

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Wednesday, 22 June 2016

(Extract from book 9)

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

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

HANSARD¹⁵⁰



1866–2016

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry (to 22 May 2016)

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

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The ministry (from 23 May 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
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Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Kairouz, MP

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry (from 20 June 2016)

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

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

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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

¹Elected 31 October 2015

²Resigned 3 September 2015

³Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴Elected 14 March 2015

⁵Elected 31 October 2015

⁶Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Joint committees

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

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

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Nardella and Ms Ryall.
(*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr 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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Wednesday, 22 June 2016

The SPEAKER (Hon. Telmo Languiller) took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
AMENDMENT (OFFICE OF THE
VICTORIAN INFORMATION
COMMISSIONER) BILL 2016**

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) introduced a bill for an act to amend the Freedom of Information Act 1982 to establish the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, to amend the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 to confer functions on the information commissioner, and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Read first time.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Williamsons Road, Templestowe

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of the City of Manningham draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that children and commuters are putting their safety at risk by crossing Williamsons Road (near the intersection with Serpells Road) to access public transport.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the state government to install a pedestrian crossing on Williamsons Road, in front of the Templestowe fire station, in order for pedestrians to firstly access public transport safely and secondly access surrounding streets safely after disembarking from public transport.

By Mr GUY (Bulleen) (149 signatures).

Geelong road safety

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

Petition of Breakwater, St Albans Park, Whittington Surrounding Area Action Group

We, the undersigned, wish to draw the attention of the house to the safety and traffic management issues on the roundabout and along Fellmongers, St Albans, Boundary, Townsend roads in the East Geelong region.

We request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria investigate our concerns and provide an immediate and suitable resolution to this very serious and community issue.

By Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (736 signatures).

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly that Premier Daniel Andrews must not diminish the powers of the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

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

By Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (212 signatures).

Gippsland Carers Association

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Victoria and Gippsland draws the attention of the house to the failure of the Victorian Labor government to provide funding to assist Gippsland Carers Association (GCA) with administrative costs and carer support services delivered to the community.

GCA services some of the region's most vulnerable families in need, and unless funding is provided by the state government these services will be severely impacted. In Gippsland there are some 26 000 family carers, of whom more than half are primary carers.

The former Liberal-National coalition government provided funding for GCA during its term of government and had pledged to continue to fund GCA into the future.

However, the current Labor government has stated it won't provide one dollar of funding support for GCA.

The petitioners therefore request the Legislative Assembly of Victoria to direct the Labor government to adopt the Liberal-National coalition's pre-election financial pledge of \$120 000 to support the GCA in the work it undertakes within the Gippsland community.

By Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (8 signatures).

Bus route 788

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the electorate of Nepean requests the Legislative Assembly of Victoria address the following urgent and longstanding public transport needs on the Mornington Peninsula:

increase the 788 bus frequency closer to 20-minute intervals;

connect this improved 788 bus service with Frankston Hospital and Monash University, Frankston;

publish the latest Mornington Peninsula bus network review in full, so our community can comment on any planned future upgrades to our local public transport system.

By Mr DIXON (Nepean) (250 signatures).

Police resources

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents in the Ripon electorate calls on the Legislative Assembly to note that:

There are no longer any police officers stationed permanently in Creswick.

Creswick is experiencing a spate of car thefts and car torching and other crime.

We therefore call on the Daniel Andrews Labor government to ensure Creswick returns to having permanently stationed police officers, including an officer living in the existing police house.

By Ms STALEY (Ripon) (78 signatures).

Mentone activity centre

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the 2015 decision by the Victorian government to apply a discretionary height limit rather than a mandatory height limit of four storeys for the Mentone activity centre.

This decision was made without consultation and made without regard to the historic features of the precinct, existing levels of development and the differentiated approach to Mentone activity centre planning to best protect the area and keep Mentone marvellous.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the Victorian government to reverse its decision by reinstating mandatory height limits for the Mentone shopping centre.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (545 signatures).

Tabled.

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

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

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

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Morwell be considered next day on motion of Mr NORTHE (Morwell).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Sunbury on 21 June be considered next day on motion of Mr J. BULL (Sunbury).

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Gene Technology Regulator, Office of — Reports and quarterly reports 2000–01 to 2014–15 (69 reports)

Ombudsman — Investigation into Casey City Council's Special Charge Scheme for Market Lane — Ordered to be published.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2016–2017) BILL 2016

Council's suggested amendments

Returned from Council with message relating to suggested amendments.

Ordered to be considered later this day.

STATE TAXATION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Council's suggested amendments

Returned from Council with message relating to suggested amendments.

Ordered to be considered later this day.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Newport Lakes Primary School

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Industry and Employment) — Last Friday I joined students, teachers, parents and friends of Newport Lakes Primary School for the celebration of the school's 160th anniversary. This wonderful local primary school within my electorate has been through five name changes and three location changes and has survived both fire and flood. My thanks go to principal David Moss, assistant principal Janet Gill, school council president Kylie Halarakis and all the teachers, students and parents who helped put together such a wonderful

event. It is the strength and resilience of the Newport Lakes school community that has seen it through the last 160 years and the ongoing dedication and involvement of the teachers and parents that will see it continue to thrive.

Hobsons Bay Community Fund

Mr NOONAN — My community also celebrated another milestone last Friday, and that was the 10th year of the Hobsons Bay Community Fund. Over its 10 years the fund has helped so many of our local community groups to expand and thrive. It has allowed those groups to deliver important programs to help make the City of Hobsons Bay a more harmonious, a fairer and a more sustainable community. The fund is governed by local volunteers and is a great example of the importance of volunteerism and the impact it can make on a community. My thanks go to Hayden Raysmith, Colleen Gates, Kerri Pyne, Helen McVay, Adrien Butera, Katherine Baron-Ancliffe, John Clarke, Craig Eyes and Vedran Drakulic, whose passion and hard work have made our community a much better place.

Renewable energy

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — The Premier is so desperate to distract from his war on Country Fire Authority volunteers that he is hiking up the cost of living to Victorian families already struggling to make ends meet. His government's renewable energy target will jack up electricity bills by at least \$65 million a year. We all agree that renewables can play an important part of future energy generation, but Victoria needs a carefully considered transition plan. The Premier is playing a dangerous game and without a proper transition plan he risks shutting down the Latrobe Valley, losing tens of thousands of jobs, jacking up power bills and harming Victorian households and small businesses.

Victoria is part of the national renewable energy target scheme, and the Premier has provided zero detail on how the state will go it alone to achieve a Victorian renewable energy target of 40 per cent by 2025. How many jobs will be lost in the process? The premature announcement is accelerating the uncertainty in the Latrobe Valley, which supplies almost 90 per cent of the electricity in the state and employs thousands of people.

We have heard from the Macquarie Group, which has suggested that the Hazelwood and Yallourn power stations would close if the Premier were to meet his

40 per cent target by 2040. Ian Myles of the Macquarie Group wrote in a research note:

To achieve a 25 per cent target ... simply Hazelwood needs to shut ...

All we are seeing from the government are reckless announcements when it comes to jobs, power bills and the cost of living. We need more than spin. We need details of a real plan.

AFL women's league

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — Each and every year the Fountain Gate and Hampton Park youth girls football teams run out to raise funds and awareness of the devastating impact breast cancer has on our community. Now in its sixth year, the Breast Cancer Awareness Cup was won by Fountain Gate after a very hard-fought and compelling contest. Congratulations to coach Steve Worland, assistant coach Anthea Felton and captain Tayla Stephens on their win.

I had the great pleasure of not only presenting the cup but also watching these outstanding young women display their footy skills. There were plenty of bumps, strong tackles, great marks and fantastic goals. Women's football has certainly come a long way. In fact last year alone female participation soared by 46 per cent, with 163 new women's footy teams stepping out and competing. More than 285 000 women now play our great game, and it has quite rightly led to the AFL establishing the women's football league, which will see eight teams competing next year, including the mighty Western Bulldogs.

The Dogs women's team have led from the front, regularly playing exhibition games. Earlier this month the team withstood a spirited fightback from Western Australia to prevail by 13 points at Etihad Stadium. Many of these outstanding women are likely to be drafted by the Dogs for the inaugural season and in their very own words said:

It's like a girl's dream.

I have no doubt that these daughters of the west will make us all proud, including local Cranbourne girl, Bianca Jakobsson.

This wonderful opportunity has come about through the extraordinary work of the Western Bulldogs and our vice president, Susan Alberti, AC, who has played a pivotal role in making sure that girls can represent their clubs and don their colours with pride. As the chief executive of the AFL, Mike Fitzpatrick, said:

Our game is on the cusp of changing forever and changing for the better.

It is time for our girls and young women to play on the biggest stage of all, and I cannot wait to cheer them on. Go, Dogs! Go, girls!

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I stand here to congratulate the courage and dedication of my local Country Fire Authority brigade members in standing up to the Andrews government over the enterprise bargaining agreement. They continue to stand willing and able to defend their communities despite the onslaught of the Andrews government and its disrespect for their commitment. I urge brigades to stand together and stand firm and not be bullied into compromising community safety.

Mildura shadow cabinet meeting

Mr CRISP — History was made last week in Mildura with a joint South Australian and Victorian shadow cabinet meeting. I would like to thank my colleagues for the time they spent engaging with my community, and I thank the community members for the time and effort they put in to making the shadow cabinet visit memorable.

Country football and netball governance training

Mr CRISP — I sat in on a governance training session provided by the AFL for local football and netball clubs. The workshop I attended was well presented and enjoyed strong participation from local clubs. Saturday football and netball are still major sporting and social events in country life. However, clubs do not function by themselves and require dedicated people to run them, and their office-bearers need relevant skills to ensure their club's future.

Hopetoun Recreation Reserve

Mr CRISP — In continuing to speak on the importance of Saturday sport in the Mallee, I inform the house that I will be attending the opening of the upgraded Hopetoun Recreation Reserve facilities on Saturday afternoon. The recreation reserve is the home of many sporting codes, and good facilities are vital. I congratulate the committee for the hard work it has put into achieving the upgrade.

Patchewollock Gun Club

Mr CRISP — The Patchewollock Gun Club has merged with the golf club, and I will be attending the first shoot at the new facilities in Patchewollock on Saturday.

Melbourne Polytechnic Greensborough campus

Mr BROOKS (Bundoora) — Greensborough TAFE campus, which is so important to my local community and which was shut down due to the cuts inflicted on the TAFE sector by the Liberals and Nationals, will see students return at the start of next calendar year. Yes, the Andrews Labor government has delivered on its commitment to reopen Greensborough TAFE campus. After working with Melbourne Polytechnic to carefully analyse training needs in the Greensborough catchment, the government has confirmed that students will return to the campus in 2017, with the campus back to full operation in 2018.

People in the north-eastern suburbs will not quickly forget the Liberals' closure of this TAFE campus as part of its \$1.2 billion cut to TAFE over its four disastrous years in office. Along with the closure of campuses, jobs were cut, fees were hiked up and courses were cut. Even specialist courses for Country Fire Authority firefighters were axed under the Liberals and The Nationals.

The Andrews Labor government has reinvested in TAFE, moving the sector's finances out of deficit and into surplus. We are now getting campuses like Greensborough open again. After a consultation process chaired by the member for Eltham and after Melbourne Polytechnic considered the research, it has been decided that the campus will focus on three main areas: health and community services; business and entrepreneurship; and science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Greensborough campus will also be home to the new Banyule Tech School, which will be accessible to kids in all local schools. It will focus on technology and innovation, and importantly it will work closely with local businesses.

I wish to commend the member for Eltham for her work, along with the Minister for Training and Skills and the Minister for Education. The difference between the Labor and Liberal parties could not be more stark when it comes to education and skills. Where the Liberals cut and closed, Labor has invested and expanded. When the Liberals turned their back on the people of Greensborough and the north-east, Labor stood with the community, and it is now delivering an even better training presence.

Regional tourism

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to refer to a magazine called *Tourism Excellence*, which is issued by the Victoria Tourism Industry Council, dated autumn 2016. On a number of occasions in this Parliament I have referred to the significant growth in international tourism. However, there is another side to the tourism story, and it is one that the minister does not talk about very often. I refer to page 6 of this publication. Under the heading ‘Challenges’, it states:

Despite a strong-performing international market, we cannot dismiss the fact that domestic visitor nights and expenditure to regional Victoria declined by 0.5 and 1.7 per cent respectively in the year to December (compared with an increase of 5.6 per cent for Melbourne). Or that international visitor spend in regional Victoria for 2015 was only 6.7 per cent of the state’s total, down from 7.5 per cent in 2014.

I urge the government to look at the importance and significance of domestic tourism. It has been the backbone of Victorian tourism for a very, very long time, and most significantly an alarm bell should be ringing for the government on this issue. It is the international visitor spend in country Victoria that is sorely lacking. Only 3.5 per cent of international visitors stay overnight in country Victoria, and that is a challenge for the minister. I urge him to grapple with that.

Jo Cox, MP

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I want to rise and offer my heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of the British Labour MP Jo Cox, who was taken from this world last week in a callous and cowardly act. In Jo Cox the more than 107 000 people who inhabit Batley and Spen in the north of England had a compassionate and caring advocate who always looked out for the most vulnerable in society.

Jo made her mark on the world long before entering the British Parliament, tirelessly working on behalf of the most vulnerable in our world during her time at Oxfam between 2001 and 2009. That is where she met her husband, Brendan. They shared a common bond and purpose to give those facing persecution and suffering hope and security. In describing Jo, Max Lawson of Oxfam said:

Jo was a diminutive pocket rocket from the north. She was as a ball of energy, always smiling, full of new ideas, of idealism, of passion.

Upon her election in 2015, Jo Cox was seen as a rising star of the British Parliament. She chaired the Labour Women’s Network and the All-Party Parliamentary Group Friends of Syria, immediately impacting upon

policy from opposition. In her first speech in the House of Commons, Jo said it best when reflecting on her community:

Batley and Spen is a gathering of typically independent, no-nonsense and proud Yorkshire towns and villages ... While we celebrate our diversity, what surprises me time and time again as I travel around the constituency is that we are far more united and have far more in common with each other than things that divide us.

This notion is something we all share in this Parliament and we all strongly support. Britain has lost a warm, wonderful and talented person. I offer my condolences to her family and community.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — This statement condemns the Andrews Labor government for its outrageous handling of the current Country Fire Authority (CFA) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) crisis, its utterly disgraceful attack on Victoria’s 60 000 loyal and dedicated CFA volunteers, its sacking of the CFA board and a minister, and its undermining of the proud 70-plus year history and tradition of volunteerism in the state’s fire and other emergency services.

The total disrespect for CFA volunteers being shown by the Premier and his government is unacceptable, and it totally breaches the volunteers charter and its provisions in relation to consultation on policy or organisational issues affecting volunteers. The sheer bullyboy arrogance of the Premier in stating last week that he had acted decisively to end the EBA dispute and that the dispute was now over, to the complete benefit of his United Firefighters Union (UFU) mates and to the total detriment of CFA volunteers, the entire CFA organisation and the Victorian community, is bitterly disappointing, totally unforgivable and unbecoming of a Premier of this great state.

The actions of the Premier over the past few weeks, in particular in appeasing the UFU as payback for its deceit and appalling behaviour in support of state Labor at the 2014 state election, should be seen for what they actually are — bullying and intimidation at the highest level. How hypocritical of the Premier to mislead Victorians into thinking he leads a government that believes in inclusion, equality and a fair go for all.

Whittlesea Chinese Association

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — On Saturday, 18 June, I had the great honour of attending the Whittlesea Chinese Association (WCA)

10th anniversary celebration and book launch. The celebration was to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Whittlesea Chinese Association, and in memory of that the association produced a book titled *Walk with Us Down Memory Lane — Past, present and future*. It is a great achievement and an interesting read, full of photos, reports of activities and local news.

The WCA and its members contribute to the community in so many ways, and this book is just part of that. It illustrates the great contribution they make. They share their rich Chinese culture with events where they invite the wider community to celebrate things such as the mooncake festival and Chinese New Year. They raise funds for important causes, such as cancer, and they volunteer their talents and skills to help others throughout the community. The Whittlesea Chinese Association members and committee are held in the greatest of respect within the local area, and they are a tribute to the suburbs of the north. Congratulations to former president Arthur Yong, immediate past president Albert Yew and current president Regina Leung-Hining.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — The Lowan electorate is home to 110 CFA brigades, each and every brigade 100 per cent operated by volunteers. After attending an emergency CFA meeting for district 17 in Horsham and joining the impressive turnout of vehicles and volunteers in Ararat, it is clear our volunteers are rightly angry that the Premier has completely neglected and disrespected their views and experience as firefighters.

It should not be forgotten that ‘CFA’ stands for Country Fire Authority. It is ludicrous that the Premier is bulldozing through an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) whereby Country Fire Authority volunteers will be controlled by a Melbourne-based union. Further, we are now in a position where the Premier’s sacking then stacking of the CFA board has resulted in no volunteer firefighters nor country representatives governing the organisation.

The list of people who believe the Premier’s CFA EBA is unlawful or unworkable continues to grow, including his former Minister for Emergency Services — incidentally a lawyer specialising in industrial relations and discrimination law — who was willing to quit rather than support the Premier’s dud deal; the Victorian equal opportunity and human rights commissioner; Jack Rush, QC, counsel to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission; the

government’s own Crown counsel; and 60 000 very passionate and proud CFA volunteers.

No-one begrudges career firefighters a pay increase, but we vehemently oppose a union takeover of the CFA. This EBA is unlawful and unworkable, and the Premier must take action to fix the mess he has created and treat our vital CFA volunteers with the respect they deserve.

Longerenong College

Ms KEALY — It was fabulous to attend the recent opening of the refurbished accommodation wing at Longerenong College. This \$4.5 million investment by Skillinvest, the federal government and the previous National-Liberal state government will ensure that Longerenong can continue to attract Australia’s best agricultural students and remain the premier ag training college in Australia. I commend the work of John Ackland and the Skillinvest board and John Goldsmith and his impressive team for their tireless and passionate efforts to make this project a reality.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — I think it is really important to reflect on the tragic and personal consequences that flow when we do nothing to stop division in our communities, and indeed as leaders in our community it is incumbent upon all of us to show leadership when we see that division. This past week I have met with many firefighters — career and volunteer. They are hurting. All firefighters, career and volunteer, have a single purpose: to keep our communities safe. The job they do can be dangerous, and danger does not discriminate.

The division needs to stop. The Country Fire Authority (CFA) issue has taken on a frenzy all of its own. I understand that people feel passionately about the CFA; it is indeed the lifeblood of our communities, particularly in rural and regional areas. That is why it is negligent, irresponsible and a dereliction of duty for the coalition to actively exploit that passion in an almost sinister, menacing and calculated fashion to deceive volunteers and the community, actively inciting them to turn against career firefighters. The level of vitriol and lies that have contaminated this issue is shameful and is to be levelled squarely at those opposite and their friends in Canberra. Our firefighters — indeed our community — deserve so much better than this.

It should never have got to this. It is not all right to use people as fodder in an election campaign. We on this side of the house do not turn our community members

against each other; that is well and truly the terrain and specialty of the opposition. Shame on those opposite.

Vietnam marine pollution

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I place on the record the massive and justifiable concerns of Vietnamese-background Australian citizens and members of the wider global community regarding the death of millions of fish and seabirds that washed up along a 125-mile stretch of Vietnam's central coastline. It is contended at this stage that the cause of death is toxic industrial pollution.

Further investigation is imperative on the part of the government to ensure that the nation's staple food supply and the welfare and livelihood of tens of thousands fishermen and their families affected by this crisis are not jeopardised. There is further concern that the dead fish could be used for the manufacture of fish sauce, which potentially puts at risk people not just in Vietnam but also in other countries.

I strongly support the international call to improve environmental management to ensure the safety of seafood products exported from Vietnam to Australia and to protect the marine environment for the health, wellbeing and safety of the Vietnamese people and foreign visitors.

Mixed martial arts

Mr THOMPSON — I vigorously oppose and question the Victorian Labor government's support of cage fighting. The outrageous gladiatorial spectacle of Ronda Rousey being kicked and punched in the head with blood spurting from her face should not be a sport promoted in Victoria. Recently in Ireland there was the reported death of a cage fighter by the name of Joao Carvalho. I call upon the government to end this barbaric sport.

Jean Sutcliffe

Mr THOMPSON — I wish to pay tribute to Jean Sutcliffe, who has reached the age of 100 and is a constituent of the Sandringham electorate. She completed her nursing training at the Epworth Hospital and spent one year in Sydney before travelling to London and completing a year of neurosurgery at Queen Square.

Circolo Pensionati Italiani

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — Recently I had the good fortune to attend the Circolo Pensionati Italiani in Essendon North for its regular lunch and dance. The

club's president is Giovanni Guzzardi, and he is ably assisted by his daughter Salvana. The lunch was well attended by around 100 Italian-Australian senior citizens, many from neighbouring clubs. My electorate is so fortunate to be the home of so many hardworking migrants, many of whom emigrated from Italy for a better life in Australia. These lunches are a time for the attendees to reflect on their contribution to making our nation great as well as on a life well lived, and they provide me with the opportunity to acknowledge their outstanding contribution to our community.

Boundary Road, North Melbourne

Mr PEARSON — I was delighted to meet with the former member for Melbourne, Jennifer Kanis, and Labor's federal candidate for Melbourne, Sophie Ismail, to inspect the new traffic lights being installed opposite the Australian Muslim Social Services Agency in Boundary Road, North Melbourne. This project was championed by Jen Kanis in the lead-up to the 2014 state election and was delivered by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. This is a fantastic project which will significantly improve the lives of many local residents in the electorate of Melbourne and also in the Essendon electorate. It is practical, sensible, local life-changing infrastructure — there is great beauty in small things.

Nicholas Shaw

Mr PEARSON — Last week I was delighted to have Nicholas Shaw join Team Essendon for the week doing work experience. Nicholas, who is studying at Maribyrnong College, made a great contribution during the course of the week and was particularly interested in constituency work. Nicholas has a bright future, and I have no doubt that he will fulfil his potential.

Maribyrnong College

Mr PEARSON — Finally, I met with Nick Scott, the principal of Maribyrnong College, where many of my constituents send their children. I was really impressed with Nick's commitment to the school and his focus on moving the apex of the bell curve to the right through fairly straightforward concepts such as reports being provided every six weeks to students and employing a dedicated reading recovery resource as well as a full-time social worker. I was also taken with Nick's focus on having senior students spend time in the school's study hall.

Glen Vernal

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — I was pleased to recently attend the awarding of the Queen's Scout Award to Forest Hill resident Glen Vernal. I congratulate Glen on receiving this outstanding award. During the ceremony those present heard many stories of Glen's achievements and the hard work necessary to earn this prestigious award. Congratulations to Glen, his family and all his scout leaders and fellow scouts who helped him along the way.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr ANGUS — The recent behaviour of the Victorian Labor government, and particularly of the Premier, has shown that the government supports bullying and is unfit to govern this great state. Whether it is effectively sacking a minister who showed some principle and refused to sell out her statutory duties to the Premier and his union masters, whether it is sacking the Country Fire Authority (CFA) board, which refused to agree with the government's grubby union-demanded deal, or whether it is demanding the resignation of the Labor-appointed CEO of the CFA, the entire CFA affair has shown the true colours of this union-run state government. It is a government totally indebted and beholden to the United Firefighters Union (UFU).

To top it all off, to have a government minister come into this chamber during the last sitting week and state untruths in an attempt to deliberately mislead this house was a shameful low point for the government. That minister should have resigned or been sacked by the Premier, but of course this did not happen as her pre-prepared comments were another part of the attempted deception being foisted on all Victorians by this dishonest government.

The CFA affair has shown that this government is completely subservient to its union masters who helped to get Labor elected in 2014. The Premier is a puppet to his union puppetmasters and beholden to their demands rather than governing for the good of all Victorians. Once again I note that I am proud to stand on behalf of the residents of Forest Hill as a member of the coalition team and support CFA volunteers as they stand against the attack on the CFA by both the UFU and the government.

Joel McDougall

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — For the past two weeks I have had the pleasure of having Joel McDougall of

Sunbury College do work experience in my office. He has done an outstanding job writing to constituents, answering the phone and dealing with the media, and in the last sitting week he came to Parliament. Last Friday he presented me with a report about the issues he believes affect young people in Sunbury. He presented fantastically well, and I undertook that I would raise these issues today.

Joel and his peers believe that good access to public transport is highly important, as often it is their only mode of independent transport. He reminded me that young people do not get public transport only to school but also on weekends to jobs, sport and other social commitments. He also highlighted the need to build the Metro Melbourne rail project as it will give him and his peers more services and access to the university precinct in Parkville.

Joel and many of his peers hope to go to university, but if it is too expensive, it will be out of his reach. Joel believes the determining factor in gaining a university education should be your academic ability, and he certainly highlighted to me the importance of making sure that university is affordable. Joel is also concerned about the cost of housing. He is worried that he might not ever be able to move out of the family home. He highlighted the importance of school funding. He and his peers want modern and vibrant schools where they can reach their full potential.

Joel believes the national broadband network is essential in the 21st century to secure the jobs of the future. He reminded me that the original fibre-to-the-home plan is the right plan for him. I want to thank Joel for his outstanding work and for his contribution to my office. We loved having him.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — I rise again to air the concerns of thousands of people from across my Polwarth electorate about the future of the much-loved Country Fire Authority (CFA). It seems to me this Andrews Labor government has no idea about the institution it seems quite happy to go to war with. I do not think this Andrews Labor government understands the feeling in rural communities. I do not think it realises that generations of families have sometimes donated land, built sheds and fundraised for trucks. I do not think the Andrews Labor government realises that country people mark their lives by major fire events: the Cressy fire in 1977, Ash Wednesday in 1983 across the Otways and Nullawarre, and the Pomborneit fire in

2009. These are life-changing events that bring people together and create bonds.

These bonds are not created through enterprise bargaining agreements, pay disputes, overtime rates and moving relocation bonuses; these are bonds created by a love of community and the desire to protect what is yours. So it was that I proudly joined yet another spontaneous CFA gathering at Bannockburn last week, quickly and professionally pulled together by Golden Plains Shire Council mayor, Des Phelan, and hundreds of locals.

Frank Dignan

Mr RIORDAN — I was honoured to attend the funeral of a well-respected local farmer and businessman, Frank Dignan, known as the King of Woodrowvale. Frank was farewelled by his three children and a strong contingent of members of local farming and business families who had dealt with and worked with Frank over many of his 81 years. Frank was an operator from another time, when hard work, careful ways and pay as you go were guiding ideals. His strong opinions of local council and young blokes that think they know everything will be sadly missed. Vale, Frank.

Australian Seafood Group

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I rise to congratulate a fabulous local business on its continuing success. The Australian Seafood Group in Coburg North has been a renowned supplier of local Australian fish for many years, and its fish and chips are certainly amongst the best in town. Blu, operated by Australian Seafood Fish and Chippery, recently opened a new 165-seat restaurant on Gaffney Street, Coburg. This restaurant builds on the extremely successful shop the business operates in Hossack Street, Coburg North. It is indeed one of the most successful restaurant businesses in my district, and I am a regular consumer.

But in terms of its success, you do not need to just take my word for it. In a 'Good Food' article of 9 February 2016 it was voted as having Melbourne's best fish and chips. The article states:

Despite the industrial location, no-one pulls a fish and chips crowd on a Monday like the Australian Seafood Group. From tradies to families and women in heels, it's so busy they're opening a second shop with 165 seats at the end of February ...

It has indeed opened, and to great success. In 2015 it was also voted in the *Herald Sun* as one of Melbourne's top 10 fish and chip shops. The article said:

It's about as unlikely a spot for a fish and chip shop as you'll find, but on a Friday night if you look for the crowds milling in an industrial estate in Coburg North you'll come across some of the best fish and chips around.

Nova 100 radio in 2015 voted it no. 2 of the best fish and chip shops in Melbourne. It builds on the continued success of the food and beverage industry across Coburg, as the community looks for ways to replace the manufacturing sector.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Like many in the Evelyn electorate community, I was outraged by the Andrews government's reckless decision to sack the entire Country Fire Authority (CFA) board for failing to sign the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), which is estimated to cost Victorians anywhere between \$700 million and \$1.2 billion, not the \$140 million that the Premier wants us to believe. This is not a fair negotiation when: an entire board is sacked for defending the position of volunteer firefighters; when the highly contentious clauses remain intact; when there are currently no CFA members on the new board to represent the views of the volunteers; when the CFA charter that was mandated by the coalition and supported by those opposite has been completely ignored; and when an injunction was in place that actually prevented the CFA from signing any EBA. The Andrews government has clearly been watching re-runs of *Dynasty*, firing the board on the spot and replacing it with a board that will go along with the Premier's dirty union pay-off.

Switchback–Victoria–Nelson roads, Chirside Park

Mrs FYFFE — In recent weeks I have been contacted by a number of residents expressing growing concerns about the safety of the intersection of Victoria, Switchback and Nelson roads in Chirside Park. It is a high-traffic area with vehicles coming from Lilydale Heights College, Lilydale scout group, the Lilydale cemetery, the Lilydale memorial crematorium, the Gateway housing estate, Lilydale West Primary School, tourist traffic and the Cave Hill Industrial Park. There are seldom sufficient breaks in the traffic, especially during peak hour, to allow for the quick and safe passage of vehicles both onto and across Victoria Road. Population growth is compounding the problem. It is a dogleg intersection, and traffic lights are urgently needed.

Mount Buller

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — On behalf of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I was pleased to open the snow season at Mount Buller on the long weekend. Can I say that Mount Buller is the most visited alpine resort in Victoria with some 430 000 visitors annually, 70 per cent of these during the winter period for snow recreation, contributing some \$230 million in gross state product and some 2200 full-time-equivalent jobs, while also contributing some \$153 million — that is, 23 per cent — to the Mansfield shire gross regional product, and it is the most financially secure and sustainable alpine resort in Victoria.

I was pleased that the member for Eildon was able to join me at the opening of the season, and can I say that the briefings I had from the CEO, John Huber, and the board chair, Jennifer Hutchison, were very much appreciated. I was very impressed with the professionalism and dedication of all the board members at Mount Buller. I was pleased to have briefings also with the Mount Buller Chamber of Commerce executive and also with the Mount Buller Ratepayers Association and the Buller Ski Lifts executives. These are all critical components of the work that is being done at Mount Buller.

The water storage project at Mount Buller is a critical project that was not successful in the most recent budget. This is a project that is about securing snowmaking and also further recreation at Mount Buller. I will be advocating to and working with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change and the Minister for Regional Development to secure funding for this project from the Andrews government in the future.

Laurimar Power Netball Club

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — It was with great pleasure I attended the junior presentations for the Laurimar Power Netball Club in Doreen on Sunday. It is a fabulous club that has only been operating for six years. Ian Landy has done a fabulous job in all that time, and the club has a unique structure in having a junior committee that assists with the presentations and with advocating on behalf of junior players. There are 277 club members at this fabulous club, and three of those teams are in the grand finals on Saturday. I look forward to seeing them at the Diamond Creek netball stadium.

The netball club is outgrowing its current home, and with the building of the new schools, Mernda Central

P-12 and Mernda South Primary School, which will have fully operational courts suitable for netball performance, I look forward to seeing Laurimar Power being successful on those new courts and on the weekend in its three grand finals. Go the Power!

Mr Scott — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, during the contribution from the member for Forest Hill a matter was raised that I think properly should not have been raised in members statements and should have been dealt with by substantive motion. I ask that it be referred to the Speaker for review.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr McGuire) — Order! I uphold the point of order. According to standing orders, it is inappropriate to impugn an MP unless by substantive motion. It is not an issue for a members statement. On advice from the Clerk, I have received this advice and I caution the member for Forest Hill and warn him not to do that again. I will pass that statement on to the Speaker.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee: Country Fire Authority Fiskville training college

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I rise to make a brief contribution on the report of the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee on the inquiry into the Country Fire Authority (CFA) training college at Fiskville. In doing so I would like to thank the committee for all its work and in particular the committee chair, the member for Thomastown, for her determination to deliver to this house this very important report.

The establishment of this inquiry was of course an election commitment. Like the member for Thomastown, I am also very proud to be a member of this Labor government, which is determined to right the wrongs and tell the truth about what happened to working people in this state — I might add, to both paid and volunteer workers in the CFA — so this is a really important report. I also acknowledge the doggedness of Mick Tisbury in ensuring that this was a matter that stayed at the forefront of the Labor Party's attention. Indeed, as I said, it was an election commitment to conduct this inquiry.

