of the Blessing of the Bikes is the road safety message'. Members will be aware that this year has been a particularly horrific year on our roads for motorcyclists. We are currently sitting at 45 deaths of motorcyclists on our roads at this time, which is up from 26 at the same time last year. Members will also be aware that the broader road toll has also increased this year, and that is a significant concern.

The Blessing of the Bikes was a great event at which to be able to spread the message, and I was pleased to be able to assist with getting the TAC on board to sponsor that event. It is funny how things work. The members for Mornington and Essendon, both in the chamber, will recall the wonderful times we had together this year during the estimates process and earlier during the budget outcomes process. It was in one of those discussions that Joe Calafiore — I think that is how you pronounce his surname — the CEO of the TAC was present. That gave me an opportunity to have a chat to him about sponsorship of the Blessing of the Bikes in Mirboo North. I started by saying, 'Joe, I have a little town in my electorate called Mirboo North'. His immediate response was 'Oh, I've got heaps of cousins who grow spuds there'. I am not suggesting that that is why the Blessing of the Bikes in Mirboo North got the sponsorship, but I am sure it did not hurt that the CEO knew the location.

It was a good event, and it is a credit to the TAC and the government as well that they supported it because road safety is critical. In my electorate of Gippsland South Mirboo North is such a popular location for motorcyclists because it has beautiful winding roads, hills and plenty of good stretches of road for motorbikes to enjoy, but equally they are dangerous and they require an extra level of care.

In addition to sponsorship and spreading the message about road safety we do need decent roads. I know that the TAC is responsible for a lot of spending on road safety improvements, particularly the wire rope barriers. A lot of those have gone in throughout South Gippsland, and I acknowledge here that a lot of my constituents do not like those roadside barriers. It is not

just the motorcyclists who I think refer to them as a cheese graters, but the general community gets very frustrated at seeing the wire rope barriers go in when the road surface itself is dangerous and can cause some of the accidents. But I understand from both the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and my colleague Darren Chester, the federal member for Gippsland, that the evidence is very clear that these road safety barriers do save lives.

While I am on those two points and on improving roads in my region I again call on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to take up the offer of the federal government, which has put forward \$25 million for the South Gippsland Highway, \$20 million of which is allocated to removing a dangerous section of the South Gippsland Highway — that is the Black Spur section between Coonawarra and Meenyan, another of those particularly winding areas that I was just talking about. There is a process in train. Both the former coalition and the federal coalition government funded a business case for the Black Spur realignment. We keep hearing that that is still underway nearly two and a half years later, but the state government now has an opportunity to do this project. I believe it is about a \$51 million spend in total. That would have required the state government to contribute the whole lot, but we now have \$20 million on the table from the federal government. The other \$5 million, if it is also matched by the state, will go to road improvements further along between Foster and Yarram. The federal coalition has also committed \$6 million for the Hyland Highway. If that is matched by the state, \$12 million would do a hell of a lot to improve safety in that area.

It is important that the minister gets on with the job. He should not look a gift horse in the mouth. He has a \$25 million, or in this case \$31 million, contribution from the federal government that he would not otherwise have got. I think the government should get on with the job, finish the business case for that Black Spur realignment, take out a very dangerous stretch of road and improve road safety in South Gippsland. The economic benefits for our local business and tourism sectors would be enormous, so I encourage the minister to rapidly conclude the negotiations with the federal government and make sure that the state coughs up its share for what will be a number of very important projects. The opposition does not oppose the bill, but I do wish the government would reverse its cuts to road funding and get on with improving the roads in country Victoria, including in my electorate of Gippsland South.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the Compensation

Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The member for Mornington, the member for Bendigo West and indeed the member for Gippsland South have touched on various points in relation to this bill. I guess at the end of the day really what you are looking at with this bill is protecting people who are seriously injured, either at work or as a result of a car accident. For a period of time in my life I spent a few months going in and out of a rehabilitation ward at the Royal Talbot hospital and I got to see people who had been injured at work. There was definitely a guy who had been hit in the head by a crane. He was a big guy, and he had an acquired brain injury. He would not have been that old; he would probably have been in his 40s. You look at it and you do sometimes wonder — this was 20-odd years ago now — what happens to these people.

Sometimes people are quite fortunate. They have an acquired brain injury, but they are able to compensate for it or with good support networks they are able to go back to living something of a normal life, for want of a better term. But that is not always the case. Sometimes what happens is that people do not work again; they are not able to work again. I met a parent from my community this morning. Our daughters were both training for a 3-kilometre swim, so we were both at the swimming pool at a quarter past 6 this morning and we had a chat. I learnt from him that his father had not had an education and had been chasing work all his life. Finally in the early 1980s he found a dream job. He was running the car parks at Melbourne Airport. His manager had said, 'We're going to change your car over. You're doing really well. Why don't you jump in the car, take your wife to Sydney for a holiday and come back. You've got a promotion. You'll get a new car. Away you go'. What happened was that his mother and father got in the car. They went up to Sydney. They were seriously injured in a car accident, and this guy's father was never able to work again. So the new car went, the promotion went, the job went and he never worked again.

We have toyed with different schemes. Workers compensation schemes did not work particularly well in the 1950s, 1960s or 1970s. It was really following the election of the Cain government that WorkCover, as I think it was called at the time, and the Transport Accident Commission were established and there was recognition that you needed to have a safety net in place for people who were victims of road trauma or serious injury. I think it goes to the notion of fairness. I think that we live in a society and in a community where we recognise that the fortunes of life can take you in a direction you do not see coming and that you might be a victim of. I think there has been a great deal of interest in the community in trying to make sure you

have got schemes in place to help address people falling foul of circumstance.

I remember working as an adviser in the other place in the mid-1990s. I know the member for Brighton, who has just stepped out of the chamber, was the member for Monash Province and the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Tourism in the late 1990s. I remember the game plan we had as a result of the former member for Mitcham's decision to resign his seat on Armistice Day in 1997, which triggered the Mitcham by-election. The Kennett government at that stage had two major pieces of legislation on the books that it was trying to get through the Legislative Council — the amendment to the audit act, which was to outsource the work of the Auditor-General to third-party providers, as well as changes to the accident compensation act which would remove common-law rights for seriously injured workers. When you are seriously outnumbered in the Legislative Council, as we were at that time — I think we had 10 members out of 44 — all you can do is play for time. That is all you can do.

We had a series of amendments to the audit act on the Tuesday, and all 220 of those were voted down in the early hours of Wednesday morning. The purpose was to try and push out the accident compensation bill to Friday morning. Theo Theophanous was the leader of the opposition at that point in time, and I think Theo gave a speech in the second-reading debate that went for about 3½ hours on the Thursday. Then we went into committee. The member for Mornington talked about Roger Hallam. I think gladiatorial would be how I would describe the way in which that committee stage unfolded from late on the Thursday night — I think the bill was committed at about 6 o'clock — and again there were about 220 amendments which were moved in that committee stage.

Roger was at the table with Theo, and it went on; there were divisions. This chamber was not sitting, and so members of the other place would come in here to sleep and race over for the divisions. The purpose of that was to make sure that the house did not rise until Friday morning. It did not rise until Friday morning. I think it rose at about 7.30 and Theo at that point went over to the Imperial Hotel for a beer. The purpose was to make sure that that was the story that led the —

Ms Asher — He had a cigarette first.

Mr PEARSON — I think he did have a cigarette first. The purpose was to make sure that that was the lead story on the Channel 9 news on Friday, 12 December 1997, because Saturday, 13 December

1997, was the day of the Mitcham by-election, which resulted in a swing of 16.9 per cent to the Labor Party and the election of Tony Robinson as the member for Mitcham.

There are probably a whole range of reasons why you had a swing of 16.9 per cent. I do not think it was due to the way in which the member for Brighton conducted herself as the Minister for Small Business and Minister for Tourism. I do not think we can blame the member for Brighton for that swing. But I think it was this notion of a fair go and that people at the time felt that what the Kennett government was doing in terms of the removal of common-law rights for seriously injured workers was a step too far.

Always with these things it is a balancing act. I remember trying to come up to speed with understanding the way in which the American Medical Association (AMA) table of injuries worked. Why is it that if you lost a foot that was worth X per cent, as opposed to if you lost 50 per cent use of your right arm that was worth Y per cent. It is complicated. You have to try to get the balance right, because you want to make sure the scheme is functional, operational and solvent, but you do not want to see it being rorted, nor do you want to have a scheme that is too punitive and not responsive to the needs of people. I think that in terms of that great debate of late 1997 there was a strong view from the people of Mitcham that they felt that the Kennett government had gone too far.

The bill that is before the house is about building on some of the work that has gone previously. I think that making sure that we are in line with the retirement age that the federal government is proposing is important. I do find it quite interesting. I think that for those of us who have worked in white-collar professions it is somewhat curious, is it not, that you are not really likely — I am not trying to tempt fate here — to register a WorkCover claim, as opposed to someone who has worked on the tools all their life. Yet white-collar workers can often work until they are 70. They can work until they are 80. If you are Warren Buffett, you are 86 and you are still on the tools, yet for workers like people in my family, their bodies are broken by the time they are 65, and they are the ones who are more likely to require access to a compensation scheme like WorkSafe in order to be able to live their lives.

In terms of the retirement age, we must make sure that people are not stranded at the age of 65, when their benefits run out from the Transport Accident Commission or WorkSafe, stranding them for two years while they wait for their age pension to kick in.

That would not be a tolerable situation. I think it is important that the bill addresses this issue. But we have come a long way. We are a sophisticated society. We recognise the fact that life can be cruel and that there is a role for the state to make sure that people are protected and that they are supported when they need it. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 and follow my good friend and dear colleague the member for Essendon, who never ceases to amaze me in his ability to pull facts from the past and give a wonderful contribution to the house.

I think it is a hallmark of this government that there is a prioritisation of strengthening and supporting the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) in the vital work that they do, as well as WorkSafe institutions, underpinned by the notion that despite fault in an assessment of someone's injury and a claim for assistance, no fault is attributed in trying to support an individual, a hallmark of our system for the TAC for a good 30 years and something that we as Victorians should all be proud of.

When you think also of the work of WorkSafe to keep our community safe, the most fundamental thing is to return home from work each and every day, which we take for granted. Sadly, I read an interesting stat on WorkSafe's website. As we round out the weeks towards Christmas, this is actually a time when workers are at greater risk. When you think that already there have been 31 workers who have passed away this year on the job, we must be forever vigilant. It is the work of the union movement, regulators and employers to make sure that workers return home safe each and every day.

While we take the work of the TAC for granted, it is worth reflecting on a jurisdiction just to the north of us, Queensland, that only recently looked at introducing a no-fault scheme. For many years there was an assessment between fault and no fault. That differentiation meant that people who had severe injuries potentially missed out on receiving that support and assistance. That recently has been changed, but it shows just how forward thinking Victoria was and how important the work of the TAC is.

This bill makes some minor amendments, particularly around the retirement age, with the federal government lifting the retirement age from 65 to 67. All state jurisdictions and their relevant support work legislation and compensation schemes need to follow suit, so that is a minor amendment to correct that. It will have an

impact on the budget, but it is appropriate to assist people through to the age that they could be working.

Also, I think something that is a key hallmark of this bill is the additional payments of up to \$5000 under the TAC compensation scheme to cover the travel and accommodation expenses of immediate family members to attend a funeral service of a TAC client. While that might seem a minor change, it is a substantial change for families who might be impacted by road trauma. In addition to the more than 9000 people who have been killed on Victorian roads since 1989, the fact that one person is injured on Victorian roads every 30 minutes is a harrowing statistic that changes families. It impacts greatly on our community, with an emotional, social and economic toll. Governments have put in so much investment each and every day to try to get towards a road toll of zero each and every minute. Every 30 minutes we see a person injured on Victorian roads, which costs our state \$3 billion each and every year. Speed-related traumas cost the state around \$1 billion per year. That is a significant toll to our economy but also to those people and their families who are affected. That is why I think that funeral support with expenses is appropriate and necessary.

I think as well, just reflecting on another change in terms of the spinal impairment guide and modification documentation, the member for Essendon touched on the fact that there is quite a crude assessment of the percentage of injury. It is guided most practicably by tort law but it does have quite a crude assessment. The decision that was referenced in the debate by previous members had an impact on how those assessments were arrived at, and it is appropriate that we change that to reflect some of the inequities in that system. That spinal impairment guide will be modified to reflect that change. Importantly, when you think about those assessments and some of the crude natures of those assessments that can be done, it is appropriate that we make sure that process is streamlined and that there is consistency after that anomaly was created in the law.

We should also consider the annual outlay for the TAC. I think every member of Parliament would have had interaction with constituents who were trying to put forward a claim to the TAC or WorkSafe and the TAC or WorkSafe had assessed that they had either a pre-existing injury or a pre-existing condition. All members of Parliament would have interacted with and advocated on behalf of constituents who have been in that predicament.

Recently, in preparing for this bill, I read an interesting fact. The journey of an injured individual is quite

stressful and takes quite a big toll. The hospital and immediate up-front costs and expenses are quite easy to assess when someone is injured, but then how to assess and determine the need to compensate someone who has lost income or value is a harder assessment. Sometimes the complexity of that leads to a lawyers minefield.

An example is that it generally takes nearly two years to assess those claims and the costs of income. I know that there is an ambition across the legal fraternity, and linking in with TAC, to try to lower that to 18 months. That is still a long time for someone to be waiting for that assessment. That is a lot of stress for someone who has already gone through significant trauma, be it in a road vehicle accident or having witnessed one of their family members, who might have been the main income earner in their family, in one. That journey of the injured worker, and trying to do what we can to better support families who might have experienced road trauma, is so very important. I think those ambitions to try to provide better support are welcomed and are really important ambitions.

I also note the amendment to change the eligibility under WorkSafe where a serious accident has occurred. Strengthening those requirements around that element as well is important to reflect the state and territory jurisdictions and streamline those processes. That is welcome as well. All in all there are some minor changes there but some very significant changes for people who are interacting with the TAC, who are interacting with WorkSafe, both valuable institutions in our state. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — It is fantastic to rise today in this house to speak on the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. To start I would like to acknowledge the measured contributions of those on either side of the house today and to note that there is bipartisan support to put this bill through. I am proud that this is something that Labor does. It is a bill that is going to make sure that people's lives are easier after they have been through significant trauma.

I note that some of the amendments in the bill are for things such as aligning the maximum eligibility age for Transport Accident Commission (TAC) weekly benefits with changes to the commonwealth pension age, which makes sense; adopting the spinal impairment guides modification document (GMD) for use in the TAC scheme to address the consequences arising from the Serwylo court decision; creating a payment of up to \$5000, indexed annually, under the TAC compensation scheme to cover travel and accommodation expenses for immediate family

affected by a death in the family; aligning the maximum eligibility age for WorkSafe weekly benefits with changes to the commonwealth pension age; establishing the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service as a statutory authority with a ministerially appointed, skills-based board; and aligning the budget approvals process for medical panels with that of the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service.

From the perspective of the member for Frankston this seems very straightforward. In a previous life I did see quite a few people in workplace accidents — hundreds, I would guess, in car accidents. It is one thing to get people out of the car or out of the machinery; it is another thing to meet them after years of rehab and see what they have gone through. Who pays for that rehab? We have a wonderful system that does that, and we have to keep that system in check and also provide the best we can for the people we govern. Overall TAC will continue to provide fair, just and affordable compensation for Victorians injured in motor vehicle accidents or MVAs, as we call them. TAC will remain financially sound, and we are committed to having a sustainable scheme. Our bill provides this sustainable scheme.

Under the previous government TAC commissioned a panel of spinal injury medical experts to develop the guides modification document to address the gaps in the AMA — American Medical Association — guides on spinal impairment. In 2016 we repealed section 46A(2C) and (2D) of the principal act, the Transport Accident Act 1986, which had been inserted by the Transport Accident Amendment Act 2013. These sections allowed for the operation of the GMD through a broad power that meant further guidelines to amend the AMA guides could actually be used at the discretion of a minister and without any parliamentary scrutiny. I think this was a fairly big oversight that we need to correct. It definitely is inappropriate. There should be limits on what a minister can decide without referring to any medical help and also to the scrutiny of Parliament. An example here would be a minister actually making a decision on an individual's case, having no professional background or knowledge of the case or any medical background at all. That just is not on.

This bill will provide a very narrow power to enable the GMD to be adopted and used for spinal impairment assessment in the TAC scheme. Basically what we are doing is restoring equity to this scheme, ensuring that the most severe injuries attract the most compensation, which of course makes sense. It is important to note that people will not be worse off than before the Serwylo decision. In fact some people will be better off.

I mentioned compensation for funeral expenses before, and I believe this is a very, very important addition. This bill includes an additional payment of up to \$5000 to allow family members to attend a funeral service of a loved one killed in a road accident in Victoria if they live more than 100 kilometres away from the location of the funeral service. This is a really important step to making sure that people grieve properly and go through the process and can move on with their life without a massive financial burden while having laid a loved one to rest. I think again that this is something that a Labor government would think of — looking after people; that is what we do.

The other interesting amendment is aligning the maximum entitlement age with changes to the age pension. While the coalition would like us all to be working in salt mines until we are 80, that is not the case for most people. They have increased the pension age, but Victoria has stepped up to ensure that those injured at work still receive their compensation entitlements. Changes to the federal pension age come into effect on 1 July 2017 and will progressively increase the pension age from 65 to 67, from 2017 to 2023.

It is with irony that I note here that I do not know many 67-year-old firefighters because I think, regardless of what the opposition have said about the link between cancer and firefighters, there is one established, and it does happen. You do not see many 67-year-old firefighters retiring at that age, and I think that is true of quite a few trades around. Of course people can enjoy their jobs, but there is just that limit to when you can physically be capable at your job.

Under current legislation the weekly benefits paid to Victorians injured in a workplace accident normally cease when they turn 65 as they would become eligible for the age pension. But because the pension-qualifying age is increasing, that leaves a gap. This bill will align the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 with the commonwealth Social Security Act 1991 to ensure there is no gap between a WorkSafe claimant's eligibility for weekly benefits and their eligibility for the age pension. Essentially we are saying to our communities that in Victoria we will look after you. This government will look after you. Nothing has changed from the day we were voted into government. We said we would put people first, and indeed we are.

This change upholds our election commitment to invest the surplus from the WorkSafe scheme into improvements to benefits for injured workers. Now, with these injured workers, I hear some people making a bit of a racket about 'This is money and you are just

paying this money to people and it is a normal process'. For these people it is not normal. To find people in industrial accidents is often horrible. It scars them for life, mentally and physically. Often it changes their life forever. Sometimes they can never work again. The least they are thinking about is the payout they will get from WorkCover; they are trying to get their lives back on track.

I think of one particular person who I met a few times after his industrial accident. He was trapped, and it took him 3 hours to be extricated. This guy was nice enough to bring a slab to the fire station and say 'Thank you' a little while later. Seeing the extent of the mechanical injuries that he had, it was just astonishing that he was still living. The last thing on his mind was the amount of money he was getting from the government. I guess the thing about that is, it costs a lot. Rehab and setting up your house — the rails, the toilet seats, wheelchair access, adapting your car — costs a hell of a lot, but no-one would really even be thinking about the money. So it is really important that we get this right, and I think we are, in making these improvements.

The final thing I would just like to speak on briefly is the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service (ACCS). I am glad to see this supported in this house as part of this amendment bill. Before the election we committed to ensuring that the ACCS was well resourced, independent, fair and transparent and with a strong legislative authority, and I believe we have done that. Our changes reflect recommendations made by the independent review into the ACCS's governance undertaken by KPMG.

Finally, I would just like to acknowledge the hard work of the minister and her staff. Things like this could be left alone and in years from now might need fixing, but it is great to see that people have got their eye on the ball and their eye on the prize, making sure that we are keeping up and doing the best for our community, which is why we are actually here in this room. Again, it is just another reason I am proud to be part of the Labor government. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — In contributing to the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 I would just like to note that the purpose of the bill is to amend the Accident Compensation Act 1985, the Limitation of Actions Act 1958, the Transport Accident Act 1986 and the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013.

As a former suburban lawyer I am familiar with many dimensions of accident compensation law and its

impact upon individuals and families. Also in this place there was a former leader of the National Party, a member for Gippsland South, who had practised accident compensation law in Gippsland and had represented the interests of workers employed in the timber mills. He was a fearless advocate for compensation for his clients, on whose behalf he acted, and he had many vigorously told stories of his fighting for just outcomes for injured workers.

It is important that the resources available to the state through the compensation scheme be directed wisely and well to those people who have compensable injuries and that the schemes operate in a just, fair, transparent and honest manner. From time to time there are matters that come before the offices of members that require outcomes that might not be immediately covered by statute. There are schemes which might replace earlier arrangements where some rights may have been curtailed at particular times. There are people who have carried injuries, and the impact from the loss of employment and loss of income following the expiration of the compensation period — at 75 or 80 per cent of pre-accident earnings — places people in different contexts and different circumstances.

A case was drawn to my attention earlier this year of a person who was statute barred from advancing a claim, where in a different realm and under different legislation both his parents were killed. At the time of his parents' death this young person in the west of Melbourne, originally country Victoria, had not received any legal advice. If he had received legal advice at the time, he would have had a compensable claim, as I understand it.

As we stand, some decades later, he is statute barred from advancing a course of action for compensation. In that particular circumstance there was no statute bar — a young person losing both parents with no structures, no knowledge and no advice around his circumstances and what would be a just way forward for him to advance his rights — but there was no such advice available at the time. Some years later it was drawn to his attention that he may have had some rights. He sought to advance his legal position, but there is the matter of a statute bar. In correspondence earlier this year I advocated that there may be a circumstance, where someone had been statute barred, for an *ex gratia* payment that might put that person back — albeit not in circumstances of the time, but that might represent some fair outcome in his particular circumstance.

These are matters that I have taken up with the government at a couple of levels, and I will continue to try and advocate on behalf of this person so that an

equitable outcome may be possible, not within the immediate parameters of the law, but through other processes that are available to government.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I wish to speak on the Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The bill before the house will improve the benefits and operation of the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and WorkSafe compensation schemes. It will strengthen the assistance offered to Victorian families affected by road and workplace injury or trauma by improving benefits payable under the TAC and WorkSafe schemes. It is also designed to strengthen the governance arrangement of the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service.

TAC and WorkSafe are Labor icons. In 1985 the Victorian Labor government, under the leadership of Premier John Cain, set about realising its ambitious mission to create a socially and economically responsible workers compensation scheme. Until then, workers compensation had been underwritten by private insurers, resulting in soaring premiums and the inadequacy of compensation payments for injured workers.

Today the original scheme known as WorkCare has evolved into a financially stable and more equitable workers compensation scheme, now known as WorkSafe. Victoria's workers compensation scheme is one of the few in the world that is a mix of public scheme regulation and private claims administration.

In late 1997 the Kennett government announced that common-law rights were to be removed, making WorkCover a no-fault compensation scheme. The damage was that common law could not be sought for injuries occurring on or after 12 November 1997; statutory lump sum payments were paid instead. On 30 May 2000 the Accident Compensation (Common Law and Benefits) Bill 2000 introduced by the Bracks Labor government received royal assent. Access to common law was restored retrospectively to 20 October 1999, the date the Bracks government was sworn in. The Andrews government is another Labor government committed to protecting common-law rights.

Claims under the Accident Compensation Act 1985 have a limitation period of six years rather than the three-year limit that applies to other types of personal injuries. The Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 — referred to as the WIRC act — was introduced by the previous coalition government as a bill in 2013 and came into effect on 1 July 2014. A consequential amendment was made by that bill to the Limitation of Actions Act 1958 to

preserve the six-year limitation period. However, it inadvertently had the effect of applying the general three-year limitation period for claims for damages under the WIRC act rather than the intended six-year period. This amendment bill ensures that the intended six-year statute of limitations period for common-law actions applies to actions arising under both the Limitation of Actions Act and the WIRC act. This bill will definitely be enacted before 1 July 2017, which is the completion of the three-year period, and hence nobody will be disadvantaged by this oversight. This provides people affected ample time to work with their lawyers and other support services to lodge claims.

From 1 July 2017 the qualifying age for the federal aged pension will begin to progressively increase to 67 years. The proposed legislation ensures that people receiving weekly benefits for road or workplace accidents do not miss out on income support by changing the maximum age for compensation to align with the pension age. This is absolutely important for those who meet with road or workplace accidents close to the retirement age.

The bill will also include an additional payment of up to \$5000 to allow family members to attend the funeral service of a loved one killed in a road accident in Victoria. This will cover travel and accommodation expenses, which family members can claim. They will be entitled to this if they live more than 100 kilometres away from the location of the funeral service. This is an important step to support grieving families and ease the financial burden when a loved one passes away.

The 2010 *Transport Accident Commission v. Serwyllo* Supreme Court decision created an anomaly in spinal impairment assessment and inequalities in compensation. Spinal fractures which have resulted in relatively low levels of disability have been compensated at higher levels than the more debilitating injuries. The court decision highlighted gaps in the existing prescribed guides for spinal impairment assessment based on the American Medical Association (AMA) guides for the evaluation of permanent impairment. Under the previous government the TAC commissioned a panel of spinal injury medical experts to develop a *Spinal Impairment Guides modification document* (GMD) to address the gaps in the AMA guides. It directed the panel to provide further guidance to medical practitioners on methodologies of spinal impairment.

The Andrews government repealed sections 46A(2C) and (2D) of the Transport Accident Act. These were introduced by the previous coalition government through the Transport Accident Amendment Bill 2013.

These sections allowed for the operation of the GMD through a broad power that meant further guidelines to amend the AMA guides could be effected at the discretion of the minister of the day without parliamentary scrutiny. This was totally inappropriate. There should be limits on what the minister can decide without reference to medical help and the scrutiny of Parliament. The repealing of these changes keeps the system fair for vulnerable Victorians. This bill will provide a very narrow power to enable the GMD to be adapted and used for spinal impairment assessment in the TAC scheme. This will restore equity to the scheme, ensuring the most severe injuries attract the most compensation.

This bill establishes the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service as a statutory body. This will bring its governance arrangements into line with best practice and ensure the accountability of Victoria's independent workers compensation dispute resolution process.

The Victorian WorkSafe scheme is in a sound financial position. WorkSafe's average premium rate in 2015–16 was the lowest in the history of the scheme at 1.272 per cent of payroll, and this rate will continue in 2016–17. The true underlying measure of the scheme's financial performance is the performance from insurance operations. In 2015–16 WorkSafe's performance from insurance operations was \$280.4 million. This was an increase from \$210.5 million in 2014–15. The Andrews government has committed to returning any surpluses from the WorkSafe scheme into improved benefits for injured workers. The TAC performance from insurance operations was \$542 million in 2015–16 compared to the 2014–15 result of \$413 million. This is indeed a record result for the TAC.

Tragically 270 lives were lost on Victoria's roads in 2015–16, 21 more than in the previous year, yet again reminding us of the importance of the TAC's efforts in implementing the Towards Zero road safety strategy. The TAC will continue to provide fair, just and affordable compensation for Victorians injured in transport accidents.

The Andrews government is committed to a sustainable scheme. This bill provides compensation and protection for vulnerable Victorians. It is critical that Victorians who are injured in the workplace or on our roads receive timely and fair compensation with ready access to rehabilitation and return-to-work services. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

**TRANSPORT INTEGRATION
AMENDMENT (HEAD, TRANSPORT FOR
VICTORIA AND OTHER GOVERNANCE
REFORMS) BILL 2016**

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 12 October; motion of
Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).**

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I rise to lead the debate on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. The Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016 aims to establish a new statutory office within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources called head, Transport for Victoria and to change the way in which V/Line is legally established.

By way of commencing my contribution I think some brief history is helpful before I substantively discuss the bill in detail in the time I have available. In September 2011 when the then coalition government introduced the Transport Legislation Amendment (Public Transport Development Authority) Bill 2011 it made it clear that the aim of Public Transport Victoria (PTV) was to put passengers first.

From 1 April 2012 when Public Transport Victoria formally commenced operation it did so by ensuring that functions such as those previously undertaken by Metlink and the Transport Ticketing Authority, including erecting signs and timetables at railway stations and tram stops and administering Labor's disastrous myki contract that dated from 2005, were transferred to PTV. It also oversaw Victoria's rail freight initiatives. PTV became a single unifying brand for an authority overseeing public transport operations such as Metro Trains Melbourne, Yarra Trams, the government-owned V/Line, which I might add continued to be government owned throughout the 2010 to 2014 term of the coalition government, and metropolitan and provincial city and rural bus operators.

PTV also began to operate a call centre for public transport users. It put forward many ideas for capital and recurrent funding for public transport while also implementing any number of coalition government policies. I will mention a few here for history's sake, such as the 10 000 extra train trips operating per week on Victoria's public transport system — that was a great initiative of the former Liberal-Nationals

government — rail freight lines to Rainbow and through Kyabram to Echuca being reopened; 10-minute train frequencies being introduced on suburban line trains such as Frankston seven days a week during the daytime; and other great initiatives.

People keep talking about the abolition of timetables and how good it would be to not need timetables so that when you rocked up to a tram, train or bus and had missed the previous mode of transport, you would only need to wait a few minutes for the next. That 10-minute train frequency introduced on suburban lines such as Frankston seven days a week during the daytime was a fantastic initiative of the former Liberal-Nationals coalition. It also improved coordination between buses and trains. We continue to hear that a lot. As shadow Minister for Public Transport one of the things that is most commonly raised with me when I talk to communities and public transport users is that there is nothing worse than getting off a train to catch a connecting bus only to see the bus driving out of the car park, or vice versa — you catch a bus down to the train station, it drives in and your train is taking off from the platform. It is difficult to coordinate this; we understand the challenges, but the coalition when in government managed to improve the coordination between buses and trains. There is still a lot of work for this government to do in this area.

There was also the successful introduction of an initial 940 Victorian protective services officers (PSOs). We continue to hear many terrific stories about the effectiveness and operation of our PSO force, whether it is in dealing with antisocial behaviour at our railway stations and car parks or young kids of driver age, whether girls or boys, arriving home on the train at night and being escorted to their car. There are some terrific stories about Victorian protective services officers. This was a great policy, one that we are enormously proud of and one that continues to deliver many community safety benefits right across the metropolitan network.

One of the reasons why PTV was established is that under the former Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure there were too many authorities in the public transport space. With PTV's establishment the then Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure retained responsibility for strategic planning across the transport sector. Note that that includes rail, trams, buses, roads, taxis and ferries. The position of director, public transport, within the department was abolished at the time. The coalition established PTV because the previous arrangement simply did not work. As the

former Minister for Public Transport and member for Polwarth said at the time, there was a spaghetti junction of a jumble of authorities. You did not know where to go when or who to turn to. It was just unworkable. Hence the Liberal-Nationals established PTV because of those previous arrangements.

My colleague the shadow minister for roads and infrastructure and member for Warrandyte will no doubt speak on the next aspect of what the coalition did in government. We retained the Roads Corporation, better known as VicRoads, which has served Victoria so well after taking over from the Country Roads Board. I will leave my colleague the member for Warrandyte, who will be making a contribution on this bill, to elaborate on how VicRoads has served Victoria so well over that time.

Having given that outline and history I will now turn to the bill. Part 4 of the bill absolutely astounds me. Earlier this year under V/Line's continuing government ownership we had the \$50 million to \$60 million dual saga of the Minister for Public Transport's mismanagement on full display, with V/Line's Bombardier VLOCITY railcars' excessive wheel wear and the failure of these railcars to correctly trigger the operation of boom barriers along the Pakenham line. I know the member for Bass continually raised this issue where railcars were not triggering the operation of boom barriers on the Pakenham line. That issue continued to be ignored as if it was not happening. Thanks to a bit of local media attention, the hardworking member for Bass was able to draw the attention of the minister and the government to that problem and get some attention for it. But this dual saga was disastrous.

For months and months and months, V/Line commuter belt passengers were shunted onto hundreds of hired road coaches. Passengers from Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo were badly affected. But the commuters who suffered most from the replacement of trains with buses were from the Latrobe Valley, East Gippsland and West Gippsland, the very communities that will again suffer grievously from the Premier's failure to encourage brown coal generators to stay in Victoria and effectively provide our state with an ongoing advantage and cheap electricity prices. After Hazelwood's closure in March 2017, these prices will increase.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HODGETT — We hear members on the other side carping, but make no mistake: under this Premier electricity prices will rise and rise and rise and will

continue to put enormous cost-of-living pressure on Victorian families. Victorians have seen V/Line's level of passenger satisfaction dive, with V/Line incurring a large loss, a reduction in infrastructure work spending in 2015–16 from \$92 million the previous year to \$58 million, and passengers and V/Line staff on a Seymour-bound train being assaulted by a drunk. The entire V/Line system was in disarray, and of course, as we know, history shows that the minister failed to take any responsibility for that issue.

Given that context, what does this bill propose in respect of V/Line? It does not discuss improved train frequencies but instead seeks to change the way V/Line is legally established, supposedly to ensure that V/Line is retained in public ownership. V/Line has been government owned — —

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr HODGETT — I have got a bit of a cold, mate. We have been working hard out in the electorate of Croydon. V/Line has been government owned since late 2002 when National Express terminated its franchise. Labor has been in office for all but four of those years between 2002 and 2016, so this part of the bill is unnecessary and ignores how V/Line remains in government ownership, as has been the case since 2002. We have had 11 years of Labor, 4 years of the Liberal-Nationals and nearly another further 2 years of Labor, and now the minister sees this as necessary. I think the government should be honest and come clean about whether cabinet has indeed actively considered privatising V/Line. If they have, they should be honest and come clean. If not, perhaps the minister needs to better explain why after this long period of government ownership she now sees it necessary to have this included in the bill.

Part 2 of the bill seeks to establish a new statutory office of head, Transport for Victoria. The community might think that the Minister for Public Transport was the head, in the sense of ultimately being accountable for transport in Victoria, but maybe that is not the case. We have certainly seen up in Queensland the trouble that the minister's colleague Stirling Hinchliffe has got himself and the Labor government in Queensland into through a failure to recruit and train in a timely manner sufficient new train drivers for the opening of the Redcliffe Peninsula line to Kippa-Ring. In Queensland 330 trains have been cancelled in a week. The Queensland Rail CEO and board have resigned yet that minister has not resigned.

In Victoria, under the Premier and Labor dysfunction, deceit and delays rule in public transport. But what does the member for Bendigo East seek to do through this bill? The minister wants to abrogate any personal responsibility for public transport and instead give that to some autonomous transport bureaucrat. Maybe it will be someone like Gillian Miles, who has been suggested, so that when things go wrong the minister can hide and media queries will get lost in a department that oversees nine ministers and has about 2500 full-time equivalent staff. We know the size of that department. We know the complexity of that department. We know the problems they have got with nine ministers, so this is just compounding the problem.

Part 2 of the bill is all about the member for Bendigo East going into hiding in her new office at the Bendigo railway station — the one that featured so prominently on page 21 of the *Sunday Herald Sun* of 6 November, which cost \$10 600 to establish and which is her third office in Victoria and only 270 metres from her Bendigo electorate office. She is an arrogant, out-of-touch minister in an arrogant, out-of-touch government.

Establishing a new head of some statutory office called Transport for Victoria will not remove how the Andrews Labor government tore up the east–west link contract at a cost to Victorians of \$1.2 billion. That was a sad day for Victorians. My community and indeed hundreds and thousands of Victorians need the east–west link because it will decrease congestion by removing the slow motorist crawl along Alexandra Parade in Fitzroy and the narrow road through Royal Park.

I was at the Maroondah Festival on the weekend, one of the biggest festivals in the City of Maroondah, and the east–west link was raised; it is still alive and well as an issue. Notably there was no Labor stand. Even the Greens had a stand at the Maroondah Festival this year, but there was no Labor stand. Perhaps they had no policies or did not want to front the people of the east about the east–west link. And that was one of a long list of issues at the front of mind out there. The east–west link is very much front of mind for people out in my electorate of Croydon and the electorates in the outer east. We will not forget that the Premier and the Andrews Labor government tore up the east–west contract at a cost of Victorians of \$1.2 billion to not build a road.

Part 2 of the bill will not by itself see a much-needed Melbourne Airport rail link built any sooner or allow a longer community consultation period. Clearly, judging

by his recent speech to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, the CEO of the Level Crossing Removal Authority and the minister have planned for communities living along the Cheltenham–Frankston railway line more examples of the ugly, intrusive, noisy, graffitiing, drug-using, antisocial behaviour that sky rail is attracting. No, the new head, Transport for Victoria, if there is to be one, will not be an advocate for local residents or agree in any way, shape or form that these residents should enjoy the same placement of railway lines in cuttings as was the case earlier this year at North Road, Ormond; McKinnon Road, McKinnon; and Centre Road, Bentleigh. These were of course done through grade separations and cuttings under the road.

Establishing an office called Transport for Victoria will not remedy Metro Trains Melbourne's or V/Line's difficulties despite slow timetables and running trains punctually — although I might remind the house that metropolitan trains are regarded as being on time if they arrive at the terminus less than 5 minutes late. For V/Line the allowable margin for short or long-distance trains is respectively less than 6 or 11 minutes late. There is quite some leeway they get before they are called late trains.

If we look at some of those figures, in September 2015 only 80.3 per cent of trains on the Belgrave line, 87.1 per cent on the Lilydale line and 89.1 per cent on the Frankston line were on time, while with V/Line 78.5 per cent of trains on the Albury line, 79.9 per cent on the Warrnambool line and 84.2 per cent on the Bairnsdale line were officially on time. They are pretty ordinary figures — pretty poor figures — when the government is trying to restore confidence in V/Line and the Metro transport system. There is a lot of work, I would suggest, for the government to focus on to get our trains running on time.

I understand that 240 staff are being transferred from authorities such as Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads to this proposed new Transport for Victoria.

I now move on to a further provision in the bill that is contentious. The minister said in her second-reading speech on the bill:

Flexibility and responsiveness require flexible and responsive legislation.

There is then this statement that looks harmless enough:

To this end, part 2 also provides for changes to agency functions by order in council.

New section 65 of the Transport Integration Act 2010, to be inserted by clause 3, introduces the concept of transport restructuring orders. Before the minister makes such an order, the only requirement under new section 65B(2) is for the minister to consult with any minister responsible for an affected agency and, in some circumstances, the Treasurer. In effect this means the minister, without any parliamentary oversight, could, with the stroke of a pen and a recommendation to the Governor in Council, effectively abolish VicRoads or the Public Transport Development Authority. VicRoads, for instance, has been with Victorians since the Country Roads Board was established in 1913, which in 1989, 76 years later, became the Roads Corporation of Victoria. I believe the manager of opposition business, through negotiation with the Minister for Public Transport in her capacity as Leader of the House, has negotiated for us to go into consideration in detail on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016.