I want to speak briefly about some of the findings of the inquiry. In particular I want to talk of chapter 5, which talks about the CFA organisational culture and approach to health and safety. I think it is important to raise these matters in the context of other debates that

have been going on in the chamber this week. We cannot shy away from the findings of this very important parliamentary inquiry. I note that those on the other side of the house have been largely silent when it comes to the findings of this important inquiry. We do not hear them in this chamber getting up and talking about what went on at Fiskville. We do not hear them getting up and speaking to the report. We do not hear them reiterating some of the claims that they made when they were in government such as that exposure to chemicals in the course of firefighting does not cause cancer. They are silent on these matters now, and I think that is a disgrace. Chapter 5 says quite clearly that:

... there is still room for improvement in: how senior management and the board respond to and manage internal criticism; and how responsibility for change at management level does not end with merely deciding on a policy — implementation of policies must be overseen to ensure they are followed throughout the whole organisation.

So let us not lose sight of the fact that the Fiskville inquiry points to some very important work that needs to be done at the CFA. I am feeling very confident that under the Minister for Emergency Services and the commitments that he has been making and the way that he has been talking about the way he wants to be the minister for that organisation we will see the necessary changes take place at the CFA, which is all about protecting the health and safety of volunteer and career firefighters.

I want to finish by commending the committee for its report. I note that there are some very important recommendations that have been made. These recommendations will be considered by the government, and I particularly commend recommendations 10, 11 and 12 to the government in its consideration of this report. Once again I thank the committee for all of its work.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee: fuel drive-offs

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — I wish to make a few comments regarding the investigation into fuel drive-offs by the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee. It really was a very instructive investigation that we carried out. The key recommendations that were brought down by the committee are that there should be an education campaign in partnership with Victoria Police, Crime Stoppers and obviously the fuel retail industry; that Victoria Police carry out six-monthly forums with the retail industry to update it on what the trends are and what some of the possible solutions may be in an

ongoing way; that Victoria Police develop a guide for the fuel industry on fuel drive-off prevention to support the actual industry in working on that problem, which is a major problem for it; and also that the Victorian government consider measures to assist the fuel retail sector to implement prepayment systems.

On the surface the whole issue seemed to be something that was fairly straightforward, but what happens when you have these investigations is that it obviously turns into quite a complex issue. One of the major issues was that there is no clear picture of the cost of fuel drive-offs, such as to what extent they are happening and other trends. All that basic information, which is one of the things you really need when you start an investigation into a matter such as this, is missing. Part of that is due to the fact that many retailers no longer report these fuel drive-offs because police are not acting on them on a case-by-case proposition anymore.

The prepayment issue is one that is often put up as an easy solution, but there was vehement opposition to prepayment from the fuel retail industry, mainly because fuel is only a minor component of operators' sales. They want people to come into the service stations where they have a whole range of other products and services available. That is the larger part of their income, so they were not keen about the prepayment method at all.

One thing which is only done on a limited scale is that a group of operators, often under the same ownership, work together in terms of collating all their own video footage. They share information about the numberplates of suspect cars or cars that have been involved in drive-offs in some of their other retail outlets. They also share descriptions of people who have been involved in fuel drive-offs. That sharing of information amongst a group of retailers has proved quite successful. It is very hard to do at scale because of the diverse nature of the industry, the diverse number and the diverse size of those that own and operate fuel outlets, but where it has been implemented it has worked quite well. What happens is that if a car comes into the forecourt and a numberplate, model of car or even a person is recognised, the pump is not activated by the console operator, so the person has to then come in and prepay. I think that is good on a limited scale.

In the end I think numberplate recognition technology will be the way to go. The technology is moving quite quickly. Somebody noted during the inquiry that even crooks have to fill up their cars with fuel. If you have numberplate recognition technology in every service station — this is thinking forward, but the cost may one day get there — then you can keep track not just in

terms of fuel drive-offs but in terms of a whole range of incidents where numberplate recognition would be very helpful. As we know, the sheriff uses that extensively. I think fuel retail outlets may be the best places to have these cameras and this system working, which may bring a broader good to the community. Once again, I think the recommendations are worthwhile, but I think we still have a long way to go in terms of combating this issue.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — I rise to make a contribution on the Electoral Matters Committee's report on its inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian state election. My contribution will focus on early voting.

As the report says, 1.2 million Victorians voted early, including 39.93 per cent of all registered voters in my electorate of Narre Warren South. It is a staggeringly high number. Over a quarter of the voters voted at the early voting centre in Hampton Park, and just under 11 per cent submitted a postal vote. This method of voting has been embraced by many Victorians and, as the report says, has increased by 155 per cent since the 2006 state election. It is really convenient for a lot of people who are unable to vote on election day for a lot of reasons, such as work commitments, health reasons or travel, to go down to the early voting centre and cast that very important vote.

I am very pleased that the committee recognises that early voting is now an established part of the Victorian electoral practice. You only have to walk around your own electorate at the moment and you will see long queues outside early voting centres for the federal election as well. This is a popular way of voting.

However, the report also indicates that there have been significant problems at our early voting centres. I spent a considerable amount of time during the last election — during the two-week early voting period — at the Narre Warren early voting centre at Hampton Park. It is well located in the Hampton Park shopping centre, which is regularly serviced by local bus routes. But I have got to say that a lot of people had a lot of problems finding where to vote. They were ringing my office to find out where it was. There was absolutely no signage or advertisement of the location.

In fact we put out some signs to try to assist people to find the early voting centre and, sadly I thought — we were trying to help people out — the City of Casey took offence to this. It did not appreciate it and

requested that we remove those non-political signs. In what is a blatant case of hypocrisy, the city had its blatantly partisan signs supporting the east–west link, paid for at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars by ratepayers mind you, plastered all over the electorate, yet it asked us to remove my assisting signs.

There were other problems too; it was not just finding the centre. But when people did find the early voting centre they did have to wait for very long periods of time. I am glad to say that the committee supports the existing early voting period as, in its own words:

a shorter early voting time frame may lead to longer queues at early voting centres.

I agree with that totally. It is clear that the demand is there, but the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) really needs to get its act together here. In the case of Hampton Park there were no toilet facilities in the VEC centre. The women and the men had to go looking around the shopping centre to find a toilet they could use. This contributed to further delays in providing service and was not a very nice working environment for VEC workers. We had to bring our own umbrella for shelter because there was no shelter out the front, and we had lots of people coming up to us and having a chat, which was very nice, but they were also getting out of the sunshine and out of the rain as well.

There was quite a bit of car parking, but in this case the biggest user of the car parking space was the Liberal Party candidate's campaign trailer, which she parked outside the early voting centre. When asked to have it removed she decided she was going to take no notice of anybody and left it there. It was regularly double-parked in the shopping centre when parking was at a premium.

I think it is very important that the VEC makes sure that people know that if they are going to vote early, the VEC will support that process with a clear indication of where the centre is located, that the centre will be in a facility that is good for staff, volunteers and campaigners and that we make sure that on the night we can see how that vote has gone. I mean, these votes are often very close, and we should be able to count that vote on the night of the election as well.

Family and Community Development Committee: abuse in disability services

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — I rise today to make a contribution on my reflections on the *Inquiry into abuse in disability services — Final Report*, which was tabled in May 2016. This work was undertaken by the Family and Community Development Committee, of which I

am a member. From the outset I would like to thank the committee for its work. I would like to particularly thank the staff: Dr Greg Gardiner, Dr Kelly Butler, Helen and Ashley. They really did a fantastic job in assisting us to compile this report. I would like to make particular note of the individuals with a disability, their friends and family and the advocacy groups and organisations that put in a lot of time and effort in order to make sometimes quite moving contributions about sensitive issues that have arisen in their experience of working in the disability sector.

We know that people with disability are sometimes the most vulnerable people in our community. We see that people who rely on their carers for their day-to-day activities are in a position where it is not easy for them to report any abuse, and there is a level of concern that if they report poor behaviour and inappropriate behaviour, that may mean that the people that they rely on to live and survive will no longer be around. So there is this really difficult structure that we have to work through. I would like to think that the recommendations that have been compiled within this report, if adopted in full, would make a difference and help to ensure that abuse in disability services does not continue.

A lot of the focus of the report is around safeguarding individuals and around mandatory reporting and how we share information about individuals who have worked within the disability sector who have behaved in an inappropriate way and how we can share that with other organisations to make sure that behaviour does not continue and other people are not harmed. There was a lot of work done on that, with references to that and recommendations within this report, and I think they are some of the most important recommendations and should be implemented immediately.

There are also some recommendations around resident choice. I found it quite confronting really to hear some of the submissions, where, for example, a woman who has a disability may not have a choice about her carer. So if they are menstruating, maybe they have only got a male carer who can assist them with their hygiene activities. I think it is really inappropriate that there is no choice around that, and we need to respect people with disability far more than that.

Something else that comes out of the report is around the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) rollout. Of course this is currently being rolled out across the state. My region in western Victoria is looking at the NDIS being rolled out in October 2017. It is only 15 months away, and we have only had 12 education sessions right across the state, none of which have

occurred in my electorate of Lowan. I have heard from a number of family members in particular who are deeply concerned that they just do not know what is going to happen to their loved ones when the NDIS is rolled out. I do call on the minister to improve his communication around the NDIS rollout, particularly in light of his commitment that the government-operated supported residential services will be closed.

I recently met with family members of Kathy at the Hunts Road supported accommodation home in Horsham, where Kathy was celebrating her 60th birthday. The family members were deeply concerned about what the future might be for Kathy. She has been in the home now for 16 years. She is absolutely thriving and is very, very happy. She feels safe and secure in her own home. There is a lack of understanding about what will happen in the future. Will the home close? Will it go to a private operator who may not continue with the existing staff? And for the staff that do a fabulous job, what will happen to them? Will they be working under similar conditions? Will they be made redundant? This lack of certainty is certainly creating a lot of anxiety within the home and particularly among the residents, the people with disability, and their family members. It is extremely important that the minister take immediate action to ensure that there is an understanding about what is going to happen to these people who live in this home.

Hunts Road is just one example within my electorate; I know there are many, many homes where people who are living in these supported residential services feel safe and secure. They have been treated well. They do not understand why things should change. I do urge the minister to make sure that he takes immediate action to guide people with disability and their family members in order to give them that security about a roof over their heads and the care that they are provided with. I also ask the government to implement all recommendations contained in the report.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — I rise to speak on the Electoral Matters Committee report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian state election. I would like to begin by thanking the chair of the committee, the member for Brighton, and the deputy chair, the member for Yuroke, for their efforts, as well as the other committee members, including the members for Pascoe Vale, Nepean and Morwell; Ms Patten, a member for Northern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council; and Mr Somyurek, a

member for South Eastern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council.

At the state election on 29 November 2014 I was privileged to be returned as the state member for Niddrie, but it was an even greater privilege to see a return to Labor government. I was very interested in this report because on election night Niddrie was not counted as having gone into the column of 'won' well into the evening. That was because of the high proportion of postal votes and pre-poll votes that had occurred in the Niddrie electorate. I was very sunburnt after the campaign, and the reason why was that I was located pretty much from dawn to dusk at the Milleara Mall in East Keilor, which was an incredibly popular pre-poll centre.

What also happened was there was a redistribution, as many members would be aware, before this election, and I got a whole new suburb, Aberfeldie, in my electorate. The Victorian Electoral Commission wrote to every new voter informing them that they were now in the Niddrie electorate, but that did also create a little bit of a sense of confusion about when they could vote and what polling booth they should go to. As part of my election campaign, I also put out a brochure highlighting that there was an early voting centre, and of the thousands of people that kept coming through, they often had my brochure in their hands. I thought the voting process was very well done, but I do believe — and I agree with the member for Brighton and other members that spoke prior to me — that these votes should be counted as soon as possible, rather than waiting and having the delay.

I really do find that this report is quite instructive, and the committee should be congratulated. More than 1.2 million Victorians cast their ballots before election day at the 2014 state election. Of these, 912 000 Victorians voted in person at an early voting centre, representing a 67 per cent increase from the 2010 election. There you have it; from the 2010 election to the 2014 election, there was a 67 per cent increase.

I know my office on Keilor Road, Niddrie, has been like Bourke Street since the federal election was called all those weeks ago with inquiries about where to vote. Many people wanted to vote at the pre-poll centre that we had during the state election, but that one is not open. They have got to get in their car and go a little bit further. So I think it is very important that when it comes to early voting centres — and we are seeing this trend happen, I think, right around the country, where people are wanting to vote early and get their vote cast — we really do need to make sure that these votes

are counted as quickly as possible. In the Niddrie electorate we had 34.37 per cent of electors cast their vote early. That represented the seventh highest rate of early voting in the state and the second highest in the metropolitan area, just behind St Albans.

I would like to congratulate committee members on their outstanding work on that report. I believe it was groundbreaking, and I support the committee's recommendation that votes that have been cast at early voting centres should be counted as soon as possible. I was one candidate waiting on election night. In a packed community hall at the Buckley Park Bowls Club, everyone was asking, 'Why haven't you come up yet, Ben? Why haven't you come up yet?'. I said, 'My hunch is I've had such a high proportion of early votes that the Victorian Electoral Commission isn't prepared to count Niddrie until a little bit later in the evening'. Eventually you come up on the TV screen, and you are very privileged and you are very humbled that all your hard work has paid off.

I do want to say that this report of the committee members, in particular the chair and deputy chair but also all the other members, is a fantastic report. I believe the recommendations are crucial in terms of how we go forward. It would be ideal if a lot of these recommendations were accepted and implemented before the 2018 election. I think the work the Victorian Electoral Commission is doing is instrumental. Let us make sure that we have a very smooth-running and wonderful 2018 election.

Family and Community Development Committee: abuse in disability services

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I rise to speak on the final report of the inquiry into abuse in disability services that was tabled in this house on 26 May this year. I was very pleased to be a member of that committee. The committee heard from over 100 witnesses as it toured throughout regional Victoria and of course held hearings in Melbourne. We inspected a number of sites during the tours. I would like to thank the committee secretariat, comprising Dr Greg Gardiner, Dr Kelly Butler and Helen Ross-Soden, for their outstanding contributions in the preparation of the report. In particular I would like to congratulate the committee chairman, the member for Bendigo West, for her passion and commitment to this inquiry, and also the deputy chairman, the member for Eildon, for her dedication to the production of the report.

Members may recall that this terrible issue of abuse of disabled members of our community residing in

disability residential care came to the fore in the *Four Corners* program on 24 November 2014. The program highlighted failures in the system in our state in dealing with allegations of abuse in disability services, and in that case it was Yooralla that was the subject of the program. The *Four Corners* program looked at how a well-respected disability service provider failed in its duty to protect those in its care. It detailed dreadful abuse of vulnerable people and highlighted the failure to take proper note of the warnings of whistleblowers and others.

The committee was tasked with inquiring into why abuse is not reported or acted upon and how it can be prevented. The recommendations in the report were to consider the interim measures necessary to strengthen the disability services system in Victoria prior to the introduction of the national disability insurance scheme and to focus on the powers and processes required to ensure a quality and safeguarding framework. The inquiry was wide ranging, and the report is a substantial one. We looked at the work of the disability services commissioner, and we considered complaints from many people about how reports were handled when they were actually made and many other criticisms of the system. A lot of recommendations have been made. Some of the important ones I think are for the mandatory reporting of abuse and around the processes for reporting. We looked at the disability workforce and made recommendations about better training and workforce selection.

An issue we considered which I took a particular interest in was that of gender in the prevention of abuse. The committee heard evidence that women with disability are more likely to experience abuse compared with men with disability. We heard that in an overview of relevant academic literature Ms Keran Howe found that overseas studies indicate that women with disabilities are raped and abused at a rate at least twice that of the general population of women and that 83 per cent of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

Throughout the inquiry the committee also heard evidence about the abuse of men with disability in disability services. At the Shepparton hearings, a mother told the committee that her son was first sexually assaulted at the age of nine. He continued to be sexually assaulted by disability support workers as a young man. It was truly terrible to see the grief of this mother, who more than anything wanted to care for her son and felt that she had been unable to do so and who had lost trust in the services available.

The evidence that was received by the committee overwhelmingly referred to abuse of people with disability being perpetrated by males. In these circumstances, it was important that this issue be appropriately addressed. The committee therefore recommended that the Disability Act 2006 be amended to provide that the gender preference of people with disability be recorded. In other words, their preference as to whether a male or female person provides their intimate care must be recorded, and it was my very strong view that in circumstances where a person is unable to make that election because of their disability a female support worker must be provided.

It was truly very saddening to hear much of the evidence of abuse. Parents suffered extraordinary distress in their efforts to ensure safety and proper care for their children. A mother, Michelle, brought in a photo of her daughter Erin to show us. As she spoke to us showing us the photo, she said, and I quote from the transcript:

She is a little girl, my little girl, who is profoundly disabled, and I would ask the committee for a brief moment to imagine that this little girl is your little girl, that she is your daughter, your granddaughter, perhaps a niece, perhaps a sister — because her life has great value and she is very real.

The distress of parents was palpable throughout the hearings. I hope that this report will give them some comfort, that the recommendations will be adopted by the government and that we will see an improvement in the standard of the way we care for vulnerable disabled people in our community.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 21 June; motion of
Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).**

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to continue my contribution on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Obviously being a country member of Parliament, I have great interest in the primary industries. Certainly having been a dairy farmer myself, I can relate to all things farming in our sector, and I take great interest in making sure that any legislation that comes from this house supports all farming sectors and does not make life any more difficult than it already is.

As you know in regard to the dairy industry, Acting Speaker McGuire, farmers are going through some tumultuous times at the moment, and certainly the

opening price is not that satisfactory. The conditions that they deal with in terms of Mother Nature, the Australian dollar and now the price of milk put pressure on them all the time, and this legislation, which the opposition is not opposing, will go some way to supporting our industries.

One of the areas I do want to touch on in the brief moment that I have is the part around the Wildlife Act 1975 and the multiple changes to that act. First of all, the bill proposes a refusal of new licence applications by people found guilty of an offence. This will close a loophole so that the Game Management Authority can refuse to grant an application for a new hunting licence to a person who has been found guilty of an offence under the Wildlife Act, and I certainly strongly support this position.

Being on the Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee, I understand that the new inquiry it is about to embark on relates to feral animals on Crown land. My electorate stretches from Cobram to Bright, and when I am up in Bright and Harrietville I seem to dodge sambar deer for half the trip home and then I dodge kangaroos for the second half of the trip. I am very lucky to get home with the car in one piece. The panelbeater has done very well out of me over the years.

Certainly this legislation will support the fact that the Game Management Authority can decide to refuse a grant, because what we do not need is more cowboys, so to speak. Of course we want to get rid of feral animals, but it needs to be done in a controlled manner and an organised manner. If not, we end up with cowboys all over the place, we end up with carcasses, and then what happens is that the wild dogs feed off those and they multiply, and that creates more problems for our community. I support the legislation because getting rid of feral animals is important but it should be done in an organised manner.

I also want to just briefly touch on one of the other provisions which concerns dangerous dogs and some of the commitments that the Minister for Agriculture has made in the other place. I do have concerns, and I have said it in this place before, about the legitimate dog-breeding industries that have been targeted by certain groups, and the minister is either supporting or certainly not trying to sway these people from the criticism that they are directing at the dog-breeding industry. It is a registered industry.

The minister talked about illegal puppy farms. A puppy farm is in fact an illegal operation, so we should not confuse things. A puppy farm is an illegal operation

whereas a domestic dog-breeding centre is obviously registered and aboveboard, so we should not confuse the two. If the minister continues to go down this path of reducing the number of breeding bitches that are available or allowed to be used in domestic breeding establishments, then what we will find is that the black market will just grow and grow and grow.

We certainly know that banning things in the past has not always worked, and reducing the number of domestic breeders will drive the black market. That is where my concerns are, so I just want to put those on the record. Considering that, we are not opposing the bill, and I do not see too much in there that is going to cause any major grief to our primary industries sector, which is an extremely important part of our community. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I take great pleasure in joining the debate on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The bill is somewhat of an omnibus bill that makes discrete amendments to six acts to improve their administration and operation and to reduce the regulatory burden.

In terms of the details of the bill, the acts to be amended include the Domestic Animals Act 1994, to extend the moratorium on the destruction of dogs declared to be of restricted breeds from the 30 September 2016 to 30 September 2017 to enable the government to respond to a current parliamentary inquiry. There are also amendments to the Public Administration Act 2004 to replace the chairperson of the Game Management Authority (GMA) with the CEO, as the person with the functions of a public sector body head in relation to the employees of the GMA.

The bill makes amendments to the Wildlife Act 1975 to permit the Game Management Authority to refuse to grant a game licence to a person found guilty of an offence under the Wildlife Act. It permits the GMA to specify a disqualification period of up to five years for the holder of a cancelled licence. It permits the GMA to conduct controlled operations in relation to hunting, taking or destroying game, and it amends the definition of a 'punt gun' to allow the use of approved firearms for hunting. The bill makes the CEO of the GMA responsible for reporting controlled operations to the Victorian Inspectorate, and it requires that notice be provided via the *Government Gazette* rather than in a newspaper for notices prohibiting, regulating or controlling the taking, destroying or hunting of wildlife along with notices of emergency closure, which happened earlier this year.

The bill clarifies the procedures of the Emergency Closures Advisory Committee, and it includes a new independent chairperson of that committee. It also proposes to amend the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 to repeal the Victorian Agricultural Chemicals Advisory Committee.

The bill amends the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 to allow the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria to immediately suspend a practitioner at the commencement of a preliminary investigation into a practitioner's fitness to practise and aligns the determinations applicable to a practitioner who is found to have engaged in unprofessional conduct of a serious nature by a formal hearing panel but who has ceased to be registered to the determinations applicable to a registered practitioner.

Finally, the bill before the house amends part 2A of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 to allow for a notice to comply to be issued to a person committing or likely to commit an offence, regardless of whether the person is the owner of the animal, the person in charge of the animal or another person. It also changes the maximum duration of scientific procedures premises licences, scientific procedures fieldwork licences and specified animals breeding licences from three to four years. The amendments are broadly aimed at improving efficiency of administration, correctly allocating responsibilities, relieving the regulatory burden and protecting animal health and welfare.

The parliamentary inquiry into regulatory arrangements for restricted breed dogs and the associated moratorium on their destruction fulfils a government election commitment, and the extension to the moratorium will also enable the government to implement its response. I would like to go to these amendments to the bill. Last year the Andrews government fulfilled an election commitment to impose the moratorium on the destruction of restricted breed dogs, while the Legislative Council's economy and infrastructure committee undertook an inquiry into that regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs and related matters. This bill will amend the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to extend that moratorium from 30 September this year to next year.

There is no doubt that the community is very concerned about the need to restrict dangerous dogs, but there has certainly been evidence suggesting that it should not simply be about the restriction of some dogs. I know that a former head of the RSPCA, Hugh Wirth, had strong views about some breeds, particularly American pit bulls, but there are a number of other views to the contrary. I am a dog owner who acquired a lovely dog

of uncertain parentage. We know that she is an American Staffordshire terrier mixed with one or two other breeds. We rehoused her after she was very well cared for by the volunteers at Ararat Dog Rescue. Certainly Bella looks like a fairly fierce sort of character, but she is nothing like that at all.

Staffies have got a bad name sometimes because of the way people have treated and tried to train them, but originally the English staffy, from which the American staffy is derived, was the original nanny dog. At the time of the industrial revolution, when both parents were required to work, English staffies were valued for their gentleness and were left to mind the children. I really recommend a staffy, or an amstaff like we have, because they are really gentle. You do need to be careful with how they respond to other creatures, but certainly with humans, if they are treated and trained well, they are the most beautiful and gentle of dogs. I recommend in particular the provisions in this bill that relate to that.

While I am speaking on this section, I really want to commend the reform that has occurred within local government around dog pounds. Many councils across the state really take pride in saying that they never, ever euthanase an animal and always make every effort to rehouse them. Certainly there is a fabulous network of volunteers who run shelters across the state. That is their life, whether they are running them on a full-time basis, providing homes or fostering dogs and companion animals that are waiting to be rehoused. We know what a benefit pet ownership has. We had the remarkable visit last sitting week of the Bondi Vet, who reiterated the health benefits of pet ownership.

There are amendments to the Wildlife Act 1975, and I very much commend those. I know that some in this place are critical of the shooting community, but I am not one of those. We have an amazing network of responsible shooting organisations in this state, and they play a very good role. I commend many of them but particularly Field and Game Australia, the Victorian branch, which does remarkable work in conservation across the state and in advocating responsible firearm ownership. Like the member for Ovens Valley, who spoke before me, I have a lot of problems getting home to my place with the number of samba deer around the place, and I also had a trip to the panelbeater due to them. With pests like the samba deer, the responsible shooting community in Victoria plays an amazing role in making sure that these pests can be controlled for the benefit of our environment but also for the sake of road safety in the state.

In the remaining time allocated to me I will talk about the amendments to the Veterinary Practice Act 1997. It is a really responsible thing for government to do, because Victoria has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world and, as the Bondi Vet told members here two weeks ago, owning pets can be a lot of fun and provide us with company, stress relief and unconditional love, but we need to make sure that ownership teaches children responsibility and helps them to develop their social and nurturing skills. We need to make sure that pets are properly cared for and receive qualified medical care, and it is important that the community has confidence in our veterinarians. This is a comprehensive omnibus bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — Briefly, before question time starts, I am also pleased to rise to speak on the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. As previous speakers have outlined, this is an omnibus bill that proposes amendments to six acts. The amendments to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 abolish the Victorian Agricultural Chemicals Advisory Committee. The bill also makes changes to the Veterinary Practice Act 1997, which allows some changes to the way the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria operates to ensure that both animals and the community are protected in the event of investigations. There are amendments to the Public Administration Act 2004, to the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and to the Wildlife Act 1975.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — My question is to the Premier. Given that you never bothered to condemn the United Firefighters Union for its bullying of your former minister, the member for Brunswick, and with you claiming that equality is not negotiable, why did you bully a female minister out of her job simply because she did not agree with you?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Euroa for her question, albeit a ridiculous question that I reject entirely. That deals with the question.

Supplementary question

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — Premier, you bullied the member for Brunswick out of her job when she tried to increase female firefighter representation, and you forced Lucinda Nolan out of her job after she opposed an enterprise bargaining agreement that discriminated against women. In your state of equality, does equality only exist when women agree with you?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Euroa for her supplementary question, one that is about as sensible as the first question she asked. It is a nonsense question, and I reject it entirely. The member for Euroa is mistaken, wrong. The question makes no sense and no reference to reality — none whatsoever.

Ministers statements: Melbourne Metro rail project

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am very pleased to rise to update the house on a new government initiative, and that is of course the signing of the first major contract for Australia's most important public transport infrastructure project, the Melbourne Metro tunnel. We are setting a cracking pace in the delivery of this critical infrastructure for our city and state. I joined the Minister for Public Transport and of course the Lord Mayor of Melbourne this morning to announce that John Holland had been awarded this \$320 million contract for early works, which will start in just a few weeks, and for major construction, which we are all very excited to say will begin early in 2017.

We are well ahead of earlier timetables and certainly well ahead of some who talked about this project and never moved a shovel of dirt on it. Those works will mean an international-style metro. So from Sunbury to Pakenham, we will have a new rail corridor, a new tunnel to make sure that trains run so frequently that no timetable will be required — world-class public transport for a world-class city. Whether it is the five new station boxes or the extra track that is being laid, this will transform our city and our public transport system.

What is more, there are 3900 jobs associated with this wonderful project. It is fully funded, and it will be delivered by this Labor government — fully funded, with no support from those opposite or their mates in Canberra, who would rather take selfies on public transport than actually build a better public transport system. It is fully funded, and those opposite do not like it because we are delivering what they could only ever talk about — action instead of words.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — My question is to the Minister for Women. The equal opportunity commission and the government's own Crown counsel, Melinda Richards, both say the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) your cabinet has endorsed will discriminate against women. Minister, is it your policy to ignore the commission and Crown counsel and to support an EBA that discriminates against women?

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I thank the member very much for giving me this opportunity to talk about this important issue about raising the status of women in our community. It is my first question before the house, and I do very much welcome this opportunity, because of course our government has put the issue of improving the status of women right at the core of our business and our agenda as a government.

The reason we have done this is that we understand the intrinsic link between the status of women and attitudes towards women and the rates of violence against women. The truth is that every member of this house — on both sides, with every Parliament and in all of the political parties, in fact — needs to maintain their rage with respect to this, whether it be about an enterprise bargaining agreement — —

Ms Victoria — On a point of order, Speaker, my question was very specific, and it was about the EBA and the United Firefighters Union (UFU). I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question that was asked of her.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, if I recall the question correctly, the question to the Minister for Women was about government policy and asking her to reflect on government policy. I think she was doing a sterling job presenting that government policy to the house, and I ask that you rule the point of order out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order at this point. The minister, to continue.

Ms RICHARDSON — Whether we are talking about an EBA, whether we are talking about a schoolyard, whether we are talking about a business or whether we are talking about the private sector or the public sector, every single member of this house — in fact, every single member of the community — has a role to play in improving the status of women and in

changing attitudes about women because of the direct link — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms RICHARDSON — Of course on a day like this and with a question like that, I could point fingers across the chamber, and I could call for an increase of numbers across the chamber, but that would not — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister, to continue in silence. I ask government members and opposition members to allow the minister to continue in silence.

Ms RICHARDSON — But I do not believe that it would advance the cause of women or improve the status of women to be talking about that issue in that way. There are so many places in which each and every one of us can maintain our rage with respect to the status of women — in workplaces, in schoolyards, in EBAs, in all sorts — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has now had ample opportunity to set the context to the question. I ask you to bring her back to answering the specific question about the Country Fire Authority's EBA.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, again I renew the point I made earlier: the question was broad and went to a range of matters around government policy, and again I think the minister is presenting that information to the house quite well. If those opposite do not like the answer, that is not enough of a reason to take a point of order.

Ms Victoria — On the point of order, Speaker, I was very specific in my question, asking about the equal opportunity commission and the government's own Crown counsel's advice being dismissed. It was not broad; it was very narrow in its scope.

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

Ms RICHARDSON — I know that this issue does raise passions across the chamber, but the truth is that each and every one of us has a role to play, and with respect to any advice that the government receives from the equal opportunity commission or from anybody engaged in this debate, rest assured that we will not take one step backwards when it comes to addressing the

status of women and addressing those attitudes that drive the rates of violence — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair is unable to hear the minister. I request silence from all members. The minister, to continue in silence.

Ms RICHARDSON — I would like to assure every single member of this house that our government will not take one step backwards with respect to addressing the status of women or those attitudes towards women that drive the rates of violence against women. Wherever advice is received to secure and advance the status of women, we will take steps to ensure that we do just that.

Supplementary question

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — The CFA has been at the Fair Work Commission trying to get the UFU to agree to EBA changes that will support more women to become firefighters. Minister, with your Premier saying that equality is not negotiable, is it your policy to back more women in the CFA, or do you back the UFU?

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. However, I would say this: with respect to any opportunity that we see to advance the cause of women, we will not take a backward step. I would encourage all members on both sides of the house to engage in this debate, because whether it comes to fire services, whether it comes to the private sector or whether it comes to the public sector there is an enormous challenge before us.

Ms Victoria — On a point of order, Speaker, again I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question that she was asked. It was very specific. Does she back the CFA or does she back the Premier and the UFU?

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the minister was very clearly and directly answering the question that was asked. Again the question went to references about government policy and the position of the Premier and the minister, and the minister is quite perfectly and adequately answering that question. What we do know is that there will not be another question asked by a female shadow frontbencher because they only have two. So this will be the last question from female shadow frontbenchers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House will resume her seat. There is no point of order. The minister, to continue.

Ms RICHARDSON — Both I, as Minister for Women, and the Premier, and in fact every member of our government, support the advance of women and improvements in the status of women. Whether they are working in fire services, whether they are working in private sector or the public sector, we need to change the attitudes towards women and drive down the rates of violence against them.

Ministers statements: Melbourne Metro rail project

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — I am very pleased to advise the house of a new initiative by the Andrews Labor government. We are getting shovels in the ground soon on the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel project. The additional new information that I am pleased to provide is that as part of the metro tunnel major works package that was announced this morning by the Premier and me, there will be 85 000 cubic metres of soil and material removed from the two station sites at the north and the south of the city. That is the equivalent of 34 Olympic-sized swimming pools worth of material. It is material that was never contemplated being moved by those opposite as they left this project on the shelf and then knocked it off altogether. This work will be starting next year.