One of the questions we have, amongst many I have mentioned, relates to new section 79AE(5) of the Transport Integration Act 2010, inserted by clause 15(2) of the bill. It states:

The Public Transport Development Authority may, with the approval or at the direction of the Minister, cease to perform all or any of its functions.

That gives us some concern. The bill's object — to give the minister such extraordinary powers — creates much uncertainty for public servants, and, as we all know, when there is uncertainty less is achieved. So if we do have the opportunity to explore the bill in the consideration-in-detail stage, that is one thing we would be asking the minister to address and give us her thoughts about such clauses.

We saw with the shutdown of the Bendigo and Sunbury lines recently, north of Sunshine in October, that the minister failed to meet her target to reopen the lines on 30 October. Instead it took a day or so longer and commuters had to put up with even more disruption than Labor had indicated. That was after the minister made no effort to, for instance, run trains between Bendigo and Swan Hill and undertake the track works at nights or on weekends. As I pointed out in letters or correspondence to the editor of the *Bendigo Advertiser* and others, that could have been done and would have been much less disruptive, but the minister made no effort to do that.

I understand that there is already quite some disquiet in the Victorian public service about the way that the

Andrews Labor government is going about trying to establish the new Transport for Victoria statutory office. There is confusion between agencies as to who will be responsible for what. I understand some staff have resigned. We appreciated the bill briefing, as we do appreciate all bill briefings when legislation comes into this place, but I have to say there were a number of unanswered questions. I did ask at the briefing for detailed statistics as to how many officers and staff had resigned from PTV, VicRoads, the Taxi Services Commission and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), and how many have been transferred, together with current staffing levels. The minister has not provided this detail to my office apart from one broad email that referred to 240 transferees. I did have a conversation with the minister about this, purely saying that we were trying to get an indication at the bill briefing as to what the structure of this would look like.

It is a big, complex department — we understand and acknowledge that — but when you have agencies being moved or tampered with, as with the new Transport for Victoria being set up, we try to get a picture in our heads in terms of an organisation chart of who is going where and how many are being moved, and it was somewhat disappointing that having asked at the bill briefing for those detailed statistics on how many officers and staff had resigned from either PTV, VicRoads, the Taxi Services Commission or DEDJTR or how many had been transferred along with the current staffing levels, we are still yet to get the detail on that. Again, in the consideration-in-detail stage or before this bill moves through both houses, the minister may wish to furnish us with those details.

It raises suspicions amongst some of my colleagues that staff have been moved en masse from authorities like Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads in advance of the legislation being considered by Parliament. That of course would demonstrate utter contempt for the Parliament and the parliamentary process. If the minister wishes to allay those fears that these changes have not started to be implemented with staff being moved in advance of the legislation being passed, I would welcome her clarifying the details of that and providing us with some of those statistics of who is where.

Finally, we saw the V/Line problems to which I referred earlier in my contribution and how the then CEO of V/Line, Mr Theo Taifalos, resigned — although it is well known that effectively he was sacked by this minister. This minister has kept her job, yet she wants, through this bill, to have unfettered powers to

abolish the agencies without any parliamentary oversight. At the same time the Andrews government clearly wants to have no responsibility for or care of the numerous problems that adversely affect public transport users, such as this morning, by way of a recent example, when the 7.44 train from Eltham commenced its journey into Flinders Street at Clifton Hill, or the many Mondays and Fridays when Metro is cancelling trains due to insufficient drivers. Instead, this bill is trying to emasculate Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads, plus the Taxi Services Commission, and to give supposed responsibility for public transport to some unknown public servant, while the minister hides away up in Bendigo at the V/Line station.

The Liberals and The Nationals — —

Mr Dimopoulos interjected.

Mr HODGETT — I refer you back to that great article, that great piece on page 21 of the *Sunday Herald Sun* of 6 November, that summed up the waste of money with the minister now having three offices. How many offices do they want to waste? I mean, it cost \$10 600 just to establish an office some 270 metres from her actual electorate office.

Ms Green interjected.

Mr HODGETT — You can make as many excuses as you want. This is an out-of-touch, arrogant minister in an out-of-touch, arrogant government. How many other ministers have got three offices? None. Why? Because they demonstrate a more responsible use of taxpayers money. We have no shame in highlighting that this minister is just blatantly wasting taxpayers money by having furniture moved up there and phone lines put in because she does not want to walk 270 metres from her electorate office. Or perhaps she wants to hide in there rather than actually doing her job and hopping out to the Bendigo station and talking to the commuters about some of the problems that we see on V/Line. Rather than hide in the office in her private suite, she might actually get out on the platform, liaise with some of the travelling public, learn a bit about their experiences and about the many problems they encounter.

You can ignore it as much as you want, but we saw earlier this year the problems with V/Line that I mentioned earlier in my contribution, where for months and months and months commuters were crammed onto road coaches while the minister was on holidays and refused to come back to take responsibility and actually do something about fixing the issue.

The Liberals and Nationals will listen to what the minister has to say during the consideration-in-detail stage of the bill. Until then we will reserve our position. We look forward to the opportunity to explore the clauses that I have mentioned in my contribution and some of the others, like the one I mentioned on page 61, and try to get an adequate response from the minister. Of course we know the government will just use its numbers to railroad — if you will pardon the pun — the bill through this house. We may well not oppose it, depending on the response by the minister. We will reserve our position until the consideration-in-detail stage to see the responses of the minister before we progress this bill further.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016.

Mr Dimopoulos — It is very nice that you are making a contribution.

Mr PEARSON — I thank the member for Oakleigh. This is a really important bill. At the crux of it is the fact that what the government is trying to do is to recognise that we have a multitude of different transport options available, and we are trying to coordinate those transport options so that we get the best outcome for the community.

The reality is that up until the petrol price shock of 2000, you had public transport patronage growing at around 3 per cent per annum. It had grown at 3 per cent per annum, which roughly tracked population growth, from about 1970. Then what happened was we had a petrol spike in 2000 and people started weighing up the options. They started asking, ‘All right, what shall we do? Should I get in the car and go along the Monash or alternatively should I get public transport?’. That led to a rapid increase in public transport patronage. Over the course of the first decade of this century we saw growth of around 8 or 9 per cent per annum. That placed enormous pressure on the system, as you would expect.

The reality is that since that time we have seen the population of Melbourne continue to grow at 100 000 people per year. In part because of the actions taken by the former government — there was a lot of high-rise development that was encouraged to take place — Melbourne is going up but it is also growing out. This is important because we now face a set of circumstances where more and more people are living further and further out. If you look at models of productivity — and I have spoken about this in the house before — you see

that a workforce of 1000 people will be more productive than 10 workplaces of 100 people, and that is a global phenomenon. The more productive businesses will have larger workplaces and there will be more of a clustering effect.

What you also see is more of these jobs being concentrated within the first four postcodes around Melbourne. That is just a reality; there is that greater level of concentration. You might ask, 'What has that got to do with transport?'. If Melbourne is growing out further and further, most of the 21st century new economy jobs are going to be based in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. They are the jobs we all aspire our children to participate in — jobs that provide stable employment and good long-term prospects, jobs that they are not likely to be retrenched from when their kids are at school and in which they are likely to be able to pursue a course where they feel fulfilled, invigorated and satisfied. That is just the reality.

Therefore what you will find is that if people are living east of Pakenham or north-west of Bacchus Marsh and they do not have adequate transport linkages, then they will be excluded from those jobs.

I refer to a report from July 2016 which was produced by the McKinsey Global Institute and is entitled *Poorer than their parents? Flat or falling incomes in advanced economies*. This report talks about a whole range of advanced economies globally, but it refers to the fact that in 65 to 70 per cent of households in 25 advanced economies wages were flat or falling in 2014 compared to 2005, and this compares to less than 2 per cent between 1993 and 2005.

The report goes on to say that we run the risk that, as a worst case scenario, 70 to 80 per cent of income groups might not earn as much money in the coming decade. Their wages will not grow. The report questions whether the younger generation will be poorer than their parents.

This is a phenomenon that I think most of us are not used to, certainly in Australia. We are used to having peaks and troughs, and we are used to there being booms and busts, but broadly speaking the trajectory of the Australian economy has generally been growing over the course of decades. Certainly we have had uninterrupted economic expansion since 1992–93.

If we are looking at a situation in which we run the risk that income groups are going to have depressed wages and most of the economic growth and activity is concentrated within the Hoddle grid and the 5 or 10 kilometres surrounding it, then it is vitally important

from a social equity point of view that we have good transport linkages, not just to the suburbs but to the regions as well because I do not think it is fair and reasonable to not have good transport linkages. I do not think that people think we should have a set of circumstances where, if you are born in and live in Hawthorn, Kew or Sunshine, suburbs close to Melbourne, that somehow you are entitled and destined to have access as a hereditary right to these sorts of jobs, or that if you are industrious, hardworking, come from a humble background and live in the Latrobe Valley or in regional Victoria — like you, Acting Speaker Edwards — or you live in Pakenham, then somehow you are excluded. Why? Because you have inadequate transport linkages to participate in these jobs.

What this bill is trying to do is to make sure that we get the planning right and that we try and make sure that we sequence adequately rail, tram, bus and country rail as part of that. We need to be in a position where we can continue to make sure that we get the most we can out of this population growth. I think the reality is that unless we turn around and basically say that we do not want people producing children and we do not want to take intrastate migration or interstate migration or overseas migration — and I do not think there is a parliament or a society that would want that — then population growth will continue. The reality is that Victoria is destined to hit 8 million people by 2050. That is just where we are headed, so we need to make sure that we have adequate planning in place to address that growth and to make sure we can meet that.

I noted with interest the lead speaker for the opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, was quite critical of the Minister for Public Transport having an electorate office as well as a ministerial office in Bendigo. I guess I have not been in this place as long as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I suppose I would say that there is a separation between the executive and the Parliament. Clearly if you are incurring some expenditures as a parliamentarian, that is clearly different to incurring expenditure as a member of the executive, so it is fair and reasonable that that separation exists between the Minister for Public Transport exercising and discharging her duties as a member of the executive as opposed to the member for Bendigo East discharging her obligations and duties as a member of this place. They are two very distinct actions. Yes, of course there will be moments when there is a degree of crossover. You might go from one meeting as your local member and then to another meeting as a minister, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would know, given the fact that he has

served as a minister of the Crown under the former administration. But I think this fixation on the fact that the Minister for Public Transport made it to page 21 of the *Sunday Herald Sun*, which meant that clearly there were 20 other stories in front of it — at least 20 other stories that warranted the attention of the editorial board of the *Sunday Herald Sun* — is a little bit rich.

It is important that we look at making sure we get this right. I note also that Transport for Victoria will also look at having an integrated approach to freight. Given the fact that Melbourne is the largest container port in the country, getting that right is important. Thinking about the way in which you have intermodal ports spread around the outskirts of Melbourne is important as well.

It is a good piece of legislation. I think it is sensible that we start to plan this infrastructure and get it right. When I caught up with Bill Kelty recently he said to me that the greatest challenge we will face as a society and a community over the coming years is infrastructure and getting it right. This bill is really important because it gets it right. We are doing this to make sure that we create a great society.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to rise and make a contribution following the member for Essendon, who made a fine contribution in which he talked about infrastructure — which is good — and getting it right. I am not sure that that always happens, but at least they will keep trying, which is a good start.

My contribution on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016 relates also to V/Line and amending the Transport Integration Act 2010. What it will do is create the head, Transport for Victoria as the lead transport agency, who reports to the secretary to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR). It gives the Minister for Public Transport power to dissolve or reconstruct transport agencies, which is somewhat of a concern to us, but I will get to that a bit later.

The bill also changes V/Line's corporate structure. One would assume that would make it more difficult to privatise, as mentioned by the member for Croydon, and amends Public Transport Victoria's (PTV) structure to become a corporation like VicRoads.

The bill also amends the charters applying to DEDJTR, PTV and VicRoads to have the latter two reporting to Transport for Victoria, and both essentially no longer responsible for the planning of projects.

V/Line certainly is a major part of my life. In fact a day does not go by on which I do not get a comment from either a constituent or a traveller about the poor service in north-east Victoria, so I am delighted to speak on this bill regarding V/Line issues. But can I say that it is disappointing that the Minister for Transport has neglected the north-east line and has no plan to deliver new modern rolling stock. She would rather rearrange the deckchairs, so to speak, on the *Titanic* and give us old worn-out stock rather than the new stock that we deserve.

As proof of this, I refer to statements and messages that I received from V/Line over the month just gone, in October. On 24 October the 6.56 a.m. Seymour to Southern Cross train was delayed by 30 minutes; on 21 October the 12.50 p.m. Shepparton to Southern Cross train was also delayed — awaiting staff; on 12 October, at 1.41 p.m. the Wangaratta to Southern Cross train operated as a coach due to a train fault; the day before, on 11 October, the 6.16 p.m. Wangaratta to Southern Cross train operated as a coach due to a train fault. These just go on and on and on. We have got others — on 11 October, and two on 10 October. On 6 October at 5.11 p.m. the Southern Cross to Seymour train was delayed due to faults at Broadmeadows, and on the same day at 1.41 p.m., the Wangaratta to Southern Cross train operated as a coach due to maintenance requirements. These are not just ideas put in our head. These are texts from V/Line that tell us the situation of the rolling stock and how poor the service is in our community.

This week, on Sunday I received an email from Patricia Webster of Freeburgh, which is between Bright and Harrierville. She started with:

I am appealing to you to please do something about train travel.

I live in Freeburgh, I used to be able to catch the early bus from Bright on weekends, go through to Melbourne by train and return in the early evening, so I could visit our grandchildren, go to a flower show, the zoo, or see a show. Not anymore. Today I found out that to go to Melbourne you have to change trains in Seymour, and on some schedules you have to go by coach to Seymour then catch a train. Train travel has gone back to the dark ages, and as I am getting older, I don't want to drive all the way to Wangaratta to catch the early train.

I respect that Mrs Webster is 74 years old, and due to the dangers in the area 'with deer, kangaroos and wombats on the road', it is quite dangerous for a woman of her age to be travelling at those particularly early hours to catch a train. To get a train service is just a given in metropolitan Melbourne, but in regional Victoria we fight, scratch and claw to try and get new

services, but they just do not get delivered. She goes on to say:

Country people are being treated like second-class citizens. In Melbourne they can get trains and trams anywhere they want to go, and they still grizzle.

She used to enjoy her trips to the city. That is Mrs Webster from Freeburgh. As I said, these are continuous emails that I get on a daily basis, or they are phone calls or walk-ins at the office. It is certainly the no 1 issue.

Barry, another constituent from Tarrawingee, was travelling on the Southern Cross–Wangaratta line at 6 o'clock on 20 June. He was travelling first class, but that train was replaced by a bus. He makes particular note that it was a bus and not a coach, and he was concerned that it was a technical fault. He understands that, but he also believes that was due to the underfunding of V/Line and asks whether it was through the poorly designed engineering or the lack of decent rolling stock that we have on our country services. His main reason for the complaint was obviously the cancellation of the service, but he says:

I choose to travel by rail so I can study in the train (completing 3 hours of study both ways is a significant reason for taking the train rather than driving).

The bus has exceptionally poor lighting which prevented me from study.

...

No toilet facilities

Uncomfortable seats

Excessively hot and oppressive environment.

Again he believes that an outcome at V/Line that would be acceptable would be 'a country train service that had a 95 per cent' or better 'efficient and reliable delivery record'. That is from Barry of Tarrawingee. So, as I said, these go on day in and day out. It is, as I said earlier, the no. 1 issue and really does need to be addressed by the Minister for Public Transport.

Touching back on the bill, it removes the accountability from the Minister for Public Transport and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and Minister for Ports, and vests this in an anonymous public servant, which is a major concern as far as I am concerned. It destroys planning and policy expertise that has been built up in VicRoads and its predecessor, the Country Roads Board, over many, many years.

The most concerning feature is that the Minister for Public Transport will have unprecedented power

through transport restructuring orders to dissolve or reconstruct agencies such as VicRoads or Public Transport Victoria with the stroke of a pen, and you heard that as well from the member for Croydon. We have seen enough disasters from the Minister for Public Transport, whether it is in this term with sky rail or whether it was in previous terms with myki. For example, we cannot even get myki in the country. You have to travel down to Seymour before you are eligible to hook into that wonderful system.

Mr R. Smith — How do you travel there if you don't have a myki?

Mr McCURDY — You may have to go and buy a paper ticket and get yourself down to Seymour, and then you can connect into that wonderful — —

Mr R. Smith interjected.

Mr McCURDY — Yes, the paper tickets; we do live in the era of dinosaurs, particularly with the way this government treats regional Victoria.

As we have heard in earlier contributions, V/Line has had its worst year ever with VLocity railcars, excessive wheel wear and failure to trigger level crossing boom barriers costing \$50 million to \$60 million and delaying commuters for six months. So a change in the governance arrangements is really just a diversion, given that from 2010 to 2014 in the last coalition government we chose not to privatise V/Line. Certainly my understanding is that the staff have been moved in large numbers from authorities like Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads in advance of this legislation being considered by Parliament. To me this is a contempt of the Parliament — or is it just sheer arrogance assuming that this legislation will go through without any amendments?

They are some of the concerns that I have. I have certainly raised the issues about V/Line in my region. They are not just from me; they are from many of my constituents. They come from the texts that I receive from V/Line themselves in fact. Although we are not opposing the bill, it is important that the minister consider the concerns that I have pointed out, because we do not want any more Labor-bungled messes like myki or sky rail on our hands. I think Victoria has seen enough of those messes. While this government continues to stay in power, no doubt we will have a few more on our hands, but with that brief contribution I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — I am very pleased to speak today on the Transport Integration Amendment

(Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. In short this bill establishes Transport for Victoria to create a more integrated, user-centric transport system, and it delivers on this government's commitment to securing the ongoing public ownership of V/Line.

On 27 June 2016 the government announced the creation of Transport for Victoria, a new central transport agency to coordinate Victoria's growing transport system and plan for its future. Transport for Victoria will bring together transport policy, planning, investment and delivery and provide a focal point of coordination and direction for government transport agencies. This model is based on the successful transport models such as Transport for London and Transport for NSW. This integrated model is necessary to respond to the challenges facing the state's transport system. Population growth, a changing economy, the impact of new technologies and land use change will all place new demands on how we plan for and manage the transport system.

Victoria is facing a period of unprecedented growth, and we heard from the member for Essendon in regard to these concerns, with population predicted to reach 10 million by 2051. With this growth comes increasing expectations that the transport system will be simple and connected and will reflect that people often use multiple modes of transport for one journey. Freight movements will also treble to support state growth and will largely use the same infrastructure that is used to move people, putting more pressure on, and between, our transport networks.

These challenges can be met if the transport system is centred on users, which is the primary design principle of Transport for Victoria. Given this, a more modern way of planning and managing the network is needed to optimise the benefits for users and the economy. That is why the Victorian government has started the work to establish Transport for Victoria.

Transport for Victoria aims to achieve integrated transport planning and delivery, with greater ability to direct and coordinate transport agencies and stronger accountability for integration objectives placed on all agency executives. It aims to achieve improved user services through integrated operational coordination of the network and provision of real-time information across all transport modes. It also aims to achieve enhanced asset management to ensure alignment and oversight for roads, rail and ports to meet the operational requirements of the network now and into the future.

Like Transport for London and systems in major cities around the world, Transport for Victoria will bring together the planning, management and coordination of Victoria's transport system and its agencies, including VicRoads and Public Transport Victoria (PTV). This will ensure that the transport system grows as the economy, the community and technology changes. It will bolster the government's ability to plan and coordinate the diverse needs of metropolitan and regional transport while increasing interconnectedness.