In 2017 we will see this major construction work starting on our important public transport infrastructure project — and indeed there will be work starting sooner than that. There will be important service relocation happening in just a few weeks time. In 18 months the Andrews Labor government has moved quickly to get this major project underway. But we have done some more analysis. I am pleased to advise the house of analysis at a national level about people who see the importance of this major infrastructure project and the jobs it creates. We have seen at a national level that there is one political party that has promised 38 times the amount of support to this project than some others. There are some in the Liberal Party — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair must be able to continue to hear the minister when the minister makes a ministers statement. The minister, in silence.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is debating the issue. I ask you to bring her back to compliance with sessional orders.

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, Speaker, under the sessional orders I am required to provide new information. I am providing new information now on government action. I am providing information on an analysis that has been done, comparing federal election commitments to the metro tunnel project, and I would be very keen to continue to provide that new information to the house.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will now come back to continuing her ministers statement.

Ms ALLAN — This is Australia's most important public transport infrastructure project, and those of us on this side will take a \$380 million commitment and the leadership of Bill Shorten and federal Labor over small change and selfies any day of the week. We want to see shovels not selfie sticks when it comes to the metro tunnel project.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — My question is to the Premier. Sacked Country Fire Authority (CFA) chair, John Peberdy, says the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) endorsed by your cabinet will cost between \$600 million and \$700 million over the next four years. Premier, can you guarantee that the total cost of this EBA will not exceed \$160 million over four years, as your government has claimed?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for South-West Coast for her question. The answer to her question is yes.

Supplementary question

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — Premier, given the wild disparity in the cost estimates for this EBA, will you agree to provide all of Treasury's costings, together with the CFA costings, to the Auditor-General so that all Victorians can see the true cost of your deal with Peter Marshall?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for South-West Coast for her question. She is right to say that there has been a wild disparity in cost estimates. I think the person she referenced earlier, at one moment he was saying it was a \$1.2 billion cost and then it was a \$600 million cost. With the greatest respect to him and to the questioner, the government gets its costings advice from the Department of Treasury and Finance. That is who provides the advice. It was not often called to provide that advice to those opposite because they never reached agreement with

their workforce. Whether it was ambulance, nurses, teachers, there were so many disputes and never a resolution.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very narrow. It was simply whether the Premier would allow the costings to be sent to the Auditor-General or not. He should answer that question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier, to continue. There is no point of order at this stage.

Mr ANDREWS — As far as information available to the Auditor-General is concerned, I would simply inform the questioner and all honourable members that the Auditor-General is independent. The Auditor-General can seek whatever documents he sees fit to seek, and the government will fully cooperate with any and all audits conducted by the Auditor-General.

Ministers statements: western distributor

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I rise to update the house on a new milestone reached in delivering the Andrews government's western distributor project. Yesterday I announced that a world-class field of construction firms have been short-listed to build Melbourne's much-needed second river crossing. Three consortia have been chosen to tender for the design and construction of the western distributor, which will slash congestion and take thousands of trucks off the inner city streets of the west. Three consortia were selected and are as follows: John Holland and CPB Contractors; Lendlease Engineering and Bouygues Construction; and an international consortium of Salini Impregilo, Fluor Australia and Lane Worldwide Infrastructure.

These world-class constructors will prepare fully costed designs for the western distributor as well as innovative design and construction methods that will ensure the best outcome for motorists and the community. A reference design is being developed which will take into account community feedback after extensive consultation.

We are very much getting on with the job of delivering these vital projects. Unlike those opposite — who sat still for four years; who could have been champions but did nothing — we are getting on with it. We could actually deliver. If you look at recent figures coming out of state Treasury and the like, we have gross state final demand at 3.2 per cent and economic growth estimated by CommSec at 3.2 per cent — the best in

the country. But there is only one thing holding us back — that is, the paucity of federal government investment in infrastructure. It is still sitting at 9 per cent of total infrastructure spend in the whole of the country. Instead of delivering money to projects with business cases of 0.45, you can come to Victoria, you can get bang for your buck and you can get benefit-cost ratios of 1.3 per cent and actually grow the total Australian economy very well.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — My question is to the Premier. My electorate is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world and suffered horrendously on Black Saturday. This week the independent chair of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), John Peberdy — whom you sacked — said that the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) is potentially dangerous. Premier, why are you ignoring expert advice and putting at risk the safety of country communities simply to ram through an EBA?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Eildon for her question. I spent a lot of time in communities affected in the local member's constituency in the aftermath of Black Saturday and many, many times since. The healing, the rebuilding, the process of support was not a short one, and in many respects it is still ongoing, and I would not want to think that anybody would seek to make a political point out of that. Surely no-one would do that. From our government that support will be consistent and long lasting for those communities and any community affected by fire — whether it be the Indigo Valley, where I was earlier this year, whether it be Wye River, where I was over Christmas, or inevitably — sadly, tragically, but inevitably — those communities that we will almost certainly have to visit in the next long, hot, dry and dangerous summer and fire season that we will confront.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — In terms of reckless decisions, in terms of danger, I do not think cutting funding to the CFA makes anyone safer. I do not think thumbing your nose at the entire international scientific community and saying, 'We don't reckon there is a link between firefighting and some forms of cancer', I do not think that is too safe.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, this was a very specific question about whether the enterprise bargaining agreement the Premier is pushing through

will prejudice the safety of country Victorians. I think the entire community is entitled to a direct answer to that question. I ask you to ask the Premier to do so.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier can make comments in passing. The Chair regards that to be the case now. The Chair now requests that the Premier come back to the question.

Mr ANDREWS — There was additional funding in last year's budget and there is additional funding in this year's budget. We have been dealing with the mess at Fiskville and responding in full to the Hazelwood mine fire inquiry reopened by our government, because many matters were left unresolved. As far as industrial agreements for the future are concerned, they are about protecting the community, as this government is, as every member of the Country Fire Authority is, as every firefighter whether they be volunteer or career is fundamentally committed to doing. Each and every one of them, volunteer or career — and not just in the fire services but in our ambulance service, Victoria Police members, members of the Red Cross, members of the State Emergency Service — all of them, will be properly supported, not with political games but with real action and an agreement and a way forward, because we are more concerned about firefighters than we are about fundraising, which is not something those opposite could ever lay claim to.

Supplementary question

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — Volunteer firefighters and the former Country Fire Authority (CFA) chair are warning you and your government that this enterprise bargaining agreement is a risk to safety. Ian Martin from CFA district 22 in Shepparton, Lance King from district 27 in Gippsland and Eric Collier from district 8 are just a few of those who have publicly spoken out about the dangers this enterprise bargaining agreement will create. Premier, apart from Peter Marshall and the United Firefighters Union, who has advised you that it will be better for public safety to go against the bushfires royal commission recommendation and create a dual chain of command on the fireground?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Eildon for her question. I am not sure if she cited a specific recommendation from the royal commission. There were many. One of them, and a submission made by the Country Fire Authority, was a call for additional career firefighters, and that is the commitment that we took to the election, and that is the commitment that we are delivering that we made the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Listen, and this is a novel concept for those opposite, you make a commitment and then you deliver it — 350 extra CFA firefighters — —

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Speaker, this question was specifically about creation of a dual chain of command on the fireground, and I ask you to bring the Premier back to it.

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

Mr ANDREWS — The fact of the matter is, I am not sure exactly what the question was about — it seems to have changed between the question and the point of order. The question referred to the Black Saturday royal commission. This agreement and our government's policy and approach in word and in deed is consistent with that royal commission's recommendations and an overriding, an absolutely clear responsibility to invest, to keep our promises and make Victorians safe — and that is what we are doing.

Ministers statements: employment

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Industry and Employment) — I rise to outline new achievements in delivering jobs for the removal of nine of our most congested level crossings between Caulfield and Dandenong. With over 2000 jobs being created by the removal of these crossings, I am exceptionally pleased to inform the house that today already 600 staff have been inducted on this project. I am also exceptionally pleased to inform the house that within the 600 staff, 8 are apprentices, 4 are cadets and 7 are trainees. These are vitally important opportunities for young people to get a start in these major projects.

I am highlighting this to the house because apprenticeship completions dropped from 45 400 in 2010 to 34 300 in 2014, and during that same period, apprenticeship commencements also dropped from 85 600 in 2010 to 48 100 in 2014. Furthermore, I am also very pleased to update the house on progress being made towards achieving our target of 2.5 per cent of the workforce on this project being undertaken by Aboriginal Victorians. Already six Aboriginal Victorians have been employed to work on this project, and we are confident that we will lift this number considerably.

We know that sometimes all that is needed is an opportunity — an opportunity for a young person to get their first chance or for a retrenched worker to be re-skilled. I know that everyone in the house —

everyone — can see value in this, but sadly that is not the case. It is disappointing to see that this critical project is being hijacked by the opposition in the other place. It simply does not care about workers and jobs, and it stands in the way while we want to get on with these projects.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now debating the issue. If he wants a debate on it, he should move a motion accordingly, otherwise I ask you to bring him back to compliance with sessional orders.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to come back to making a ministers statement. The minister, to continue.

Mr NOONAN — On jobs we will not be stopped, and it is time that those opposite got on board or got out of the way, because we are about jobs and we are about helping young people.

Honourable members interjecting.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — My question is to the Premier. The Westmere fire brigades group is a group of 19 fire brigades that covers an area of 1 million acres, with 1000 volunteer firefighters and 400 privately owned fire tankers. These people are the front line against fires in the Grampians. On Monday they unanimously declared no confidence in you and your new minister because you are refusing to listen to their concerns. Premier, you keep saying you have ended this dispute, but is it not a fact that you have ended a dispute with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) but at the expense of the respect and trust of 60 000 Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the member for Ripon for her question. The answer is no. What I can say, though, beyond that very straightforward answer to her question, is that we increased funding in last year's budget and we increased funding and support in this year's budget. What does that look like and what does that mean? It means 70 additional trucks for CFA volunteer brigades — it sure beats cutting their budget — a rebuild of a number of important stations, a number of important stations rebuilt under this government — —

Ms Staley — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

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

Mr ANDREWS — It means additional funding to respond to the mess at Fiskville — the dangerous, potentially deadly mess at Fiskville. We had to deal with that matter because others had refused to deal with that matter. It was a bit like Hazelwood. We had to reopen that mine fire inquiry because others had refused to deal with it appropriately.

In terms of many of the brigades certainly, perhaps all of the brigades that the member has referenced, they are not integrated brigades. They will be unaffected by additional firefighters being employed in integrated brigades. If the member is asking me to apologise for turning out more firefighters to dangerous fires, well no, I will not apologise for that. That is a commitment we made and one we are honouring.

This agreement will have no impact, no negative impact and perhaps only positive impacts, on the CFA as we bring about the cultural change, the organisational change, that the human rights and equal opportunity commission calls for, the fire services review calls for and brigades across this state call for — more resources, stronger support, being able to be focused on the fire season that is coming rather than on an industrial dispute, spiteful and nasty and nearly 1300 days long, given to us — gifted in one of the great acts of generosity, one of many — by the former failed government. This was inherited by us, but it will be ended and resolved by us as well in the interests of a safer community.

Just as last year we invested in better fire services, just as this year we invested in better fire services, the same will be true of next year and the year after that. The member for Ripon can be assured that, rather than talk, we will actually deliver, something she would be at best unfamiliar with.

Supplementary question

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Premier, yesterday you said that there is still a role for consultation with brigades like the Westmere group, but given cabinet has endorsed the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) and you are claiming the dispute is now ended, what changes can volunteers still make to what is in or out of the EBA, or is your promise of further consultation just a sham?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — With the greatest of respect to the member for Ripon, I would have thought a sham was when you set up a website pretending to care about firefighters but it is actually a fundraiser. I

think the challenge for the member for Ripon and all those opposite is: will they commit to return every cent raised to the CFA? It is the least they could do, having cut the CFA's budget when they were last in government. That would be a sham, Speaker — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Roads Road Safety and the Minister for Industry and Employment are warned. The Leader of The Nationals is entitled to silence when making a point of order.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was very specifically about what opportunities volunteers will have to change what is a disastrous EBA to actually support them. I would ask you to bring the Premier back to answering that question to actually show some respect to the volunteers here in Victoria rather than just slagging off at them.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Minister for Roads and Road Safety

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Roads and Road Safety will withdraw from the house for the period of 1 hour.

Minister for Roads and Road Safety withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining
agreement**

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair upholds the point of order. The Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Speaker, I thank you for your guidance. I am pleased to be able to update the house and confirm for the house that just a few moments ago in respect of court action the CFA board and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria have reached agreement to continue consultation — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, now consultation is a bad thing!

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Members for Rowville and Hawthorn

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

Honourable members for Rowville and Hawthorn withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — So apparently consultation is a bad thing now. There are some who would like this to go on and on and on and use it as a fundraiser and a political football. The government will have none of that.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier's time has now expired.

Ministers statements: Safe Schools program

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I rise to detail a new initiative of the Andrews Labor government. This week I have given approval for my department to provide the \$300 000 shortfall resulting from Malcom Turnbull's cowardly cave-in to right-wing extremists regarding the Safe Schools program. I am also pleased to inform the house that more than half of government secondary schools in Victoria have now signed up to the program. In our schools today Safe Schools is saving lives, and that is why we are investing this further \$300 000. We know that 75 per cent of same-sex-attracted young people are bullied and that the vast majority of this bullying occurs in our schools. We know that same-sex-attracted young people are six times more likely to attempt suicide.

However, we have not won the battle against homophobia. The tragic events of recent times are a reminder that we cannot take a backward step in tackling hate. Teachers and students need to be equipped with the materials to stand up to homophobia. That is why we have committed to these additional funds. For six years, across the country and across governments, there was broad support for the program. I quote:

Our support for Safe Schools Coalition Victoria is an important step in ensuring school communities have the resources and confidence to challenge homophobia and respect diversity.

Those are the words — now he has left the chamber — of the former Liberal education minister, the member for Nepean. And he could not be more right.

However, I wish I could advise the house that there was still bipartisan support for rolling out this vital anti-bullying program in our schools. Regrettably, though the Leader of the Opposition has announced his eagerness to abolish the Safe Schools program. Respect should not be an elective in Victorian schools, and under the Andrews government it will not be.

The SPEAKER — Order! The time for questions without notice and ministers statements has expired.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER — Order! On 9 June the member for Burwood took a point of order about the constituency question asked by the member for Carrum on 8 June. The member's point of order centred on whether the matter was a constituency issue, noting that a question on a similar topic had been ruled out of order as the previous question had not been related to that member's electorate.

Having reviewed the member for Carrum's question, I do not uphold the point of order. The member advised the house in asking her question that she had been contacted by principals, teachers and parents, and I take that to mean people in her electorate. In fact the member did that twice. The member could, however, have been clearer about this, and I ask all members to make sure their constituency questions relate very clearly to local electorate matters.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Mr Northe — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, I just wish to raise for your attention a point of order

with respect to a question on notice that I put to the Minister for Public Transport on 3 May with respect to the sky rail project and what impact that might have on Gippsland V/Line services. I would ask that you highlight that to the minister as soon as possible so I can provide the relevant information back to my community.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will refer that matter to the Speaker to follow through on.

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, last sitting I raised a point of order with regard to two unanswered questions on notice to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, one of which is now four months old. It related to vehicle movements near schools. Now, the minister called out across the chamber, ‘I do real work; I don’t do work on stunts’. I do not regard questions on notice relating to vehicle movements near schools to be a stunt. I have very little confidence that he intends to actually answer those questions I have put. I would ask you, Deputy Speaker, if you could please chase those up so that I do get the responses that my constituency deserves.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I will pass that on to the Speaker to follow through with.

Malvern electorate

Mr M. O’BRIEN (Malvern) — (Question 7671) My question is to the Minister for Police. Recent Crime Statistics Agency data records that my Malvern electorate has suffered a 10 per cent increase in offences in the last 12 months. This includes a number of aggravated burglaries in which armed offenders have attacked families in their homes in the dead of night. In the last 48 hours two violent carjackings in Malvern and Malvern East have heightened community concerns about rising crime.

In this environment my constituents are worried that the Malvern police station, which currently operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, will have its hours cut under Labor and be closed when the community needs it open. Today the police association secretary, Ron Iddles, told 3AW that there have been night-time closures at the Malvern police station in the last six weeks. So I ask: will the Minister for Police rule out any cuts to the opening hours of Malvern police station and guarantee it will remain open 24 hours a day to protect the people of my electorate?

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (Question 7672) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for

Agriculture in the other place. Part of the state district of Essendon’s western boundary is the mighty Maribyrnong River. Improving the health and quality of the Maribyrnong River is of enormous interest to my community. What is the latest information on plans to stock the Maribyrnong River with estuary perch?

Lowan electorate

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — (Question 7673) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. How will the minister protect small businesses in the Lowan electorate from a proposed VicRoads amendment to registration requirements for new light vehicles? On 10 June 2016 VicRoads issued a newsletter with limited circulation which outlined changes to registration for cab chassis vehicles fitted with a non-manufacturer-supplied tray, with almost immediate effect.

The implication of these registration changes is that all third-party manufactured and fitted trays for cab chassis vehicles have to have a vehicle assessment signatory scheme (VASS) certification. There are no local VASS certifiers in Lowan, so a tray manufacturing business such as McErvale Steel Construction in Hamilton would have to pay a VASS certifier to travel from Melbourne to certify every tray it produces, at an additional cost of up to \$1300 per tray. Further, local car dealerships would have to take every new cab chassis with a non-manufacturer tray to Warrnambool to be registered. This is cost prohibitive and unfairly discriminates against small businesses in country Victoria.

I therefore ask the minister to provide information as to how the government will protect small businesses in the Lowan electorate that will be significantly impacted by the proposed VicRoads amendment to registration requirements for new light vehicles modified before initial registration.

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (Question 7674) My constituency question is to the Minister for Planning. I refer to two planning scheme amendments prepared by the Shire of Nillumbik: amendments C81 and C101. What is the current status of these two amendments?

Hastings electorate

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) — (Question 7675) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Last month the Andrews government announced that the Stony Point railway line in my electorate will be closed from 25 June to 31 July 2016 and the Frankston line will be closed from 24 June until 31 July 2016, between Caulfield and Moorabbin, to allow for the removal of three level crossings on the Frankston line and that bus services will replace trains on those lines.

In a media release of 5 May the Acting Premier and the public transport minister announced a ‘37-day construction blitz’ to remove the three crossings and said that not a single day would be wasted in doing so. I ask the minister: will construction works on the removal of these level crossings continue seven days a week, day and night, during the 37-day construction blitz to help minimise disruption to residents and small businesses along the Frankston line so that the passenger service on the Stony Point line can return to normal sooner rather than later?

Thomastown electorate

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — (Question 7676) I have a question for the Minister for Education. I ask for information on the outcome of applications for funding under the Andrews Labor government’s capital funding program for non-government schools. The St Mary of the Cross Mackillop Catholic Parish Primary School in the growth area of north Epping has applied under this fund to enable the construction of new learning areas and other important learning spaces. There is a high need for school places in the area — for example, the school has an enrolment of 425 students, and the nearby state school has over 1400 children enrolled. New learning spaces for all schools are absolutely vital in this area, and they are desperately needed.

Sandringham electorate

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — (Question 7677) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Public Transport. It arises in the context of a bayside resident who recently observed a railway commuter, a mother with young children, struggling on platform 13 on the Sandringham line because the toilet facilities in the main concourse were closed and there was a lack of any other available facilities. My question is: is the minister able to redress the circumstance so that young mothers in need are not placed in a position of difficulty when seeking to access toilet facilities, which are not present on platform 13

and no longer present on the main concourse while works are being undertaken?

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — (Question 7678) My constituency question is to the Minister for Youth Affairs. Anglicare Victoria is proposing to develop a centre to help connect disconnected youth in Broadmeadows, where the convergence of coalition governments, state and federal, left unemployment equal to the rate in Greece and youth unemployment at more than 40 per cent. The Anglicare proposal would link opportunities for young people to attain a range of hands-on skills for jobs in building, construction and creative industries and deliver sport and recreation facilities. The redevelopment of the old Ericsson building would provide access to social enterprises, combining them with basketball courts and recreational facilities based on successful models such as The Shed Skatepark in Cranbourne and the RampFest Indoor Skate Park in Braybrook. I ask the minister: what is the latest information concerning the available support to assist Anglicare Victoria with this proposal for Broadmeadows?

Ringwood electorate

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — (Question 7679) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport and relates to residents living parallel to the works being done at the Heatherdale level crossing removal on Buxton Road in Mitcham. One resident reports choosing the location to live because of the green, leafy, mature tree-lined feel of the street. They now describe the area as having been devastated by tree removals. Instead of coming home to their pocket of greenery, they now face full views of graffitied fences and no trees. One resident had his house valued before the works and recently, after the tree removal. He reports that the agent agreed that prospective buyers will be significantly reduced in number and that subsequently the value of his house has not risen in line with the rest of the area.

My constituent would now like to know how residents will be compensated for the loss of value of homes directly affected and what remediation process will beautify the area again with greenery and have privacy restored. My question to the Minister for Public Transport is: will she advise and show my constituents in Buxton Street how their street will be remediated to beautify it and restore the greenery and their house values?

Eltham electorate

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (Question 7680) My question is for the Minister of Police. Community safety and crime prevention across my electorate are important policy areas. I ask the minister: what support exists through government initiatives to improve safety and reduce crime in my local community and what anomalies may exist behind the recent statistic changes? I note that the Shire of Nillumbik, a vibrant, friendly community, is the safest non-rural local government area in greater Melbourne. However, there is some concern in the community around the recent crime statistics for the area. I note that factors in the increase appear to be due to a change in the methodology of collating crime statistics and that often increases are driven by the recording of multiple offences by recidivist offenders.

However, I seek clarity from the minister so I can best inform my community regarding any concerns they may have. I know that through the state budget there was a large commitment to keeping our community safe and ensuring that we as a government are providing the resources needed to assist Victoria Police achieve this goal. I commend the recent announcement by the Andrews government of a \$596 million public safety package, which will allow for an extra 406 sworn police, including 300 more on the front line, in the next two years.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I pick up where I left off, which was speaking about the amendments to the Wildlife Act, specifically those in relation to hunting and the Game Management Authority (GMA), and some amendments to the Public Administration Act 2004 as well.

Hunting is a critical industry and pastime in Gippsland in general and in my electorate of Gippsland South in particular. Indeed a report produced by the previous coalition government estimating the impact of hunting in Victoria in 2013, which was released in 2014, showed that hunting expenditure had a total economic impact in Victoria of \$439 million, which is a very significant figure across the state.

In fact, the largest impacts outside Melbourne on a regional basis were in Gippsland, with a \$76 million

gross regional product from hunting. Specifically in my electorate of Gippsland South, the Shire of Wellington, with a total expenditure on hunting activity of \$25.8 million, was the biggest outside Melbourne and the second in the state. Hunting is a significant area of economic and obviously cultural and recreational activity in my electorate, and I strongly support responsible hunting and the good things that come with it from social, community and economic perspectives.

Turning to the bill, there are some changes to the process for wetland closures and reopenings which remove the requirement for an advertisement to be placed in a newspaper. That is not opposed by the coalition, given the changing nature of technology and obviously the changing nature of some of the decision-making. We do not oppose that, although it does bring into question some of the decision-making that we have seen in the past few months with respect to closures of lakes. Thankfully none of them were in my electorate of Gippsland South, but in other parts of the state we saw significant changes.

Members of the house will probably have received under their door this morning the latest issue of *Conservation & Hunting*, which is a magazine of the Australian Deer Association and Field & Game Australia. It highlights the closures that occurred. The member for Murray Plains, the Leader of The Nationals, has already mentioned the incident at the Lake Elizabeth State Game Reserve. There were also closures at Toolondo Reservoir and the Johnson Swamp State Game Reserve.

There was very clear anger and concern in the hunting community about the way these changes were made. That anger and concern are perhaps best enunciated by Field & Game Australia's David McNabb in an article in the journal *Conservation & Hunting* which says that one of the conclusions that can be drawn from the closures that occurred this year is:

Government will disregard advice from its own experts, the GMA, selectively choosing advice to achieve its own outcomes. Government is unable or unwilling to be consistent in application of standard game management processes.

The article highlights that responsible hunters, those represented in particular by Field & Game Australia, do not have confidence in this government. In fact it highlights that Field & Game:

... can operate with consistent and transparent processes, and where there is good communication.

The article goes on to say:

This has not been our experience with this government this season.

Our preference is to work with government. However, it does not appear there is the likelihood for improvement any time soon ...

That is certainly a concern we have. We saw the government arbitrarily make decisions on closures. As I said, the member for Murray Plains has outlined the Lake Elizabeth situation, where hunters were given 2 hours to get out the night before the opening of the season with respect to a particular bird species which was quite easily identifiable. There are concerns about the way that went.

The other thing that Mr McNabb raises in his article is the slow progress by the government on the implementation of matters around the Game Management Authority. That was, of course, initiated by the former coalition government and established to great acclaim by the hunting and conservation communities. We had an original hunting action plan. Mr McNabb's article says:

The original plan was signed off by the previous coalition state government in a whole-of-government commitment to hunting. Shelved as the new Andrews Labor government took power in late 2014, it's been six months since the last discussion on this important initiative. How long will hunters wait?

I appreciate and understand that the Labor Party is under pressure from The Greens and from animal rights activists with respect to hunting. I am pleased that the government has resisted the pressure to ban duck hunting, as has occurred in other states, and that it did have a season this year. However, there are those other concerns that I have already outlined, and I think the government needs to be far more transparent in the way it makes decisions about hunting, particularly with respect to the duck season.

In the time I have left, I just want to move on to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act changes and also to those with respect to the Domestic Animals Act, particularly in respect of dangerous breeds. As the member for Murray Plains, the Leader of The Nationals, has outlined, the government, having made quite a lot of political mileage out of dogs but particularly dangerous breeds and saving those animals, has now found that it is actually a little bit harder and not quite as simple as it would appear from opposition. We are therefore seeing the moratorium on the destruction of dangerous breed dogs extended further.

I am concerned more broadly about some of the policies that the government is proposing with respect to animal breeding and to dogs in particular. We all

abhor the terrible treatment that has been unmasked on occasion at so-called puppy farms and absolutely agree with anything the government will do to outlaw those or to strengthen enforcement of outlawing those. The law is quite clear, and the coalition government made significant changes to crack down on puppy farms as well. But I am concerned that some of the policies proposed and those that have been foreshadowed by the government, which we will possibly be debating later this year, will in fact be counterproductive in terms of animal welfare.

In my electorate I have a registered dog breeder by the name of Banksia Park Puppies that operates at Stradbroke, just south of Sale. I believe it is the largest breeder of dogs in the state. I have been there to have a look, and I have invited the minister, Jaala Pulford, to also visit. She has refused to do so. This is a super professional organisation. Their dogs have a lot of space, they have shelter and they are well fed and looked after. They have a staff I think of 12 to 15 people coming in to look after the animals and to socialise them. Indeed, a number of the employees are intellectually disabled people who find great joy in the job that they do but also do a fantastic job with the animals. Even the local school, the Longford Primary School, has students who get to come down once a week to help socialise the new puppies. What a great job that would be for a group of kids.

This organisation has well over 100 — I think around 200 — breeding animals. Under the proposed legislation the government is foreshadowing for later in the year, it will be outlawed by 2020. I think that is actually not a good outcome for animal welfare, because there is a strong demand from Victorians for puppies or dogs as pets. That demand will still need to be met from somewhere, and I fear that that demand will in fact be met through the black market, by breeders underground, and that will actually be worse for animal welfare. I caution the minister and the government on this issue, and I certainly reiterate the invitation for the minister to visit Banksia Park, a wonderful breeding facility, and support any measure to ensure that in everything we do we make sure that we get the best possible outcomes for animal welfare.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition opposes this motion to adjourn. What is happening is exactly what we warned would happen yesterday when we were debating the government business program. The government has overloaded the program and is,

therefore, truncating debate on a number of very important bills. The opposition has got several country members who want to make a contribution on the impact this bill will have on their electorates, but they are being denied the time to do so.

Government members yesterday had the nerve to complain and urge opposition members to make further contributions to debate, but when there are bills on which the opposition side of the house has important things to say the government will not give us the opportunity and simply shuts down the debate to suit its own priorities. If the government has overloaded the program within the available sitting hours, the remedy is very straightforward: the house should sit longer so that each of the bills before the house can be properly debated.

Yet again this is a government that is in disarray. It has been unable to organise its legislative program and is now trying to guillotine bills which are important to many, many members representing constituencies right across the state. As I indicated yesterday, this Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 deals with a range of acts of Parliament and a range of different policy areas, and each and every one of those deserves proper attention. There are members on this side of the house who want to make contributions, and they should be allowed to do so.

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for Women) — The government business program which was presented yesterday is a jam-packed program, for sure. Certainly both sides of the house agree that the government is doing a great deal of legislative work that needs to be brought before the house. However, we need to proceed in an orderly fashion, and I understand the opposition was made aware that we would be moving on to the next item of the day, which is the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. It is of course an important bill that needs to be debated, and the government is seeking to ensure that members on both sides of the house have an opportunity to speak to the bills that are presented here as part of the government business program.

I would urge all members in fact to work with their whips to talk through these issues as they arise to ensure that everybody does get that opportunity to speak about these important bills. Those conversations are taking place, as I understand, but I do also appreciate that members opposite may be frustrated at the number of bills that are coming forward in fact, because what they were perhaps more used to when they were in government was a slower pace of legislation through the house as a consequence of them

being in Snoozeville for their time in government. This was a do-nothing set of individuals and government members who when they were in power actually slowed down the pace of the legislation that was coming through the Parliament.

I appreciate that the new picked-up pace that the Labor government is bringing to the house is probably frustrating and proving challenging to members opposite. Nonetheless government members are very keen to move on to the next item of business, the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill. I encourage all members to take this opportunity to speak on this important legislation brought before the house.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — I rise to support the manager of opposition business in relation to stopping the adjournment. We are actually talking about the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, and there are people on our side who do need to speak on that. There are people within the country regions who have wanted to put their voice out and make sure that they are heard. They can get the voices of their communities heard in this house, and that is what it is all about. It is important that they do get that opportunity to stand up on behalf of the local communities they represent.

Whilst I note that we are going on to the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016, which is an important bill — it is an important bill to go through — you cannot do that at the expense of a bill in relation to regional Victoria. While members opposite are saying that it is a jam-packed program, we have actually said that they have put too much in the program this week, and what that has done is prevent genuine debate on a lot of these bills.

If the government wants to talk about laziness et cetera, last sitting week we only had two bills before the house. That actually shows to me that the Leader of the House for the government cannot arrange a timetable that is effective to give everyone that opportunity. I note the suggestion to have discussions with our whip. I am more than happy to talk to our whip; I talk to our whip quite regularly. However, the whip cannot add additional times when the government tries to stop debate and uses its numbers to prevent people in regional Victoria having a voice.

I think it is vital that we continue on this bill, as our regional members sitting here today understand totally how important it is to get their discussion time. They are but a voice for 40 000 people, the same as everybody else in this area, but some of them sitting in

here at the moment are covering up to about 60 per cent of Victoria's landmass, and I think it is important that those people up there get that voice.

Members of the shadow cabinet went up just recently to Mildura to look through that area, and people up in Mildura particularly have mentioned that they do not get an opportunity to have their voice heard in Parliament with this government. The government is ignoring country Victorians, and we need to make sure that those people have that voice in this Parliament. We need to make sure that we continue on these debates to ensure that voice is continued into the future.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — I rise to support the adjourning of the current bill. Let us not beat around the bush. This is a fast-paced government. This is the government getting on with things. This is a little unfamiliar for those opposite, who lived life for four years in the slow lane — 'Steady as you go. You'll be right'. Some of the power that we are getting through on some of these bills for regional Victoria is important. Some of the waffle and some of the rhetoric from those opposite is really disappointing.

We have got to get on with things. There has been a big program this year of bills. There has been a lot of support for regional Victoria. This is no different. This is not a genuine suggestion that members are not being able to have their say, because some of the rhetoric that the opposition has put forward in the house on behalf of its constituents is falsified and misleading their communities, and those opposite know it, particularly on things like the Country Fire Authority.

This government is fast-paced in trying to get on with it, and if the opposition was genuine, it would have more people in the house and would have had more people putting their names down for bills over the last 18 months. If you did a count of those speaking and the number of bills on which people have spoken on that side, there are still some struggling to get their second-reading statistics up into double digits. There are still a few.

There are a few on our side heading towards triple figures, but there are a few on the other side who have barely gotten to double digit figures, and I am talking about second-reading debates. I look towards those who claim to be the saviours of regional Victoria. There are some members of The Nationals who have barely gotten to double digit figures in second-reading debates. Those opposite cannot come in here and tell us that they want to speak on bills and get involved when for 18 months they have lived life in the slow lane. They cannot come in here and put forward a contradiction

that makes absolutely no sense. We are adjourning the debate. We are getting on with it, and if that is a bit different to what they experienced under the Geoff Shaw regime, then I am sorry for all of them. We are getting on with things on this side.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I rise to support the manager of opposition business in his call to stave off this attempt to adjourn, and I could not agree more with the member for Gembrook's comments as well. This government is a city-centric government; there is no doubt about it. To hear the member for Mordialloc, a member who represents an inner-city seat, telling country members that their contributions in this house about their electorates and about their constituents are nothing more than waffle frankly shows to everyone in the house and indeed to Victorians how city-centric this government actually is. Whether it is denigrating Country Fire Authority volunteers, whether it is reducing the amount of money going to road maintenance, whether it is taking funding from country councils, this government shows that it is absolutely a 100 per cent city-centric government.

Indeed when there is a bill that comes to this house for debate, a bill that actually addresses issues that country Victorians and indeed that members in this place who represent them want to talk about, the first thing the government does is to curtail debate as soon as it possibly can. The first thing it does is say to those members, 'You can't talk on these issues. You can't represent your constituents'.

The Minister for Women, who is at the table, seemed to indicate how proud she was of the government business program and of the bills the government brings to this house, yet she does not want to see debate on these bills. She does not want to have the house talk about them. She does not want to see members talking about the specific issues that relate to this bill. I see the member for Lowan is on our speaking list, and she is very keen to speak on this bill. She has been assiduously working to make sure that she represents her community, and this government is going to deprive her of the opportunity to represent her constituents in a manner which she is afforded the right to in this place.

I support the manager of opposition business in his attempt to stop this adjournment. I think that we should certainly continue debating this bill. We should certainly make sure that we address all the issues in this bill. The Minister for Women said, 'I encourage everyone to speak on the next bill', but we actually want to speak on this bill. Why does she not encourage us to speak on this bill? We are simply not able to,

because the minister will not let us do that. As I said, it is very disingenuous of the government to stop the debate on this bill. I think it should rethink the adjournment. Let us talk about this bill and let our members who represent their country areas so well speak on the bill. There are three members sitting in the chamber who represent over 60 per cent of Victoria, and, as the member for Gembrook said, their constituents have a right to expect their member to be able to get up here and speak on these bills.

With that, I support the call put forward by the manager of opposition business that we do not adjourn this debate.

House divided on Ms Spence's motion:

Ayes, 47

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

Noes, 36

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

Motion agreed to and debate adjourned.

Debate adjourned until later this day.

LAND (REVOCAION OF RESERVATIONS — REGIONAL VICTORIA LAND) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 4 May; motion of Ms NEVILLE (then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water).

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you for obliging me during question time today by allowing me to stay. It was fantastic today.

The Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016 is a bill that has come forward. It is quite a standard bill. It relates to the revocation of land in regional Victoria. We have seen this kind of bill in the past over many governments. I will state the opposition's position at the start: we will not oppose this bill. I will speak about some particular items in the bill individually and where they are heading. The bill relates to permanent reservations over Crown land that can only be amended by an act of Parliament. These amendments can only go through when the bill is passed by Parliament. As we have said, this bill is a routine part of government business, and so for obvious reasons we will not be opposing it. It is something that needs to be done.

The bill provides for a number of revocations. The first one is Burkes Flat. The bill revokes a redundant permanent reservation, which initially had the purposes of a mechanics institute and free library and a restricted Crown grant. The site was never used for that purpose. The institute was built on an adjoining allotment and was later demolished in 1994. In relation to the image attached here, the land surrounding the mechanics institute hall will not be impacted, and thus it will most likely be sold. I think it is important to put it out there that the hall was not used for what it was initially designed for, and therefore it is something that should go back out. There is the ability to sell it and move it on.

Campbelltown is the second one. The bill revokes a redundant permanent reservation which was initially made for livestock watering purposes. The site is no longer used for that purpose. Again, the owner of the adjoining land currently has a licence on the land, and it will most likely be sold.

In relation to Lake Charm, the bill revokes a redundant permanent reservation initially made for a mechanics institute and free library. A mechanics institute was

built on the site and later demolished in 1946. The site is now vacant and not used. This will most likely be sold.

The last one is Walpeup. This revokes redundant permanent reservations initially made for experimental farm purposes over six different Crown allotments. The site is known as the Mallee Research Station; it is an agricultural research station. The site was closed in 2009, and it is an area of 1040 hectares. The site has valuable vegetation and buildings, and suitable land for agriculture is available. The future use of the land is said to be mixed, given its various values. The public and council are keen to see some action take place. This revocation was introduced by the coalition when it was in government, and it did not come to fruition due to time constraints. That is why we are not opposing the bill.

I have some maps here in relation to the bill. The interesting thing I will note is that when you look through these plans, there is one thing that is obviously very common to a lot of these lands, and that is that a lot of the land is in forested areas — in areas that are heavily treed. Some of them are just in dry grasslands, but obviously they are not in areas where there are only buildings. The one thing that is vital in all of these areas and the areas surrounding them is that they are areas that are generally serviced by the Country Fire Authority (CFA). It is very important that if a CFA brigade were to be called on in one of these areas, it would be able to react. The people who would react in all of these areas would be volunteers. There are volunteers across our state who go out and protect the surrounding houses in areas like these, they protect our natural assets, they protect the forested land and they make sure they do.

When we look at these revocations and look at the protection of these areas, it is vital that we continue to put that across and discuss how the CFA is going to protect them in the future. One of the things the CFA requires in protecting areas like this is surge capacity. That surge capacity is something that has been put at risk at the moment. It is something this government has put at great risk through its fundamental error of trying to force through an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) in relation to the CFA. In doing that it has put at great risk the very lifeblood of the CFA. It is important to note this when we are talking about these revocations, because they are in areas that are serviced by the CFA. Whilst the department has put forward its position and the government is putting forward a position on these revocations, whether they are sold or not sold, from the community's perspective it is very important that they understand the protection afforded

to them by the CFA and how they are going to be protected going forward.

Whilst this EBA is being pushed through — obviously a court decision today is trying to prevent that, and the court will make a determination of who is right and who is wrong as it goes through — it is important that we discuss how these areas are going to be used in the future and what they are going to be used for within local communities. We need to look at whether these amendments are going to put people at risk in their local communities.

Our local communities need to understand that any change in land or to its title — any change of where it heads to — relates to where it is going to end up and who is going to end up controlling it. If that land is to be sold, obviously the community would like to know where that money will go. The community would like to know how it is going to be spent, but it would also like to make sure that the land is going to be maintained in a condition that is safe.

The maintenance of these areas can be done by local community members and local community volunteers. Local community volunteers can and probably have protected those areas for a long time. This maintenance can include gardening. Community members may have done weeding in the area. The other thing the community can do is make sure these areas have good fire prevention. To get the fire prevention measures in place in these areas, communities generally discuss these matters with their local CFA. The local CFA is vital when communities talk about the protection of land. The CFA will actually come in there, assess the land for the local community, whether it is still in government hands or in private hands, and it will actually have a look over it to make sure it is going to best protect that local community.

Mechanics institutes are generally halls, and they can be used at times of disaster as well. If you have a disaster going through an area, communities can use local halls. I note that the member for Mildura is here. Local halls are used all the way through his electorate; people use them to meet and greet. We use halls like this as a position at which people can meet during and after an event. There could be a major bushfire or flood through one of our regions, and it is vital we have these particular facilities for people to use.

As I said, the coalition is not opposing the bill, but these local halls can be used by our local CFA brigades to come down and give briefings and information sessions. The volunteers in our community are vital. They do such a fantastic job across our whole state. We

have an issue at the moment where the government is not standing side by side with these volunteers, and we need to make sure they are protected. We need to make sure that volunteers can continue to provide information to the community. At halls like these mechanics institutes our CFA volunteers would be able to give the community information and updates. However, by supporting the new EBA, this government has actually removed the right for CFA volunteers to do community engagement. It has created a requirement that it must be a career firefighter or a member of the United Firefighters Union that does that, whereas what we want is local people giving local information and using facilities like this to make sure they can get that information across.

We have got the bill before the house today, which is not opposed, but certain areas around here — Burkes Flat and Campbelltown — obviously have high fire danger and high risk. It is important that we ensure the protection of these areas going forward and make sure that we are in a position to protect them.

Whilst this government is going to bring through new legislation, and there has been old legislation — obviously some of the bills that have been here before — to revoke the land, we are actually going to ask government members in making their contributions in relation to this to specifically outline what measures they are going to put in place to ensure the protection of the local communities around there. What are they going to be doing to ensure that the CFA has opportunities to go to mechanics institutes or halls to deliver community information on how best to protect people in high fire danger? We want them to talk about the EBA. We want them to talk about how a court today has actually decided that it is going to put another injunction on this EBA to stop it going through, till 20 July, so we can go through that community consultation. If you actually are doing that community consultation, here are some great places to do it. They have not been sold yet. Here are some great places to get out there and actually get that information on the record so people can discuss it from there.

One of the provisions in here is clause 10. It revokes the orders in council providing for the permanent reservation referred to in items 4, 5 and 6 of schedule 1 of the bill — the site of an experimental farm known as the agricultural research station. The permanent reservations are revoked in full. We all know that agriculture is very important in Victoria. Agricultural research is very important in Victoria. I had the pleasure of going out when I was the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and having a look at some of our research centres, understanding how

important they are not just to the government but also to the communities getting factual information on the table and factual information back to farmers, making sure that we have the best practices going forward.

Talking about farmers, farmers are very important for fire prevention and firefighting throughout Victoria. Farmers are the ones who support the CFA. Farmers actually have a lot of trucks on their own sites; they do their own fire protection. These are the things that may not be protected in the future. It is vital that we actually stand with our farmers and make sure not only that they have access to the research from centres, and if any money from these revocations is going back to the centres for research, that we are getting the information out to them and working with them so they can better protect their communities, their crops et cetera in the future.

When we are talking about agriculture, or when we are talking about any farming throughout regional Victoria, some of the biggest risks farmers face are floods, storms and the rapid expansion of any fires, particularly grassfires, which can be very fast moving. If you did have a big grassfire or a large bushfire coming towards a property, even one of the ones for which there is revocation here, the only way to actually stop or put preventions in place is to actually have a surge capacity of people to go out there and fight that fire. Those people, you would generally find, would be volunteers. A good example would be Black Saturday, where for the first 5 or 6 hours of Black Saturday there were only volunteers on the ground.

We need to make sure that in the future we still have that surge capacity going forward. We need to make sure that anything in place going forward in relation to fire prevention in our regional areas can have support from the outer ring of Melbourne, and that outer ring of Melbourne currently has a very strong and vibrant volunteer sector and some integrated stations as well. It is those volunteers that will go out and protect land like this in the future, and they will make sure that areas like this have the staff, the trucks and the facilities available when they are needed.

Whilst the government will talk about purchasing 70 new trucks, so many of the trucks across Victoria are purchased by the local community. It is vital that the local community stays on board with this and gets behind their local CFAs. I would actually recommend them. They could even go to the *Herald Sun* today. They could get a new little sticker, which says, 'Back the CFA'. We need to make sure that they get their message out there that — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Order! The member needs to understand that no props are allowed in the house.

Mr BATTIN — That one. It is very important —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Order! That is very disrespectful, and I would like an apology.

Mr BATTIN — I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Edwards) — Thank you.

Mr BATTIN — Continuing in relation to the CFA, it is just a shame that we only have one side of the Parliament that will actually stick up for the CFA, and we need to make sure that it will continue.

In relation to land revocation, obviously we have spoken about the land revocations in the past. This is not the first lot to come through in this term of government, and I am sure there will be more to come through. The department, I know, worked quite hard on making sure that when we are looking at the land across the state, we do not want to end up with land that is surplus or that is going to create issues for people, government or the local community in the future. You should actually be looking at disposing of some of that land. I think it is important, and I actually say that the department does a great job in making sure it plans for that. Some of the areas come about because they are backing on or have a licence over them or are leased to somebody else — one of the local community members. The better option, from a government perspective, is to either sell that land or move it on so it comes off the books from there. Most of our land — obviously government land — is around supporting communities and making sure that communities have those assets that are available.

What I will say — and I am going to finish my contribution — is that no matter what happens with the land going forward, we are not opposing the revocation of land here. No matter what happens to this land going forward in regional Victoria, we need to understand that the biggest asset we have in regional Victoria is people. It is not land, and it is not buildings; it is people. We need to respect their views, and we need to respect their voice when they are speaking. They will speak on things like the revocation. Some people, when they are looking at certain revocations, may look at how it affects their local community. Most of them would look at how it affects all of regional Victoria. We need to understand that regional Victoria survives on volunteers and the State Emergency Service and the CFA. We

have volunteers in the ambulance service. We have volunteers like the Red Cross, who go out and support the local community, and many of them have used facilities like this, particularly with the mechanics institutes. What we are saying here today is that while we do not oppose the bill, that must be taken into consideration when the government is going forward.

I want to thank the department for the briefings with my staff when we went through it. I want to make sure that any messages from this are heard well and truly and that when members of the government stand up and talk about the revocations — whilst we do not oppose those — they put on record their support for the local CFA. They need to put on record their support for locals' voices to ensure that the EBA in front of them at the moment does not go through and that we can protect these communities in the future.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution on this bill, the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. Let us be very clear about what this bill does. It is going to revoke redundant permanent reservations over Crown land at Burkes Flat, 30 kilometres east of St Arnaud; Campbelltown, 20 kilometres north-west of Daylesford; Lake Charm, 15 kilometres north-west of Kerang; and Walpeup, 30 kilometres east of Ouyen.

There are no mechanics institute halls on the sites which relate to this bill, so let us just be very clear about that. There are no structures on the sites in relation to mechanics institutes halls. I think it is important to make sure that that is very clear to the lead speaker from the opposition.

Can I say also that we are pleased that the opposition is not opposing the bill. We are also pleased that, given the technical nature of the bill, there have not really been a lot of public announcements and discussions about some of these revocation matters.

Given that the lead speaker went to broader investments and discussions in relation to regional Victoria, I might also touch on some of those. In particular on the 2016–17 budget, which does deliver for regional Victoria, I will outline just a few of those investments on behalf of the Andrews government. There is \$1.3 billion for rail, including \$518 million to upgrade the Ballarat line, \$280 million for 27 new VLocity carriages and \$131 million to increase passenger services to Ballarat, Traralgon, Geelong, Shepparton, Bendigo and Warrnambool. I also put on the record that there is \$325 million in funding for infrastructure works and services, including upgrades to irrigation, water security, mobile black spots and streetscaping.

In the area of investment in water infrastructure, I know from my role as Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment that we have done a lot of work. I was up in Maryborough recently in relation to some significant water infrastructure works that we are doing there on water purification and improving water quality. Again this shows the great work that our water authorities are doing with the support of the government in ensuring that there is investment in places such as Maryborough in the electorate of Ripon.

There is also \$101 million for the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund to upgrade tourist landmarks and create jobs. Tourism is a critical part of growing jobs and investment in regional Victoria. We know also that particularly around water policy and our investment in recreational water supplies in regional Victoria it is about making sure that there is water there for irrigators but also, where we can, that we manage demand for recreational pursuits and water use. If we can make sure there is recreational water use in regional Victoria, that drives tourism, regional investment and greater opportunities for jobs in hospitality in regional Victoria. Water security is now not just about providing for primary producers and irrigation; it is also about trying to make sure, where we can, that we invest in and grow the supply of recreational water in regional Victoria, because that drives tourism, drives investment and drives jobs for many regional Victorians.

There is \$107 million for the Drysdale bypass project in the electorate of the Minister for Water, which will reduce congestion and improve safety on the Bellarine Peninsula. This is a very significant investment, and it is a project that I know she worked very hard on in the lead-up to the last election to ensure that there was funding for it. I know that that is a project for which she has pushed very hard to secure investment. It is a very substantial project there in Drysdale. Anyone who drives along Drysdale roads would know that the bypass is critical for people living on the peninsula.

We have also seen some \$325 million in investments to create jobs in regional areas, and I think that has been quite significant and widely well received and welcomed by regional Victorians.

There is \$168.5 million to completely redevelop Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton. Goulburn Valley Health is a very significant provider of services across the Greater Shepparton region. I remember my days working for former health minister Bronwyn Pike. Clem Furphy, as a former chair of Goulburn Valley Health, is someone whom I have great regard for and who did a lot of work in those early days to advocate for and drive improvements to Goulburn Valley Health

in Shepparton. I certainly thank Clem Furphy for his service, which had a lot to do with the significant investments made by the Andrews government in its previous budget, along with this \$168.5 million to Goulburn Valley Health. A lot of the early work that people like Clem led needs to be acknowledged. There was also the work done by Greg Pullen in his time as CEO at Goulburn Valley Health.

There are a range of other matters in the budget that I think are worthy of mention in relation to regional Victoria, as the expansive discussions by the lead speaker of the opposition addressed. Particularly around rural and regional Victoria, there are some 61 projects that will share in more than \$200 million for upgrades, planning and land acquisitions to finally give students the modern facilities they deserve in our state education system. As I touched on in discussing the Drysdale bypass project, there is \$107 million that will improve safety on the Bellarine Peninsula. I think that is a critical project for people in the Bellarine electorate.

In relation to the bill, we need to ask: what is a Crown land reserve or reservation? I know that is something that people in the house will be keen to have some clarification about. For the benefit of following speakers, I will just give a brief outline of a Crown land reservation and what it is. It is land that has effectively been set aside by an order of the Governor in Council for a particular public purpose, such as for an educational or recreational purpose. These reservations may be temporary or they may be permanent. A temporary reservation may be revoked through an administrative process such as an order of the Governor in Council, and of course a permanent Crown land reservation may only be revoked by or in accordance with an act of Parliament.

Can that land be used for other purposes without revoking the reservation? It is good practice to manage and regulate land in a manner that is consistent with the purpose for which it is reserved, and it is not possible to sell reserved Crown land. That is something that I think that members would be keen to be aware of.

In relation to the land at Burkes Flat, is it affected by the bill? The land at Burkes Flat comprises a small area of vacant land which is currently permanently reserved for the purposes of a mechanics institute and free library. The land is contained within Crown allotment 7 in the township of Burkes Flat in the local parish. Burkes Flat is approximately 30 kilometres east of Saint Arnaud. The mechanics institute's building was never built on the site; it was in fact built on the adjoining site. That building was demolished in 1994 in the dark days of the Kennett government.

The Crown land reservation and restricted Crown grant is being revoked. Why is that happening? Why are we suggesting that we do that? The ratification of the existing permanent reservation and restriction of Crown land is being revoked as it is now redundant. It does not reflect the current or any potential future uses of the land. Are there future plans for the land at Burkes Flat? At this stage there are no definite plans relating to the land at Burkes Flat, although it is anticipated that the land will be assessed as surplus to government requirements and may be sold.

There are set processes under legislation in relation to the Victorian Government Land Monitor and under the valuer-general about how processes are dealt with for the disposal of government land. It may be offered to other government departments, or it could be offered to local government before potentially being made available for public sale. There are a range of processes that may be followed in relation to that site.

Can I say also that the land for watering purposes at Campbelltown was also contained within a Crown allotment; it is approximately 20 kilometres north-west of Daylesford in the Buninyong electorate. The bill revokes the existing permanent reservation for watering purposes. Are there any future plans for that land at Campbelltown? It is anticipated that the land will be assessed as surplus to government requirements and may be sold to the adjoining landowner, who currently holds a licence under the Land Act 1958 to use the land. These are some of the matters that may lead to the future use of the land at Campbelltown.

In relation to the land at Walpeup, what was the agricultural research station used for? Just for the record, it was part of research into dryland farming techniques, particularly for the Mallee region. The site was managed by the former Department of Primary Industries until 2009. I am pleased that the opposition does not oppose this bill, which relates to the revocation of reservations in regional Victoria in relation to several parcels of land. I wish the bill a speedy passage through the house and commend the minister and the department on their work.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution on the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. The purposes of the bill are to revoke the permanent reservation and related Crown grant of certain mechanics institute land at Burkes Flat, to revoke the permanent reservation of certain watering purposes land at Campbelltown, to revoke the permanent reservation of certain mechanics institute land at Lake Charm, and to revoke the permanent reservation of

agricultural research station land at Walpeup. My interest in this is very much related to Walpeup. Walpeup is a part of the Mildura electorate, and the Walpeup research station has been very much at the heart of the Mallee for over 75 years.

I will begin with some of the history of the Mallee Research Station at Walpeup. As I said, it goes back over 75 years — and 75 field days were held on that site. It came into being with grain farmers coming to the Mallee and needing to have a great deal of support and assistance in learning how to get the best possible result out of the Mallee soils. That was achieved at Walpeup. Scientists have worked there for a number of generations and have been able to make Mallee soils highly productive. What was considered to be marginal grain land is now prime grain land, by the work that has been done. I attended a number of those field days prior to the announcement of the closure in 2008.

On coming to this position I knew very little about grain growing, but by the time I had finished a couple of field days I had learnt a great deal about grain growing. That research, again, has carried through to this very day with the way the Mallee has been able to produce a yield in what are essentially times of drought. That is largely attributable to the work that was done at the Mallee Research Station — sometimes beginning with the inventiveness of farmers and sometimes beginning with the sheer academic work as well.

One of the closing trials conducted there which was of interest to me was that which created an environment in Mallee conditions but with additional CO₂ introduced around the crops to be able to, as the CO₂ in the atmosphere rose, look at the effect on grain crops. That was also trialled across a large number of new strains and hybrids of various grains to work out what would be the impact of slightly higher CO₂ levels.

In fact it was work done to allow for the adaption and continued production of our valuable export in that area. Unfortunately the trial was cut short by the 2008 closure, something that I think in the future Mallee farmers will come to view in a different light to the way it was viewed in 2008 when the site was closed. The site is divided roughly into three areas: the trial areas for grain growing; an area of Buloke forest, which is in prime condition because of how well it was maintained as a research station; and of course the buildings, which were the centre of the Walpeup community. The changes in this reservation will need to take into account a number of aspects as it goes through that.

The community did consider it to be its centre, and it was used by the community for meetings, for school

visits to train our future farmers and agronomists and other support mechanisms for farming, and for academic visits. On numerous occasions I came across researchers there. Somewhat embarrassingly, to add to that, one day I was driving over the hill and saw two ladies standing there holding a rake. I stopped to ask what they were doing. They told me they had just raked the track, ahead of looking for wildlife the next morning and would I please not come back this way after they had raked out my tyre marks.

Some of the resources that are within those buildings are accommodation and other extensive facilities. Some of that accommodation was used, as was the whole area, as a staging ground for the Country Fire Authority (CFA). This strip of Mallee track farm sits between huge national parks: the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, the Sunset-Murray National Park and the Wyperfeld National Park. It has been used as a staging ground for the CFA and national parks to fight those fires. It has fantastic facilities for firefighters, and allows them to use the showers, to sleep and to be fed. That will be missed. At this point we should acknowledge those Mallee track brigades for the work they do in protecting that area, and we also should acknowledge their ability to act as the surge capacity in dealing with those huge fires which are often campaign fires and go on for a very long period of time. The local knowledge that those brigades bring means that they know the local resources. They know who has got what machinery, where it is and how it can be used. They know where the water resources are and they also know where the people are: which farmhouses are occupied, which are not, who is away and who is not. That is a tribute that has to be paid, and remembering that this research station and its facilities sat at the heart of the community.

It is those physical facilities there that very much occupied the community's time. There has been a long period where the community worked very hard and there was considerable grief after the announcement on 8 August 2008 about the future of that research station. A large number of meetings were held over that time, and I attended a great deal of them. There were people employed at that station who lost their jobs. Some were transferred, some simply took packages as we deconstructed the support for the Mallee at that station. Consequently we lost the Walpeup school, which was closed because of lack of enrolments, on a decision that was made by a previous government.

We went through a process of trying to work out what to do next. A reference group was formed and its members worked very hard over the years to try to find options for that. Ouyen Inc, a very reputable

organisation in the Mallee, endeavoured to try to find some way of utilising that building and keeping it as the heart of that part of the Mallee. Petitions came to Parliament. I pay tribute to Luise Mock who worked very hard in that area at the time as she raised issue after issue, looking for opportunities. Similarly, schools were concerned about the lack of access, particularly to mentors and scientific people who had been present to show a way for that area to progress. Advertisements were examined, looking for expressions of interest. It did not amount to much initially. An action group was formed but was excluded from the process because it had a vested interest, and then the issue of donated equipment had to be gone through. This all caused the community great pain as we went through those processes.

The Mildura Rural City Council became involved and TAFE became involved. To TAFE's credit it took a temporary or a short-term lease over the site and with its building and construction apprentices it did a great deal of restoration work at that site. In that time there were some artists who came into residence there as well, using the facilities that the TAFE college had improved for accommodation. But then TAFE walked away because it could not find a use for it within the academic environment. Mildura Rural City Council could not find a way forward. The community even looked at it, when Pam Parker came along and made a suggestion that perhaps it could be used for an early release facility for prisoners to give them some skills as they were about to go back into the community, being low-risk. This tore the community apart, but its members were incredibly pragmatic — and I take my hat off to them — and they said, 'Yes, we would like that'. However, again, the community having said yes, it did not result in anything occurring.

Over time huge numbers of people have been involved in this research facility. It was the heart of the Mallee and that heart was cut out by the end of research at that facility. Those community members are still grieving the loss, and in the future we have an issue with the ongoing grain research that is so important. But the community members stood and they fought and they worked hard. Now the building is for sale. We will wait and see who can take that on and how that will deliver a benefit to the Mallee. The pressure is on this government to find a use for these marvellous facilities to maintain them as the heart of the northern Mallee.

Sitting suspended 1.01 p.m. until 2.01 p.m.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! The Speaker has accepted a statement from the member for Bulleen proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house calls on the Premier to stop showing disrespect to 60 000 CFA volunteers and risking community safety by continuing to push for an EBA that includes the following clauses:

- (1) 15.1 and 16.1 requiring that changes to structure and roles in the brigade administrative and volunteer support services must be agreed by the UFU;
- (2) 36.4 requiring that unless an incident is a level-3, multi-agency incident, paid operational staff will be unable to report to volunteer staff, regardless of the experience of volunteer staff;
- (3) 41.1 requiring the CFA to hand over full access of its email system and database to UFU, and providing the UFU will have unrestricted use of it;
- (4) 42.1 requiring that all CFA policies affecting employees can be made or varied only with UFU agreement;
- (5) 45.15 providing that firefighters cannot move between specific types of trucks during a shift unless agreed by the UFU;
- (6) 45.21.3 providing that staffing charts that specify which staff are at each station and the commencement dates for those charts can be changed only with UFU agreement or by the disputes panel;
- (7) 51.6.5a, 51.3, 147.1 and 183.3 providing that the CFA cannot employ operational staff on a part-time or casual basis unless the UFU agrees;
- (8) 62.5 that establishes a disputes panel and provides that if the chairperson of the panel vacates their position, the UFU must agree on a replacement;
- (9) 69.3 providing that only firefighters can be appointed as fitness leaders (responsible for taking fitness classes at work locations); and
- (10) schedule 20 requiring that uniforms and workwear for all CFA operational staff must be agreed by the UFU.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — What 60 000 Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers want is respect, and what they have got from this government is not just disrespect; it is the ultimate insult from the highest elected official in our state, from the Premier — that is, to attack them and try to destroy the institution that is the CFA, an institution that has been around for decades, for 70 years. We have seen bushfire events in this state come and go and Victoria has survived them,

and one of the things that has held our state together has been the Country Fire Authority. Whether it is in country communities, regional cities or outer urban Melbourne, I think all of us in this Parliament need to recognise and understand that the CFA is not just a group of volunteers coming together to fight fires; it is men and women who are putting their lives on the line to defend their communities and to do everything they can to protect us, our homes, our towns and our families. For that they deserve our respect. They certainly do not deserve the attacks that they have had today by the Premier and by the Labor government.

It is quite astounding that today, in the year 2016 here in Victoria, the Labor government wants to destroy decades of volunteerism in the name of politics and in the name of electoral payback, because we all know who was on the polling booths in 2014, we all know who was there abusing people in 2014, we all know who had posters up in their workplace in 2014 and we all know who was on the how-to-vote card for Labor in 2014. It was the unions, and it was the union movement that came back and said, ‘After the election we’re going to come calling’, and indeed Peter Marshall has. The question that has not been answered that was put to the Premier by many of us in this chamber is: ‘What does Peter Marshall have on you?’. We would all like to know. Is it a tape recording? Is it a transcript? Could it be a dictaphone? What does Peter Marshall have on the Premier that would have him risk destroying the CFA in the name of politics? It is not just this side of the house that thinks the Premier’s moves are completely disgraceful.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr GUY — Look to the other side and the very vocal member for Melton. You might want to ask the member for Brunswick, you might want to ask your own former minister: why is she not there? Maybe she has got something that you do not have; she has got a bit of principle. Maybe she has got something the Premier does not have; she has got a bit of integrity. Maybe she has got something that all of you do not have; she has got a bit of guts. She stood up to the Parliament’s greatest bully, the man who will bully anyone over any topic, as we know. What he says behind closed doors and what he says in public mean there are two Dans, and we know it.

Do not take it all from me about the CFA. Ask André Haermeyer, who said that the demands of the United Firefighters Union (UFU) are:

... Trojan horses that would sideline ... volunteers ...

That is from André Haermeyer, the former member for Yan Yean.

Do not ask me; ask Gary Johns, a former Keating Labor government minister, who wrote very clearly:

The Andrews Labor government is a union stooge.

Do not ask me; ask the head of the Country Women's Association. Or do those opposite disrespect them all as well, saying, 'They do not matter'? Those opposite do not care:

... these recommendations have the potential to put our communities at risk. We are especially concerned for the safety of our rural families and their communities.

Do not take it from me. Do not take it from the member for Brunswick. Do not take it from Gary Johns or indeed André Haermeyer. What about Melinda Richard? That is right — another Labor government appointee who has had the guts to tell the truth. She said:

We agree with the human rights commission that clauses in the proposed agreement that prohibit or restrict part-time work are likely to indirectly discriminate against employees who are women, pregnant, have the status of a parent or carer, have a disability and are possibly older people.

Because equality is not negotiable in Victoria, do not ask me. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission said:

The agreement effectively bans employees working part time at a station as an active career firefighter.

Do not take it from me. What about Jack Rush, QC? He said:

I've had a look at the EBA —
enterprise bargaining agreement —

and I think it's highly unsatisfactory for volunteer firefighters.

I have got to tell you, Acting Speaker, whose opinion would I take on an EBA, Jack Rush, QC's or that of the guy over there, the member for Essendon? Whose opinion are you going to take? His? Is it Danny Pearson, QC? Is it Don Nardella, QC? Or do we take the opinion of Jack Rush, QC, a guy who knows more about this topic, who has given plenty of advice to Victorians on this topic over the last few years and whose opinion we should be taking?

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr GUY — I am not asking the member for Melton to take my opinion. I am asking you to take his former colleague André Haermeyer's opinion, or the opinion

of Gary Johns or Peter Tuohey, the head of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF). He could be considered as well — or Jack Rush, or Machel Crichton or Melinda Richard or the equal opportunity commission. I am asking you to take theirs.

Or what about Warren Mundine, AO, a very respected Australian. He said:

Look, I come from the bush. The volunteer firefighters in New South Wales, and Victorians are the same, they get out there, they do this for free, they work for their communities, and so you know, any time the volunteers want to stand up, I am behind them.

And so are we on this side of the chamber. Sue Noble, the CEO of Volunteering Victoria, said:

In rural areas volunteers in the emergency services are connected and contribute across their communities in ways that extend far beyond fighting fires.

And she is right, because we on this side of the house can tell you, Acting Speaker, and can tell all of this Parliament, that the CFA firefighters are volunteers who know those communities — they live there, they respect them, they fight for them, they know the people, they know the streets, and in many cases they know who lives in the houses that they are putting their lives on the line to defend. They know them all, so that is why we should respect them. That is why we should be looking after these people, not selling them out for a cheap dirty deal that got the Labor Party into government and that got them people to hand out for them before the election.

Can I just say again, Acting Speaker, looking at the veto — and not just one veto; the nearly 60 vetoes in the EBA — can you believe that the government would require the CFA to hand over full access of its email system and database to the UFU?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr GUY — Is that the possible minister, the member for Macedon, yelling out? Sorry. I thought it was Christian Zahra. He would have read the EBA. Again I say: do not take it from me. It is in section 41.4. That is it. It is not made up; it is in the EBA — it is there in section 41.4. What about this one: section 45.15 provides that firefighters cannot move between specific types of trucks during a shift unless agreed to by the UFU. This is complete madness. It is completely outrageous.