Ultimately the aim is also to improve the user experience of transport. It will do this through being the primary communications point for customer contact and information dissemination, and over time it will become the sole communications point. It will provide a single source of information about our road, train, tram, bus, taxi and freight networks, making it simpler and easier for Victorians to get the transport information they need.

Transport for Victoria will also be more responsive and provide real-time information. For instance, where there is a road accident and there is severe disruption, motorists may be aware of the incident but they may not be aware of alternative transport routes. Over time Transport for Victoria will provide a single source of real-time information on how the road, rail and bus networks are operating. The information Transport for Victoria provides may help users make the choice to switch to public transport to avoid traffic congestion or vice versa.

It is also important to note when we talk about the improvements that Transport for Victoria will make to user experiences, there will be a great benefit to macro planning and asset management, but it will also have benefits at a more micro, localised level. Electorates such as Yuroke which are experiencing rapid development and population growth will benefit greatly from this integrated and coordinated approach. Indeed I think the member for Yan Yean would share the concerns we have about responding to this development.

Yuroke is a growing community extending from just north of Melbourne Airport up the urban growth boundary to the north to the farmlands at Kalkallo where it joins the electorate of Yan Yean. There is a Metro train servicing the Craigieburn area and a V/Line train from Donnybrook, which is just outside the Yuroke electorate and just into Yan Yean. There are five regular bus routes servicing Craigieburn, and VicRoads is the responsible authority for five major arterial roads. There are well-established parts of the

community as well as newly developed areas with rapid growth, and with up to 10 new families moving into the area each week there are pressures on the existing, limited infrastructure. As with all new communities there is a lack of knowledge as to who may be the responsible authority for issues or concerns.

How would Transport for Victoria assist in improving transport users' experience within this electorate and indeed similar electorates? I see real benefits in regard to communication and planning for infrastructure. Firstly, in regard to communication, users would no longer have to seek out and identify which agency to contact to report issues and concerns. One example that I get contacted on — this is where we look at the micro issues that can be addressed and improved with this bill — is a bus stop on Craigieburn Road. That particular road has soft edges and after rain and numerous bus movements ditches are created at the side of the bus stop. There is a concrete pad but the road does get damaged very easily and I am often contacted by residents who are unsure who they should contact to report this damage — whether it is VicRoads or PTV. With that singular Transport for Victoria model there would be one point of contact where people could raise their concerns and have them responded to.

The second area where I believe the Transport for Victoria model would benefit the user experience is in regard to infrastructure and planning. Rapidly growing communities such as mine need a coordinated approach to planning for services and infrastructure. As the population increases, congestion increases and there is a need to respond with improved infrastructure such as roads. In doing so there is a need to consider the future needs of other transport users, such as those who use public transport and cyclists.

Another micro-like local example of how a coordinated approach can bring about a better outcome can be seen on Mickleham Road, which some years ago was duplicated from Somerton Road to the Tullamarine Freeway. In the most recently duplicated section at Attwood there is a bus stop that was installed about a year ago, long after the duplication occurred. As a result of it being added later on, the cycle path, which is concrete and off the road, has had to be dug up and rerouted around the bus stop and the light poles. This has led to a pretty bad ride for users, who have to try and navigate the path. With all of the directional signage this is not the best outcome. That is an example of how, had there been a coordinated approach at the time of the road duplication that incorporated the future public transport needs of the area, we would have a

much more seamless route for people who need to cycle down that particular road.

I will leave it to others to speak in more detail about the other component of this bill that consolidates V/Line's structure and provides for its ongoing public ownership. I will say that we know that public transport services are essential to our regional communities. They connect people to jobs, to education, to recreation, to services and to each other. That is why we want to make sure that V/Line is owned by the state so that it continues to provide essential access to public transport for people in regional Victoria. These changes focus the organisation on delivering transport services and would make it more difficult for V/Line to be franchised in the future.

Both of the key initiatives in this bill will be of great benefit to our state. The Transport for Victoria model will bring great benefits to the residents of Yuroke, to similar communities and indeed across the state, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I rise to add to the debate on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. It is fair to say that this is a very important bill to debate in this place, because it sums up, on so many levels, what this government is actually about and the way that the Labor government actually operates. This is not a government that is concerned with real people or real outcomes or the world outside Spring Street. It is a government that honestly believes if you get the spin right, if you make an announcement, then the job is done. This is a government that believes that reorganising the public service is the same as delivering outcomes in the suburbs, across metropolitan Melbourne and indeed in regional areas. It just shows us how disconnected from reality this government is, because the only people that benefit from anything this government does are the printers and the sign-writers who get new work every time a new branch of the public service is created or rearranged.

Labor said in their platform in 2014 that they would:

Ensure that responsibility for a whole-of-government approach to reducing congestion is assigned to a single government agency.

We have seen since then the western distributor authority, the Level Crossing Removal Authority, the metro authority, the Victorian School Building Authority and now Transport for Victoria. It is hardly a single government authority that will deal with all these issues. Indeed it is creating agencies so fast that anyone with shares in logo development companies would be

doing pretty well under this government. This bill creates the granddaddy of them all — a whole new bureaucracy on top of an existing bureaucracy. It is a bureaucracy that will not ease 1 minute of congestion, will not make one extra train run on time, will not repair 1 metre of country roads and will not improve one Victorian's life.

What will it do? It will allow the government to hold a few press conferences, put some new sexy logos out there, get a few glossy brochures out there and that is about it. As long as it can have a press conference, this government does not really care about too much else. It thinks that once it has done that, then the job is done. But the job is not done. There is a lot of work to do in this area, and the government is just not looking at that work and not looking hard enough to ease the frustrations of the average Victorian. We can see in part 3 of the bill that that is exactly the case, because this part does not seek to replace any agencies or create a more streamlined organisation. Instead it just amends their roles, in effect changing their reporting chains — and that is pretty much all.

Let us consider VicRoads, the agency where the public has the most direct interaction with the government on transport matters. Service at VicRoads is not something that the average person usually talks about in any great terms. This bill will certainly not change their frontline services at all. In fact VicRoads is not even mentioned in this bill. That is how little this bill has to do with the frontline services that matter to Victorians when they interact with the government on transport issues.

But VicRoads services do require a mention. We see here the continuation of the lack of interest that the minister has in how VicRoads interacts with the general population. I refer the house to a press release put out by the now Minister for Roads and Road Safety back in March 2012. He was very upset. He blamed the Baillieu government. He was very verbose. He said:

VicRoads now close at 4.30 p.m., or 30 minutes earlier, and has reduced its weekend hours.

...

Clearly this poorly thought-out decision will result in longer lines, poor service and more time taken out of people's working day.

Four years later, with VicRoads being under the authority of the minister for the last two years, we see that 38 of 39 centres still close at 4.30 p.m., no centre at all is open on a Saturday or Sunday and four centres in rural areas close for lunch. While there was a lot of ranting and raving from the member for Narre Warren

North back in 2012 when he was in opposition, after two years in government, with VicRoads being under his control, we have not seen any of those issues change. Indeed he seems quite content to let the level of service that he railed against so much when he was in opposition continue under his watch. It is another broken promise from Labor. It is another broken promise from the minister. But it again demonstrates that the Andrews government has no real interest in helping motorists or Victorians. It is just interested in changing the logos.

We see congestion building up on Hoddle Street on a daily basis, we see Punt Road full of congestion, the failure of the Westgate distributor that was dumped shortly after this government came to power, the east-west link contract ripped up with \$1.2 billion down the drain and congestion getting no better at all. All we have to show for that — all this congestion, all the frustrations that Melburnians experience on a daily basis — is this transport bill, which is really just for show. We know this is for show, because we have already lived through it with Infrastructure Victoria.

Infrastructure Victoria is another agency which was created with an additional \$10 million of resources and staff. We confirmed through the questions on notice process that not a single existing position in the department was closed down or moved across because Infrastructure Victoria was taking those issues on. Just as Transport for Victoria will no doubt create more staff on top of existing staff, the same applies to Infrastructure Victoria, which frankly in many ways is a waste of time. As much as I support the CEO and the board, and I think their intentions are very honourable, we know now that the government basically will just cherry-pick from their plan. Gavin Jennings in the other place said Infrastructure Victoria would take the politics out of infrastructure, but all the short-term or medium-term decisions on infrastructure were made before Infrastructure Victoria even existed. With the advent of the draft report that Infrastructure Victoria put out recently, the government cherry-picked bits and pieces from the plan. Infrastructure Victoria was just a way of delaying decisions by the government, and Transport for Victoria will just be another way of delaying fixing the congestion on our roads.

Importantly, when it comes to structure, clause 3 inserts new section 64A, subsection (3) of which confirms that the head of Transport for Victoria will be accountable and responsible to the head of the department. That is really what this bill is about, another layer of middle management without any independence at all and answerable to the department anyway. We have seen

the public service blow out under this government. In the *Australian* of 26 May this year it was reported, and I quote:

Weeks after the Victorian government delivered its budget it has failed to explain how many extra public servants it will hire, despite a huge blowout in forecast employee expenses.

Treasurer Tim Pallas forecast a \$3.6 billion jump in employment costs in the public sector over the four years of the state budget ...

This particular bill will bring in a new bureaucracy that will only add to the very big, very expensive bill that Victorians are going to be paying every single day.

Part 4 of the bill relates to the ongoing public ownership of V/Line and dealing with the corporate governance structure. That is really the bill in a nutshell — just tinkering with legal necessities at the edges rather than doing the hard work and rather than doing something useful that helps Victorians. I have heard the Premier many times compare his plans for the Melbourne Metro with the metro systems that you see in London and New York. Anyone who has been to London and New York or who has lived in either of those cities knows that Melbourne Metro is going to be nothing like those two examples. To say that this government is going to be delivering something that is comparable to those two systems is simply laughable. In those cases we are talking about networks of many, many stations and great efficiency. The fact that we are building a couple of extra stations and basically an underground tramline here in Victoria shows the government has a complete lack of understanding of what an integrated transport system is all about.

I do want to point out that Transport for London, which was created in the year 2000 by the Greater London Authority Act 1999, did consolidate services and bring management closer to the people. The Victorian government is seeking to emulate what happened under Transport for London with this bill and with this new agency, but it does not bring the sorts of things that Transport for London brought to the people who live in London such as better consolidation of timetables between linking services. Of course the crowning achievement of Transport for London was the introduction of the Oyster card. It is worth bringing that up because it was launched in 2003. It works flawlessly. It was done with a 17-year contract at an initial cost of only £100 million.

Over 43 million Oyster cards have been issued so far, and even tourists in London find the system easy and intuitive to use. It is the antithesis of myki, which to date has cost us over \$1.5 billion. If Transport for

Victoria had been around when myki was being looked at, we might have had a better outcome than we did under the previous Labor government. With the current government, we just have a nightmare. The word 'myki' is a joke to most Victorians and most Melburnians, and as far as tourists are concerned, they do not have a clue how to use it because it is so difficult. As the member for Ovens Valley said, it is very difficult to get a myki card in regional Victoria.

In short, this bill will not fix any of the issues that I have raised. It will not fix congestion because the culture of this government is that it cannot manage a project, it cannot manage money and nothing will change at all. The government will put out a lot of glossy brochures, but at the end of the day Labor cannot manage money and Labor cannot manage major projects. In the end this is a bill with 100-odd pages that will not improve services, but it will waste money, it will create some new logos and frankly that is a perfect summary of what this government is all about.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — This bill is vital and urgent because Victoria's population is expected to reach 10 million by 2051 and Melbourne is expected to be a city of 8 million people. We are using population growth to drive economic activity, so this is important for jobs, growth and prosperity. This is the heart of this bill. This is why this bill matters. We need a modern transport system to keep pace with our population growth. People want a transport system that is connected and one that offers choice. We need to be smarter about how we use our existing transport assets and services to plan for the future in a better and more integrated way. This is why Transport for Victoria is being created: to bring together the planning and the coordination of Victoria's transport system and its agencies, including VicRoads and Public Transport Victoria.

The bill establishes Transport for Victoria as a new, central transport agency to coordinate Victoria's expanding transport system and planning. It gives Transport for Victoria appropriate powers to better integrate the network, and we need a single source of information about all of our road, train, tram, bus, taxi and freight networks, making it simpler and easier for Victorians to get the information they need. I want to also highlight the importance of the freight networks for our rural and regional communities and for commercial support for them and for our prosperity. This is the big picture being delivered on transport, and it also delivers on Labor's commitment to keep V/Line in public hands.

Transport for Victoria has been likened to Transport for London and other transport agencies around the world, so it looks for what the best practice has been to bring together the planning, the management and the coordination to support a number of people using our roads and public transport systems. This is the other initiative that has been downplayed by the opposition, but let us put it in perspective. The Labor government, the Andrews government, is delivering the biggest pipeline of major transport projects in this state's history, including the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, the western distributor and 50 level crossing removals for safety, for better productivity, for economic development and for many other reasons.

Ms Ryall interjected.

Mr McGuire — This is the inconvenient truth. We are hearing the opposition, the backbench, starting to come up with some interjections on this because this is an inconvenient truth. This government is actually delivering. That is the point, and that was the failure of the Baillieu and Napthine governments — they failed to deliver. This is what is really at the heart of this and the heart of the interjections that we are getting from the other side.

The legislation also transfers V/Line's operations, currently controlled by a proprietary limited company, to V/Line Corporation. That is an issue really at the margin. Passengers will not notice any change as a result of this transfer, but what it will do is allow V/Line Pty Ltd to be wound up and ensure the ongoing public ownership of V/Line. As I mentioned earlier, this is reflecting Labor's election commitment and honouring and delivering that.

Freight movements, with our growth, are also expected to triple, and they will largely use the same infrastructure that is used to move people, putting more pressure on and between our transport networks. This is another issue that will be addressed by this legislation, and these challenges can be met if the transport system is centred on users, which is the primary design principle of Transport for Victoria, unlike the claims from the member for Warrandyte. The focus is on who is going to use it, how we deliver better services and how that can be done in a more appropriate way.

One of the areas that I want to reference is the need for development of the transport system in Melbourne's north. The expectation is that 1 in 20 Australians will live in Melbourne's north in the next two decades. The population is already four times the size of Geelong and is predicted to grow by another half a million people in

the next 20 years, making it the size of Adelaide, so this is critical. Melbourne's north is home to the highest concentration of advanced manufacturing in Australia and the highest proportion of undeveloped industrial land — about 60 per cent — defining it as the most sustainable and affordable region to cope with population growth.

Broadmeadows was defined by former Premier John Brumby as the capital of Melbourne's north, and as the member for Broadmeadows I want to address some key propositions regarding transport and what is needed as well. The Campbellfield railway station, I think, has a need to be futureproofed as part of the current Camp Road grade separation. This is part of removing unsafe railway crossings, and I think there is a real opportunity here. Of course that helps reference into the Ford site which is right there. This is one of the great opportunities for redevelopment in the future. My view is that that should be a hub for future industries and jobs, so if we look at that now and take that view, how do we futureproof this site, get rid of the level crossing and set this up as a jobs and growth centre for the future? I think that would be of major economic benefit not just to the local community but also to the state of Victoria.

A new Broadmeadows railway station or major upgrade is also required. I just want to remind the house that the Brumby government had set aside money for this, but under the Baillieu and Napthine governments the reverse Robin Hood strategy came in and that money was shunted down the train line to placate the then member for Frankston. We cannot just keep doing this — to have this sort of approach, the reverse Robin Hood strategy. When the coalition comes to power it goes to the poorest area, the area where you should be investing for economic development, and takes the money away from there.

There are also some other opportunities to look at additions to connect the local road networks and to complete connections from the Merlynston Creek crossing to the new Campbellfield railway station. Also there is the cyclist and pedestrian bridge at Broadmeadows railway station and the Merlynston Creek road crossing linking the old industrial areas with the new through to Belfast Street.

Consideration of these transport projects should, I think, be addressed as part of the decision-making around the funding received from the lease of the port of Melbourne. They are all capital projects that have job creation benefits to help reshape the fortunes of Broadmeadows and Campbellfield, particularly at this

time of great need. This would be a fantastic investment that I am sure would have a multiplier effect on not just jobs immediately but on opening up this whole area for further economic development. After all, it has been one of the engine rooms of the state, underwriting prosperity for generations with manufacturing.

It is really about how we now address what the future plan is as we go from the old, large factories to advanced manufacturing. How do we actually look at addressing these issues of globalisation and the demise of local manufacturing, the demands of population growth — used to drive economic activity — and multiculturalism? Broadmeadows is the flashpoint for these defining national concerns and the issues that face us in Victoria with population growth.

One of the points I really want to emphasise is the opportunity. We have blue-chip infrastructure and it is only 16 kilometres from the central business district of the world's most livable city. If we look at how we integrate these opportunities, we see we have two train lines into Broadmeadows, we have the spur into the Ford site, the expanded Tullamarine Freeway that the Andrews government is delivering, the ring-road and the curfew-free international airport at our back door. So this is the opportunity. This is a big picture government that I am proud to be a member of, and I like the way we can harness these issues and these opportunities.

I commend the hard work of the Minister for Public Transport in bringing this bill to the house. I think that this is the necessary architecture that has to be put in place to deliver jobs growth, better economic development and prosperity for the state of Victoria.

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — I rise to speak on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. I was interested to hear the member for Broadmeadows say in his introduction that this bill will address population growth, that this bill will essentially address all transport issues and all transport woes. I would suggest to the member for Broadmeadows that he come out to my community in the Ringwood electorate and tell that to them, because my community is still reeling from the \$1.2 billion wasted for no benefit whatsoever in terms of the east–west link.

My community has increased significantly — by around about 3000 people in the last two years. I note that Labor has been in for 13 years of what is coming up for the last 17 years and we still have those freeways ending in traffic lights. It is an absolute disgrace. So I

would say to the member for Broadmeadows that this additional bureaucracy will not solve the population issues, it will not solve all of the transport issues of this state and it certainly will not solve the problems for people trying to get from the east to the west and from the west to the east in a timely manner so that they can spend time with their families.

In terms of its purpose, this bill looks at changing the governance arrangements that apply to V/Line, and it creates the head, Transport for Victoria, as a statutory office — another bureaucracy, another agency. We know this Labor government has become famous for creating bureaucracies and agencies, adding more authorities and creating additional cost centres and adding to existing cost centres. It does not produce outcomes. This bill does not produce outcomes. It does not change anything. It just adds to bureaucracy.

In terms of what would help congestion — certainly congestion in my community — there is the east–west link. That is what would help productivity, and we know that that is the biggest drag on productivity in this state. It has been identified as that, yet nothing has been done about it. The member for Broadmeadows talked about productivity. When we talk about productivity we look at the efficiencies and the ability for business to get about the state and actually undertake the product deliveries and the service deliveries that need to happen.

I am not sure how those opposite actually think that business can get around the state just by their creating a further bureaucracy. Certainly those travelling from east to west are finding their trucks are on the road for longer, their utes are on the road for longer and their cars and vans are on the road for longer as the population increases and as this government fails to address one of the core problems, one of the core congestion points, one of the core drags on productivity in Victoria. How does this Labor government expect to actually improve economic outcomes when one of the biggest drags on productivity is right there in front of its eyes and it has wasted \$1.2 billion on not doing anything about it?

Infrastructure Victoria is another bureaucracy created by the Andrews government. It was designed to take the politics out of infrastructure, but unfortunately the Premier put the politics straight back in once it had produced its report — by cherrypicking particular projects and refusing and refuting and saying, 'No we won't do it' in relation to the ones that were actually put forward. As for the citizens jury that helped to construct that, well it became clear as people began to discuss the

outcomes of that that what came about as a result of those citizens juries was not actually taken seriously or applied, certainly in the context of the east–west link.