Section 62.5 establishes a disputes panel and provides that if the chairperson of the panel vacates their position, the UFU must agree on the replacement, requiring that, unless an incident is a level 3

multi-agency incident, paid operational staff will be unable to report to volunteer staff regardless of experience of the volunteer staff. This is dangerous, because fires do not wait for volunteers or paid staff; fires just happen. Having represented the Northern Metropolitan Region in the upper house, which has seen a lot of bushfire activity in the last few years, I know, and my constituents in the northern part of the electorate know, that fire waits for no-one. Fire goes through communities. We cannot wait, we cannot have delay and we cannot have this kind of operational challenge. That is why the royal commissions in the past have all said there should be one chain of command, and anyone seeking to destroy that one chain of command, as that part of the EBA certainly would, would be completely and utterly crazy to do that to country communities.

I simply say: the evidence is there. It has been written by the hand of the UFU. It has been endorsed by the cabinet of the Premier. It took a minister to stand up and resign on principle and say, 'The Premier is wrong; the Premier is going to destroy volunteerism in this state', and he is doing it for all the wrong reasons.

We have seen the Premier come into this chamber and mislead it. We have seen the Premier appear on Victorians' TV screens and literally tell lies to people's faces. We have had a Premier who has gone for weeks and weeks and never explained why he needs to gut the CFA in order to put the UFU in charge of what should be the greatest volunteer organisation in Australia. There has never been from any Labor member any level of adequate explanation as to why we have got a veto saying that the UFU will determine what kind of uniform a volunteer can wear; why the UFU — a union, an external body — should say who can ride in a truck; why the UFU should say to volunteers, 'You can't go into parts of a fire station that the community fundraised for'. What a disgrace.

Again, do not take that from me. I hear from the other side of the chamber again the kind of faux outrage you get from those standing up for a union like the UFU. Go and ask the volunteers in the Lara CFA, who say very clearly they will be locked out from parts of a fire station that their community helped fundraise to build. Is there a greater insult to our 60 000 volunteers than having those volunteers being locked out by the UFU from fire stations that they helped fundraise for through schools, through churches, through the Country Women's Association and through volunteers' donations. They helped fundraise, but they cannot ride in the trucks and they will not be able to wear the same uniforms. It is 100 per cent a disgrace.

I say in conclusion that one side of this Parliament will never sell out the CFA. One side of the Parliament will always stand up for the rights of volunteers. One side of this house will always stand up against external influences that would destroy the greatest volunteer firefighting organisation in Australia, and that side of the house is the Liberal and Nationals parties.

What we are seeing from this government today is the most unprecedented attack on volunteerism, and if it succeeds in Victoria it will go to Queensland because the Palaszczuk government is looking at what is happening here. It will go to South Australia because the Weatherill government is looking at what is happening here. You can bet your life that Mark McGowan in Western Australia is looking at this and that Luke Foley in New South Wales is looking at this, because the one thing we now know from Bill Shorten is that Labor's attack on volunteerism is a national attack on it, and it is going to take this side of the house to once and for all stand up for what is right, and what is right is defending the rights of our 60 000 volunteers in the CFA in their time of greatest need — and that is now.

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — Well, what a rant that was — what an utter rant! Spare me the theatrics of the Leader of the Opposition! Those opposite are not interested in resolving this dispute. They are not interested in the interests of our firefighters. All they are interested in is pitting firefighter against firefighter for their own gain, politically and financially. How much have you raised — how much have those opposite raised in donations to the Liberal Party? What an utter disgrace — raising money as a result of misinformation and lies.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! I call the house to order. I would actually like to hear what the Deputy Premier is saying.

Mr MERLINO — According to the Leader of the Opposition, every —

Mr Pesutto interjected.

Mr MERLINO — Settle down, John! According to the Leader of the Opposition every career firefighter is a thug, and every volunteer who dares to have a view that is different to the Leader of the Opposition's is a 'volunteer' — in inverted commas. That is a direct quote from the Leader of the Opposition. So you are either a thug, if you are a career firefighter, or you are a so-called volunteer if you have a view other than that of

the Leader of the Opposition. That is the arrogant and dismissive view of those opposite: so-called volunteers. Well, there are plenty of brigades that are not buying the lies and campaign of misinformation of the Liberal Party and that are reassuring their communities that those communities need not fear the lies of those opposite. The Leader of the Opposition continued those lies today. To claim that volunteers will stand by and not be able to fight a fire until career firefighters arrive is a lie. It is a complete and utter lie. It is dangerous, and it is completely wrong. Do not take my word for it. Here are comments from a few brigades.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! I would like to hear what is being said. I understand that this is an issue that people are very passionate about, but I think it would be useful for everyone in this place to actually hear what is being said.

An honourable member interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order! I also ask members not to reflect on the Chair.

Mr MERLINO — I want to get some comments from brigades on the public record. Warragul fire brigade stated:

The Warragul fire brigade would like to reassure our community that the current CFA EBA —

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement —

negotiations will have no effect on our ability to provide fire and emergency response.

We have protected this town for over 130 years and will continue to do so into the future. Our focus has always been, and will always be, on our service delivery to our community; regardless of the outcome.

Regardless of the outcome! The Stratford fire brigade stated:

... the current CFA EBA negotiations will have no effect on our ability to provide fire and emergency response.

Devon Meadows fire brigade stated that the 'negotiations will have no effect':

Our focus has always been and will always be on providing a professional fire service regardless of the outcome of these negotiations.

Allans Flat fire brigade, reassuringly stated:

our community that the current, well-publicised CFA ... negotiations will have no effect ...

Dixons Creek stated — and this is a good one:

Dixons Creek rural fire brigade would like to assure the community that our primary focus is to protect the community as we have always done. This will not change, under any circumstances.

The CFA — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MERLINO — They do not like listening to this! Dixons Creek said further

The CFA is comprised of volunteers and career staff. We work together, as a team. One cannot exist without the other. We fully support each other, in every emergency incident we respond to, as well as the day to day running of the brigade.

We advise all community members to fully educate themselves on the EBA for UFU members, to ensure you are all fully informed and aware of the factual information available.

So, are Dixons Creek volunteers 'so-called volunteers'? Are they 'volunteers' — in inverted commas? Why do not those opposite get up next and answer that question? Dixons Creek also stated:

Dixons Creek rural fire brigade is in no way affiliated with the UFU (United Firefighters Union).

Narre Warren fire brigade CFA stated:

... we wanted to not only reassure our local community, but also the broader Victorian community of our position, and state some facts.

Narre Warren ... is a fully volunteer brigade. We will continue to service not only our community, but the broader Victorian community with the commitment and passion that we have always displayed since our establishment ...

We have a broad membership of over 100 people, all with different viewpoints, however we as a brigade will continue to support our surrounding brigades, both integrated ... or fully volunteer as we always have.

...

CFA is a unique organisation that simply could not exist if it wasn't for the joint passion, commitment and dedication of both volunteer and career firefighters. One simply cannot operate without the other.

So those others, they are the thugs that you have been attacking — that is what you are saying.

Mr Wakeling — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would call on the minister to explain to his local volunteers why he lied to 10 members of his local brigade when he said that they would be consulted regarding the EBA. Perhaps the minister would be able to consult and explain to the public why he did that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Order!
There is no point of order. I ask the member to resume his seat.

Mr MERLINO — So the sleepy member for Ferntree Gully — —

Mr Wakeling interjected.

Mr MERLINO — Okay. Well, how about the Upwey fire brigade? It stated:

... the current CFA negotiations that you are hearing in the media have no effect on our ability to provide fire and emergency response.

...

Upwey fire brigade —

in my electorate —

is a volunteer fire brigade who works in harmony with career and volunteer CFA members.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MERLINO — No, they do not want to hear this. The Upwey brigade further said:

At times we respond with partner agencies such as SES, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police, DELWP, MFB, Parks Vic and local government.

We work as one.

That is what my volunteer brigades are saying. From Wallan CFA:

... we will continue to provide the same level of service to our community as we have always done, regardless of any ongoing political issues.

From Ballarat CFA:

The Ballarat fire brigade will continue to respond to incidents and will continue to do this.

Our members have joined the brigade to serve the community and to protect life and property.

From Langwarrin CFA:

... business as normal, and we will continue working with our neighbouring brigades as normal.

From Noble Park CFA on 14 June:

This morning Noble Park and Dandenong CFA were called to assist Victoria Police with removing approximately 100 passengers from a peak hour Metro train, after a power cable malfunction at the Chandler Road level crossing.

Another example of how CFA volunteers (Noble Park) and staff (Dandenong) are working together to keep us safe and protect our communities.

From Mount Martha CFA:

The brigade was called out to this car fire on Thursday 2/6 ...

The car was well alight when our crew got on scene and was supported immediately by Mornington fire brigade ...

A great effort by our volunteer firefighters working alongside the career firefighters —

those the opposition call thugs —

from Mornington.

From Doreen CFA:

... the current CFA EBA negotiations have no effect on our ability to provide fire and emergency response.

...

Doreen ... is a volunteer brigade who works collaboratively with career and volunteer CFA firefighters from across the state.

...

We work together, as a team. We support each other in every emergency incident we respond to.

From Ararat fire brigade:

... no members from our brigade say they want to walk away, so again I would like to reassure —

this is the captain writing —

the community that as always, we are still here for you and will continue to be.

From Kerang fire brigade:

... nothing changes no matter what happens; the fire siren will still go and we'll still turn out ...

We will not compromise the public safety at all.

...

We are 100 per cent volunteers, we run our own fires completely and that's not going to change.

Again, from Warragul fire brigade:

Today CFA career firefighters from Traralgon ... joined us to practice and train utilising Traralgon's aerial appliance, by undertaking practical training drills in the Warragul CBD. It was great to have the career staff here to share their knowledge and experience in the operation of this appliance; another great example of volunteers and career staff working together to keep your community safe.

From Langwarrin CFA:

We have been made aware of some political campaigning in Langwarrin promoting 'hands off CFA'. We would like our community to know that we were not involved in this campaign in any way, and we remain 100 per cent apolitical.

Our focus remains on protecting the community of Langwarrin and supporting our neighbours.

There are so many brigades right across the state reassuring their communities — and they need to because of the lies and the misinformation of those opposite. They are making the point that career firefighters and volunteer firefighters work together. They always have and they always will.

We will resolve this dispute because this is a dispute that has gone on well over 1000 days. We are not prepared to go into another fire season with this dispute ongoing. We have determined to resolve this dispute. It is now with the CFA board. There will be consultation with volunteers. It will go to the vote of our career firefighters. It will go to the commission for ratification, and life will go on. It will not have an impact on our volunteer brigades across the state. The 1200 volunteer brigades will not be impacted by this agreement.

What we will not do is whip up a disgraceful scare campaign, pitting firefighter against firefighter. What we will not do is attack volunteer firefighters who have a different view as 'volunteers' — that is the quote of the year from the Leader of the Opposition. What we will not do is create fear in communities by spreading dangerous lies that fires will not be dealt with by the people that are first responding to the fire. What we will not do is claim on social media, like the Leader of the Opposition did, that firefighters were campaigning for Labor, when in fact it was a photo of recruit firefighters undertaking wildfire training. Lies, lies, lies — that is all we get from those opposite. What we will not do is claim that volunteers are resigning from brigades such as Monbulk, when in fact no-one has left. The Leader of the Opposition will say and do anything, and why? For opposition members' own political advantage and, disgracefully, to raise money for the Liberal Party. That is what they are doing.

This has been a long-running, spiteful, bitter dispute, and I am not prepared to go into another fire season with this hanging over our heads. Each and every clause in this agreement has gone through the independent umpire, which is the appropriate process. When you have a dispute, when you have an EBA that cannot be concluded with the parties, it goes to the independent umpire. That is what happened in November last year — it headed off to the independent umpire.

Ms Allan interjected.

Mr MERLINO — That is right; CFA management sent it to the independent umpire. That is what it wanted. Each and every clause has gone through the Fair Work Commission. The independent umpire has made recommendations, including a specific provision within the agreement that says that the agreement will not have an effect on volunteers. So we have as a government resolved to support that and resolved to finalise this agreement and to support the recommendations of the Fair Work Commission. We have also ensured that there will be that specific provision in the agreement.

We have got Craig Lapsley as the emergency management commissioner to oversight the implementation of the agreement and report back to government and report back publicly, and we have a path to the Fair Work Commission if it is needed. We are going to set up a collaborative consultative committee with our volunteer firefighters and our career firefighters and management. Those opposite want to continue the dispute. That is not in the interests of Victoria. It is not in the interests of the safety of communities across Victoria. We will end the dispute.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise to support the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Bulleen, the Leader of the Opposition here in Victoria. It is interesting to be lectured to by the minister, the Deputy Premier, the person who thought protective services officers (PSOs) were plastic police. He had absolutely no respect for PSOs when he was in opposition, and he has got no respect for volunteers now that he is in government — absolutely no respect at all.

This very sad story of a lack of respect for volunteers by the government goes back to and starts before the 2014 election. I quote from Peter Marshall, who was reported in the *Red Flag* magazine of the Socialist Alternative. Peter Marshall bragged about the fact that he had 723 firefighters manning booths for the Labor Party at the last state election. He bragged about how the United Firefighters Union (UFU) members had doorknocked 43 000 homes on behalf of the Labor Party. So that is what this is all about. This is about political payback to the UFU, who doorknocked and who manned booths for the Labor Party at the last state election. This is all about political payback, and unfortunately the volunteers are collateral damage in the bullying of the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services.

As the Leader of the Opposition quoted, you can go through quote after quote of people who have said that this enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) is illegal

and discriminatory. All the experts are saying that, but the government will not take any notice of those particular people. If you go through some of the clauses in the EBA and look at 15.1 and 16.1, they are:

... requiring that changes to structure and roles in the brigade administrative and volunteer support services must be agreed by the UFU.

In my language and anyone else's language, that is a veto that has been put into this particular EBA. That is most definitely a veto. I do not know how the Premier or the minister can say that that is not a veto.

If you go to 41.1, it is:

... requiring the CFA to hand over full access of its email system database to UFU, and providing the UFU with unrestricted use of it.

It is a breach of the privacy of all Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers that their data is going to be handed across to the union. We know what will happen there. If someone disagrees with the UFU, they will be hounded, they will be punished, they will be victimised and they will no doubt be bullied and potentially physically assaulted. We know what happened at polling booths where there were UFU members. If people actually wanted to take a Liberal card, they were intimidating them. They were threatening them with violence. That is what happened at polling booths. And there have been official complaints about that. Those on the other side might want to put their heads in the sand and not realise that, but there have been official complaints about bullying at polling booths by UFU members.

Clause 45.15 is:

... providing that firefighters cannot move between specific types of trucks during a shift unless agreed by the UFU.

Again, how is that not a veto on management decisions by the CFA management? If it is not a veto, I do not know what is.

If you go through the EBA, there are somewhere between 50 and 60 clauses that effectively are a veto against management decisions as to how the CFA runs. The CFA is probably one of the world's best volunteer organisations, and it is respected as probably the best firefighting agency anywhere in the world. That is all being put at risk for political payback to the UFU and to Peter Marshall for all those resources that were put into the election back in 2014.

If you go to clauses 51.3, 51.6.5 and so on, they say:

... the CFA cannot employ operational staff on a part-time or casual basis unless the UFU agrees.

How can they run an organisation if they have got to rely on the UFU to make sure that they can actually do their job?

Clause 94.6 says:

Changes to amenities (including facilities for meals, refreshments, recreation, rest and recline) or access to communications must be agreed by the UFU.

So volunteers who have been out on the fireground and come back cannot go into those facilities unless the UFU agrees.

Recently I had an example from one of the volunteer firefighters I was talking to about this particular process. They were actually in Bendigo on Black Saturday. We know that there was a fire there and that there were fatalities in Bendigo with that fire. On their rest break they went back to the Bendigo fire station. They actually wanted to use the conveniences in the fire station. They were caught short, and they wanted to use the conveniences. They were told that that was the union toilet and that volunteers cannot use that particular toilet. That is the sort of thing that went on back in 2009, before we had this EBA. It will be worse after this EBA happens. You will not be allowed to use the toilets and you will not be allowed to use the lunchroom unless it is condoned. If you go to quite a few of the integrated stations, you will see there are demarcation lines in those stations as to where the volunteers can go, because the paid firefighters do not want those particular people.

Mr Nardella — What a lot of rot.

Mr WALSH — That is not rubbish. You go and have a look, Don.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr WALSH — You sit up the back there, bellowing all the time. You get out there and actually have a look at what happens out there, instead of bellowing up there all the time.

As I said, this is all about political payback. The Deputy Premier, the minister, is very keen to put some quotes on the record. Can I put a quote on the record from Lachlan Gales, who is a Wangaratta deputy group officer and volunteer? It is from the *Border Mail* on 20 June:

'We're appalled that a boy from Wangaratta —

the Premier —

would be at the heart of this problem, which is going to tear apart not only the fabric of our CFA, but impact our local communities', he said.

'There's a big picture out there, there's a game being played — we are all pawns in a greater game which Daniel Andrews hasn't explained'.

I explained that earlier. That is about the fact that there were 723 UFU members manning polling booths in 2014. It is about the fact that the UFU doorknocked 43 000 homes in 2014. That is what Lachlan Giles in Wangaratta needs to understand, that this is just about political payback.

One of those people who has probably been very supportive of this government over the last nearly two years would be Peter Tuohey, the president of the Victorian Farmers Federation. If you go to today's *Weekly Times* and to the story by Kath Sullivan, it starts off, 'The dumbest thing possible'. It goes on to say:

'The government has lost the respect of just about everyone in rural Victoria', Mr Tuohey said. 'I explained it was just about the dumbest thing they could have possibly done', he said of the government's decision to dismiss the board last Friday.

I actually agree with Peter Tuohey 100 per cent; it is the dumbest thing possible. If you look at this political payback and those people who have stood up to the Premier, who is an absolute bully, you will see a minister has lost her job, CEO Lucinda Nolan has lost her job and the board members have lost their jobs, sacked and out the door for not signing an EBA that all the experts said was illegal and actually discriminatory. You had a board that wanted to employ a new CEO, and the government was very proud to appoint Lucinda Nolan when she got that job. She was someone who wanted to bring changes, wanted to bring cultural diversity and wanted to get more women into the CFA. What happened to them? They were all bullied out of the job. They are gone.

What we are talking about in the matter of public importance today submitted by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Bulleen, is an issue of political payback for a union that manned booths, doorknocked, intimidated people, bullied people and made sure the Labor Party actually won an election. Now those opposite are beholden to a union, and this is just the start. It will happen in other places in Australia. It will probably happen to other volunteer organisations in Victoria. There is a real risk that we are going to lose the ethos of volunteers in Victoria because of a Premier who is a bully and who does not want women in senior positions in those organisations.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — We heard from the Leader of the Opposition earlier, and what he spoke

about was respect. If we want to talk about respect in this debate, then respect means not lying to our communities. Respect is not about inciting division and hatred and intolerance. Respect is about respect for our communities, and respect is about listening to our communities. Let me start on this issue about respect, and that is hearing from members of our community. I received a message via Facebook recently, and I would like to read that message out:

Hi Sonya, Just a quick note to say thank you for your ... post supporting all firefighters. I am a career firefighter with the CFA ...but also a volunteer member with my local community where I reside ...

I'd like to think I have a bit of an understanding how both parties feel (volunteers and paid staff) and in no way do I consider myself a so-called 'union thug' as we have been reported in the media. Indeed, I would describe myself as someone who just loves life, my family and friends and what I do for a living.

Unfortunately this attempted division and subsequent denigration of relationships have taken their toll on me personally. I have lost one of my best mates because he believes in what has been said in the media, I have been ostracised by my local volunteer brigade who would rather believe press reports than speak to me directly, and the situation has also put great strain on my personal life. Thank you for your positive message to all firefighters in support of unity.

Last week I also went and visited a number of volunteer Country Fire Authority (CFA) stations in my electorate, and the message that I got from them was this: they just want to continue to do the job they do best, and that is to protect our communities and keep them safe. They do not want to be part of this divisive commentary that is taking place now in our communities; they want to continue the good work they have always done, and they have always worked in partnership with career firefighters.

Unfortunately it is division that we are now seeing in our communities, and it is this division that is leading to the hatred, the intolerance and, frankly, a breakdown in that social fabric. As I said previously, as leaders in the community it is incumbent upon us to make sure that we do all we can to stamp out that division and not to create it, as those opposite have been doing.

Those opposite are inciting this division, and I can tell you it is not because they care about the CFA or the volunteers or our community. If they cared about that, would they have ripped the guts out of the CFA? Would they have shed 164 jobs? No, they certainly would not have. And if they cared, would they have tried to bury the atrocious conditions at Fiskville and tried to sweep under the carpet the contamination which impacted our volunteers and the local community? If

they cared, would their shadow minister not have bothered to show up to the Fiskville inquiry? If those opposite cared, would they have refused to act on presumptive rights legislation? If they cared, would they have ever said, 'We are not convinced that there is a direct link between cancer and the firefighters'? If they cared, would they have sat on the emergency medical response? If they cared, would they be spreading lies and inciting hatred amongst the community — lies on important issues like community safety? I can tell you they do not care. They do not care about the CFA, and they do not care about our communities.

I will tell you what they care about, and that is fundraising. They care about a federal election coming up, and they care about making sure that their Liberal mates in Canberra are getting the money they need to run their campaigns. What they do not care about are facts. Let us talk about some facts, shall we? Firefighters, career and volunteer, are hurting and our community is the worse for it and is suffering. Firefighters, career and volunteer, have a single purpose, and that is to keep our communities safe.

The work of firefighters can be dangerous, and we know that danger does not discriminate between career and volunteer firefighters. I recall the member for Frankston telling me a story. He was called out to an incident. It was a car accident. The victim in the accident was a heavily pregnant woman. She was trapped inside the car, and the member for Frankston told me that he knew the woman had lost her baby. He had to stand there and hold her hand while it took over an hour to extract her from the vehicle, and all the time he was trying to reassure her that things were going to be okay.

I recall the story of a friend of mine who was a volunteer firefighter who fought in the Black Saturday bushfires, and he had to visit home after home to place flags in the houses where bodies were found so that those coming after him could identify and remove the bodies from those houses. It was not until several years later that he recognised the traumatic impact that had had on him. Where was the minister back then during the Black Saturday fires?

Here are some more facts. While this dispute continues, and for as long as it continues, it distracts our firefighters from doing the job they need to do, and that is to keep our communities safe.

Here are some more facts. It was the CFA that referred the matter to the Fair Work Commission. The CFA asked the Fair Work Commission to intervene in this

dispute in an effort to help it to resolve the matters in dispute. It was the Fair Work Commission that then asked the parties to identify between them what matters were not agreed. That left the Fair Work Commission with a list of matters that were not agreed, and that became the subject of the commissioner's inquiries. It was on that basis that the Fair Work commissioner handed down his recommendations on 1 June.

Those recommendations very clearly protect the role of volunteers and the important work they do. The commissioner specifically recommended inserting an overarching clause into the agreement in effect to underscore the fact that the agreement applies only to 34 integrated stations and only to career firefighters. It is a lie to suggest that this agreement extends to those 1200 CFA volunteer stations or that they are somehow going to be impacted by this very specific employment agreement that applies to career firefighters.

Many have made a lot about clause 36.4. That clause is clear and contains the recommendation of the commissioner that volunteer incident controllers retain their discretion to manage resources and incidents. Anything else is a lie. In regard to the meaning of 'seven on the fireground', even Tony Abbott today in the newspaper gave a further lie about this point. Seven career firefighters will be dispatched to an incident — not on the ground. This applies only to integrated fire stations, where the first responder or incident controller may decide that the second truck is not needed.

Finally, in regard to the so-called veto, these are consultation clauses and they are standard in employment agreements. This employment agreement will contain an escalated dispute resolution procedure, which again is standard. To make this anything larger than that is a fabrication and a lie.

Finally, just briefly, I would like to talk about diversity and equal opportunity. We have put the status of women front and centre in the Andrews Labor government. It is the centrepiece of our policy and legislative agenda. I actually find that those opposite drawing on this issue in this context are belittling the status of women and the important work that has been done in this area. That those opposite can raise this issue in the context of the CFA is at best disingenuous and at worst damaging to our objective of achieving gender equality in Victoria. If those opposite were serious about gender equality, we would see more women on their front bench and in fact on all their benches.

We are not talking about thugs; we are talking about firefighters who have a very important role to keep our communities safe.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — Automatically I obviously support the member for Bulleen and this matter of public importance, and I find it very interesting that the last contributor was speaking about diversity within the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and was actually saying that we on this side are the ones who are putting an imposition. I want to state that the only quotes we have ever put in place are from the equal opportunity commissioner. It was the commissioner who had put on the record that this enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) prevents women from going into the CFA workforce. That was a quote from her, not us.

In relation to the Fair Work commissioner and the Fair Work Commission, if those opposite are 100 per cent right and supportive of the Fair Work Commission, why has the Supreme Court put an injunction in place on the agreement, preventing it from being signed until today? The government has had to fold on its position and say, 'We are going to have full consultation'. If you have a look at the media release that was sent out by the Minister for Emergency Services, firstly, it has got the wrong website. The wrong website was listed on it — not a good start. The wording says that he will listen to their concerns — that is not a bad start — and then he will give them the facts. Never once in its own media release does the government mention consultation or that it is willing to change anything going forward. It is simply just passing back the facts.

There is one thing I will agree with the member for Melton on. The most important part of being a member of this house is recognising that everybody deserves to have a voice and everybody should be heard. Just after the minister went out, unceremoniously sacked the board and appointed a new one, I went down to the Berwick CFA station to give our position and do a media release. While I was there a phone call came through to the Berwick CFA volunteers from a United Firefighters Union (UFU) member who said, 'We will turn up out the front with trucks, and we will make sure you do not do this. You will do it at your own peril'. They were the words given to the first lieutenant at the Berwick CFA. Then they turned up and blocked the driveway.

Mr Richardson — Hearsay.

Mr BATTIN — With photos. They blocked the driveway. I agree with those on the other side that not all CFA career firefighters are thugs, but ones who

want to block a driveway and stop people going in and out of a CFA station I actually think should go directly into that category. They should have been smart and blocked the driveway out and not the driveway in. That would have made a bit of a difference to what their message was. However, they decided that was their position.

The CFA CEO is a very important role. The Labor government came in, it headhunted, it did its search and it found Lucinda Nolan. Why did it choose Lucinda Nolan? Because she is a strong woman who has worked in emergency services, who has a fantastic history and who wanted to see general cultural change through the CFA. She wanted to see change. I had the pleasure of working under Lucinda Nolan, and the credit for her for what she did for Victoria Police is amazing. Now this government has forced out Lucinda Nolan, the very person it brought in to fix the problems. Why did it do that? Why did it get rid of Lucinda Nolan? Because she stood up to the Premier and said, 'You are wrong. You are trying to force through an EBA that is against the law and against the CFA act'.

It is not only her. The CFA board has gone with this position. It is a well-respected board. We have members on the other side on the record as speaking about the positives of this board, and that includes positive comments about the acting chair, John Peberdy. There are about four or five Labor members who during the term of the last government spoke about their confidence in the CFA board. What changed in the intervening period of time? What changed in the last few weeks so that those members who had full confidence in that board now want to get rid of it? I will tell you what it was: the board would not fold to Daniel Andrews's demands to force through an EBA that is unlawful and should not be there.

I have a quote. Someone recently said that Daniel Andrews has shown an 'arrogance and disregard' he could not remember seeing from a leader before. This person said that Daniel Andrews has given up the right to be trusted because of the way he has handled this dispute with the CFA. They said, 'I don't say this lightly: I don't trust him'. Neil Mitchell has had many phone calls from volunteers, he has listened to them and he has relayed their messages. It is vital that all Victorians know this: we cannot trust him.

I have a quote from Peter Tuohey of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF):

The Premier and his colleagues risk eroding all the good work they've done in country Victoria if they side with the union and sign this deal with the unions.

Again, a man who has come out in support of many government initiatives is now saying that government members should keep their hands off the CFA and stay out of regional Victoria.

Country Women's Association of Victoria president Mabelle Crichton has said:

... these recommendations have the potential to put our communities at risk. We are especially concerned for the safety of our rural families and their communities.

The Crown counsel has said that it agrees with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission that:

... the clauses in the proposed agreement that prohibit or restrict part-time work are likely to indirectly discriminate against employees who are women, pregnant, have the status of parent or carer, have a disability and possibly also older people.

It is not us saying this. These are people appointed by the government who are saying this and saying it is discriminatory. Government members are out there saying that the coalition is running a scare campaign. I will take some credit for some of the things I can do, but I do not think I could convince 60 000 volunteers, Jack Rush, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Crown counsel, and I definitely could not convince the VFF. I could not convince all those out there about their views of what they are putting forward for the government.

In a letter to the *Age*, Bob in Wonthaggi stated:

Daniel Andrews, for well over 50 years I have been a devoted Labor supporter. Nothing could induce me to vote Liberal. I am also a strong union supporter but when it comes to the CFA versus the fireys' union ... you are wrong. The CFA is entrenched in the country. We are dependent on the volunteers and very proud of the wonderful job they do. If you continue with your 'head in the sand' attitude, you will lose enormous support in the country. This will be remembered for many years to come. Listen and be strong enough to change your mind.

This is one of Labor's supporters. This is a Labor Party supporter of 50 years who is telling Labor it has got it wrong, and it cannot even listen to him.

There is a quote from Sharon and Terry Donovan, who lost their accommodation business on Black Saturday:

We feel the CFA is being railroaded and may become a lapdog to the union ...

What is happening is an insult to these special people.

They are saying: 'Hands off our heroes, and leave the CFA alone'. Volunteers, many of whom are farmers, will not tolerate the union taking control of the CFA.

The union's absurd demands could lead to the CFA's 60 000 volunteers walking away. We have gone out to the brigades, we have visited them across the state, and the message is all the same: 'Daniel Andrews, keep your hands off'.

Labor members can try to convince themselves that the EBA that has been put in place with veto conditions will not affect volunteers, but it says all 50 conditions must be agreed to. It does not give you an option. That is not consultation. It must be agreed to. Uniforms must be agreed to. Trucks must be agreed to. Operational budgets must be agreed to. These are all things that will fundamentally affect the way the system operates and the way volunteers can go about their job.

With Labor funding this new CFA EBA, which will cost more than \$600 million, up to \$700 million, those funds have to come from somewhere. The government has a choice — it is going to be removing appliances that are supposed to be going out to volunteer stations, the operational equipment that should be going to CFA stations, or it is going to be increasing the fire services levy to regional Victorians and farmers, the ones the CFA is there to protect.

In my hand I have got quote after quote from across this state. I have had absolute pleasure in travelling across the state and speaking to the hardworking volunteers who get out there and protect our communities. We have gone out to rallies from Warrnambool to Wonthaggi, from Mildura down through to Castlemaine. Everywhere we heard the same message: votes of no confidence in the Premier, discussions about resignations and discussions about brigades separating themselves from the CFA. But the one message all of the volunteers sent back and all members opposite need to take on board is that not one CFA volunteer wants to resign. Not one of them wants to separate from the proud institution of the CFA that they have been involved with for many decades. They are proud of the work they have done. They deserve respect, and that respect has to start in this house.

I ask the Premier to take the message on board. He does have the opportunity to change his mind. He should get away from just listening to the volunteers, then changing his mind and putting his facts to them. He should actually undertake some genuine consultation. The Supreme Court has told the government it is wrong. All of these people — Jack Rush, QC; it does not matter who you speak to — have said the government is wrong. The government should take the chance, come out on the front foot now and say it will stand with the CFA volunteers and protect them for the future.

I supported the member for Bulleen before, and I will support him again with one message. On this side of the house there is one thing we will not do; we will not go against a volunteer in this state. We will support every single one of them. Volunteers deserve that support, and now we are calling on the entire chamber to give them that respect.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — What we have seen throughout the course of this week has been an appalling politicisation of this issue by those on the other side with one end only in mind — that is, to get their mates in the federal Liberal party over the line on 2 July. That is what has been motivating them throughout this week, and they have shown no regard whatsoever for the damage they are doing in our community as they deliberately go about pitting firefighter against firefighter, causing a great deal of concern and unrest in our regional communities and spreading lies and mistruths wherever they go.

As members of this house will know, my community of Macedon has been impacted many times by many serious fires. Of course if we go back to Ash Wednesday, a day in 1983 that we will never forget, 47 people in Victoria died, 7 of whom were from my own electorate of Macedon. At that time I know many of us thought we would never see such a day again, but of course as members in this place all know too well, Black Saturday, 7 February 2009, is a day that we will never forget on which 173 people lost their lives — that is, 173 people lost their lives despite the very best efforts of volunteer and career firefighters alike across our state.

We have heard none of this from those on the other side — that we stop for a moment and reflect on the perilous circumstances of our state. Here we are in one of the most fire-prone places in the world. It is vital that we have the very best fire services in the world, and in order to do that we need our fire services working well together. We need our career firefighters and our volunteer firefighters working cooperatively together, as they have done over many years and on many occasions and as they will continue to do so once that mob opposite stops its divisiveness in our community. It is absolutely disgraceful.

As I was saying, many lessons were learnt from Black Saturday following the comprehensive 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, including, I might note, the importance of employing more career firefighters to ensure that communities, particularly those in the outer urban fringe, have 24/7 support and protection. I note that the member for Yan Yean is in the chamber. It is communities like hers that will benefit from those

additional firefighters being employed. I might also say that it was an election commitment of ours and one that I am very proud we will see delivered. In my own electorate I have 37 brigades that are 100 per cent volunteers, and I am very supportive of each and every one of those brigades and continue to be, as I am, I might say, very supportive of volunteer organisations that stand ready to serve our community across my electorate, including the State Emergency Service, including community emergency response teams and including Red Cross volunteers, whose work in the aftermath of disasters is absolutely vital.

We all know that volunteers play an extraordinary role in our communities, and they will continue to do so. Across my electorate volunteers are motivated by a desire to serve their communities and, I might add, by the camaraderie that is part and parcel of being part of one of these magnificent community organisations, be it the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Country Women's Association, Rotary, Lions or Girl Guides. Despite the lies and misinformation being peddled by those on the other side, none of this will change — not one bit.

I will tell members what needs to change, and it needs to change straightaway — it is the lies and the fears that that mob on the other side are peddling for their own political advantage. I will tell you why it needs to stop, and it needs to stop now. Today, in an article headed, 'CFA crisis — firefighter handed a bullet shell "for the Premier"', the *Age* reports:

A career firefighter was handed a .22 bullet shell and faced a storm of abuse while collecting donations for local brigades, as public anger over the CFA dispute takes an ugly turn.

Leading firefighter Alex Batty was among a group of career and volunteer staff from the Traralgon CFA station ... who were rattling CFA fundraising cans at traffic lights last week. Some motorists questioned whether the firefighters were career or volunteers before they donated, he said, and others erupted with vile abuse.

'One particular person put a .22 shell in the donation bucket and said, "You can give that to the career staff and the Premier",' Mr Batty recounted to Fairfax Media.

'Another said, "Why the f—would we donate to you ...

I say to those on the other side of the house: it is time that you stop the lies. It is time to stop the misinformation and join with us in moving forward to deliver the very best fire services that this state needs.

I support the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services and the action they have taken to end the dispute with Victoria's paid firefighters. One of the challenges the government has faced is that for more

than three years the CFA board was unable to reach an enterprise bargaining agreement with its paid workforce, and then, despite agreeing to refer the matter to the Fair Work Commission, the board refused to accept the recommendations of the independent umpire. In my opinion this demonstrated clearly to me a failure to lead, and this is despite Commissioner Roe saying:

The role of volunteers in fighting bushfires and maintaining community safety in delivering high-quality services to the public in remote and regional areas and in integrated stations is not altered by this agreement.

These are the facts that those on the other side, the members of the Liberal Party and the National Party, refuse to acknowledge because it suits their dirty, political purposes to be out there campaigning, taking down names, taking down email addresses and soliciting for money to fill their coffers ahead of the federal election. It is an absolute disgrace.

As this house knows, the government commissioned a fire services review by former Tasmanian emergency services minister David O'Byrne, and most recently we have seen the Fiskville inquiry report tabled in this house. Both of these reports point to serious leadership, management and workplace culture issues that need to be addressed by the CFA. Only those on this side of the house, only the Premier and only the Minister for Emergency Services, have a plan and have the will to ensure that we have the very best Country Fire Authority equipped and funded with protection for career firefighters and protection for volunteer firefighters. We will take their health and safety seriously. We will implement presumptive rights legislation. That lot on the other side fobbed that off. They denied the link between cancer and firefighting. They have sold career and volunteer firefighters out at every step of the way.

As I said, I will finish, Deputy Speaker, but I did want to end on this note: the behaviour of that lot on the other side with their campaign, including the registering by the Liberal Party of a website that purports to be an independent website and the soliciting for campaign funds, shows the utmost disrespect to CFA volunteers. It shows absolute disrespect to the community of Victoria, and to be lectured by those on the other side about governance — by a mob whose own former state secretary is now in jail on account of stealing \$1.5 million — is an absolute disgrace.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) — At the last election the now Premier went to the Victorian people with a Labor slogan saying, 'Putting people first'. It sounds good, but words are one thing; it is action that people will judge you on. The backbone of this great state in part is our

volunteers. In fact our state would never be able to function as a state if it were not for our volunteers. Whether they be scouts, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the State Emergency Service (SES) or lifesavers, it is a mighty effort. Crucial to the safety of this state are the Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteer and the career firefighter, so why does the Premier, who claims to put people first, go to extraordinary lengths to destroy the heart of the CFA by handing over effective control of the CFA to the United Firefighters Union (UFU)? This is not about Labor putting people first; it is about putting unions first. In Victoria the Premier puts unions first. Labor will never be able to spin its way out of this. Never, ever will Labor be able to spin its way out of this incompetence by its Premier and government.

Some of the lies and the spin that Labor members have started with is to accuse the previous coalition government of not settling the CFA enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) with the UFU. And they are dead right. Do members opposite know why? It is because we said no to Peter Marshall. We were not going to roll over and allow the UFU to just bulldoze every single thing the CFA chief fire officer said. What has been forgotten as part of the lead-up to this dispute is that in 2010 the Brumby government did a sneaky side deal with the UFU to give the union a whole heap of extra powers and money. It was a sweetheart deal, and in regard to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) it meant that the UFU had effective control over the MFB. So what did we have to do between 2010 and 2014? We had to sort out the mess between the UFU and the MFB. So, yes, Labor members are right. We had to go to the Fair Work Commission because the UFU was using its power to veto the chief fire officer's determinations.

Let me give you some examples. The chief fire officer at the MFB wanted to move a truck from fire station A to fire station B. The union said no. And just remember, this is the same deal that those opposite want to put on the CFA. This is the same deal, and this is how veto powers work. The chief fire officer had said, 'It would be more effective to move this truck to this fire station'. The union said no. So we had to take it to the Fair Work Commission — can you believe it? — to get the truck moved from station A to station B.

It gets worse. We had brand-new, world-class appliances ready to go to fight fires, but the UFU would not sign them off. For 12 months we battled with the UFU. Again we had to take it to the Fair Work Commission to get world-class appliances put into service. But the one that always confuses me is a situation when the MFB wanted to roll out a new

version of Windows for its PCs. Guess what? The UFU said no. Can you believe that we had to go to the Fair Work Commission to upgrade Windows for the PCs? It is hard to believe.

But let me tell you about the most disgraceful one of the lot. We had a heatwave in January 2014, and that meant that all hands had to be on deck. Whether it be the SES, the ambulance services, the firefighters, the doctors or the hospitals, everyone had to be on deck. There was no question about it. The MFB, to its credit, said, 'We're going to add an extra 30 people — 30 firefighters — to the cause to assist those elderly people who are sick and need a first responder to get there to make sure they are okay'. And what happened? The UFU black-banned nine trucks. At the height of the heatwave the union had nine trucks black-banned. That is an absolutely disgraceful situation. While every ambulance, the SES and everyone else was on full duty, the UFU banned nine trucks during the heatwave. And that is a disgraceful situation.

Do you know what we had to do? We had to go back to the Fair Work Commission in order to get those nine trucks back on the road and to make use of the 30 people — 30 firefighters — who could have been making a big difference in keeping Victoria safe. Can you believe it? That is what the UFU did to try to shut down the decision made by the chief fire officer that that was what should happen. It is that same deal with the MFB that they are going to template onto the CFA. The union will have ultimate veto powers over the chief fire officer. We even had to go to the Fair Work Commission to get the UFU to bargain in good faith. Can you believe it? We had to go to the commission to get that.

Another Labor lie that members opposite are very keen to push forward is that we cut the CFA budget. It is blatantly wrong. It is factually wrong. It is factually incorrect. Labor believes that if you say it often enough, the people of Victoria are going to believe it. Every single year we put forward a record amount of CFA funding for the CFA budget. In fact in 2011–12 we added an additional amount on top of the budget to implement the bushfires royal commission's recommendations. We gave it an additional amount on top. So to say that we cut anything in regard to the CFA budget is false and is another Labor Party lie. Every single year the coalition government budgeted more money than Labor ever budgeted.

In regard to presumptive legislation, we made it very clear, and the member for Warrandyte made it very clear when he tabled documents, that we were absolutely committed to presumptive legislation in

regard to both career and volunteer firefighters. During the 2010 to 2014 period Labor talked about presumptive legislation but only ever for the career firefighters. It never, ever mentioned that it was going to bring presumptive legislation in for volunteers. It was only ever for career firefighters. We made the commitment — —

Ms Green interjected.

Mr WELLS — Yes, we can see that the member for Yan Yean is going to want to rewrite history, but the facts are that the Liberal coalition with the National Party was absolutely committed to presumptive legislation, but it had to include the volunteers. It absolutely had to include the volunteers, and we went to the election absolutely committed to that.

I heard the new emergency services minister a couple of days ago saying that there was not one veto in the EBA agreement that the UFU has pushed forward. Are we reading a different document to what the government has?

An honourable member — He's not reading it.

Mr WELLS — Someone is not reading it. We have been reading it, and there are almost 60 veto powers for the UFU in the way that the CFA is going to run its business. In other words, before the chief fire officer makes a decision, whether it be on uniforms, training or moving a truck from one area to another, he has to get the UFU to tick it off. That is a ridiculous, pathetic, disgraceful way of running an organisation. In a time of a massive fire what you need is to make sure that you have a single line of command so that everyone understands what is going on, otherwise lives will absolutely be lost.

What the Labor Party has done in regard to the CFA board, which was there to look after the CFA in its entirety, and the CEO is nothing short of a disgrace. This is going to haunt the Labor Party, the Premier and the Minister for Emergency Services until the 2018 election, and I cannot wait to make sure that we are fighting tooth and nail for the CFA volunteers.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I rise today in anger. I rise with absolute anger and disgust. I am so upset at the division and deep hurt that this opposition is creating across our state. It is absolutely despicable. For those opposite to say that nobody on this side of the house understands or cares about Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers is not only a lie; it is disgraceful.

Like many in this house, I had childhood friends who lost children on Black Saturday. My daughter's friend

lost her aunt, uncle and two cousins on Black Saturday. We even, if you can believe it, lost ALP members on Black Saturday. We well understand exactly how important our volunteer firefighters are, just as we understand how important our career firefighters are. All firefighters are important, and they all deserve to be treated with respect, not this claptrap and disrespectful and politically motivated rubbish we hear from those opposite.

They should be hanging their heads in shame at this politically motivated campaign, which, as we have heard today, is payback. How clearly do they know how many career firefighters were out at polling booths and went doorknocking? They know it extremely well. This is them paying back career firefighters for standing up for their rights and for being heard — for telling the Liberal Party that it had it wrong, that it had not resolved their enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) despite having two years to do it and that it was treating the fire services with disrespect. This is the reward they get for standing up for not only their own rights but the needs of all Victorians. What they get is absolute disrespect, lies and scaremongering.

As I have said before in this house, all those opposite understand is how to whip up the fear in people. The only way they know how to govern or try to get into government is through fear and lying. They do not know how to make policy. They do not know how to put money into services where it is needed.

In my own community volunteers work well with career firefighters. We had volunteer firefighters from Diamond Creek train at the integrated station at Eltham. Last night we had volunteers from nine volunteer brigades training at Eltham with career firefighters, learning how to use new firefighting foams. And do you know why it is important they know how to use new firefighting foams? It is because the firefighting foams used at Fiskville were polluted — they were chemically toxic — and the CFA kept using those foams.

While I am talking about Fiskville, let us go through the myriad of concerns about what went on at Fiskville that those opposite ignored for the four years they were in government and that those opposite did nothing about. Those opposite ripped \$6 million out of Bangholme so that they could put money into Fiskville to build new apartments that were rarely used by volunteers or career staff. They did not pay one iota towards cleaning up Fiskville. This was despite Airservices Australia in 2010 withdrawing \$12 million of investment from Fiskville, including a water recycling plant, because it did soil testing and it was too polluted.

This was presented to the Fiskville board. This was presented to Mr Peberdy, who is now standing up and being counted as standing up for volunteers. Where was he in 2010, as a member of that board, to say, 'There's a problem here'? Where was he in 2011? Where was he in 2012? Where was he throughout the whole time that he was on the CFA board? He was missing in action. He was not defending volunteers, and he was not defending career firefighters. He was not looking after the people who need to be looked after because they are looking after us. They are looking after this whole community.

Let me read out some of the things that were said by volunteer firefighters to the Fiskville inquiry. Trevor Lansdown, who was a volunteer for 27 years, said that a toxic culture 'runs through the CFA from top to bottom'. He spoke about the mantra 'the trees have ears', where anything you said on or off duty would be used against you if an instructor had it in for you. He said:

These actions built a culture of keep quiet and pull your head in; this culture was also evident in instructors and other employees of the CFA and Fiskville in general.

Andrew Bishop, who has been a volunteer for many, many years, raised concerns about safety that came to fruition on a fire exercise. A telephone call was then made by his instructor to the then regional headquarters complaining that he had questioned the chain of command. Leonard Wyhoon, a volunteer since 1984, held concerns about the lack of record keeping due to safety. Darren Miller, who is a career firefighter, said:

During my attendances, I followed normal 'good hygiene' practices but at no stage was I ever told of a danger to me in the water supply at Fiskville.

CFA publishes many 'safety alerts'. I am yet to this day to see one on the danger of water contamination at my training college!

It was not just the culture that was toxic; as we all know, it was the environment.

Mr Lansdown also said that there was no respiratory protection and that black soot in 'great amounts' came out of his nose after drills. Mr Wyhoon reported the same and coughing up stained sputum. Mr Miller said:

The handling of this OHS issue by CFA management and the VFBV has destroyed my faith in the organisation to protect me or even to inform me of a clear and present danger! Statements of 'a safety-first organisation' appear to be just hollow words.

Mark Lyons, a Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) instructor, reported the water in the dams was used to

clean personnel as well as cool breathing apparatus. He said:

Very little care was taken regarding exposure to this water because of CFA management reassurances.

And perhaps the most damning statement of the cover-up came from Tony Ford, a career firefighter, who said:

Even the cottages that we used for our accommodation had signs on the walls warning us not to drink the water.

Let us talk about the money that was spent by CFA board members between 2010 and 2013, when I think around about \$250 000 was spent on things like going to the Royal Mail Hotel in Dunkeld and things like 60-cent parking meters — things that were not investing in CFA volunteers or career firefighters. They just spent money where they wanted to. The fire services review found that there were issues. The Fiskville inquiry found that there were issues with the way the CFA was managed. The CFA board had to be held accountable for its lack of care of firefighters, both volunteer and career.

I also want to talk about the shocking language that those opposite have been using, which has been allowed to continue on throughout the community. The member for Macedon referred to this. This is a cynical, cheap and divisive campaign by the Liberal Party; let there be no question of this. It registered its 'Hands off the CFA' website in April. It is using extreme language and not letting the facts get in the way. The Leader of the Opposition has already been busted numerous times for tweeting falsehoods. He blocked Thomas Parkes, a volunteer firefighter, on Twitter because he called the opposition leader out on his disgraceful use of the CFA as a political football. The opposition leader is very thin skinned, is he not, Deputy Speaker? He followed up and he lied about the minister's visit to Mildura firefighters. The language that is being used, including words around war, is extreme — this state is not at war. There is no war, there is a negotiation around an EBA that is currently being settled.

There is a great deal of carry-on from those opposite about the lack of volunteer firefighters being heard. Where were they when the CFA wrote to the Fair Work Commission saying that Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria had no role to play in the negotiations because it was a negotiation between employer and employees. I suspect that those opposite who have no concern for workers do not really understand how an EBA works. Let me tell those members how they work: an employer negotiates with an employee. To drum up this frenzy of

fear, as those opposite have done, is an absolute disgrace.

I will tell you what else the CFA is not spending money on. It is not spending money making sure there are breathing apparatus supply tanks — mobile units that can be filled — going around from community to community. Eltham has to currently cover from Eltham to Sunbury because the Sunbury one is out of operation, and this is something that was provided for by the volunteers. Eltham supplies up to 15 volunteer brigades. They replace their breathing apparatus and fill them up every time they are needed. Radios do not work properly. If firefighters are in a building, and they go in different directions, they cannot hear each other because the radios do not work because they are substandard.

We have trucks that are out of action that have to get parts imported from France, which can take up to six weeks, while the fire truck just sits idly by, not being used. This is the mismanagement that the CFA has indulged in for far too long, and it is time for it to stop. It is time for those opposite to start being real politicians and actually create real policies that help people, instead of this disgusting divisive work that it is doing. I stand here in support of my volunteer firefighters, and I stand here in support of my career firefighters.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I rise to join the debate on this matter of public importance (MPI), and indeed a matter of public importance it is — that of our 60 000 strong Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers. I represent 51 brigades from Acheron through to Yellingbo, across four districts: 12, 13, 14 and 23. I will certainly acknowledge that a number of those brigades have members who are employed by the CFA and also members who are employed by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). The enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) that is the centre of the MPI today is indeed contentious because it has some 60 clauses of veto, and what this does is actually open up old wounds that in some cases have been festering for a long time. It creates tensions between the career firefighters and the volunteer firefighters, who have had to work beside each other for a long time. That is not fair. It is so not fair that the volunteers are caught up in a paid-staff EBA. There are no winners here unless you are a staunch United Firefighters Union (UFU) member — and I know that not all career firefighters are. I have certainly spoken to some who are not, and they are the ones, along with the volunteers, who are particularly distressed. Our firefighters do great work and they need to work together, and they need to respect each other absolutely.

I just want to reflect on the history of the CFA. The CFA came together some 70 years ago in 1945 following a royal commission around the 1939 bush fires. But brigades have been around a lot longer than that. People in local areas joined forces to create a bit more strength around their own firefighting capability locally and then the brigades grew around that. In my electorate Kangaroo Ground is perhaps the longest continuously operating rural brigade, having operated since 1892; Healesville has been in operation since 1894; Mansfield is having its 125th anniversary next month, having been formed in 1891; Warburton has had a centenary; Murrindindi-Woodbourne was formed in 1920; Strath Creek was formed in 1926 — and I could go on. They are brigades that have been formed by communities. They have been community led and driven for a very long time.

When they banded together to protect their communities, often what happened was that farmers would slice off a bit of land. They would slice off maybe a quarter of an acre, and the Cooper family in Whanregarwen did this; in Thornton it was the Barton Gilmore family; and in Koriella it was Bob Briggs, as it was likewise in Homewood. Volunteers have helped with construction and working bees over decades, and mostly they have helped out financially. They have volunteered to raise funds to purchase gear. They may own a truck, they may own a slip-on vehicle or they may own particular apparatus or equipment. I grew up around the Limestone fire brigade, where my father was a volunteer for 45 years.

In my electorate of Eildon, the CFA brigades often form the heart of their communities, where towns like Barjarg or Maindample that have no post office, town hall, football club or pub have a CFA shed, and likewise Glenburn, Hoddles Creek, Molesworth, Murrindindi and Yellingbo. There is limited infrastructure, but you can bet your life they have a shed. The culture and spirit of volunteerism is self-motivated and self-led.

Volunteers give of their time and money freely and have managed with little direction from governments and other institutions. That is why a union takeover of the CFA hurts. It lays waste to that spirit by imposing suffocating controls on what volunteer firefighters can and cannot do. Without our volunteer firefighters our rural communities will be put at a huge risk. Without volunteers the Victorian government could never possibly employ enough emergency services workers to protect our state, our properties and our lives. That is why it is so important that we continue to recognise and value the contribution that volunteers make to Victoria.

Strangely enough, in May this year during National Volunteer Week, the Premier announced that the Andrews Labor government had signed a statement on working with volunteer-based agencies to support volunteerism in Victoria. I can tell members that what he signed — the emergency management volunteer statement, which acknowledges the contribution of some 100 000 volunteers, of which 60 per cent are CFA volunteers who protect communities before, during and after emergencies — is clearly not worth the paper it is written on because completely hypocritically, just over a month later, the Premier bullied a minister who had the bravery and the strength to stand up against him and he bullied a CFA board that stood up for what it believed was right, so he could push through what he wanted.

This is an attack on communities and an attack on volunteers, but it is not just an attack by the Premier. It is also an attack by cabinet, because once the Premier removed the previous minister, then he got consensus — unanimous agreement around the table. He got rid of the dissenting and gutsy voice, so it is the members of the entire cabinet of the government who are responsible for this.

An EBA spells out the terms and conditions of employment, but I think the current EBA goes well beyond a workplace agreement. It hands control to a union — to the UFU — and many members of the UFU are indeed militant. I talk to people all the time who work at integrated stations or who have interaction with a lot of these union members, and they describe absolute bullying. Some of the people that are describing this are certainly not on my side of politics. Even on the weekend somebody who is a strong unionist said that the UFU is now out of control with these demands and that it needs to be fixed. He had very little regard for how members of the Andrews government would ever be able to do this, because they were the root cause of this decision.

I want to have a look at some of the clauses of the EBA. Clauses 15.1 and 16.1 require that changes to structure and roles in the brigade administrative and volunteer support services must be agreed by the UFU. Imagine that in a regular workplace. Imagine that senior management is trying to drive change and trying to bring about efficiencies and productivity gains, and the staff say, 'No, you can't make those changes unless you have the union tick it off'. That is extraordinary.

Clause 41.1 requires the CFA to hand over full access of its email system and database to the UFU and provides that the UFU will have unrestricted use of it. Why does the UFU want all the emails of all of the

volunteer base? It is because the union wants to take it over — absolutely — and this is the first step. We heard people saying, ‘It’s not going to change’. Well, it might not change at the minute, because government members want to appease people and to lead them into a false sense of security that it will not change, but let us go a couple of years down the track. Heaven forbid that members of this government get another term in government! What are they going to do then? This is a real risk, because members of this government may not make the changes now, but they will set up the structure so that this can happen smoothly in the future. I get out there, and I hear constant talk of what happened in the 1970s and the 1980s. Race Matthews was out there trying to lead the charge to merge the CFA and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), but that was knocked on the head pretty substantially.

I turn to another clause of the EBA. Clause 45.15 provides that firefighters cannot move between specific types of trucks during a shift unless agreed by the UFU. What a crock that is! There must be a whole heap of scenarios where this would happen. Somebody may be out on a fireground and may need to move to a different destination. A person might have a particular type of skill — but no, the union has to sign it off first. Gosh! In the middle of an emergency, how do you think the union is going to do that? And what delays is that going to bring?

I turn to one of the more bizarre clauses, clause 69.3, which provides that only firefighters can be appointed as fitness leaders responsible for taking fitness classes at work locations. I mean seriously! I find it absolutely staggering that these are considered as part of an EBA, an enterprise bargaining agreement. The CFA volunteers should have no part in that, and they should be pulled out of it.

The attitude of the Premier and members of the Labor Party is: ‘It’s my way or the highway’. Members of the cabinet made a unanimous decision to support this EBA, to sack the CFA board and to force the resignation of Lucinda Nolan, who was hand-picked by the Premier and who has a steadfast and honourable reputation. I think this is absolutely appalling, and there is no respect shown to our volunteers.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — It is always a great pleasure to join any debate in this chamber on the value and work of our Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers. However, I have to say I do not support the matter of public importance (MPI) put before this house by the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition represented Northern Metropolitan Region in the other place for many years, but I do not recall

ever seeing him at any of my CFA stations. I could be wrong — maybe there were one or two occasions at election time — but he was certainly never there standing up for the CFA when its members needed new stations and new equipment. I do not recall him being on the job. I do not recall that at all.

This MPI purports to be about the settling of an enterprise bargaining agreement between the CFA and the workforce of career firefighters. That is what it purports to be, but this MPI is just another tactic in a dishonest, despicable, divisive and destructive campaign by the coalition which is purely about shifting votes to their coalition counterparts in the forthcoming federal election. What we have heard from other members is that it is not just about shifting votes; it is actually about shifting dollars. It is about shifting dollars from Mr and Mrs Average, separating them from their hard-earned — —

Ms Ryall — Deputy Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house had a quorum recently, so there is no point of order. The honourable member, to continue.

Ms GREEN — Thank you very much, Deputy Speaker. That someone who does not know anything about the CFA is trying to shut down debate is absolutely unbelievable.

What we have heard from this divisive opposition is that the Leader of the Opposition in his contribution mentioned respect and said things about volunteerism being destroyed. He questioned who has guts in this campaign and who has integrity. I would say that those on the other side who have proposed this matter of public importance are the ones who lack the guts and the integrity, and they are the ones who are on a mission to destroy volunteerism and to destroy the fabric of the most effective volunteer and staffed firefighting service in the world. It is not without its problems, however, and they have been identified as — —

Mr Morris — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, your attention was just drawn to the state of the house. There has not been a quorum called today.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. There was a quorum called when the house reconstituted at 2 o’clock, so there is no point of order. The honourable member for Yan Yean, to continue.

Mr Morris interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington will sit down.

Mr Morris — That was 2 hours ago.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The honourable member for Mornington will sit down immediately.

Mr Morris — An absolute disgrace.

Debate interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Mornington

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Under standing order 124, the honourable member for Mornington will leave the chamber for half an hour.

Honourable member for Mornington withdrew from chamber.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Debate resumed.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — Where were the guts and integrity of the Leader of the Opposition during his four years as a member of the former government, as the Minister for Planning, when the guts were being ripped out of the CFA? There was absolutely no action on Fiskville. Government members voted down presumptive legislation in the other chamber. That is where the Leader of the Opposition was, voting down presumptive legislation on cancer on — what was it — six or seven occasions, and then those opposite have the temerity to say that they back the CFA and they back volunteer firefighters.

Where was the action from him as a local member covering the Yan Yean electorate? Where was he when the operational budgets of volunteer fire brigades were halved under his watch? This was done at the same time that Victorians were paying more for their fire services — they could see it on their rate notices — and at the very time when operational budgets were halved. That was the very time when all of a sudden there were no paggers available for volunteers, there was no personal protective equipment available for volunteers and there was no action on Fiskville.

So we had the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition, and then we had the holding pattern, I think it was, from the Leader of The Nationals doing the victory lap. He was just doing his ‘Keep Steph out’ act. Then we had the member for Gembrook making his punt for the leadership and doing every divisive little thing he can on the ground. When the member for Gembrook could have made an impact, when he could have had some input into the Fiskville inquiry — and he says he cares about volunteers, as the shadow minister — he did not even show up to one hearing of the Fiskville inquiry. And then it all got too hard, and he resigned from the committee. As the shadow minister he could have made a viable contribution, and he could have heard what happened to people there.

I feel very strongly about the Fiskville situation because I know many people who are suffering health concerns worry about what the future might hold, as well as those who are dying and those who have died. My uncle Allan Radford was a volunteer firefighter. He was the captain at the Port Campbell brigade. Before he died he told me he firmly believed it was his exposure at Fiskville that was the cause of his cancer, which ultimately killed him. It is just like Brian Potter and just like Malcolm Fallon, who is ill at the moment, and many, many others.

I want to tell the story of Tom Upton. Tom is a fabulous elector living in Humevale, just outside Whittlesea. I met Tom when he was about 16. We went on strike team together north of Yea. It was a pretty awful day because unfortunately the captain of the Campbells Creek brigade lost his life in the gully next to us, and we heard it on the radio. Tom and I were bonded forever after that. On Black Saturday one of the four maydays I heard on that terrible day, when crews were in mortal peril, was one of those that held Tom Upton. For 40 minutes the truck he was in was belted. They called mayday over and over, giving the coordinates of where they were. And we had tears streaming down our faces because we knew they were saying, ‘Don’t come. Don’t come’. They were giving us the coordinates because they were telling us that is where we would find their bodies.

After that Tom and the rest of his crew were taken off the fireground for the rest of that horrible day — thank goodness they survived — but he slept two more days under the desk at the Whittlesea fire station because he could not get back to his home and did not know whether his parents were dead or alive. What he did know was that three of his neighbours, including one of his best friends, had perished across the road. Somehow Tom recovered from his post-traumatic stress disorder after that, and he became a career firefighter in 2010,

and I was pleased to speak at Tom Upton's graduation. He served his community in Warrnambool, in South Morang and in Eltham as a career firefighter.

Ms Thomas — He is vilified by that lot.

Ms GREEN — He is now vilified as a member of the UFU. This is not a war. These people are dividing families. They say the first casualty of war is the truth. Those opposite are acting like this is a divorce and they are fighting over the children. Well, I will not cut Tom Upton in half because he has been a volunteer and a career firefighter. I will stand for him and for every other firefighter in my electorate, who I have always stood up for. I have always stood up for them, and I will continue to stand up for them.

Those opposite have never talked about safety. The National Party year in and year out — every time there was new legislation coming in — would say, 'Oh, unnecessary red tape'. Well, the CFA does need to change. Volunteers need to have a voice, a voice that those opposite never gave them. There needs to be dispute resolution for volunteers. They need to actually have a voice and to have a CEO who lets them be heard before the Fair Work Commission. That is why we need a new board. We need a clean-up. We need a clean-up of Fiskville, we need people who will do things cooperatively and we do not need a minister who will be at the tennis and who denies firefighting foam causes cancer.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — I rise to continue the debate today on the matter of public importance about the complete lack of respect that is being shown to the Country Fire Authority (CFA). I follow on from a rather rousing rant from the member for Yan Yean, who has clearly bought what CFA members across country Victoria can expect to be told by union members. Just today alone on my iPhone the amount of trawling and trolling from United Firefighters Union (UFU) members on any post that has been put up is an absolute outrage to country communities. It is an insult.

There is not any trolling from Polwarth — none from the hardworking fire brigades and fire sheds around Polwarth. No, they are from Melbourne. They are from inner-city areas. They are from people probably being paid high wages and sitting in comfortable, warm, air-conditioned UFU offices or in other trade union outlets, wherever they may be. They are sitting there with all the time on their hands, and meanwhile the CFA volunteers are the people who are getting together on an almost weekly basis in their local communities, rousing up real support from farmers who are leaving their cows for the morning or the afternoon or from

grain farmers or whoever who are coming in and working together with their wives, their children and their families to say that they want their CFA respected and they want their CFA supported.

I guess the way this government is treating it is that it is right and everybody else is wrong — not just one person is wrong, but lots of people are wrong. Everybody else has got this wrong, except the Premier. Today he has put a letter into our local paper. I think it is the first one the *Colac Herald* has had from the Premier. He talks about lies. Well, we have all been talking about the lies in this debate. There is a good rack of lies. He says, 'Trust me'. That is the bottom line. He says, 'Trust me' — the man who said not one cent would be spent to stop building a road. 'Trust me', he says, yet \$1.5 billion is the 1 cent he did not spend.

Country people are thinking about that, of course, are they not? They are thinking, 'Gee whiz, \$1.5 billion' — or \$1.2 billion or however many dollars it is — 'is a hell of a lot of money'. They are sitting there and thinking, 'What could we have done in our country communities with that, with this man we are supposed to trust? What could we do?'. It is a lot of roads. It is a lot of fire tracks cleared. It is a lot of equipment for CFA sheds — CFA sheds, mind you, that have many times been built, put together and fundraised for often on land donated by local families and communities. This is not someone country communities are about to start to trust.

So now what? The thrust of this letter today says to our country communities, 'We had to steamroll this through. We had a thousand days'. A thousand days is going to be some new biblical metaphor that we use in this place when a government can just do what it likes — 'It's a thousand days'. Well, that is a great message to put out to every union heavy that we have got in this state: 'Just put up with it for a thousand days and you can rely on this Premier to sack a minister. You can rely on this Premier to sack this board. You can rely on this Premier, this government, to sack everybody just to get it through'. What an appalling precedent. It is actually a worry. I mean, what next? I cannot imagine what it is going to be like with Olympic teams: 'You know, we didn't win enough gold; we'll just sack everybody. Sack the International Olympic Committee. Sack everybody'. That will be the approach we will have.

An honourable member — Dictator Dan.

Mr RIORDAN — Dictator Dan. So what else does this thousand days mean? It is a steamroll. According to the press release that went out only this morning on an

enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) that is supposed to be solved the message is: 'Don't look here, folks. It's all over, but it's not really. We're still going on about it'. But, guess what? We have got a Ministry of Re-education going on in this state, There is Safe Schools — that is re-education — and now we have a new website for CFA re-education.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr RIORDAN — Absolutely. So I do not know what we are going to get on this.