This bill amends the charters that apply to one of the super departments created by this government, the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. That means that Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads will then report to Transport for Victoria and not have responsibility for the planning of projects. One of the issues here is about losing the years of organisational knowledge — planning and industry knowledge — that reside with those people that suddenly are no longer involved in that process. Where they end up and where that organisational knowledge goes no-one knows, but this is one of the things that obviously needs to be considered when these restructures, or corporate structures, are put in place.

Giving the Minister for Public Transport power to dissolve or reconstruct transport agencies — and once again I have highlighted my concerns about this government’s continued creation of further bureaucracies and cost centres — and the ability at the stroke of a pen to create or reconstruct or deconstruct or get rid of an existing bureaucracy just makes it open slather, essentially, for further creation and further adjustment without the proper insight, the proper understanding and the proper need to get outcomes.

At the end of the day — the member for Broadmeadows said that this bill will solve everything — this bill solves nothing. A solution is delivering on the outcomes that actually decrease congestion and provide solutions for people so that they can get to where they are going: they can get to work, they can get home from work, they can get their kids to where they need to be and they can spend time with their families. That is what people want — actual solutions. They do not want a bill that, according to the member for Broadmeadows, apparently solves it all. It does not solve it all. What solves it all is not bureaucracy but actually delivering on outcomes.

The other issue here is that with the appointment of the new head, who will essentially be the Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, they will essentially take the brunt. We know with the Andrews Labor government that whenever there is a problem, whenever there is a concern, they roll out the spokesperson. You do not see a minister for dust. What we will find here is that as problems arise, as they have in the past, it will be all handballed over to the secretary of the department; it

will not be the minister taking responsibility. We will see the ministers for public transport, roads and ports running and hiding instead of actually being accountable. Instead it will become a public servant’s fault, as everything else is always someone else’s fault. They will be there for the photo ops, they will be there for the good news, but for anything wrong that requires accountability they will roll out the spokesperson.

What we need is this government and the minister getting their act together and actually fixing the country train service. I know that the member for Frankston was not around last term, but in terms of just understanding regional rail link and then understanding, early in this term, the excessive wheel wear on those trains, the level crossing failures, the additional \$50 million or \$60 million, which took six months — for V/Line commuters it was a total inconvenience. We only need to look at myki: \$1.5 billion that — —

An honourable member — A disaster.

Ms RYALL — Yes, that was a disaster. I am not sure which member opposite said that, but I agree with them; myki was a disaster. At \$1.5 billion — and I am just trying to think; I think originally it was going to cost \$300 million — it absolutely blew out. But the point is that for my community in Ringwood this bill does nothing. They continue to be stuck in traffic, and they continue not to be able to spend time with their family. In the mornings traffic is banked back to Blackburn Road now; it is difficult to get on. Even at Springvale Road in Nunawading there are times it is difficult to get onto the freeway, it is so chock-a-block.

This government has ignored the will of the people out in my electorate of Ringwood. It has trashed \$1.2 billion of the \$2 billion of state money that was going to be put into the east–west link. What we do not want here is added bureaucracy. What we do not want here is wasted money.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — What a tirade from the member for Ringwood, and what a pity that in her contribution she failed to mention a fantastic little project out in Ringwood at the Ringwood railway station, a community mural that has been developed there by people with mental illness in the member for Ringwood’s electorate. What a pity that in her 10-minute rant she did not use the opportunity at all to talk about her local community and a fabulous little project that has been developed out there as a consequence of this government’s commitment to public transport in this state.

It is actually my pleasure to speak on this terrific bill, the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. As we know, the bill does two things. It establishes Transport for Victoria to create a more integrated and user-centric transport system and delivers on — very importantly for us on this side of the house the Labor Party keeps its promises — a commitment to secure the ongoing public ownership of V/Line. We on this side of the house will never forget the dismantling of public transport in this state by the Kennett government, and we on this side of the house who represent regional Victoria will never forget the description of regional Victoria as ‘the toenails of the state’. We will never forget that. That is why on this side of the house we will invest in regional Victoria and we will invest — massively invest — in public transport for this state.

This is, as I said, a really important bill. I am delighted to be speaking on it today. As we know, in Victoria we are victims of our own success. We are attracting unprecedented population growth. And do you know why? Because people are moving from the other states. They are coming here to Victoria because they know that this is the state of economic activity, this is the state of jobs growth and, importantly, this is the state that is investing in public health and investing in public schooling. This is the state where you come not only for economic interests but because we are the progressive state of the nation, with a focus on fairness and equity.

As I said, when you have got a state that is growing at the rate that ours is, it is really important that you plan for that growth. When it comes to the work that we have done in the public transport portfolio, it really is unprecedented. Think about what that mob on the other side did in four wasted years. Did they build a single track of railway line? The answer to that question is: not 1 inch. Yet this government is getting on with removing 50 of Victoria’s most dangerous level crossings. We are building Melbourne Metro. It is fully funded, and we are on our way. We have invested \$1.3 billion for better regional rail services, and it is why we have added more than 170 V/Line services. That mob on the other side, as we know, were the architects of the destruction of regional rail services in this state.

If we unpack some of that money, we can see that of the \$1.3 billion there is \$518 million for the Ballarat line upgrade project; \$280 million to fund 27 new VLocity carriages; \$131 million to increase passenger rail services for Ballarat, Traralgon, Geelong, Shepparton, Bendigo and Warrnambool; \$141 million for major maintenance; and \$198 million to rebuild

V/Line so it can deliver better services across Victoria. I can tell you this: V/Line needed to be rebuilt because that mob on the other side took \$120 million out of V/Line. You cannot provide a service for the people in regional Victoria if all you do is cut and cut and cut the services that regional Victorians rely on.

As I said, this is a great bill, and it does two things: it makes sure that we have the architecture within the transport portfolio to ensure we can continue to deliver services across Victoria both in metropolitan Melbourne and, importantly from my point of view, in regional Victoria; and that we have got the right corporate infrastructure behind the scenes, if you like, to ensure that we can deliver the services that Victorians need and expect. For that reason alone this is an excellent bill. As I also said, it does deliver on our commitment to ensure that V/Line remains in public hands, and that of itself is a very, very important commitment.

I did want to take some time, if I could, to draw the house’s attention to the fact that tomorrow is the national day of respect for public transport workers. I would like to commend the Victorian secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, Luba Grigorovitch, and the Victorian secretary of the Transport Workers Union, John Berger, on this initiative. In doing so I note, as the member for Yuroke informed the house earlier today, that this day has come about here in Victoria to take some time out to recognise all the work that our public transport workers do and that they often put themselves at risk for the community at large. It is important that we take that time to acknowledge their work.

In particular I wanted to use this opportunity to talk specifically about some of the people in my community. I have seven railway stations in my electorate on the Bendigo line. It has been my pleasure to visit those stations. It is something that I enjoy doing as a local member of Parliament. Of course I talk to the commuters and find out the issues that are of concern to them, but I also take the time to talk to the station staff and indeed the conductors as well. This has reminded me that when I recently visited one of my stations and took the opportunity to go and say hello to the stationmaster, he said to me, ‘Well, thank you for coming and introducing yourself. It is very nice of you — better than the other mob’. I said, ‘Why, who are you referring to?’. He said, ‘Well, Matthew Guy came up here for a photo opportunity. Didn’t bother to say g’day!’. So there you go, that tells you something about the different values of those on this side of the house compared to the Liberals over there. He travelled to my electorate, had a photograph taken for the local

paper, but did not bother to take the time to say a quick hello to the staff at the V/Line station.

I would like to use my remaining time to acknowledge and thank public transport workers in my electorate: Louise Noel, Ross Urquhart, Ron Campbell, Rick Seymour, Jan McMinn, Newlyn Kilby, Gayle Weller, Helen Wakefield, Louise Smith-Hayes, Simon Munro, John O'Flaherty and Len Smith-Hayes. I am sure there are some that I have missed, but I did want to take this moment to thank them, the men and women who keep our V/Line services running and who are driving the fantastic Woodend FlexiRide, a newly commissioned service from this government; Gisbus, which is of course another fantastic Labor initiative; and the Kyneton town bus.

This is a really great bill. I am very pleased to have spoken on it today. I commend all the ministers on the work that they have done. Getting the governance of our transport system right is really, really important. We have got a big job ahead of us, and only this government will deliver.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. The coalition are not opposing this bill. Like much of our work in this Parliament, the bill does fall into one of five key areas: health, education, law and order, the economy and transport. This bill is a transport bill. The purposes of the bill are to create the head of Transport for Victoria as a statutory office and to change the governance arrangements applying to V/Line.

The main provisions in the bill amend the Transport Integration Act 2010 to create the head, Transport for Victoria as the lead transport agency that reports to the Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; amend the charters applying to the department, Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and VicRoads and have the latter two reporting to Transport of Victoria and both essentially no longer responsible for the planning projects; change V/Line's corporate structure, supposedly to make it more difficult to privatise; amend PTV's structures to become a corporation like VicRoads; and give the Minister for Public Transport the power to dissolve or reconstruct transport agencies.

There are a couple of concerns with this bill, and they are that it certainly does remove some accountability from the Minister for Public Transport, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Minister for Ports and

vests it with a public servant. That is always a significant issue, particularly in that accountability area, and it destroys the planning and policy expertise built up in VicRoads and its predecessor, the Country Roads Board, over a century.

There are a number of roads that have a lot of history in my electorate. I will be talking about those later and the importance of the corporate knowledge that has been accumulated with those roads.

The Minister for Public Transport will have unprecedented power through the transport restructuring orders to dissolve or reconstruct agencies such as VicRoads or Public Transport Victoria with a stroke of a pen recommendation to the Governor in Council. This too is a worry. Yes, you need to reform. Yes, you need to move with the times, but you need to be extremely careful that you are not spending all your time involved in reconstruction or restructuring and not actually getting on with the job.

We know that V/Line has had a very difficult year. It has had to manage some wheel-wear issues and some level crossing issues. Its bottom line, as the report that has come to Parliament recently shows, is that there is a considerable cost with those issues. There are also lessons to be learned from those issues. We do not want to lose that particular knowledge through a restructure.

It has also come to our attention that staff have been moved en masse from authorities like Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads in advance of this legislation being considered by Parliament. Perhaps they are getting a little ahead of themselves in assuming the passage of this legislation through Parliament. In fact I think it shows contempt to move people ahead of this legislation passing.

There are a number of things that are important for transport in my electorate. Many members have spoken at length about some of these things. There is pressure on our transport infrastructure. There is certainly the opportunity to use the port dollars to deal with some of those infrastructure issues. We have been through some of the priorities that are needed in my electorate, particularly in the roads area.

Perhaps before speaking on roads I will briefly address the Murray Basin rail project, which is a transport project of significance that is occurring. We need to look at some of those solid operational issues that will arise once the current phase of the Murray Basin rail project is finished. It is progressing, but level crossings will become an issue. The speed at which we can move our trains and the desire for a 24-hour turnaround in the

train service is important. In pursuing 24-hour turnarounds at some point I believe there will be a need to have a dual gauge from Maryborough to Ballarat to give our freight trains a direct route via Geelong to the port of Melbourne rather than the interim route that is proposed now, which will see them go to Maryborough, then west to Ararat and then east to Geelong. We very much need to keep our minds on the value of a 24-hour turnaround to our freight industry, particularly for the high-value horticulture that is destined for the port and the grain that is destined not only for Portland but also for Geelong.

I return to roads. VicRoads has enough to do without being caught in a continuous cycle of restructure, rearrangements and fresh naming exercises. There is real pressure on our key road freight routes in the electorate of Mildura. They carry our high-value horticultural exports out of Robinvale to the port. They also move large amounts of grain, fodder and other farm materials and livestock around my electorate. The port dollars have been set aside for transport infrastructure. Key freight routes in my electorate for funding from that transport infrastructure fund include the Robinvale-Hattah Road. This is a road that I have talked about many times in this Parliament. This route carries almonds, citrus and grain, as well as table grapes and wine grapes. It is an east–west link from the Robinvale region towards Mildura, where there are transport hubs like our rail hub, and the processing of citrus, wine grapes and also almonds at Carwarp, where they are hulled and shelled. This road is significant. It needs to be about a metre wider in the shoulder so trucks can get past and you can protect the edges. There are significant issues there. I do not wish to again get a phone call from a prominent local. He tells me that he claims one windscreen a year on his insurance because of the issues that come up. He is kind enough to call me every time that he has to go and buy a new windscreen.

The Robinvale-Sea Lake Road is also important. This is a north–south road and is a link between Robinvale and the Calder Highway. The Calder Highway is the link to the port. In particular, table grapes out of Robinvale are often transported by road to the port of Melbourne. That road has stretches where it has been widened to allow for trucks to pass without heading onto the shoulder, but there are parts that also need upgrading.

There is also a road known as the Rainbow-Birchip road. This is another east–west road. It links the Henty Highway to the Sunraysia Highway and the Calder Highway at Wycheproof, and Beulah to the Sunraysia Highway is the link there. There are not a lot of kilometres there. Again, it needs sealed shoulders and

the Beulah to Sunraysia Highway link near Birchip needs white lines. As part of that link, this particular road can carry backwards and forwards up to 2 million tonnes of goods in a year, including exports and farm supplies.

The government needs to focus on what is important, and what is important in my electorate and in the state are our key freight routes, not name changes, new logos or lost opportunities due to restructuring. We have a once in a generation opportunity to deliver to much of regional Victoria the 10 per cent dividend won by the National Party in the upper house and invest in our regional transport infrastructure. We have some roads we need to get right. By restructuring VicRoads and losing that corporate knowledge an opportunity will be lost or squandered to really plan and do this work well. Staff at VicRoads know where these problem roads are; they know what to do with them. Let us not lose that corporate knowledge in the process. We should not take our eye off the ball. We need to make those key freight routes fit for purpose, fit for our economy and fit to serve Victoria.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. I look forward to keeping you riveted, Acting Speaker Pearson, with a nice poppy in your lapel for Remembrance Day.

On 27 June this year the government announced the creation of Transport for Victoria, a new central transport agency to coordinate Victoria's current transport system. This is a very important bill and I have enormous pleasure in supporting it. I will have a bit of a bite back later with the opposition because I am continually incredulous at the audacity of those on that side of the chamber considering the amount of work they never did. If it was not so serious, it would be funny, but I will come to that. They had some of us in stitches on this side of the chamber.

Transport for Victoria will have responsibility for integrated, user-centric transport portfolio outcomes and will change the charters of other transport agencies that we heard about, such as Public Transport Victoria, V/Line and some of the other key agencies. The bill also incorporates changes to consolidate V/Line's structure and provide for its ongoing public ownership.

As we know, and as we have heard from other members, including the Minister for Public Transport and the Premier, Victoria's population is growing at an incredible pace. I think it was the member for Macedon

who said that we are a victim of our own success. The population of Victoria is predicted to grow to 10 million people by 2051. With this growth comes an extraordinary need for the support of infrastructure, whether it be housing, transport, schools or social infrastructure.

The previous member talked about freight movements. Absolutely, this will also support the state's economic growth. Transport for Victoria will provide a single source of information about our road, train, tram, bus, taxi and freight networks, making it simpler and easier for Victorians to get the information they need. I think it is particularly critical at this juncture because of the enormous amount of work going on to upgrade transport routes in Victoria. Unprecedented work is going on.

The new umbrella organisation is intended to keep Victoria's transport system moving while this pipeline of major transport projects is delivered. This includes the Melbourne Metro tunnel, the western distributor and 50 level crossing removals — and I will talk a bit more about those in a moment. Those on the other side did not have to worry about a peak group to keep transport running because they did not have a pipeline in the works. That is the problem.

Mr Edbrooke — Fifty shades of nothing.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — That is right, 50 shades of nothing, as the member for Frankston puts it. They did not have the need to think outside the square about how you meet the needs of a growing population every moment of every day, because that is how transport runs in Victoria, particularly on weekends — every moment of every day — while you are doing an enormous amount of work to upgrade that infrastructure. They never thought of it because it was never a problem they had to contend with. But we are contending with that problem, because we made a commitment to the Victorian people at the last election that we would do an incredible amount to meet the standards that we expect to be maintained despite the growth in population. Those standards are: 24-hour public transport on the weekend; and trams, trains and buses in areas where they assist people to get to services, including schools, shops and doctors.

This particular bill, as the title suggests, establishes the head, Transport for Victoria as a statutory authority within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources with responsibility for integrated transport policy and planning to improve the user focus and how users experience the system. I like

the user-centric nature of it. Obviously that is the key to driving a better outcome. It is not an organisation to assist public servants to carry out their vision for transport; it is an organisation designed to carry out the vision of the consumer and the commuter.

This bill gives Transport for Victoria a clear mandate by providing broad transport functions and the ability to assume any transport portfolio function, and that is vital when we have so many intersections between transport functions and transport modes. The bill creates the power to transfer statutory functions between transport agencies. It gives Transport for Victoria, a new body, specific powers of direction over transport agencies excluding independent safety entities and VicTrack, and it changes the legal form, as we have heard, of Public Transport Victoria to convert the entity into a corporation consistent with the way in which VicRoads is constituted. As we have heard from previous speakers, it actually guarantees in a sense, through its structure, that V/Line will be maintained in public hands.

The other interesting thing for me is that Transport for Victoria will provide real-time information. A road accident, for example, can create severe disruption, as we have heard from other speakers, and motorists may hear about the road accident on the radio or through other media and may make less informed travel choices because of that delayed information.

I refer to some of the comments made by those opposite. I do not blame them, because really it is hard to make up 10 minutes of a contribution when you really do not have much to say or much to be critical of, so I will not be too harsh on them other than to remind them of their comments. I think one of the speakers said that just rearranging public servants, or something to that effect, does not mean you are investing in transport. No, that is correct, but we are not just rearranging public servants; we are strategically creating an entity which will deal with a range of challenges that an increased population brings. The government seeks to continue to meet the same standards of transport despite this increase. We are trying to get an agency to contest that idea and to come up with a better service system than we currently have.

We are not just doing that. We are also investing in a big pipeline of work both on roads and public transport. As a reminder, we have got the Monash Freeway and the M80 ring-road upgrades happening now; we have got 37 level crossing removals that will be complete or underway, as the Minister for Public Transport and the Premier have reminded us, by 2018; and we have got

early work starting on the metro tunnel. I was recently with the Minister for Public Transport, the member for Narre Warren South and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety at the announcement of the contract to expand the Monash Freeway by one lane, both inbound and outbound. We have the biggest rolling stock order in Victoria's history, with 50 per cent content rules. I could go on, but I have only got a few more minutes. Fundamentally, with that list of work and achievements it is really quite a nonsensical argument or criticism to say that we are just rearranging public servants.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — The member for Frankston and the member for Yuroke want me to keep going, but I have other designs for my last couple of minutes of this contribution.

Those designs are really just to remind the manager of opposition business, who is going on about train delays, that in a huge network like we have in Victoria it is really easy to pick three or four examples and make them the apparent norm, but that is misrepresenting the statistics. I will give you some of my own statistics. They are: Metro Trains Melbourne in September 2016 ran 92.9 per cent on time; from September 2015 to September 2016, it was 92.4 per cent — so the timeliness has increased in the last 12 months; services that were delivered increased to 98.7 per cent; and regional trains have increased in punctuality to 90.9 per cent from 87.2 per cent. There are a whole range of those statistics. In fact one that really struck me was that since August 2016 the Gippsland line had the best result in 10 years, as did the Ballarat, Seymour and Warrnambool lines. That is our caring concern for regional Victoria.