An honourable member — What's it called?

Mr RIORDAN — Well, I do not know, but it says, 'Trust me little kiddies of the country — trust me. Go to this website and all will be revealed. We will reveal how our own Labor minister was wrong. We will reveal how our own appointed CEO that has been there 5 minutes was wrong'.

Mr Watt — It sounds a bit like the Wizard of Oz.

Mr RIORDAN — Absolutely, the Wizard of Oz. And not only that: 'We will tell you how the nine independent members are all wrong too'. Now, some of our friends on the other side have been quick to rattle off every —

An honourable member — The Lizard of Oz.

Mr RIORDAN — The Lizard of Oz; that is right. They have been quick to rattle off every problem they have had for the last 20 years in the CFA and say that is why the government has had to take this action. Well, I am sorry, I cannot find too much information that said any of this was going to happen because of those things. No, my friends. We all know that the board was sacked because it is a union deal; it is a union-paid act, and that is all it is.

So what is the situation? We are back to these thousand days. Are we honestly saying that the unions of this state can get what they want by hanging out for a thousand days? Community safety is the most important thing. It is more important than Peter Marshall and the UFU's hissy fits behind closed doors. It is more important than the self-interested deals at taxpayers expense that ultimately will risk community safety.

Mr Richardson — Did you write this yourself?

Mr RIORDAN — I did; I am on a roll. The community knows this CFA debacle is much more than just grubby backdoor union deals with a compliant and

uncompromising Premier. Country people know that this is an ideological war going on. Country people are seeing this government bring its top-down approach to communities, which is coming at them from all angles. I have got my friend sitting over in the gallery here today. His business is threatened because of government policy being forced down onto people in country communities, with no regard for tradition and no regard for their hard work and effort. There is no regard for our country eel fishers who sit there and work. They get rid of the carp; they help keep insects under control. They are the only ones out there looking after our environment day in and day out, and they do not get paid for it. But, oh, no, this is just another example of government policy being used to work against country people.

It was reported last week that this government is going hard on volunteers in schools as well, because it does not like this and it does not like that. It cannot control what mums and dads want to do with their kids in their schools. The government is going to make our schools safer by driving away engaged, involved and caring parents. Then it is going to replace them with Safe School brochures and most probably another set of whizzbang websites and apps that will have all sorts of re-education ideas in them.

Ms Thomas — Sit down. You're an embarrassment.

Mr RIORDAN — No, I am having too much fun. What sort of society do we want? That is what we are all asking in this matter of public importance (MPI). Do we want a society where everyone steps back, has no ownership and does not care, a society that relies on government to do all its bidding? Or do we want to encourage a society that has vibrant communities that live together, work together and care for each other, that get in and pitch in and help? It is not some guy that we are going to see, like the old 1970s battery ad where you holler for a Marshall every time you have got a problem. 'Holler for a Marshall': that is what the Labor Party's view of emergency services is. They are going to just sit there and holler for him, and if you are out in the middle of the western plains somewhere, you are going to have to wait till the union guys turn up.

We have heard a lot today about some of these crazy clauses, the clauses our friends on the other side tell us do not really matter, that they do not care about. So we asked the question: what on earth are they in there for anyway? Of course, the most ridiculous as far as I am concerned — and my goodness, there are plenty of ridiculous clauses in there — is clause 41.1, requiring the CFA to hand over full access of its email system and database to the UFU and providing the UFU with

unrestricted access to it. We have asked the question: what on earth does it want that for? There can only be one reason. It is about re-education. It is about data control. It is about the UFU doing what it has done to me all day, with its trolling and trawling on the internet, sending out nasty, spiteful, crazy demands and commentary.

Mr Watt — It's a closed shop.

Mr RIORDAN — That is right; it is a closed shop. They might work well on a construction site around Melbourne. Well, country people — I can tell you this — they are not into it. They do not like it, and they are not going to stand for it.

What we want are the values and the CFA respected. We want communities that feel that they own themselves and have control over themselves. They will not be silenced. It is hands off the CFA; it is as simple as that. It was not broke, so let us not try to wreck it.

LAND (REVOCAION OF RESERVATIONS — REGIONAL VICTORIA LAND) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. As previous speakers have indicated, it really looks at dealing with the revocation of permanent land reservations in regional Victoria for mechanics institutes primarily. It is interesting to note that there is actually a Mechanics Institutes of Victoria, which was formed in 1998, and clearly mechanics institutes were around for a lot longer before then. The secretary of the Mechanics Institutes of Victoria is a gentleman by the name of Luke Mitchell. I have got to know Luke very well over the years. He is an outstanding gentleman, extremely bright and very, very passionate about mechanics institutes. He has real drive and a real passion for this great institution.

On the term 'mechanics institute', I remember as a kid you would be driving around and you would see 'mechanics institute'. You would sort of wonder, 'Well, what do they do? Do they loan out tools there or do they fix cars there or are there old blokes in blue overalls playing around with machines?'. The term derives from the fact that 'mechanic' means an artisan or workingman. The movement began in 1800, and it was really the apogee of the Scottish Enlightenment

movement, because it recognised the fact that you needed to try to find a way to educate working people.

The first mechanics institute in Melbourne was built in 1839, and in 1873 it was renamed the Melbourne Athenaeum, which is just down the road here in Collins Street. In total around about 1000 were built in Victoria, and there are 562 remaining today. They were about trying to create levels of literacy and numeracy that had not been seen among working people since ancient Rome. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to have gone to cities such as Pompeii have been able to look at graffiti on walls, including on the brothels there. You realise that people, who I suspect were workingmen — or they might have been workingwomen — could read and write. They wrote with quite detailed and sophisticated sentence construction in the graffiti on the walls of the brothels of Pompeii. You do not see that level of literacy and numeracy until the 19th or 20th centuries, when you see the results of a higher level of education. This forms the basis of a sophisticated and civilised society.

In many respects we would not have the mechanics institutes had we not had the Reformation. Recently I was reading a great book by Neil MacGregor, *Germany — Memories of a Nation*. The interesting thing about Germany during the Reformation is that it was not a single state; it was basically a series of cities which were independently ruled and were culturally connected but politically distinct and separate. People spoke different dialects of High German and Low German, which were almost like two separate languages. It was very hard for someone from Hamburg going to Munich, for example, to understand the language spoken there.

What happened was that in his childhood Martin Luther spent time in areas where both High German and Low German were spoken. When he looked at translating the Bible into German, that formed the basis of modern German as we know it. Another interesting thing, too, is that he was aided and abetted in the great cause by Johannes Gutenberg, who created the printing press. Why is this important? It is because Germany had a series of satellite cities which were free and independent — culturally linked but politically separate — and there was great freedom of movement and of thought. In England, for example, people who were trying to publish English translations of the Bible were executed for treason, whereas in Germany, because they could seek comfort and protection in licensed states, they were able to produce the good book, as it were, publishing a literate form in a native language. It was not in Latin; it did not need to be

translated by the priesthood in order for it to be understood.

We had the Reformation and we had Johannes Gutenberg and Martin Luther, and that formed the basis of a movement to try to educate working people. The mechanics institutes played a vital role in this state and this nation in making sure that we became a sophisticated and progressive society and community. This is a great piece of legislation. It recognises the fact that we need to acknowledge our past but move on to the future, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. In the words of parliamentary counsel a number of years ago, the comment had been made that bills such as this and the statutory review that expunges legislation from the statute book can sometimes succinctly and evocatively recall aspects of Victoria's past history. In the present case, the purposes of this act are in part:

- (a) to revoke the permanent reservation and related Crown grant of certain Mechanics' Institute land at Burke's Flat; and
- (b) to revoke the permanent reservation of certain watering purposes land at Campbelltown ...

These are regional areas of Victoria, and in those precincts there are no doubt important Country Fire Authority (CFA) units that manage fire burns on part of the land in Victoria. In our state lands in Victoria we have national parks, state parks and regional reserves that grade the land use and access to it and the particular regulations that apply to it. It is important that those lands are well protected. A decade or more ago more flora and fauna was barbecued in this state under the no-burn policies of the then government that had failed to do the required burn-offs necessary to manage the land correctly. There are further dangers to ensuring that in the case of the CFA, which has been a matter of great debate today, nearly 60 000 firefighters who are currently in dispute with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) have the opportunity to protect, maintain and manage lands in Victoria.

In contributing to this particular debate, I would just like to place on record the words of a former Bracks Labor government minister, André Haermeyer, who made the note about the UFU that:

Many of its demands in its current dispute with the CFA are Trojan horses that would sideline CFA volunteers and undermine their interests, with little or no real benefit for the paid firefighters the UFU represents.

It would also undermine the operational authority of the CFA's chief officer and operational commanders as well as compromise the fiduciary responsibilities of the CFA's board under the Country Fire Authority Act.

I think that of the many different authorities that one could place on the parliamentary record, the insight and understanding of a former Labor Minister for Police and Emergency Services is on par and parallel with the immediate past Minister for Emergency Services.

Coming back to the bill, I would like to comment specifically on the revocation of the permanent reservation of certain agricultural research station land at Walpeup, which has a direct connection with my electorate in the sense that a person who had grown up in the Sandringham electorate spent some years working at Walpeup. In addition, the father of that particular person, a man by the name of Tom Stratford, is an outstanding citizen who was a carpenter by trade. I met him one day in Mentone, where I saw a bloke in his early 80s with his set of carpentry tools in a timber box walking across the road. I made inquiry of what his purpose was. I deduced after numbers of questions that he had actually been repairing the fence of a neighbour. He invited me into his home, and I saw marvellously crafted timber items. From timber that was gained up in Walpeup, if my memory is correct, he crafted a lectern in one piece for St Augustine's church in Mentone. I would just like to make sure that that is the fact. He was a master-craftsman, an artisan, and he made beautiful pieces of furniture that I saw in his home, some out of one piece of timber. They were beautifully designed items. A family member of his, his son, had a long-term career at the agricultural research station land at Walpeup.

It is important that we manage our lands well, and it is important that we maintain them well. Crown land is governed under a range of different uses, as I mentioned earlier on: national parks, state parks and regional reserves. It is important that they be properly protected from fire, and the words of André Haermeyer are salutary in this chamber in terms of the importance of that.

The member for Essendon has also spoken of the role of learning, and he went back to Martin Luther. There were other fierce advocates of the day who sought to empower people. Daniel Hannan was of the view in one of his books that the expression 'Of the people, by the people, for the people' in terms of government comes from a statement in one of the Wycliffe Bible translations:

This Bible is for the government of the people, by the people, for the people.

It empowered an understanding of knowledge and liberated the people to form their own views on a range of matters.

There was also the work of Tyndale in terms of the promotion of the translation of the Bible that might empower people and also that of Martin Luther, who made the statement, 'Here I stand'. I have a feeling that the former Minister for Emergency Services may have made a statement like that in a recent cabinet meeting — 'Here I stand. I can do no other'. It is a tribute to her fortitude and courage against great opposition in the CFA dispute to have arrived at that strong, powerful and courageous position to protect the interests of the CFA.

One of the earliest mechanics institutes had a connection with the Melbourne Athenaeum, and also the Prahran Mechanics Institute has a very long history of making reading libraries available. A number of years ago members of this chamber were invited to make donations to the Melbourne Athenaeum Library of books that were of importance to them, and members of both sides of the chamber made such bequests.

The Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016 revokes a number of permanent reservations. I might add too that in terms of land use — I have made this statement before in the house — there has been a diminution of recreational lands in Melbourne. As once quarter-acre blocks have been subdivided and as once company tennis courts on the adjoining block have been subdivided, there has been a diminution in the urban playing spaces of Melbourne, with smaller subdivisions and the erosion of land.

We have had the takeover, which I have mentioned before, of Olympic Park. The Melbourne & Olympic Parks Trust saw it passed from the use of amateur athletes across Victoria to a football club with a finite membership and taken away from the people of Victoria to use. I have previously called for a royal commission into how that took place. There is also the encroachment upon land of the further development of Hisense Arena, which has seen sporting ovals south of Melbourne Park that were once used by the people of Melbourne for recreational purposes now form parts of car parks and stadia.

There is an erosion of that land, and one of the greatest things that this legislation can do is to ensure that in the decades ahead there is the same per capita square metreage of recreational land for future generations of Victorians, so that that recreational land, whether it be for netball courts, hockey pitches, football ovals, cricket

ovals, soccer pitches or lacrosse fields, will be available for future generations of Victoria. Whenever I see a bill that changes a classification or revokes reservations for particular uses, I am very keen to ensure that in that process any opportunities for land to be used for recreational playing fields in the middle of Melbourne are taken advantage of.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to make a contribution on the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. These revocation bills are fairly common in the Parliament and are periodically introduced. There are usually several in each term of Parliament. Obviously Crown reservations are put over Crown land for specific purposes. They might be for education purposes or for recreational purposes. In this case, we have two former mechanics institute sites, and we also have a livestock watering site and an agricultural research station.

There are four of them around the state. We have Burkes Flat, which is east of St Arnaud. The bill revokes a reservation for a former mechanics institute and a restricted Crown grant. In fact the mechanics institute was never actually used for that purpose, and there was a hall built on adjoining land that was demolished in the 1990s. The Campbelltown site is a livestock watering site north of Creswick, and again it is no longer being used for this purpose, so there is a revocation there. Lake Charm, which is south-east of Swan Hill, was again a former mechanics institute site. There was one that was built there but demolished in 1946. The site is now vacant and will more than likely be sold.

Probably the more interesting one is at Walpeup, which I believe is the correct pronunciation. The member for Mildura previously enlightened us as to how to pronounce that one correctly. I think most in this chamber would look at that one and probably struggle to pronounce it correctly. I think even the member for Essendon might struggle with that one without assistance. The Walpeup site was previously an agricultural research station. It is quite a large holding of land — 1040 hectares — and it certainly has buildings on it, but it is also very suitable for agricultural purposes. The member for Mildura gave quite a detailed description earlier of the land at Walpeup and did in fact say that it is a staging ground that is used by Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers. It sits between two national parks, so it is an important piece of land.

As I said, these are quite routine bills. I recall a previous revocation bill. There was some land in Barwon Heads

that was sold for the construction of two bridges in Barwon Heads at the time, although the community fought very hard for one bridge. The member for Bellarine and the member for South Barwon at the time fought very hard to build two bridges, but there was some land there that needed to have its reservation revoked for those bridges to be constructed.

In fact it is very timely that I speak about that today, because we had a disallowance motion in the upper house with regard to the sky rail proposal, a motion which was defeated.

In that case back in 2009, from memory, the actual disallowance motion was successful in the upper house, and as one would expect from the Labor government of that day — I can only imagine what the Labor government of today would do — it came in with the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and rode roughshod over the communities of Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove, using a portion of the act that gives the Minister for Planning the power to intervene and fast-track the rezoning of land for educational use or for health purposes.

I venture to say that even if the motion had been successful in the other place today, this government would have found a way to ram it home just as it is doing with many other things around the state. If people do not agree with the government, they are just dismissed. Whether it is about the sky rail or the CFA situation at the moment, we certainly have a situation here where this government imposes its will on people irrespective of what the will of those local communities is. As I said earlier, it did this to the Barwon Heads community seven years ago. The community only wanted one bridge built; indeed the old bridge had to go.

I might just give a timely warning to the government that at that election the Barwon Heads electorate swung 17 per cent to the coalition because the Labor government had not listened to or respected the wishes of the local community. A 17 per cent swing would probably lose quite a few seats for the government along certain railway lines at the moment if that disrespect continues. There is obviously the disrespect shown to the community with regard to the sky rail and also disrespect has been shown to the 60 000 CFA volunteers. If the government thinks that it is going to be able to do whatever it pleases and there will be no ramifications in the electorate, then its members really are living in a fantasy land as far as I am concerned and certainly as far as many in the coalition are concerned.

As I said, these revocation bills are quite common practice, much like we have bills to tidy up the mistakes in legislation that periodically come before this house. As I said, this bill revokes four permanent Crown land reservations scattered around Victoria, predominantly in the north-west of the state. It is quite a sensible thing to do with land that is no longer used for its originally intended purpose, as long as the local community is supportive of that land being either used for other purposes or sold off to be used in a more constructive manner. I certainly do not object to these revocations taking place where they have the support of local communities, but as I said earlier, you must respect the will of the local community. If you do not, you do so at your own peril. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I too rise to make some comments on the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016. As many of the other speakers have already canvassed, this is a bill that effectively revokes permanent reservation over Crown land in four significant rural areas.

It has been quite interesting to hear the various contributions members have made, given that it is a bill of quite a technical nature. We certainly heard from the member for Sandringham about his concerns around what the removal of a reservation on land means in terms of access to recreational land. I was particularly enlightened by the member for Essendon's contribution, which noted the impact of this bill particularly on mechanics institutes and really reinforced the important role that mechanics institutes have played in the history of Victoria. I am sure that everyone has a story to tell about the role of mechanics institutes and the part they played in giving working people access to free education.

The member for Essendon was quite erudite in his knowledge of the Reformation, I thought, and particularly of the role that Martin Luther played in the Reformation. Of course that was a significant period of time back; Luther died in 1546 after his really significant contribution in terms of the translation of the Bible from Latin into the contemporary vernacular. It was the first time the Bible had been translated into a contemporary vernacular, and the purpose of Luther's translation was of course to make theology accessible to people. In terms of the important role that Martin Luther played in the development of Germanic languages, what a lot of people do not know about Luther is that he also played an important role in the development of modern hymns as well. Luther made a contribution in understanding the importance of music in modern Germanic languages, and I think that is

another significant contribution. Another one that is often — —

Mr Thompson interjected.

Ms HENNESSY — I have been asked to name names by the member for Sandringham. The member for Sandringham is also a man of deep historical knowledge, and I am sure he will understand that Luther made a very important contribution in setting psalm 46 to music as well. It was often used, and he certainly had the development of his version of the Lord's Prayer as well, which made a significant contribution.

Another important contribution that Luther made was of course in the evolution and development of marriage within the Protestant religion, and I say this as a person who has been socialised within the Catholic tradition. He married a lovely woman, Katherine von Bora, and that established the modern practice of Protestants of the cloth, so to speak, being able to marry as well.

When the member for Essendon reflected upon the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016 and its importance and significance, his contribution was around mechanics institutes and the accessibility of language. It was indeed about the impact of the mechanics institutes. The member for Essendon talked about how the mechanics institutes made language accessible to common people. You did not have to be a person who understood Latin in order to have access to it, and that of course was the link with Luther and the Lutheran movement.

With those brief observations on this bill, I indicate that I wish it a speedy passage through the house. I have enjoyed the interesting contributions my parliamentary colleagues have made on a bill of a reasonably technical nature. It has a lot of very interesting and historical entry points, and this has been a delightful opportunity for me to make a very brief contribution.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr SPENCE (Yuroke).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

CHIEF PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (*By leave*) — I am very pleased to rise by leave and make a short statement. The men and women who work in this place serve something greater and much more lasting than any single government. They serve the democratic tradition that built this state and this nation and everything in it that we hold dear and close — the things we value most. In our modern era, that tradition has perhaps seen no greater servant than Gemma Varley. Gemma started in her public service career in 1976 in the federal relations branch of the then Department of Premier and Cabinet. She joined the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel two years later.

Since that time over 3000 pieces of legislation have passed through this chamber and this Parliament. We have made so many reforms and changes, so many big steps — leaps, in fact — towards the modern, progressive Victoria that we all know, love, value and cherish today, and our statute books are the guide map for that. They are so very important to the way our state functions, the things that we know to be important, the things that we work hard to protect, the things that we value and the things that we safeguard. Nothing is more important than the process.

Gemma has been central to that process in modern times — and I think a career of this length can be defined as modern times. She has of course served as chief parliamentary counsel for the last eight years. That is where most of us have come to know her and appreciate her dedication, her professionalism, the acuity of her intellect, the practical application and the outcome focus that she has always brought to her many and varied tasks, and ultimately her love of this institution and the role it plays in building a stronger state.

It is not easy to be a parliamentary officer. It is not easy to work in the service of all of us assembled here. It is perhaps easier for some than others, but it is challenging work. The gruelling time frames that the business of democracy imposes on its parliamentary officers is often forgotten by us certainly, and I dare say it is perhaps not so much a matter of it being forgotten but perhaps the broader community is not even aware of the sort of sacrifice, work and dedication that people like Gemma bring to the task.

Gemma knows it well, and there are a few stand-out examples in such a long career. In more contemporary times I do not think any member of the former Labor government will ever forget the work around the complete rewrite of the Children, Youth and Families

Act 2005. I know we will not forget Victoria again playing its natural leadership role, leading our nation in reform to be the first state to pass human rights legislation with the drafting and the passage of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. These are just a couple of examples. There are many more, and they serve as lasting testaments to the dedication and skill of one of the greatest servants of this Parliament that we have seen for a very long time.

On behalf of this generation of modern legislators, for want of a better term, and all who you have served in previous years, we say thank you so very much, and we wish you well for the future. You will be missed, but you will leave the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel in very good hands. It is stronger for your contribution and better for your contribution. Can I just finish by saying that few have contributed more and even fewer have contributed as much and left with that zeal, that enthusiasm and that passion for their important work. We are truly in your debt, and we wish you well.

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (*By leave*) —
By leave I wish to make a statement if I can. Few people in this building and few people in the government structure as a whole have outlasted 9 of 10 premiers they have worked under. If I could say to Gemma on behalf of the Liberal and National parties, it is not a bad effort to have outlasted Rupert Hamer, Lindsay Thompson, John Cain, Joan Kirner, Jeff Kennett, Steve Bracks, John Brumby, Ted Baillieu and Denis Napthine and retire in the period in 2016.

Sometimes as politicians all of us forget that the opinions we come to this place with and the laws we seek to enact as parliamentarians, obviously predominantly through government, are slaved over, written up and legalised, and that work is done by those particularly in the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel in the drafting of that legislation to make sure it is right and to make sure it does what the government of the day or the Parliament has asked it to do. That work has to come from somewhere, and that work can only ever benefit from someone of experience. I know we should not speak directly to people, but can I say to Gemma that that kind of experience is something that is exceedingly hard to replace. It is something I think all of us have appreciated over a number of governments, over many parliaments — the kind of experience that you have brought to this role and the leadership you have shown others in the position you have held in that role.

I know from the member for Brighton and the member for Box Hill in particular, who were in the government

of 1992 to 1999, that particularly early in that term there was a huge amount of rewriting of state laws and a huge amount of legislation passed, some of it passed in the very early hours of the morning after a lot of work had been done to get that legislation through this Parliament. You were central to that and have been steadfast, straight down the line and as straightforward as anyone in that position could possibly be to all of those governments.

I think it is fair to say that all of us have appreciated immensely not just your leadership in the position you currently hold but the work you have done before, both the advice you have provided and the work you have done. It is certainly something we will not forget. If I could say to Gemma on behalf of the opposition, we wish you well. We thank you for everything you have done. I find it amazing that someone has been around this building since 1978; it must have changed so much. I certainly thank you for the work you have done, and best wishes into the future.

Honourable members applauded.

STATE TAXATION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Council's suggested amendments

Message from Council relating to following suggested amendments considered:

1. Clause 4, lines 10 and 11, omit "or short-term accommodation".
2. Clause 4, lines 17 and 18, omit "or short-term accommodation".
3. Clause 4, line 25, omit "or short-term accommodation".
4. Clause 4, page 6, lines 4 and 5, omit "or short-term accommodation".
5. Clause 4, page 6, lines 12 and 13, omit "or short-term accommodation".
6. Clause 4, page 6, after line 15 insert—
 - “(2) Despite subsection (1), *residential property* does not include any of the following—
 - (a) land
 - (i) capable of being used solely or primarily as commercial residential premises, a residential care facility, a supported residential service or for the purposes of a retirement village and that may lawfully be used in that way; and
 - (ii) that a person intends to use solely or primarily as commercial residential

- premises, a residential care facility, a supported residential service or for the purposes of a retirement village;
- (b) land which includes a building, or part of a building, that a person intends to refurbish or extend so the land is capable of being used solely or primarily as commercial residential premises, a residential care facility, a supported residential service or for the purposes of a retirement village and that may lawfully be used in that way;
- (c) land—
- (i) on which a person intends to construct a building so the land is capable of being used solely or primarily as commercial residential premises, a residential care facility, a supported residential service or for the purposes of a retirement village and that may lawfully be used in that way; or
- (ii) in respect of which a person has undertaken or intends to undertake land development for the purposes of—
- (A) constructing a building so the land is capable of being used solely or primarily as commercial residential premises, a residential care facility, a supported residential service or for the purposes of a retirement village and that may lawfully be used in that way; or
- (B) enabling another person to construct a building so the land is capable of being used solely or primarily as commercial residential premises, a residential care facility, a supported residential service or for the purposes of a retirement village and that may lawfully be used in that way.”.

7. Clause 4, page 6, line 16, omit “(2)” and insert “(3)”.

8. Clause 4, page 6, after line 16 insert—

“*commercial residential premises* has the same meaning as in the A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 of the Commonwealth;”.

9. Clause 4, page 6, lines 21 to 23, omit all words and expressions on these lines and insert—

“*residential care facility* has the same meaning as in section 76 of the **Land Tax Act 2005**;

retirement village has the same meaning as in the **Retirement Villages Act 1986**;

supported residential service has the same meaning as in the **Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010**.”.

10. Clause 4, page 7, lines 1 and 2, omit “a serviced” and insert “an”.

11. Clause 4, page 7, line 8, omit “or as short-term accommodation”.

12. Clause 4, page 7, line 9, omit “those ways” and insert “that way”.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I move:

That this house makes the amendments suggested by the Legislative Council.

The government’s proposed amendments to the State Taxation and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2016 are technical amendments to the definition of ‘residential property’. The suggested amendments that we are considering, which were supported by all members in the other place, ensure that all land intended to be captured by the duty surcharge is treated the same way. The amendments ensure that entire developments of hotels and other short-term accommodation are not captured, which was never the government’s intention. These suggested amendments are consistent with the second-reading speech and give effect to that stated intention.

The suggested amendments to clause 4 of the bill amend the Duties Act 2000 and ensure that the definition of ‘residential property’ for the foreign buyer duty will not capture, firstly, premises such as hotels, motels, serviced apartments and student accommodation; and secondly, retirement villages, residential care facilities and supported residential services.

These amendments are a shining example of the government’s strong belief in maintaining an open line of communication with industry and stakeholders. These amendments have been warmly received by stakeholders, such as the Property Council of Australia and the Accommodation Association of Australia, and I commend the suggested amendments to the house.

Mr M. O’BRIEN (Malvern) — What an extraordinary claim from the Treasurer! We have just heard the Treasurer say that it was never the government’s intention that this extra tax grab should catch hotels, motels et cetera. Let us look at the explanatory memorandum of this bill, circulated by the Treasurer. On page 5 it says:

Short-term accommodation includes, but is not limited to, accommodation such as hotels, motels, retirement villages, student accommodation and serviced apartments.

How can the Treasurer get up here with a straight face and claim that the government never had any intention

to extend this tax grab to hotels, motels and retirement villages when the explanatory memorandum specifically includes them?

Ms Asher — He didn't read the bill.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — I do wonder about that. Has the Treasurer not even bothered reading his own legislation, or is he just trying to pull the wool over the eyes of Victorians yet again?

Of course we drew the attention of this chamber to this issue when I spoke on this bill when it came through this house the first time. I quoted from the Accommodation Association of Australia. It said that this bill became 'a virtual hotel investment tax'. We have a government that likes to proclaim that we are the best of everything, and we have a Premier who loves to get into Buzzfeed wars with Sydney about how we are great and how we are open 24/7. Sydney is not introducing a hotel investment tax, but that is exactly what this bill specifically sought to do.

So it is either massive incompetence on the part of this Treasurer — and he has now been forced, humiliatingly, to backflip and remove this greedy tax grab — or it is simple incompetence. He is either incompetent or he is less than honest, because when the explanatory memorandum specifically includes the very items which this Treasurer just 5 minutes ago stood up and said, 'We had no intention of including those matters', it is garbage. No-one believes the Treasurer.

The opposition certainly does not oppose these amendments. This was always a greedy and stupid tax grab from a greedy and stupid government, and to the extent that it has been reduced slightly and the damage to be done is reduced slightly we certainly do not oppose it. What is disappointing is that the other place has not suggested amendments to reduce the terrible impost of tripling the tax on the fuel that powers 90 per cent of Victorian homes and businesses. The government, the Labor Party, the Greens, the Sex Party and Mr Vote 1 Local Jobs all stand condemned for voting against the coalition's amendment that sought to protect Victorian homes and businesses from this tax that will increase their electricity prices.

I do not want to hear any crocodile tears from members opposite about how they want to help manufacturing. The worst thing you can do for manufacturing is to increase its power prices, and that is exactly what this government is deliberately doing. Every member of the Labor Party in this house and in the other place voted to increase the power prices of Victorian homes and

Victorian businesses — a quarter of a billion dollar tax grab, a quarter of a billion-dollar deliberate decision to increase power prices. It is absolutely appalling.

I do wonder how many other problems in this bill have now gone through. We have heard this completely disingenuous claim from the Treasurer that he never intended to implement this tax grab to hit hotels, motels and retirement accommodation despite the fact that his very own explanatory memorandum explicitly includes them. This is another example of how we have a Treasurer who is simply not across the detail of his portfolio and simply cannot be trusted.

Motion agreed to.

Ordered to be returned to Council with message informing them of decision of house.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2016–2017) BILL 2016

Council's suggested amendments

Message from Council relating to following suggested amendments considered:

1. Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly —
Schedule 1, page 4, line 8 omit "3 737" and insert "4 337".
2. Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly —
Schedule 1, page 4, line 11, omit "7 751" and insert "7 151".
3. Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly —
Schedule 1, page 5, line 7, omit "3 737" and insert "4 337".
4. Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly —
Schedule 1, page 5, line 11, omit "3 737" and insert "4 337".
5. Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly —
Schedule 1, page 7, line 8, omit "7 751" and insert "7 151".
6. Suggested amendment to the Legislative Assembly —
Schedule 1, page 7, line 12, omit "7 751" and insert "7 151".

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I move:

That this house does not make the amendments suggested by the Legislative Council.

The government will not be supporting the suggested amendments. I am advised that no such amendments have been sought or approved to an appropriation bill of this nature in the last 10 years. I understand that Legislative Council members are keen to have additional funds for Legislative Council committees. Indeed in the 2016–17 budget the government allocated a further \$1.62 million to meet the increasing reporting requirements of the Legislative Council committees to ensure that the committee system can continue to operate effectively and also to assist Parliament to meet its responsibilities.

Indeed on 6 July last year I received a letter from the Presiding Officers advising me of a transfer of \$500 000 from the parliamentary investigatory committees appropriation to the Legislative Council appropriation pursuant to section 31(1)(a) of the Financial Management Act 1994. Under the act the Presiding Officers are required to notify government, but they are not required to seek its approval for these transfers. On 15 June this year I received a similar letter notifying me of a transfer of \$526 000 to the Legislative Council appropriation for Legislative Council standing committees.

Upon hearing of the suggested amendments that I am addressing, I have today written to the Presiding Officers to advise them that the government is supportive of a similar transfer of this nature for the 2016–17 financial year. This is a more appropriate mechanism by which an alteration to such financial capacities and payments within the ambit of the appropriation as already set exists — that is, by the Presiding Officers using their powers and notifying government and then effectively reorganising their allocations rather than adopting a suggestion to amend appropriations. Accordingly the government will not support these suggested amendments.

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) — The opposition is very sympathetic to the proposed amendments moved in the other place. We do believe that Legislative Council investigatory committees have a very important role to play. We also would be of the view that they have demonstrated in this Parliament already a very significant output. They have been very productive. They have been effective in holding the government to account, which is something that this government particularly needs but all governments need, it would be fair to say. Governments should be held to account, and investigatory committees and parliamentary committees

are ways to do that. The Treasurer has flagged that he does not wish to accept the amendments that have been proposed in the other place, but he appears to be suggesting that he is comfortable with the effect of the amendments being delivered. I note that he is nodding at that. I welcome that.

From our own discussions with the Presiding Officers, both the President of the Legislative Council, Bruce Atkinson, and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Telmo Languiller, the opposition understands that the Presiding Officers are both agreeable to the transfer of funds from the department of parliamentary investigatory committees appropriation to the Department of Legislative Council appropriation in 2016–17. We note the correspondence from the Treasurer dated today, which we have a copy of, and which the Treasurer referred to in his contribution.

While this mechanism would seem to deliver the desired effect, we do question whether it is the long-term fix. If the Presiding Officers are both of the view that the Legislative Council investigatory committees should receive greater appropriation, then rather than having a charade of giving them a lower appropriation every year and then having through administrative means moneys transferred between the general parliamentary appropriation and the Legislative Council appropriation, it would appear that having a permanent fix would be a better outcome. But in terms of the looming deadline of the new financial year and the government's stated intention to not accept the amendments proposed in the other place — and I acknowledge that work is being done to give effect to the Legislative Council's proposals — the opposition will not be dividing on this particular motion.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — I want to add just a few brief words in support of the remarks of the member for Malvern. As the member indicated, it is important to ensure that the work being undertaken by the Legislative Council committees is appropriately funded. They have done valuable work in the main, and we expect that they will continue to do valuable work to assist in the functioning of the Parliament and to hold the government to account. In essence what we have now arrived at is an alternative way of implementing what the amendments suggested by the Legislative Council would achieve. As the Treasurer has referred to, he has written to the Presiding Officers indicating that the government is supportive of them making a transfer under section 31(1)(a) of the Financial Management Act 1994 in line with current practice.

The opposition understands from discussions with both the President and the Speaker this afternoon that they

are agreeable to that arrangement, so they will in effect by administrative means achieve the transfer from one appropriation to the other appropriation in the same way as would have been achieved by the amendments suggested by the Legislative Council. As the member for Malvern has indicated, on the basis that exactly the same result is going to be achieved by administrative means as would have been achieved by the amendments suggested by the Legislative Council, the opposition accepts proceeding by that means.

Motion agreed to.

Ordered to be returned to Council with message informing them of decision of house.

NATIONAL PARKS AND VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 25 May; motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change).

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — I rise to speak on the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. I will start off by stating that the position of the coalition is to not oppose this bill. There are two parts to this bill: one is around the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park and one is around particularly the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC).

The National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016 amends the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park. It also amends the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 to broaden VEAC's advisory role, to enable government responses to recommendations of VEAC and the former Environment Conservation Council to be amended, and to make minor amendments to the act. A lot of these are small technical changes. However, it is important that we get the opportunity to speak about how this bill will affect us, particularly in our local electorates and our local areas.

As we know, VEAC has had a very important role in Victoria. It obviously assesses anything in relation to the environment and it can give reports back to the government and make recommendations. I will speak very briefly on what I would say is one of the better or more in-depth reports that I have seen. It was in relation

to the helmeted honeyeater down through Yellingbo and the work that was done there by the chair, Phil Honeywood. The helmeted honeyeater, as all would know, is a state emblem and is obviously very important, as is the need to ensure its protection for the future. It is something that people in my community have spoken about quite regularly. We were very lucky in the former Gembrook electorate. I should say that I am still lucky in the new Gembrook electorate before I get into trouble, but the old Gembrook electorate used to be over 2000 square kilometres in area, and in that area we were lucky enough to have the helmeted honeyeater and most of the state's emblems there. We had the pink heath and Leadbeater's possum, and we used to have gold, but we did not have the sea dragon.

People in the community, particularly around Yellingbo, are very passionate when talking about the helmeted honeyeater. Part of the community up there has raised concerns about access to national parks and state parks and ensuring the safety of the local communities. Submissions have also been made by the fire services in relation to how they can better protect their communities from the aspects of the national park and particularly the Yellingbo state forest. One of the recommendations concerned where the helmeted honeyeater lives and looked at where it breeds. That is important to ensuring that we have more helmeted honeyeaters in the area, particularly along the Cockatoo Creek and the creek system up there in general. It is also important to know exactly how that operates. The recommendations also concerned ensuring a pathway for helmeted honeyeaters to travel from one section to another so they do not end up being stuck in one small area. That could actually mean the reforestation and regeneration of the undergrowth to ensure there is a correct environment for the bird to develop and for there to be a growth in numbers.

There is not always great feedback from some in the local community, particularly if you go onto their private properties and say that the recommendations are for regrowth of forests or fencing off certain areas along the creek, which the local community have traditionally had access to. Those people have to have the opportunity to have a say, and it is vital that a government, any government, listens to everybody in that local community and to all of their concerns. In Yellingbo we had some very strong views both ways. I met up with members of Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater. Their view is that we must do as much as we can to protect the helmeted honeyeater and promote further breeding of the bird. Another spot for the helmeted honeyeater is in the Bunyip State Forest. We all know the forest experienced a lot of devastation during the Black Saturday fires. We wanted to make

sure that there was an area there where the helmeted honeyeater could thrive into the future.

When you are speaking to sections of the community who are concerned about fires and other things that could go through there and looking at fire prevention, you hear that some of the fire prevention methods and models, including planned burning, could have a detrimental effect on a species like the helmeted honeyeater or its habitat. When you are removing the habitat — it is the same as with other animals, particularly the Leadbeater's possum — you create an issue regarding the long-term future and viability of a particular breed. We wanted to make sure that that was actually there for it. The report that VEAC handed down took into consideration both sides of the argument. It looked at the best way to protect the habitat and also at how we could work with our community to protect it, which is very important in an area of high fire danger.

This bill means that when you are launching investigations through VEAC they do not always have to go through the whole cabinet process. It provides the opportunity for the minister to look at some of the recommendations. Reports will still have to come back and recommendations will still need to be made, but it gives an opportunity for the minister to have a say in that, without having to go through such a big process for investigations that may not be at a high level. When talking about investigations in the past, such as into gold panning — and I am talking about the helmeted honeyeater — they would probably still go through the same process; they would still go through cabinet, because they are quite large investigations.

But there are other times when VEAC would like to do some smaller investigations. When I say small, I mean investigations that are still important. When you are talking about the environment, it is quite difficult. A lot of those investigations are still very, very important. It is important that the minister can have that free rein to go through a process in working with VEAC. Whilst we were in government we were supportive of this with VEAC. We thought that giving the option back to the minister was an advantage and took away the difficulties of going through a full cabinet process to get decisions through. I think it is vital that we protect that going forward.

The other part of the bill amends the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park. Villawood Investments is donating 245 hectares as native vegetation clearance offsets elsewhere, and the land is one-third cleared and two-thirds native

vegetation. It increases the Greater Bendigo National Park by 245 hectares — from 17 340 to 17 585.

Offsets is another area of exceptional importance in Victoria. If we are going to continue with our population growth — we have more than 100 000 people moving into Victoria each and every year — and we are going to continue to have developments, whether they be high density, low density or medium density, and we are going into areas particularly in outer regional cities, we are going to start having development through areas that have some sensitivity in relation to the vegetation and the vegetation growth. By having an offsets program you are ensuring that the government of the day and also the developers are considering what they are doing and how they are going to ensure protection for the future.

You only need to go down to Strzelecki, where in the past there has obviously been development that has seen a reduction in the number of trees in the area. There are reports around what has happened with that in the past, and obviously there will be reports in the future about what has been happening with other areas when there have been developments, especially large-scale developments. There are areas where you can go to that have specific sensitivities around the environment and specific species, particularly of plants and grasses, that may not be able to be offset. But if they can be offset, it is important that we not just offset them but also ensure that they survive for the future.

I know from speaking to the former minister that this was an issue that was on the table quite regularly. I am sure that the previous government and this government — governments of the past and the future — will have the same concerns. When you are talking about offsets, it is not one tree for one tree because it does not quite work that way, but it is important that you have a process. You cannot just offset as well and just say, 'We are going to offset one area for another area', unless you can look at the viability of those areas and what specific offsets are.

Those offsets can vary based on their value. If there are some areas that have quite common amounts of the natural environment, then those will obviously require a much smaller offset. However, there are other areas. There is one in Officer where, due to a specific grass species, there were issues in relation to offsets for that. I have spoken to the member for Gippsland East, discussing with him the aspects in relation to a golf course there, and there were some queries in relation to the offsets for that. That actually raises a whole different element of offsets in relation to what happened in that area. They were talking about a specific tree that

could grow there. It was not a tree or a shrub that was there; it was one that could potentially grow there, going by the maps.

I think a lot of these maps and the mapping across the state need a lot of work because they are not exactly 100 per cent accurate as yet. It is important that is identified in this issue going forward. When you are creating new offsets, when you are looking at an area that you are going to be offsetting, you have got to make sure that those values are equal on scientific facts, not just based on mapping which says it could or may or may not be.

For the one down in Gippsland that I mentioned — and I am trying to recall the exact location, but it was a golf course there — by saying that it could grow there, it created issues because the specific plant they were talking about you could not offset anywhere else in the state. There was nowhere else to offset it. However, it did not actually exist there at the time, so it was only because it could grow in that area. You have got to take into consideration, in that offset model, how you do not actually stop some of the progressive development that we have had through those areas while taking into consideration that we ensure we have protection of the environment for the future. On some of those occasions we do need to be a little bit cautious with the mapping that is in place. I think that mapping may need a fair bit of work to ensure that it is right going forward.

When we hear about the offsets in the past — and I spoke about Officer and the specific grass in Officer — it is interesting because in the mapping a student had said that there was a specific grass in Officer. However, when we went over the records a bit more and there was a bit more detail — it took nearly seven years I believe — only to find that that grass had not been there. Again, it was one that could possibly exist. Being a local in that specific area they were talking about, I can tell you that when I was born it was tea-tree. It went through a stage when it was totally burnt out. It became a paddock and it has been a paddock up until this development. Obviously there were cattle on that paddock, and I do not believe that specific grass could have existed. However, just due to the mapping of it that has created some issues there. I think that is important.

That brings us back to the national park, and obviously Villawood Investments is actually having to go through this process of offsetting now. I think it is vital that it has that opportunity there. When we talk about national parks and the expansion of national parks, obviously it is something that is of benefit to all in our community. National parks are a benefit to our community, and we

need to make sure that they are accessible for everybody. We need to make sure that people have opportunities to use national parks for many different activities, and I think that is a very good aspect.

One of the amendments contained in the bill is the fulfilment of the government's commitment to grant Aboriginal title over the park under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010, and this was in line with the 2013 recognition and settlement agreement between the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the previous state government. Again, if you are talking about titles and you are talking about protection — I have spoken a lot about environmental protection — obviously we have got a very rich history within these areas, particularly around our Aboriginal culture. It is vital that we do respect that, and it is vital that we do work with all those organisations, particularly, obviously, the Aboriginal corporations in different parts of the state, so that we can see these areas protected for the future — not just when we talk about our past, obviously, but to preserve their past as well. It is a very important part not just of Victoria but, as we know, of the whole of Australia. We need to make sure that is preserved.

In our position of not opposing this bill, I will just say very briefly that national parks — and the VEAC reports state this — are something that I think the whole state benefits from. A lot of the time environmental groups, particularly smaller environmental groups, do not get the voice that they need and deserve when they are stepping out there. I am talking about the 'friends of' groups. As I said when I spoke about the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater before, we have also got many other 'friends of' groups for rivers and parks, and I am sure there would not be a member in this house who does not have, no matter where you are, a 'friends of' group that goes out and does fantastic work in its local community. Those are the small groups that do need a voice, and that voice is generally through the VEAC reports. They get an opportunity to ensure that they can get their voice to these organisations and make submissions. When you read the historical reports of VEAC, there are some groups that, whilst I may not agree with them, have been given an opportunity to have their say. That is probably one of the most important parts of the VEAC reports going forward.

In closing my remarks on this bill today, I will say that probably the most important part about national parks is — and I have ended up where I started today — that if we expand our national parks, the one thing we need to ensure is that we protect our volunteers in the future. The Country Fire Authority volunteers are the ones who go out there and protect our national parks, and

they ensure that the parks are protected and that if there is a fire through our national parks, like we have had in the past, they are the first on the scene. We can go back to Black Saturday, when for the first 6 hours it was only volunteers out there fighting the fires in Victoria. We want to make sure that that surge capacity is there if we are going to be increasing the size of our national parks, which we are in this bill by 245 hectares. We need to make sure that we continue that surge capacity and make sure those resources are available for the future.

In saying that, the opposition does not oppose the bill and, as I said, we look forward, particularly on the VEAC scene, to some of the reports that will come from that.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. In particular, I just start by asking the house: which was the last government not to add to the national park estate here in Victoria? It was of course the Baillieu and Napthine governments that failed to contribute to the national park estate here in Victoria. I am sure that we will continue to ensure and advocate to advance the interests of the national park estate here as the Victorian Andrews Labor government, but for all time it will stand on the record that the previous government was the first in many, many years to not add to the national park estate here in Victoria. The party of Hamer and others failed to expand and advance the interests of the national park estate here in Victoria.

The only contribution those opposite added to the national park estate was to try to introduce fuel reduction units in the form of cattle in the national parks. That was the answer the opposition had to dealing with the threat of fire and bushfires here in Victoria. That was the additional contribution those opposite sought to make to the national park estate. I am very pleased that among the range of achievements the Andrews government has made under ministers Neville and D'Ambrosio has been to ensure that cattle are out of the High Country here in Victoria.

I say also that there are no 99-year leases. We have protected our national parks from overdevelopment by legislating out 99-year leases, which again was another aspect driven by the previous Baillieu and Napthine governments to try to expand development from private developers in our national parks. We have also seen of course a biodiversity plan from the Andrews government, the first in some two decades. It has been a great source of engagement and consultation with regional communities in particular. We have introduced

the review of national vegetation guidelines, the forest industry task force and the inquiry into the chemical used by the former government for weed sprayers, particularly out in Bendigo and other places. Working with the Australian Workers Union, a union I am a proud member of, has also been another aspect that we have worked hard on.

We are working on a full review of the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA), the drafting of a marine and coastal act, the protection of Hanging Rock and the addition to the number of free camp sites across the state after those opposite, the Baillieu and Napthine governments, sought to introduce a whole range of fees and charges to try to keep families out of our camp sites and national parks, which was scrapped by the Andrews government. One of the key things introduced by those opposite — and I remember that we were in the regional sitting, I think, in Ballarat — was gold being declared the Victorian mineral emblem under the Baillieu government. That was about the greatest contribution they made to environmental protection here in Victoria.

There has been record investment of course in the Sustainability Fund for us to invest back into the community and also in the environment contribution levy. We have invested in Parks Victoria. We have increased the number of staff at the EPA. We have delivered long-term leases to the Arthurs Seat Sky lift, and the Shipwreck Coast master plan is funded in this budget. There has been a very significant investment that underscores our determination to grow jobs and investment in tourism to bring people to regional Victoria. We have also seen of course record numbers of visitation at the Melbourne Zoo. I also say that in relation to those opposite we have seen nothing but attacks on our environment. They have nothing positive to say about the environment. The National Party tail wagged the Liberal Party dog when it came to environment policy here in Victoria under the previous government.

There are a range of aspects in relation to this National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill that go a long way to underscoring what the Andrews government's priorities are here in the environment. We are adding to the Greater Bendigo National Park in relation to this bill, and I look forward to hearing from the member for Bendigo West.

I also say that this is about improving the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC), which is chaired by a former member for Warrandyte, a very big contributor here to the Parliament in the past. We are

going to make sure that VEAC has that capacity to investigate matters in a fit-for-purpose way so that it can deal with matters that are very specific. I think it is important that our legislation reflects that. This is also about making sure that we can better respond and reflect government policy of the day and be more nimble and adept. I think this legislation allows VEAC to respond to those policy decisions of government to better reflect that, and it also makes sure that the government has a capacity to better interact with VEAC around public land use and changes in public land use. That is critical to a lot of the work that we are doing.

Regarding these changes, I know that our engagement in regional Victoria, particularly around the national parks estate, has seen a range of aspects change. Regarding the savage cuts by the previous government to Parks Victoria — Parks Victoria was essentially emasculated by the previous government — it is the Labor government that knows that healthy parks mean healthy people, but if you do not have a healthy Parks Victoria, you cannot have healthy parks and you cannot encourage people to go to them. If you jack up the fees in our camp sites and national parks, you are not going to encourage people to come to our parks.

People who come to our parks are the greatest advocates for protecting our parks. It is about getting Victorians and their families to those parks to understand their value so that they want to advocate for them at the ballot box and in our communities and so that they become the advocates of the future for our national parks. But if you jack up the fees to keep them out, if you are undermining, undercutting and not delivering for Parks Victoria, it will lack the capacity to encourage and regulate our parks to the standard that Victorians expect.

We have great standards, very high standards, for Parks Victoria, but if you do not invest in Parks Victoria, if you do not look out for it, if you do not encourage it, if you do not value its staff — the passionate people who dedicate their lives to working in our national parks for the greater good of the community as custodians of public land — and if you do not demonstrate that as a government, then you are saying that parks do not matter. If you are saying that, then you are not encouraging people in our community to make sure that they are the next generations of Victorians that will advocate, advance and protect the interests of national parks estate here in Victoria.

In summary I say that the amendments to the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park include providing for the addition of approximately 245 hectares to the park. These

amendments to VEAC, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, are to broaden that advisory role, to enable the government to amend a response of the government to recommendations of VEAC or the former Environment Conservation Council and to make other minor amendments to the act. This is about making VEAC work better for Victorians. It has a very critical role to play, as I am sure that through the forest industry task force VEAC will have an important role to play in demonstrating both the economic viability of the national parks estate and also how governments will work and legislate to ensure that we continue to grow the national parks estate here in Victoria.

That is a critical aspiration that the Andrews government has, and it is one that the previous government failed to deliver on and one in which I think we have seen — as we have, again, in the removal of cattle from the High Country — a very clear demonstration from the Victorian Andrews Labor government of its determination to make sure that parks are for people, not for cows. Parks are for people; they are not for private businesses or organisations. We all contribute to the national parks estate through our taxes, and we should all benefit from that investment. We all contribute our taxes to Parks Victoria, and we should all benefit from the advocacy, the custodianship and the work that it does to ensure that our parks prosper and thrive.

We must ensure that those who demonstrate and commit their working lives to their passion for the environment in that organisation are valued and are given every support from the government to commit and deliver on their task. I do think that the community has very high expectations of Parks Victoria's role, and I think the previous government in its significant cuts to Parks Victoria undermined Parks Victoria's capacity to deliver on the expectations of the Victorian community.

I think that we have demonstrated very clearly through a range of investments in our parks that the Victorian Labor government is committed to advancing and protecting the interests of our environment. We have seen that through the scrapping of 99-year leases for developers. Parks are about our people, and they are about ensuring that future generations can value our parks, understand them and protect them into the future. That is about investing in them. The Andrews Labor government has a lot more to say, and a lot more of our deeds will come to pass through the rest of this term. We have made a great start and are looking forward to the future prosperity of our parks under our minister, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise to make a contribution on the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. It is interesting to follow the member for Ivanhoe, the member for No Police Station in Heidelberg West. I correct the record that there were additions to national parks in the term of the previous government, so I think his comment that there were no additions to national parks is incorrect. There were a number of small additions to national parks through that period of time.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WALSH — It is important to have the truth out there. The truth might not mean much to that side of the house, but it is important to have the truth out there on those particular issues.

This bill does two principal things. In the national parks area it adds an additional 245 hectares to the Greater Bendigo National Park. Some of that is in line with the 2013 recognition of settlement agreement that was signed by the previous government and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation. The coalition obviously supports that happening, and there has been a donation from Villawood Investments as part of native vegetation offsets.

The member for Ivanhoe waxed lyrical about how good increasing the size of national parks is, but it is very important that whatever national parks we have are well maintained. One of the constant complaints that I have heard as I have travelled around Victoria in my time in the Parliament is that Parks Victoria is the neighbour from hell — that is, because of the weeds, because of the vermin and because of wild animals, Parks Victoria is the neighbour from hell. Something we in this place need to bear in mind is that there is a responsibility on all landholders in Victoria. There is a lot of responsibility put on private landholders to control weeds and to control vermin. There is not that same responsibility put on public land and particularly on Parks Victoria.

Whether it be foxes, wild dogs or deer that are coming out of those areas and doing damage to private land, it is the private landholder that pays the cost of those animals coming out. We know that this government does not have a commitment to wild dog control. The government has scrapped the bounty and got rid of the Wild Dog Advisory Committee. The government does not have the same commitment. There is only one aerial baiting program per year instead of two, as happened under the previous government. There is no commitment to controlling vermin, particularly wild

dogs, let alone blackberries and all the other weeds that are in the public estate and that are constantly coming out and being washed downstream in the waterways to infest private property.

The member for Ivanhoe and members on the other side of the house might want to wax lyrical about the public estate and how it is great to add more hectares and more area to it, but unless there are the resources and the commitment to maintain that land properly, it does not change very much at all. There is a very good saying that just changing the sign on the front gate to call an area of land a national park does not deliver a good environmental outcome. The member for Ivanhoe and others who might want to make contributions to the debate might want to bear in mind that you have to maintain the public estate. Yes, national parks are for people — there is no argument about that; they are definitely for people — but people have to have access to them. You have to make sure that tracks are maintained and not overgrown, and you have to make sure that the weeds and vermin are controlled.

Apart from weeds and vermin, the greatest threat to the public estate and to national parks is fire, particularly large wildfire. In a previous Parliament I was part of the parliamentary inquiry into the 2002 and 2006 mega-fires in Victoria. Both those fires burnt in excess of a million hectares. A lot of that was public land and national park, and because of the fuel load build-up, those fires were very intense fires that caused huge environmental damage to the areas that burnt, particularly in the ash forest areas and some areas that burnt twice.

If an ash forest burns, it can regenerate, but if it burns again within the next 15 years, the ability to regenerate is killed. There is not the seed there for it to grow again. On trips that members of that parliamentary committee made into the high country, we saw that there are a lot of areas of ash forest that will never be ash forest again because the forest burnt twice — once in 2002–03 and again, as it was regenerating, in 2006.

Out of that parliamentary inquiry, the recommendation was to effectively have controlled burns for about 5 per cent of the landmass in Victoria. It was a very similar number to what ended up coming out of the royal commission after the 2009 bushfires. I notice there has been a change of policy by the current government now that its members have moved away from the hectare burn to more of a risk management strategy. That may be fine, but if enough burns are not done — and they are expensive and a challenge for the relevant minister to get the budget allocation to do — and a good controlled burn regime is not maintained, we will end

up with mega-fires again like we had in 2002, 2003 and 2006. The greatest loser out of those fires is the environment, with the damage that is done to it, because we lose not only the flora but also the fauna, particularly small marsupials and those sorts of animals that do not have the opportunity to outrun those mega-fires.

What is really interesting with that whole fire issue is that we have the current debate about the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the lack of respect being shown to CFA volunteers by the government, particularly the Premier. When we have those mega-fires, we rely on the surge capacity of the volunteers that come in and support Parks Victoria firefighters and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) firefighters. Teams in my area go away on campaign fires regularly. They go away for five days, and the truck stays there, there is a change of shift and the volunteers come for another five days. Having surge capacity during those mega-fires and campaign fires that last for weeks and weeks is how those fires are fought. If we as a state lose the commitment and the goodwill of the volunteer firefighters to give up their work, leave their families and travel halfway across the state quite often to go to those campaign fires, the state will be the poorer for it. In this case, when we are talking about a national parks bill, the environment will be the poorer for it as well.

At the moment all the volunteers are saying, 'We are there for the community, and we will still go and fight fires no matter what happens', but there is a real mistrust of the government. There is a lack of faith in the government that its members are going to negotiate in good faith around this particular enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA). We have heard the rhetoric from the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Emergency Services, about how the things that the CFA is saying about the EBA are not true. At this stage I have yet to see anything that proves that the Deputy Premier is right in what he says, because I think he is effectively using weasel words. They are hollow words to try to gloss over what is an absolute disaster for the government in how its members have been caught out mistreating volunteers here in Victoria and their lack of respect for volunteers as well.

Ms Hutchins — Why don't you get back to the bill?

Mr WALSH — It is on the bill. This is about national parks and making sure they are protected into the future, and having them protected involves making sure that we have a viable and committed volunteer staff at the CFA that can be there to fight those mega-fires and those campaign fires in the future. So it

is very much to do with national parks and making sure they are protected into the future.

The other thing this bill does is that it changes the process around how Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) inquiries are started. There is not only the opportunity to have to go through the cabinet process to have VEAC inquiries done in the future, there is also the opportunity for the minister to instigate those particular inquiries.

Again, there are mixed views in the community about the effectiveness of VEAC in terms of some of its inquiries. I speak on the basis of history in terms of the inquiry on the red gum park along the Murray River, where the overwhelming majority of the communities and the industry there were very, very dissatisfied with the VEAC report and the subsequent closing up of some of those particular areas. Again, as I said before, those areas now are infested with weeds and with vermin because they are not being managed appropriately into the future.

So I would like to end with a caution to the government: yes, you can brag about having more national parks, but you have actually got to maintain them properly, you have got to control the fire risk and you have to do controlled fire burns to make sure we do not have mega-fires in the future.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — I am very pleased to rise to speak on the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016, mainly because this pertains specifically to the Greater Bendigo National Park, which of course is right in my backyard. I am very excited to be able to say that this new bill will expand the state park.

I would just like to begin, though, by pointing out that the Leader of The Nationals in his contribution chose to talk about certain things, but I think he has some selective memory when it comes to resourcing Parks Victoria. This side of the house has not forgotten how much Victoria's environment suffered under the four years of the coalition. Just to remind the Leader of The Nationals how much the coalition allocated to assets for the environment in 2013–14, I note that it was zero dollars. In its term of government the coalition cut nearly \$650 million from the environment department, which was then the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, and it lost more than 900 staff. Parks Victoria lost 1 in 10 staff, and 10 per cent was cut from its budget overall, with 31 per cent cut from its environmental programs. Sustainability Victoria lost

over a third of its staff, and its ability to engage on climate change was stifled under coalition policy.

This government will never, ever cut funding to Parks Victoria or Sustainability Victoria. In fact in the 2016–17 financial year alone the Andrews Labor government has provided \$55 million in new funding from the Sustainability Fund. Not only is this the largest ever single-year investment from the Sustainability Fund but it is also nearly six times — I repeat, six times — the total amount of new funding provided for climate change related initiatives over the entire period of the previous coalition government. So let us just put some things in context and some facts on the table.

This bill is really important because it amends provisions relating to the Greater Bendigo National Park, adding approximately 245 hectares, which Villawood Investments is donating and which will be included in the park. It also corrects some of the line work which depicts the park's boundary and has amendments to simplify the description of those areas of the park which extend about 100 metres below the land's surface. The amendments will enable the government to fulfil its commitment of the state to grant Aboriginal title over the park under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 as well as enhance the park. That is really important, because the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation has been consulted, and it certainly supports these amendments regarding the park.

The Dja Dja Wurrung clans, of course, are of the Jaara Jaara people, who were the first settlers in our area. I have some extracts here I would like to read, and the print is very small, so you will have to bear with me:

The Dja Dja Wurrung language group are descendants of the Jaara Jaara people who are traditional owners of this land.

And can I pay my respects to them. It continues:

There are many Aboriginal people in the Bendigo region from many tribes, some have moved here and others that had been gathered into the Franklinford mission station found their way to the Bendigo region. The Aborigines that grew up learning Jaara Jaara culture but were not in the Jaara Jaara bloodline are custodial people. Today, part of the struggle to regain Aboriginal culture is finding and confirming personal identity within the cultural boundaries and genealogy.

Nevertheless, there are many remnants of Aboriginal culture found throughout Bendigo. Some of them may go unnoticed when you are walking through the park, but as my property actually borders the park I have been privileged to see some of these culturally identified things. Along the roadside there are some scar trees, and there are also larger areas that had been used to make coolamons and war shields. Anything

bigger would have been a canoe tree. You can also see the mounds that were used for cooking that are usually found near natural water sites. Other sites that indicate Aboriginal occupancy include the axe mines, the grinding grooves, the stone arrangements, the birthing trees, the marker trees — grafted trees — and the rock wells.

The significance of this for our Dja Dja Wurrung people is immeasurable. They also have a very strong association with the box-ironbark forests which dates back many, many thousands of years. The forest provided food, material for tools and shelter. The close association with the forests continues today, and significant Aboriginal sites, as I said, can be found throughout the area.

The park also has a very colourful European history, particularly in relation to goldmining and eucalyptus oil production. In fact one of my late husband's family members was indeed a eucalyptus oil producer in the park many years ago. The operation is closed down now, but I do remember visiting it 20 or 25 years ago; it was still operational then. Of course with the gold rushes, which began in 1857 and continued right through to the 1860s, many signs of the gold rushes, including the alluvial diggings, the old mining dams and water races, the shafts and mullock heaps, are all scattered throughout the park.

The box-ironbark forests and woodlands have been extensively cleared for agriculture, goldmining, urban development and timber, and that is why we absolutely need to protect this park. Only 17 per cent of the original box-ironbark vegetation of north-central Victoria remains, and most of that of course is in the Bendigo national park.

Bendigo, as many people would know, is a wonderful, wonderful city, but we are literally a city in the bush. We are indeed surrounded by almost a continuous ring of forests, parks and reserves. But having said that, there are many activities that you can enjoy in those parks and reserves, and they are extremely popular with our local communities and visitors alike. I was looking at the Wander Victoria website today, and I noticed that the Bendigo national park is actually a place that people are recommended to visit from metropolitan Melbourne. People can come to Bendigo to see the goldfields and visit the Bendigo national park and enjoy all that it has to offer.

The vegetation types within the park include the mallee remnants and the box-ironbark and heathy dry forest, and there are a number of threatened plants and animal species that rely on the forests around Bendigo. It is not

just Bendigo that benefits from the national park; there are other state forests that surround Bendigo as well, including Campbells Creek, with 58 hectares there; the Castlemaine and Muckleford state parks; Fryers Range and Goughs Range; and the Metcalfe, Sandon and Upper Loddon parks. Of course all of these are easily accessible to people, and I encourage people to come along to our region and have a wander through our national park and our state parks.

The reason that we have the national park in Bendigo is in no small part due to a great former Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Honourable Sherryl Garbutt, who back in 2002, following an investigation of the significance and extent of box-ironbark forests and woodlands across Victoria, was able to have that reclassified to make sure that it had better protection in the future. Of course the Bendigo forest management plan incorporated into the national park some 1.9 million hectares of public and private land.

I might just end now because my voice is running out on me, but can I just say that this is a really important bill. It protects the Bendigo national park well into the future. It also means that by expanding that park there are more opportunities for people to come and visit our park and enjoy what it has to offer. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution on the National Parks and Victorian Environment Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. The purpose of the bill is to amend the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park; to amend the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 to confer additional functions on the council in relation to the conduct of assessments and the provision of advice; and to amend the process for responding to recommendations of the council, the former Land Conservation Council and the former Environmental Conservation Council.

I think I will leave the Bendigo section to those people who live closer to it. I am going to focus my attention on the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) and the provisions therein to expand some of its powers. By far the most significant impact that VEAC has had in my electorate is on the use of the river red gum national parks. This was something that in 2007, 2008 and 2009 was very strongly debated in my community, and the repercussions of what happened there are still being felt through my community. When VEAC inquired into the proposed river red gum national parks, there were a whole lot of issues that arose out of that, in particular access to the

Murray River, which is something people who live in the north really treasure. Dispersed camping and day trips to the river are things that are very, very unique and special to that area and make it extremely livable.

However, to this day there are still issues around access along certain tracks within this particular land and access for duck hunters. I have got Stephen Cohrs, one of the duck hunters, trying to get clarification as to whether he can carry a firearm across the river red gum national parks in order to shoot on the 3 Chain Reserve. There are differing stories coming from everywhere. Generally he is too scared to go anywhere near the river, because of how Parks Victoria may interpret his activity. Similarly dispersed camping was hotly contested, and I think still is being hotly contested, for that area. Despite assurances that that is not the case, we have got bollards around various places, constraining where people can move.

Another issue that came out of VEAC's recommendations about river red gum national parks is access to firewood. Now, there is not a great deal of firewood needed in the Mildura region, but for those people who do need it, it is generally older people who have not updated their situation but are comfortable with the heating and cooking that is provided by firewood. They are often not in a position to afford to buy commercial firewood, so they have gone out either by themselves or with their children and grandchildren and collected a couple of trailer loads of firewood to get them through the winter. Now that we are designated a national park, the firewood is running out. The people in the Mildura region are very unhappy. They keep saying, 'There are 10-year riverbeds with plenty of firewood', but they are not allowed to go and get it.

Something that we do know is that there is a fire risk from this. As the fallen timber builds up it creates a considerable fuel load, and older river red gums are incredibly sensitive to fire. Those trees will withstand a small fire in the leaf litter. However, they will not withstand a hot fire from falling timber, and now some of these river bends are at risk of total destruction due to fire. These are some of the echoes that are coming through from the VEAC recommendation about this park that was accepted by the previous Labor government. We now have a whole lot of consequences that were not seen or when they were seen were not addressed. We need to find a way forward to harvest some of the fallen timber to meet the firewood demand and protect those forests, because sooner or later there will be a hot fire in there and we will lose the lot.

Now we notice that Parks