I also want to comment briefly on the work of the extraordinary Minister for Public Transport. She is an extraordinary minister. She runs rings around every single member on the other side. Regarding criticism about her having an office to do her job in, I would give someone like that 10 offices, because she would pay back 100-fold in terms of her contribution to the Victorian people. That criticism is a lack of recognition of regional MPs, a lack of recognition for MPs with families and a lack of recognition for one of the most effective MPs, the Minister for Public Transport. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — It is my pleasure to join the debate on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. I have heard from the government

members that Transport for Victoria will replicate Transport for London.

Transport for London was set up at the creation of the Greater London Authority in 2000 when powers pertaining to London's public transport system were shifted from the central government at Westminster to the newly created Greater London Authority. Transport for London has been a global leader in integrated transport planning. Its first major success under London's then Labour mayor, 'Red Ken' Livingstone, was the successful rollout of the Oyster card. One of the great things about Transport for London was that it set a long-term vision for the British capital and its 8 million people — a capital that is bigger than our state. That plan has, over the last 15 years, for example, allowed the central government and the Greater London Authority to fund and build Crossrail, a railway line from Reading to Shenfield. For the first time there will be an east–west connection across London.

I raise this for a couple of reasons. I raise it because it shows that infrastructure provision in the British capital is bipartisan and that when, for example, Boris Johnson defeated Ken Livingstone to become the mayor of London in 2008 — a campaign that I was particularly pleased to have volunteered on — the plans that Mr Livingstone had in place were not torn up by Mr Johnson. Equally when Gordon Brown was thrown out of office in 2010 the incoming coalition government continued his vision and plans for Crossrail.

Mr Dimopoulos — Why do you love England so much? Why are you such an Anglophile?

Mr T. SMITH — The difference between Transport for Victoria and what happened in Britain with Transport for London is that contracts were not torn up and plans were not changed. There was a level of maturity from one side of politics to the other upon their coming to government. That is very, very different to what has been happening in Victoria. When the Labor Party came to government in Victoria they tore up the east–west link contract. They said that it would not cost a penny — not \$1. I recall the Premier saying before the election that the contracts were not worth the paper they were written on. Yet in a gross debasement of our international reputation the Premier tore up the contracts and the Auditor-General has said that it cost us \$1.2 billion to do so. Now we have this new creation, Infrastructure Victoria, a quango of some note, which has produced its 30-year vision. Yet unlike what happened with the British model, which the government has based this new authority on, within the

space of not even 24 hours the key recommendations from Infrastructure Victoria had been ruled out by this government — a congestion charge for Melbourne, for example.

The member for Oakleigh was interjecting, asking me why I think there are similarities between what the government is trying to do here and what has happened in Britain. It is because that is what the government has said — that this body replicates Transport for London. If it were any other race or nationality that he was referring to, then I suspect he might be in a spot of bother. But that is okay, I am not going to get sensitive on these matters — we believe in free speech on this side of the house.

I mentioned these matters because Infrastructure Victoria, at great expense, brought out a report that suggested, for example, a congestion charge for Melbourne, a rail link to the airport and toll charges on the Eastern Freeway and indeed the east–west link. Unlike what happened with the British model, which you have based this authority on, your government threw out those recommendations in less than 24 hours of their being made. If you are going to go down the path of a mature, rational response to population growth, infrastructure provision and planning for a city such as Melbourne, which is growing by 100 000 people a year — on this side of the house we are very, very committed to taking the pressure off Melbourne by growing regional Victoria, and one of the only ways you can do that is by improved transport linkages to regional cities — you cannot just throw out the recommendations your so-called experts have spent months and millions of dollars planning.

I knew Michel Masson when he was CEO of Yarra Trams, as I had a bit to do with him when I was the mayor of Stonnington. I do not know why you went to the bother of appointing these people when you completely ignored their report. Frankly, I thought the congestion charge idea for Melbourne was ridiculous, but when you have got a number of departmental secretaries sitting on the board of Infrastructure Victoria. The government would have known that that was what Infrastructure Victoria was going to suggest, so why you would simply rule that out instantaneously is beyond me.

We have some serious challenges facing Melbourne from a car congestion perspective. Labor's initial response was to tear up a road that Infrastructure Australia, Sir Rod Eddington and citizen juries from Infrastructure Victoria — frankly every commonsense person — think we need. Yet you tore it up; that was

your initial response. But the other fundamental point that the Labor Party and the Greens seem not to realise is that, whether we like it or not, Melbourne is a city that was built and constructed as a city around the motor car after the war. All of the transport planning that existed between the end of the war and the Bolte government in particular, with the 1969 metropolitan transport plan, was largely dedicated to a city that was to revolve around the car.

That is still the case today, where over 100 000 more people commute to work by car in Melbourne than Sydney, despite Sydney having many more people living in it than Melbourne. Equally, rail patronage in this state between the war and the late 1990s to early 2000s in real terms actually decreased. I do not attribute blame to either side of politics for that. It was a simple fact of life, and indeed it reflected cultural trends and a whole host of other issues at the time, particularly also the petrol price. As petrol prices increased drastically around 2003 and 2004, people got back on the train for the first time in decades.

But I make this point to Labor: you have abandoned the eastern suburbs, you have abandoned my part of Melbourne, indeed the chronic congestion that is facing my part of Melbourne in Kew. Unlike Transport for London, who are actually delivering on their commitment to a cross-city rail tunnel, you are miles away from coming anywhere near to adding capacity to the city loop that we on this side readily can see is absolutely necessary. We say that with population growth around South Yarra that South Yarra must be included in the Melbourne Metro. We must have an airport link, and Melbourne must be catapulted into the 21st century by modern transport planning, not further quangos.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — Sometimes I am confused listening to the member for Kew as to whether I am in Melbourne or London, and I do not think I am alone in that sentiment. To the bill: it is my pleasure to rise in support of this bill. Transport networks touch the lives of all Victorians every day, and they can sometimes be the difference between a very good day and a very ordinary day. A well-functioning transport network — whether it be our roads, rail, buses, taxis, whatever it may be — makes the everyday lives of Victorian people that little bit easier. It means we can get to where we need to be efficiently and without too much focus or stress on the journey itself.

Each of us in this place would receive feedback on our transport networks on a weekly, sometimes even on a

daily, basis, depending on events at any given time, and we hear from people regularly about the impact on their lives when our systems do not work. It could mean missing an important appointment or a child's school concert or, more seriously, it could cause issues of safety.

On 27 June this year the Andrews government announced the creation of Transport for Victoria, a new central transport agency to coordinate Victoria's growing transport system and plan for its future. This bill before us today establishes Transport for Victoria, with responsibility for integrated, user-centric transport portfolio outcomes and changes to charters of other transport agencies accordingly. This bill also incorporates changes to consolidate V/Line's structure and provide for its ongoing public ownership. I will get to that particular part of this bill a little bit later in my contribution.

As we have heard from other speakers, Victoria is facing a period of unprecedented growth, with the population predicted to reach 10 million by 2051. With this comes increasing expectation that the transport system will be easy to use, connected and allow people to choose multiple modes in one journey with ease. Freight movements will also treble to support state growth, and they will largely use the same infrastructure that is used to move people, which puts more pressure on our transport networks.

Transport for Victoria will bring together the planning, management and coordination of Victoria's transport system and its agencies, including VicRoads and Public Transport Victoria. Transport for Victoria will provide a single source of information about road, train, tram, bus, taxi and freight networks, making it simpler and easier for Victorians to get the information they need. For me, thinking about the way consumers engage with our transport system, I think that aspect of what this bill delivers for us is one that will be very welcome to most commuters, if not all commuters, and will be something that will genuinely and meaningfully impact on the way people engage with our transport system.

This bill acknowledges and acts upon the need to bring the people who design and develop our range of transport networks together. It creates the position of head, Transport for Victoria to unify transport planning and coordination as a system. The body will also lead in the strategic planning for all forms of transport. The creation of Transport for Victoria is a key part of our objective to increase interconnectedness and to better coordinate the diverse needs of metro and regional transport. It is also an important measure in ensuring

our public system keeps moving while we deliver on a large number of transport projects that cater for growth in our state. These include Melbourne Metro, the western distributor project, the level crossing removals, as well as road and rail upgrades in metro and regional areas.

I am fortunate to have a number of such projects that impact on my community in Dandenong. I am fortunate to have a number of level crossings in and around my electorate that had been earmarked for removal, for example, works on the Noble Park level crossings — that is, three level crossings at Corrigan, Chandler and Heatherton roads. That work has started and the community is very supportive, indeed excited, about the project, given the time all of us travelling through Noble Park have to spend stuck at boom gates.

We have also had the Abbots Road level crossing in Dandenong South earmarked for removal, and I believe ground works will begin late next year on that project, a project that has significant benefits for local business and industry, freeing up traffic flow for more efficient movement of freight and the local workforce in that area, which also happens to be one of the largest employment precincts in Victoria. This area of my electorate has also recently benefited from the announcement of a new bus service, route 809, which will commence in a matter of days. This route will carry workers and apprentices to the heart of the Dandenong South employment precinct, that heart being Abbots Road. This has been celebrated by local industry, which has been calling for this route for some time so they can remain attractive employers for local talent. Labor listened and Labor delivered, unlike the previous government.

My community in Dandenong also stands to benefit from the widening of the Monash Freeway, another welcome initiative for those who travel its length regularly, and I include myself as one of those regular commuters down the Monash Freeway. The works that are commencing there currently are very eagerly awaited by the communities out in the south-east; I can tell you that for certain.

Listening to members of the opposition complain about this government's infrastructure agenda was interesting. It was fascinating because of the astonishing inactivity of the former government in relation to infrastructure — or in relation to anything, really. There were no infrastructure projects of any note under the former government, and the one they did cling to was drawn on the back of a napkin at the 11th hour because of persistent bad press about their lack of activity. So,

forgive me for not being at all compelled by criticism from those who were part of a government renowned for its lack of vision and its lack of activity, a government essentially renowned for its laziness. I am pretty sure there is a line about the impotence of purity in there somewhere.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Ms WILLIAMS — That is it. But back to the bill before us today. User experience is at the core of the changes outlined in this bill. We have listened to community feedback and want to improve user experience, improve connectivity and improve communication.

We hope that Transport for Victoria will be more responsive, making reporting mechanisms much, much simpler. An example of this might be something as simple as reporting a pothole in the road. We know that currently that is a very frustrating process. As it stands we know people are often passed between agencies, which is inefficient and inconvenient. The existence of Transport for Victoria will create a clear communications point for commuters to both report issues, get real-time information and make enquiries.

At the heart of all of this is the desire to better meet the needs, choices and preferences of commuters — that is, the members of our community who rely on these essential services most days of their lives. In doing so, and in seeking to better meet these needs, we are improving the lives of everyday Victorians.

As I touched on earlier, the bill also changes V/Line. We have had country trains here since 1857, and the gold rush brought train lines to Bendigo, Ballarat, the Murray River and Echuca. Today V/Line is Australia's largest regional public transport operator. I believe there were some 17.6 million train and coach passenger trips in 2015–16, a 17 per cent increase from the previous year. V/Line is a cornerstone of regional communities. It gives others the opportunities to see Victoria's diversity and the beauty that resides in our regions. Whether it is the wineries, bushwalking areas or bike trails, natural springs, coastal villages or alpine towns — you name it — we have a lot of wonderful natural assets in our regions.

V/Line also believes in giving back to local communities. For example, V/Line holds the V/Line Cup every year, where young regional football players can showcase their skills as a pathway to the AFL. As such V/Line is a part of us and a part of our regional communities, and it should remain in public hands. That is very much the view of this government.

V/Line is two entities for historical reasons. The failed franchising in 1999 led to National Express withdrawing in 2002, and the state established a statutory authority called V/Line Corporation to control the business, which became V/Line Pty Ltd. This was necessary at the time, but now is the time to secure V/Line's future. This bill does that by facilitating the transfer of property, employees, rights and liabilities from the proprietary limited company to the state corporation. The bill then enables the proprietary limited company to be wound up. The bill changes V/Line in a way that passengers or staff may not notice, but is fundamentally important. This government is absolutely committed to strengthening public ownership of V/Line and to protecting it and improving it.

This bill does what most Victorians have been crying out for — it simplifies and better connects our transport networks and systems. It does this with a view to the future, a future of population growth and therefore pressure on our networks that it is the responsibility of any government to meet. But it also deals with the reality of this government, a government with a large pipeline of infrastructure work in the transport area and a commitment for doing this work properly for the benefit of all Victorian commuters. That commitment is one that I am very proud of.

The bill is focused on users and on improving user experience, which in my view should always be the focus of public services. As such, I commend this bill to the house.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. The residents of the Sandringham electorate — the residents of Hampton, Highett, Sandringham, Black Rock, Beaumaris, Cheltenham and Mentone — are walking, talking experts on the current failures and the lack of foresight and vision in relation to public transport infrastructure in Victoria at the present time.

During the grade separation works on the Frankston line, Sandringham electorate residents saw the future through the increased population and commuter movement on the Sandringham railway line. It was difficult to park within a kilometre of the railway station, trains were overcrowded and the issue of parking has been one that has pervaded public transport debate for a long period of time.

I think the failure to plan properly and well is illustrated by the fact that, with the grade separation works that are about to take place on the Frankston line and with Victoria's population projected to double in the next three decades, under the working brief there is not one extra car park being planned for stations at Mentone and Cheltenham — not one. In the event of the works adopting a trench model, there will be multistorey car parks to replace the loss of existing car parks, but I invite members on the other side to do the mathematics. Victoria's population is projected to double over the next 30 years, and the government is not providing one extra car park for a commuter. You tell that to senior residents in Mentone, Beaumaris and Black Rock who do not travel to the station at 6 o'clock in the morning.

I digress briefly to say there is another competing problem with the level of developments taking place at the moment. In Highett on one occasion a commuter rushing to work arrived at the car park. There was one space left, and a tradie was aiming to go into that car park. This serious-minded city female commuter said, 'I'd like to park here'. He said, 'There are 160 tradies on the job; where do we park?'. She told him, 'Not in the commuter car parking spaces'.

But back to the narrative. With Victoria's population projected to double, I cannot emphasise emphatically enough or categorically enough that there is a fundamental failure in the visionary planning for transport infrastructure in Victoria without there being provision for extra car parking.

In relation to grade separation works, I would like to place an issue on the record. Last week the head of the Level Crossing Removal Authority spoke at a Committee for Economic Development of Australia gathering. According to a report in the *Age* newspaper, I understand that he said:

... the 'best outcome' for commuters might involve upsetting locals who don't want sky rail.

There have been very strong anti-sky rail campaigns conducted on the Frankston line and also the Dandenong line. Why? Because the people were not consulted. When the announcement was made in November 2014 that grade separation works would take place, the community understanding was one of interest and also a belief that it would be the rail going under the road and that perhaps a cut-and-cover option might be adopted. That did not cause community angst.

But there are people who have spent their lifetime earnings in establishing dwellings along that corridor who face personal devastation as a result of the works

that are being embarked upon. There are interim issues being confronted by local traders who fear the financial implication of their businesses being in a precinct that will be inaccessible for local customers. There are people who have put their heart and soul into property renovations in the local area and who are confronting the fact of potential compulsory acquisition.

Interestingly on the Frankston line — I am not sure who came up with the idea of the grade separations along the Frankston line — there was a physical impossibility of grade separating road and rail at Cheltenham without also doing it at Park Road. That remains an anomaly, and it is an anomaly that has impacted greatly upon a constituent who left her job in the commonwealth public service on the advice and the understanding that she could retire and her home would not be at risk. A matter of weeks after retiring from her job she found out that her home was going to be compulsorily acquired and she would be obliged to relocate. This has been devastating, and it is due to a lack of proper planning, proper insight and proper advice being conveyed to people being affected.

I would now like to return to the comments of Mr Kevin Devlin as reported in the *Age* newspaper of 5 November. They were comments made to a Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) function on 4 November 2016:

... hinting that the 'best outcome' for commuters might involve upsetting locals who don't want sky rail.

I place that comment in contrast to statements made by the federal member for Isaacs on 13 June 2016 when there was the republication of a statement by the Minister for Public Transport, as I understand, that there will be no sky rail along the Frankston line. I seek clarification really on this very important point in the summary of this debate: will there be sky rail on the Frankston line or will there not be sky rail on the Frankston line? A new turn of phrase has entered the debate — sky bridges, rail bridges — but if you add the distance in Cheltenham of a sky bridge and then the distance in Mentone of a sky bridge, you get over 2 kilometres of elevated rail. The juxtaposition of those remarks by the federal member for Isaacs with the statement by the head of the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) will send panic into the minds of many, many people who will be adversely affected by a policy that they did not have the opportunity to vote upon. They did not have the opportunity to choose whether there would be a sky rail.

A number of comments have been made in relation to the consultation process. Some very bright people have

sought to contribute to the process and have turned up to the workshops. They have redesigned the drawings where they said that the height would be 8 metres and they have then pointed out that the gantry and other overhead wires will be another 8 metres. And so in the presentation of the materials there have been concerns raised. One very bright person has suggested the best solution is a tunnel from Moorabbin to Frankston, but this was not part of the design brief despite significant tunnelling being undertaken in Melbourne. There is also a view that the consultation should be extended to enable account to be taken of the views of elected councillors in relation to the works being undertaken.

I would like to just put on the record that in Cheltenham a person has raised concerns about car park access to the proposed multilevel car park during peak times if that were to take place. They have argued there should be an access road between the cemetery and the track with a bridge into the multilevel car park for vehicles travelling south from the railway line. The fact is that both options state that the objective is to create car parks equal to the number that exist now, but, as I have earlier noted, that number is already glaringly inadequate. Cheltenham is a rail access centre for many residents from Beaumaris and Dingley Village and a much larger car park is required now. When these works are being undertaken it is such a glaring failure — such a glaring anomaly — that not increasing car parking provision to cater for population growth at this time will stand as a landmark failure of forward planning.

It may be that the bill before the house — the transport integration amendment bill — will draw some wisdom into the debate, but we must create additional capacity so that we can plan for population growth into the future. There has been an extraordinary failure to provide additional public car parking around railway stations. There has been a failure to accommodate the demand for better bus services within the local region to cater for population growth. It is important that the minister clarify whether the public consultation process on the Frankston line has been a bona fide process when a week following the closure of consultations the head of the LXRA is standing up at a CEDA meeting and suggesting that the best solution for the works may be a sky rail whether the residents like it or not. I invite the minister to comment on the disparity between her statement to the people and the statement by the head of the LXRA.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria

and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. What a mouthful that is.

You would be forgiven for thinking that we were an hour early in time with the member for Sandringham putting what could be described as adjournment questions left, right and centre to the Minister for Public Transport. When we are talking of a bill that looks to the long term, he is basically saying in his contention, ‘Keep away from the Sandringham line at all costs. Keep everyone on the Frankston line. Keep everyone on the Dandenong line’. That is exactly the short-term planning of locking away suburbs that we need to get away from. I was listening to that contribution, as well as the comments about car parking at stations. There will be an attempt to increase car parking at the stations he mentioned. That is well known. That is well established. That is through the consultation. We have seen that. We have talked about it. Multilevel car parks have been put forward and that is well known, so I do not know where those briefing notes have come from.

It is a bit rich for coalition members to be speaking on a bill that talks about future vision and planning for our state. If you look at their administration and you look at their approach to long-term planning, long-term planning was 18 months — or just over 500 days. When the absolute proverbial hit the fan, Geoff Shaw overthrew a Premier and Denis Napthine was desperate for a policy.

We left the budget in a circumstance in 2010 that allowed for \$50 million for detailed planning considerations for Melbourne Metro rail. Those opposite put everything into review, were not ready to govern, did not have an agenda for the state and then three years later expected to get the silver bullet with what was the east–west debacle of the 45-cent return per \$1 invested. That is not looking to the long term, that is looking to the short term.

This bill and the establishment of the Transport for Victoria overarching body will look to address some of those significant limitations. But the coalition will not learn. We now have members in this house and in the upper house talking about a 10-cent return for a dollar invested on South Yarra station to save federal member Kelly O’Dwyer. It is absolutely outrageous — 90 cents lost in the dollar. That is an outrageous equation for people who claim to be economic managers. Really, when you go through and extrapolate out from South Yarra station, the east–west link and Fishermans Bend, the type of planning and forward thinking on that was ‘Let’s get around a table. Let’s map out what we want to rezone’. The next thing we know, suddenly it is all

rezoned and the new incoming Labor government has to buy land to provide basic infrastructure like health care and education. It is completely outrageous.

Let us look at those four years when we saw the east-west link put up as a significant project. We saw a rerouting of the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel on the back of an envelope with two months preparation, and a changing of that significant project and rerouting it through Fishermans Bend with no planning. One of the major articles that came out at the time said that it was rerouted through major sewerage lines. That was probably the level of the detail and planning that was put into major infrastructure projects for our state.

Our population will grow significantly; we will reach 10 million by 2051. We need to look to the future and plan accordingly. Contrast the previous government's approach to some of the major projects that this government is getting on with. There is the removal of dangerous and congested level crossings — 37 level crossings will be removed or will be underway by 2018. This is a substantial shake-up for Victorian communities. We are getting rid of these 172 dangerous legacies of the past; we are getting rid of 50 over the next eight years. That is significant forward thinking. That is thinking beyond the term and looking to the future needs of our community. We know they are dangerous and with metropolitan Melbourne growing substantially, that is an important project.

The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel will drastically transform Melbourne. It was 1971 when the city loop first commenced construction. It took 14 years for that project to be completed in 1985 with the opening of Flagstaff station. That was a significant boost for our transport infrastructure and our transport network. The next truncation of that is the Metro rail tunnel and that is absolutely fundamental. It is fundamental to my community along the Frankston line. The member for Sandringham flippantly talks about the Sandringham line not wearing that burden. The Frankston line is growing and the capacity is expanding.

In the City of Kingston we are expecting to grow by 20 per cent over the coming 10 years. We need to look towards the levers we pull in terms of dealing with those congestion issues in our community. We cannot put more lanes on highways. The Nepean Highway is already at capacity. Station Street to the south of my electorate is already at capacity. We need to leverage the transport infrastructure that we have to a far greater level to create more efficiencies — that is, by creating better signalling, by easing congestion along the line and by having trains run closer together. Allowing

capacity in the Metro tunnel is absolutely fundamental to that plan. The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel was conceived and considered for many years and has now been planned. It has been on the cards for a long time.

It is about not taking that short-term politicking and thinking and looking long term at how we can set up the future and set up generations for the future. Think of the M80 ring-road, with a more than \$2 return in economic benefits. The previous government did not invest a cent — it did not do a thing. It was not in their interests, it was not in their marginal areas and they did not even consider the western suburbs at all. That is a complete indictment of that government's approach to planning.

When we look to the longer term, we send a signal to the private sector that we can attract investment and provide that certainty and confidence. When the goalposts move, that is when investment moves away from our state. The private sector is looking to invest in consistent and certain states, and this is what Victoria offers. Consumer confidence and business confidence is going up, and with long-term planning and by creating overarching structures we create that confidence, we drive that investment from the private sector, and we are able to get on with some of those fundamental projects that will drive economic outcomes.

People are always screaming across the table in question time. Question time is an interesting window into the psyche of some of those opposite. We constantly see the bleating of those opposite, particularly the member for Warrandyte who goes on and on, bleating and carrying on. He could not quote the youth unemployment rate when he was the minister; he could not put that forward. But with this kind of project, where we are looking at what are some of the macro projects — can we create apprenticeship opportunities, can we create employment opportunities — we do not see any of the bleating on policy from any of those opposite.

You hear their contributions on bills. It is all negative. There is no forward planning or vision from those opposite. You see the ultimate statesman in the very angry Leader of the Opposition, who turns around and lectures our government about getting on with things. He is certainly not a statesman. I have the benefit of looking straight at him when he carries on. He is lucky the camera is up in that corner of the house because if it was there, the grabs that we would have and the images of how he carries on would show that he is no statesman at all. His action regarding Fishermans Bend

was completely outrageous. His approach to planning rezones is completely outrageous. What is the infrastructure plan for Fishermans Bend? Absolutely nothing. It was a last-minute rezone: get it through quick, there is an election coming up, there is a \$10 000-a-table fundraiser. Let us have a facilitation, let us have a chat, let us have a conversation — that is what it was about. We knew it; the *Age* covered it extensively. Now we are forced to go and buy land, wasting taxpayers dollars, precious taxpayers funds, to buy back important land for educational precincts.

Ms Kealy interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON — The member for Lowan might laugh, but this is absolutely the case. It might not be a priority for you, but providing the educational resources for our community is absolutely a priority. Providing those schools, providing those kinders, providing those health services, providing transport infrastructure may not be a priority for your mob but it is absolutely a priority for us because we have to look at the entire state and how we govern in the interests of all Victorians. Some of the actions of those opposite were in complete contrast to the interest of Victorians.

This overarching body will create that macro accountability. It will look to the future: it will look to how we deal with a population of 10 million Victorians by 2051, in stark contrast to the forward planning the federal government does, the Malcolm Turnbull/Tony Abbott government that currently governs the federal scene, where only 9 per cent of infrastructure funding is delivered to Victorians. It is an absolute indictment. They are not looking to the long term. It will be Victoria and the Andrews Labor government that gets on with delivering those major projects for our great state.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is a great privilege to rise to make my contribution on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. This bill essentially outlines a corporate restructure for transport in Victoria. It joins the former Public Transport Corporation and VicRoads. Both will now report to the head of Transport for Victoria, who will then report to the Secretary of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

I note that even though we have a corporate restructure there is no change to government policy in relation to public transport and to roads in relation to VicRoads. There is no additional funding. In fact when we look at VicRoads, we see that over the past two years of

government there have already been hundreds of millions of dollars cut out of its budget, particularly the road asset management budget. While this government appears to be focused on the bureaucracy and putting in additional senior positions which are going to cost taxpayers a lot of money, there is less and less money being allocated to fix our roads which, quite frankly, are becoming death traps. I think it is absolutely outrageous that we continue to see these cuts, and there is complete silence from Labor when it comes to how we can make our roads safe workplaces for our truck drivers, bus drivers, families and people getting to sporting events and to work. It is an absolute shame that we have a government that neglects country Victoria in such a way.

There are two elements of this bill that I really want to speak to. They are around public transport, particularly public transport services in Victoria, and I also want to go into further detail around VicRoads and obviously the condition of the roads in western Victoria. Firstly, I would like to pick up on some of the comments from a number of members who have contributed to this debate around some of the population pressures that we are facing in Victoria, which are also referred to in the minister's second-reading speech. Unfortunately we have a Labor government that seems to think that Victoria ends at the tram tracks — that you only have to invest in Melbourne and somehow that automatically means you are investing in all of Victoria. That is simply not the case, but it is evidenced by Labor's slashing of the country roads and bridges project. We see a government that now spends less than 3 per cent of the infrastructure budget on country Victoria, but we represent 25 per cent of the state's population.

The Premier goes on and on about how unfair it is that Victoria receives 9 per cent of the federal infrastructure budget for 25 per cent of the population, which Victoria represents, so why then is it fair that country Victoria, which is 25 per cent of the state's population, gets less than 9 per cent. In fact we get less than one-third of that. The gross hypocrisy of this Labor government in saying one thing and doing another is really outrageous, and country people will not forget this at the next election. Country people know that Labor is letting them down. It is only the Liberal-Nationals that have a plan for population balance across the state and an understanding of how we are going to manage population growth going forward. I think this is something that will be very, very much a point of difference between a Labor government only focused on Melbourne and supporting their union mates, and the Liberal-Nationals, who have got the strategy and the vision to make sure that all of Victoria will grow and

our rural communities will not just survive but will thrive well into the future.

If we want to look at Labor and their plan for public transport in rural and regional Victoria, we should go back again to the minister's second-reading speech, and I quote:

It is incumbent on government that the best projects are pursued and that means the best projects for the system as a whole, not just for one mode or one corridor —

certainly if that one corridor is western Victoria, where there are no passenger rail services. In fact through the government's review of public transport services, which resulted in the regional network development plan — a plan to expand, review and provide additional public transport services apparently across the state — it neglected all of the need to expand public transport in western Victoria. There was no discussion at all in the final paper around improving connectivity between rural areas and regional centres. There was no discussion at all about returning passenger rail to the region. In fact even though all of these items were raised through the consultation process and were outlined in the conversation, all we ended up with in western Victoria was a plan to revise and review a bus stop in Horsham and a bus stop in Hamilton.

I am sorry, Labor, we need more than just a paint job at a couple of bus stops. We need to make sure that rural people living in rural areas can access health care in a time-efficient way, we need to make sure that they have a reliable public transport service, we need to make sure it is accessible and we need to make sure it is affordable. Unless you take the initiative and have a strategy and vision to deliver for rural and regional Victoria, then you are only going to fail under this Labor government.

I would also like to refer to VicRoads, because the alternative for country people who are looking to access medical appointments when there is no public transport available is to travel by road. Our roads are an absolute disgrace in western Victoria, and I would encourage every member of this chamber, if they have not already done so, to go onto YouTube and have a look at the Glenelg Shire Council series 'Fix our key freight roads'. They have just released the third clip in the series, and when you see the roads in our region firsthand you will be absolutely appalled at the condition that they are in. This is something that is occurring now under a Labor government after they have cut the country roads and bridges program and cut hundreds of millions of dollars out of the VicRoads budget. I hold Labor 100 per cent accountable.

VicRoads cannot do their job if they do not have the budget to do these repairs. I speak to people in VicRoads all the time, and they are absolutely at their wits' end. They want to be able to do a better job, but Labor simply will not deliver the money to rural and regional Victoria so that they can ensure our roads are in a good and safe condition.

I was speaking to Des Trotter from Trotters Coaches late last week. He runs public bus services, V/Line services and some school bus runs in western Victoria. Des and his crew had received reports that a section of the Glenelg Highway around the Muntham hills, just out of Coleraine, was in very, very poor condition. Drivers were scared to drive on this road. Des and his team went out and reviewed this section of road, and their only conclusion was that this road should be closed. Now, this is a major highway from Victoria to Mount Gambier in South Australia. It is the way we connect between the two states in the south.

When you have the operator of a major coach line saying the road should be closed, this government should sit up and take notice. There are 1000 adults and schoolchildren who are travelling on public bus services on this road each and every day. I have travelled on this road a number of times. In fact I have raised this section of road in Parliament on numerous occasions over the past two years. I have raised it with the minister directly, and still we have no allocation of funds to fix this road. It is down a section of highway, obviously through hills — it is the Muntham hills area — and the road is simply falling apart. It is a winding road. There is no way to move off the road. There are absolutely no sections of bitumen in some areas. You have no choice but to basically wear the impact of the roads. There is evidence of numerous rims being shattered and of tyres blowing out. You simply cannot move off the road to get away from the potholes — obviously you cannot move into oncoming traffic. This is a death trap, and it is absolutely shocking that Labor continue to neglect this corner of the state.

I think every person on that side of the chamber should hang their heads in shame, but particularly the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Premier. The roads minister has been down to Portland to launch the green triangle freight action plan. He has stood in Portland, he has seen these roads and he has refused to provide the funding for them. Dan Tehan, who is the federal member for Wannon down in that region, has committed \$40 million to specifically repair that section of road.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Ms KEALY — Well, if it is such a small amount — I note the member for Melton's interjections that it seems like such a small amount — why will the state not match it? If it is nothing, as the member for Melton says it is, why will the state government not announce that funding? It is time that the Labor government actually woke up and worked out that there are lives at stake. If it is nothing, as the member for Melton points out, why is the Premier neglecting this side of the state? It is absolutely appalling that Labor will say that that is nothing and that the people of western Victoria simply do not count.

The member for Wannon, Dan Tehan, has now said that if the money is not matched — if the \$40 million is not announced for this section, which apparently is nothing, as the member for Melton points out — then we will lose this federal funding. It is incumbent on this government to take a stance on country Victoria and fund its rural roads.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I take great pleasure in joining the debate on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. I actually quite enjoy joining the debate after hearing from some members who cover the west and the south-west of the state, because according to them it seems like it is really only in the last two years that everything fell into disrepair. I remember the former member for South-West Coast, who was the former Premier, Denis Naphthine, who was in Parliament from 1988 until 18 months ago. He got up in this chamber shortly after this government was elected and said the worst roads in the state were in the south-west. He literally said it in the February after we got in, just after his watch ended.

Ms Kealy interjected.

Ms GREEN — The National Party, the shrill voices over there, only find their voice when they sit on the opposition side. When they are in government they are absolutely mute, and they are absolutely mute when they are speaking to Canberra.

I grew up in the south-west of the state, and I know how rubbish those roads have been my whole life, because for my whole life the conservatives have represented that area, and they only ever care about their own jobs and their seat in the white car. That is what the conservatives do, particularly the National Party. What is Andrew Broad doing? The shrill member for Lowan — what is she doing? She mentioned the federal member for Wannon, Dan Tehan. It was like we did a mid-season draft. I grew up

in the south-west and I now represent areas north of Melbourne, and the member for Wannon grew up in the Seymour electorate and he represents the south-west — but what has he done? Forty million dollars is a drop in the ocean. Nine per cent of federal infrastructure funds comes to the state of Victoria, and those on that side criticise our billion-dollar regional roads fund and our billion-dollar outer suburban roads fund and criticise our investment in rolling stock.

Ms Kealy interjected.

Ms GREEN — I draw the attention of the house to the member for Lowan, who was heard in silence but is now a shrill harpy, not listening to someone coming after her. She actually mentioned the return of passenger rail to her electorate. Why would you need a 'return' of passenger rail, because when her lot — —

Mr McCurdy — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, we are on the transport integration amendment bill, and at this stage the member for Yan Yean has not even mentioned the bill. She has been debating the contribution from the member for Lowan. I ask you to bring her back to the bill and that her contribution have some sort of relevance to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomas) — Order! The member for Yan Yean is to continue her contribution on the bill.

Ms GREEN — I refer to the explanatory memorandum at the beginning of the bill. This contrasts what the member for Lowan and other speakers on that side of the house have said, which is that this will not deliver for rural and regional Victoria. It says:

The creation of the head, Transport for Victoria will bolster the state's ability to plan and coordinate metropolitan and regional public transport, road, freight and ports as part of a system that will deliver improvement at every stage from long-term planning through to strategic asset management.

This is what has been absent when those opposite are on the government benches.

A former member for Warrnambool, Mr McGrath, along with Ken Jasper, a former member for Murray Valley, were the only two National Party members I know that ever stood up to their leadership — whether it was Jeff Kennett, Peter Ryan or Denis Naphthine — and said, 'It's not good enough'. Ken Jasper stood up and said, 'Do not take our trains', and Mr McGrath actually stood up and said, 'Do not take the Warrnambool train'. If the member for Lowan at that time had actually said, 'Don't take our passenger rail', maybe the current member for Lowan would have

passenger rail — or perhaps that would be the situation if they had also stood up to their federal counterparts at any time. Whether they are on this side of the house or the other side of house, they continue to allow the federal government's contribution to roads and infrastructure in this state to languish at 9 per cent. That is not sustainable for rural and regional Victoria, and it is not sustainable for the growing areas of metropolitan Melbourne. We are doing what we can, and we have record investment at a state level, but we could do so much more in investing in public transport and roads if we had a decent partnership with the federal government. But instead the taxes paid by Victorians, Victorians hard-earned taxes, are invested in projects to the north — in New South Wales and in Queensland.

Instead we as a government have not wasted one day. We have not sat here on Spring Street, looked out the window over into the gardens and said, 'We've won'. The Premier has not said, 'I've become the Premier. Is that the premiership cup? I will put it on the bookshelf and never look at it'. We have not wasted one day. We have got in there, and we have started building things. We are getting rid of those dangerous and congested level crossings at numerous intersections with rail lines across Melbourne, not just picking winners in areas that vote for us or sucking up to people because, you know, 'We might need that seat next time'. Actually it does not matter where people live in Melbourne; if it is dangerous and it is congested, it is on our list and will be prioritised on that basis. It will not be just a little-used one in public transport-rich Brighton. If you are in the western suburbs, the northern suburbs, the eastern suburbs —

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

Quorum formed.

Ms GREEN — I was rudely interrupted because the other side do not want to hear that inconvenient truth — that there would be more roads and public transport investment in this state, much more, if they got their brethren in Canberra to do the right thing. Well, we are doing the right thing. We are getting on with building and with getting rid of those dangerous and congested level crossings, which will improve productivity. We have invested in bus networks. In my electorate those on the other side cut 1000 bus services per week. Can you imagine that? A thousand bus services per week right at the time when the population was doubling. What insanity!

And we would be doing more roads if they had been shovel ready, but nothing was shovel ready. The roads in western Victoria would be better if the projects had been shovel ready, but they were not shovel ready. The other side had not invested in anything. Any of the rolling stock that was introduced, whether it was trams or trains, on their watch had been ordered under a Labor government. The only ones that are being delivered now have been ordered under a Labor government.

We will take seriously the roads and public transport needs. We will not be listening to the bleating of the other side when they find their voices, which is only when they are on the opposition side; otherwise they are mute. They are Liberals first and Victorians second.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I rise to join the debate, which has been quite lively, on the Transport Integration Amendment (Head, Transport for Victoria and Other Governance Reforms) Bill 2016. Despite this bill being very thick, as you can see if you have a look at how detailed it is, it has a couple of quite simple purposes. The first is creating the head, Transport for Victoria, as a new statutory office to integrate and coordinate Victoria's growing transport system. The second element is about changing the governance arrangements applying to V/Line and transferring them to the V/Line Corporation. In doing so the bill proposes that the property, employees, rights and liabilities of V/Line Pty Ltd move to the state-owned corporation.

It was in June this year that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Minister for Public Transport announced they were going to be establishing this new central transport agency. This new agency, which is going to be known as Transport for Victoria, is going to be the lead transport authority. One of the terms I noticed raised very frequently in the second-reading speech was that word 'institutions'. I find it quite interesting; it is a word that I have not heard either of the two ministers refer to the agencies as, but 'institutions' was time and again mentioned in the second-reading speech.

Transport for Victoria is being established within the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. It is one of the departments that has had quite a number of changes over time, and every time these departments change their names and way of operating it adds an enormous cost to the taxpayer. In terms of reporting, this will be a point of integration and direction setting for the whole portfolio, including departmental transport staff and operational transport agencies, which will report through the head

of Transport for Victoria and then through to the appropriate ministers.

One of the key elements here is about the coordination across all modes and the planning, coordination and operation of the public transport system as well as the road system, so all of the agencies. For me this is particularly important. The issue of connectivity is one I hear of most frequently. In my electorate I do not have any public transport by rail; it is only bus. I have the route 683, which zooms down the Warburton Highway and connects at the Lilydale railway station. Time and again I am reminded that the connections between the two modes just do not work. I think it is because they both have their own targets, their own key performance indicators, so they must leave at a certain time.

You hear people say that as soon as they get off the train at Lilydale to head home after a long day at work, whether that be in the city or anywhere along the line, they see the tail-lights of the bus as it pulls out of the car park. The later at night it is of course the less frequent the services are. So this can mean quite a long wait at Lilydale station before people get their connections. That can also happen in the morning as well — the trains are a little bit more frequent at peak hour in the morning, but as you get later in the day it is a problem. I hear continually about the failures of the connections between the bus and the rail system. I am expecting that that will be improved with this new Transport for Victoria, because it is going to bring together the planning, coordination and operation, which, as I would see it, should make those modes connect much, much better.

In terms of a couple of the roles here about developing policies, strategies and networks to deliver the integrated, connected transport service and also one of the key objectives — I find this is interesting — of enhancing the experience of transport systems through improved communications, choices and connections, on the surface that sounds okay, as does being a single source of information about our road, tram, train, bus, taxi and freight networks, making it easier.

I know we certainly looked at that and did implement an almost one-stop shop with bushfires after the Labor government had not quite done all that it should have done after the 2009 bushfires. We tried to make it a simple system for the end users. When someone has had a trauma and they have to repeat their story again and again and again, it gets very draining for people, and I imagine it is the same if you have got issues that you are trying to raise here that you have got to keep raising again and again. We find already that ministers

duckshove and pass the buck constantly to other departments. It is very difficult sometimes to work out who is the person in charge.

I want to refer to the second-reading speech, which I have gone through in quite some detail. It has a couple of worrying components. The worry refers to the need to ‘think strategically about how and when to intervene, and make effective investment choices’. The Minister for Public Transport has mentioned this. That made me cringe a little bit because she has made the decision to have a third office. Despite already having an office in Bendigo, she needs to have another closer to the station, some 270 metres from her electorate office. I find that really quite absurd. If this is an example of ‘thinking strategically about making effective investment choices’, I think it is quite laughable. Also, I had the pain of listening to the member for Mordialloc. I certainly know that there was a lack of strategic thinking in that contribution.

As background to this, it is about and in the context of the population growth, about people being moved and about increased freight also being moved. One of the comments in the second-reading speech is, and I quote:

Over the next 35 years, freight movements are also expected to treble to support state growth and it will largely use the same infrastructure that is used to move people ...

Immediately that told me that this government has no vision, for in 35 years they are going to be operating in exactly the same way as they are operating now. We have this contrast between saying ‘We are going to think strategically’ and then in the same second-reading speech showing very limited vision.

The second-reading speech talks about investment in transport generally. This is always worrying because we have had a botched regional rail project, and we have had the very botched myki system that is still experiencing issues now. I think awarding a contract to someone that had not done that work was very short-sighted in the first place.

Focusing on the users and knowing who the users are is good, because they are not just public transport users — the people on the trains, trams and buses — they are also road users. If you focused on the users, it would be fairly simple to understand the need for the east–west link, a road that has been dumped by this government at a cost of over \$1 billion. When you look at what Infrastructure Victoria and Infrastructure Australia say about what an important and strategic link the east–west link would have been, I do not think that in spouting about putting the users at the centre the

government has considered the road users, because they are certainly not just the people in the eastern suburbs; they are also the people a long way out who are actually coming from country areas and crossing the city. It is certainly not considering the users of the South Yarra railway station as well.

The second-reading speech also refers to other modern cities and transport challenges. One of the things I have noticed with most cities that I have visited overseas and even interstate is that they have complete ring-roads, and here we do not have a complete ring-road. Joining the eastern suburbs beyond Greensborough to the Eastern Freeway is absolutely paramount. All other modern cities have an airport rail link. Again, there were plans in place to have an airport rail link. We had moved on this as a government — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms McLEISH — We had moved on this as a government, and I can hear people on the government benches saying that it is a joke, because they know they are never going to build an airport rail link, but we on this side of the house are absolutely determined that an airport rail link needs to be done.

The second-reading speech also refers to autonomous trains. To me — —

An honourable member — Oh, I'm going to ride a unicorn to the airport!

Ms McLEISH — Absolutely. Autonomous trains means driverless trains. What I read here is the vision is that the Labor government is very keen to move to driverless trains, and I think the unions might have a lot to say about that. But it is flagged here, and I hope that they do take note that this is on the agenda for the Labor government — to move to driverless trains — because it is mentioned in the second-reading speech here. I think it is actually something that is happening overseas in many, many countries, and it is something that we perhaps do need to look at, and I was pleased to see they had it on the agenda.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Frankston line elevated rail proposal

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — (11 950) The matter I wish to raise this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is clarification by her of statements made earlier in the year that there will be no sky rail on the Frankston line and the comments by Kevin Devlin, the head of the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) to a Committee for Economic Development of Australia function on 4 November 2016, as reported in the *Age* newspaper of 5 November, that:

... the 'best outcome' for commuters might involve upsetting locals who don't want sky rail.

The issue regarding improved public transport infrastructure is a very important one for the people of Melbourne, not just on the Frankston line but also in other areas of Melbourne, as Melbourne's population is projected to grow to more than double its present size over the next 30 years or thereabouts. There are a number of anomalies in relation to public transport infrastructure provision that I alluded to in the house earlier today, including the lack of provision for car parking into the future. The plans modelled for the Mentone and Cheltenham railway stations, on my reading, are quite explicit: there will not be one new car park provided beyond maintaining the existing number of car parks. This is an extraordinary position given population growth. One of the most frequent concerns raised by people within my electorate, and I understand across Melbourne, has been the lack of parking provision. There was a \$20 million fund announced at the last election by the government, but that will spread very thinly over metropolitan Melbourne with a couple of hundred stations concerned.

The matter that I have drawn attention to and seek response from the minister on relates to the very keen community input. I have attended community debates and forums put on by the LXRA and met with local traders and local residents, and the overwhelming weight of community opinion regarding the new railway infrastructure is that the trench method, or cut-and-cover method, is one that is strongly favoured into the future. There is a concern about the economic modelling that will be used and the amortisation of costs, whether it be over 50 or 100 years, to produce the best result, and that elevated rail will cost more. I look forward to the minister responding to this very, very important issue that is of great interest to members of the community along the Frankston railway line and more particularly within the areas of the Sandringham electorate at Cheltenham and Mentone.

Moonee Ponds Creek

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (11 951) I direct my adjournment question to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is for the minister to advise me what action the Andrews Labor government is taking to improve the quality of the Moonee Ponds Creek. The Moonee Ponds Creek runs along the eastern boundary of the state district of Essendon. I would like to acknowledge the work of Kelvin Thomson, a former member for Pascoe Vale in this house and the federal seat of Wills, who in 1989 founded the Moonee Ponds Creek Association, which has since become the Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek (FoMPC), and local community activist Anna Lanigan.

FoMPC has done a power of work in terms of improving the whole creek corridor from Greenvale to the Yarra River, which is approximately 35 kilometres. There has been an enormous amount of work done in terms of a shared pedestrian and bike path that has ‘reopened’ the creek, and there has been a lot of revegetation. I would like to commend the City of Moonee Valley for their work as well in relation to this matter. I am very keen to learn more about what we can do to improve the quality of this great community asset.

Yarrowonga floods

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — (11 952) The matter that I wish to raise is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is that the minister be given a full briefing of the flood damage along the river systems in the Ovens Valley electorate, in particular in this instance along the Murray River in Yarrowonga. This is with a view that funds can be dedicated to the region for the flood damage.

By way of background, Yarrowonga is situated between Wodonga and Echuca and is an iconic tourist town along the Murray River. The Murray is regulated at both Dartmouth Dam and Hume Dam. This year there was a delayed reaction to the filling of these dams and in deciding how full we should have these dams. I am certainly not one to be critical of who decided on how full the dams should be and when we should be releasing them, because it is a difficult question; it always is. If you leave too much water in there and we get spring rains all of a sudden, everybody says, ‘Why didn’t you release that water a little earlier?’, and if we do not get any good spring rains and the dams are down a little bit, somebody says, ‘Who is the fool who let the water go a bit earlier in September?’. It is a difficult issue.

The Hume Dam in particular was at 99.3 per cent, and therefore the authority had to make some massive releases because October is traditionally the major inflow month and there was a concern that major flooding could result. The result of the release of this water was major erosion and damage done to the Yarrowonga Holiday Park, which is a community caravan park located right on the Murray River. Severe damage has been done to the playground area and other parts of the park.

Glenn Brear from Yarrowonga, a very committed and hardworking member of the Yarrowonga community has raised that issue with me. He has asked me to ask the minister to get a full briefing with a view of getting some funds partitioned their way. I would certainly request that the minister get a full understanding of the issue and that she assist financially with the repair and repatriation work to ensure that the local community-owned caravan park is not out of pocket for an event that was completely out of their control. I do hope the minister takes this into consideration along with other flooding issues and damages that I have raised in this place recently.

Macedon electorate roads

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — (11 953) The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is that the minister join me in Romsey to advise when the traffic management study of the Barry Street intersection will commence. The Romsey intersection study was an election commitment, and I am delighted that \$200 000 has been allocated for this work, including for consultation. My community is now looking forward to this work commencing.

I also call on the minister to join with me and examine the state of Melbourne-Lancefield Road. As the minister knows, this road services Lancefield and the rapidly growing community of Romsey as well as Monegetta, Bolinda, Clarkefield and, in the member for Sunbury’s electorate, Goonawarra. Earlier this year the minister announced big road safety improvements across regional Victoria as part of the government’s *Towards Zero* initiative. I was pleased to see that flexible barriers will be installed on the Melbourne-Lancefield Road, and while this initiative is most welcome, I would like the minister to join with me in identifying other improvements that could ensure safe travelling and better connectivity for the townships on the east of the Calder in my electorate.

Stawell tyre recycling facility

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — (11 954) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek is that she urgently and personally intervene to complete the approval of the revegetation offset for the Stawell tyre dump so that the tyres can begin to be processed before the looming fire season.

Over 12 months ago the Used Tyre Recycling Corporation acquired the 9-million-tyre Stawell tyre dump with plans to process the tyres into carbon black. At the time of the initial announcement this new plant was envisaged to bring 50 to 100 full-time jobs to Stawell — much needed jobs, as Stawell has lost 737 jobs since the election of the Andrews Labor government. Since that initial announcement the company has spent around \$1 million on the project. It was also a lasting solution to the single largest environmental threat facing Stawell — the potential for 9 million tyres to catch on fire. In fact the fire threat is so great that whenever there is a bushfire in the region additional fire crews are dispatched to guard the tyre dump to ensure it does not catch fire.

In February this year the company moved on to the next stage of their plans and installed an initial shredding plant on site. I was very pleased to be able to be there the day that plant was turned on and to throw a few tyres on the conveyer belt. Then the long, dead arm of the Andrews government struck. The company applied to the then Minister for Climate Change and Water for an exemption from having to revegetate an adjacent block — a block owned by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) that is licensed to the Used Tyre Recycling Corporation and that the company needs to clear. Minister Neville said no, and she dithered before saying so.

The company then spent \$5000 to apply for an assessment for a revegetation offset, and lo and behold the scrubby block on the outskirts of Stawell in an industrial estate was assessed as requiring \$130 000 in revegetation offsets. The company agreed to pay. It took months to find a landholder in the region prepared to plant the required offset. However, one was eventually found, so DELWP sent the company the form, which was duly signed by the managing director, Dr Matthew Starr, the next day and returned to DELWP. That was months ago. The company needs DELWP and the offset landholder to sign the form so it can then go to the next approver, the local council, for final approval. Please, Minister, get this form signed.

Cranbourne East sporting facilities

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — (11 955) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, and the action I seek is for the funding of the Hunt Club estate local level cricket and football oval and pavilion in Cranbourne East. An application to the Andrews Labor government's Growing Suburbs Fund 2016–17 was made by the City of Casey. The application made to the fund was to support the funding of the Hunt Club estate's local level cricket and football oval and pavilion in Cranbourne East. The project includes the construction of a district-level floodlit AFL and cricket oval with a synthetic wicket to meet increasing demand on existing clubs and grounds. The new pavilion will enable the local community to host functions or events and provide an additional community space for the local area.

Cranbourne East is the fastest growing suburb in the state of Victoria, and I am proud to represent the residents of Cranbourne East. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows Cranbourne East had the largest and the fastest growth in the nation, with a 32 per cent jump in population from 14 334 to close to 19 000 people in 2014–15. Unfortunately the Hunt Club estate has been left with nominal sporting facilities, and I am glad that Casey council has finally identified this project with an application to the Andrews Labor government's Growing Suburbs Fund.

Goulburn Valley Health radiotherapy services

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — (11 956) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that the minister writes to the federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Sussan Ley, seeking funding for the provision of radiotherapy services at Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton to complement the redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health, committed to by the Andrews Labor government.

Speaking at a Pink Ribbon luncheon in Shepparton last month, well-known general medical practitioner Dr Kerry Phelps said she was shocked that Shepparton did not offer radiotherapy services. This was a statement which really echoed true when the Garvan Institute of Medical Research released its study a couple of days later entitled *A Rural Perspective — Cancer and Medical Research 2016*. The study revealed that a person is more likely to die from cancer within five years of diagnosis the further they live from a major city. It also showed that the drop-out rate for radiotherapy was more than double for rural public hospitals and that people were less likely to access

chemotherapy services based on their distance. This proves the need for ease of access to these services.

Albury-Wodonga opened its cancer service in September. It is a \$65 million facility which includes 30 inpatient beds, a 30-chair chemotherapy facility, 17 medical and allied health consulting rooms, an education and training facility, a wellness centre, two paediatric treatment chairs, a PET/CT scanner, a brachytherapy service and, most importantly, three radiotherapy bunkers. This is a \$65 million facility, fully funded by the federal government under Victoria's health pool, despite the fact that it is located across the border in East Albury.

Shepparton has a local oncology service, thanks largely to philanthropic donations, which matched half of the Victorian government's contribution. However, at \$1.9 million and with only 12 chairs and 2 beds, it is a small service. Goulburn Valley Health services a large area, spanning from Echuca down to Seymour and across the border to Jerilderie. It is a hard ask for patients to travel to Bendigo, Albury or, in most cases, to Melbourne, for 10 minutes of radiotherapy. I have heard of patients having to lie across the back seat of cars as they drive for hours to Melbourne for that brief treatment. They are ill, and certainly too ill to travel by train, which I am sure many of you in this house will understand because I have spoken at length about the need for better train services. In any event people who are ill cannot travel by train for those sorts of treatments. It is no wonder radiotherapy drop-out rates are so high in country areas.

As identified by the Garvan report, in a regional area we have the highest rates in Australia of prostate cancer, breast cancer in women, colorectal cancer, melanoma, non-Hodgkins lymphoma and kidney cancer. According to Cancer Victoria statistics to 2011, the number of people diagnosed with cancer in Greater Shepparton alone each year is double that of Wodonga. We need more studies done on these issues.

Waverley ambulance station

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — (11 957) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Health, who is also the Minister for Ambulance Services. The action I seek is that the minister visit the Waverley ambulance station in Mount Waverley in the coming months to inspect the new works that are scheduled to take place to rebuild the station. The Andrews government has allocated \$1.2 million to rebuild Waverley ambulance station, which is one of the oldest stations in metropolitan Melbourne.

Under the previous government Victoria saw ambulance response times go up and up. Ambulances were queued at hospitals and were not out on the road responding to calls. The infrastructure, including ambulance stations, was ignored. Fast-forward to the Andrews Labor government and a minister who works tirelessly every day to improve the health of all Victorians. In the last year nearly 10 000 fewer people waited for elective surgery than in 2013. I understand that the waiting list is at a 17-year low. In terms of emergency ambulance response times we have seen a big drop. Ambulances are now arriving faster than they have in five years. We have invested heavily, including \$144 million in the last budget, to repair the damage of the previous government. We know there is more to do; there always is. But it helps to have someone at the helm who knows what they are doing and approaches the issue with a human touch.

As part of this government's investment in infrastructure, the commitment to Waverley ambulance station is a much-needed one. It is a 24-hour station and responds to around 800 calls a month. The new investment will mean new ambulance bays, modern amenities, rest rooms and a full kitchen. I would like to thank the minister for her ongoing work for all of us, and I look forward to visiting the station with her in the coming months.

Portland Aluminium

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — (11 958) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Industry and Employment, and the action I seek is that he outline what the government is doing to support jobs at Alcoa's Portland Aluminium in the wake of the Hazelwood closure. As the minister would be aware, the Alcoa-owned smelter at Portland uses about 10 per cent of the energy generated in Victoria. The minister would also be aware that the smelter employs 700 people directly and supports a further 2000 positions in Portland.

However, the future of the smelter is again under a cloud for two reasons. The first is the expired agreement with the state over power supply. The expiration of the 30-year contract means the smelter is now paying a significantly higher amount for its energy supply, meaning its profitability is being compromised. The second reason for this cloud of doubt is the announcement last week of the closure of the Hazelwood power station. It may be hard to find a link between the east and the west of the state, but there is one and it is troubling. With the closure of Hazelwood, some economists have forecast that energy prices across the state will soar up to 25 per cent. That

increased cost would be a disaster for manufacturing right across my electorate. For Portland Aluminium further increases in the cost of production will occur at a time when the world aluminium price is low.

Last week the minister stood with the Premier to announce that they would work with the people of the Latrobe Valley and support them through this difficult period. I ask the minister if that support will extend to the west of the state and if the government will support Alcoa's Portland Aluminium to help them remain a viable business, in turn preventing the decimation of an entire community. If action is not taken now, there is a real fear that Portland Aluminium will close, leaving thousands of people without jobs and the minister facing an employment crisis at both ends of the state. Can the minister guarantee the employees at Portland Aluminium and the people in the wider south-west community that you are not giving up on them and you are standing with them to ensure the viability of the smelter? You promised that every job was worth fighting for, so how can you stand by and watch the consequences of doing nothing, particularly for the people of country Victoria and particularly for the people of Portland?

Bentleigh electorate independent schools

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — (11 959) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Education, and concerns the Andrews Labor government's independent schools capital fund. The action I seek is that the minister ensures an allocation of funding is made towards a new performing arts centre at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College in Bentleigh. Eight schools in my electorate have received funding to either be rebuilt or upgraded by this government. That is a record I am very proud of. In fact across the state billions of dollars are being invested in building and rebuilding schools across both Melbourne and regional Victoria. We have not forgotten the independent schools sector. We have our \$121 million independent schools capital fund. The vast majority of those funds are going to the Catholic schools sector so I would request the minister ensures that a contribution is made towards this vital project at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College.

Responses

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — Can I thank the member for Shepparton for her adjournment matter. I am absolutely more than happy to advocate to the commonwealth and explore what more can be done in respect of radiology services at Goulburn Valley Health. I also acknowledge the member for Oakleigh

and his adjournment matter. Again I would be more than happy to go out and engage with his wonderful paramedic and emergency services community. I know the Minister for Police is urging me to complete my contribution, as I bolted up the stairs, but I do want to put on the record in respect of the member for Oakleigh that he is a fine member. I would also like to acknowledge the member for Oakleigh's mother, who cooks and bakes the most outstanding galaktoboureko, and I would like *Hansard* to reflect that this Parliament has honoured her.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I have been in a number of adjournments and that was certainly interesting. The Minister for Police to refer off the other eight matters.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — A range of members have raised a number of matters for different ministers, and I will pass those issues onto those ministers.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.21 p.m.

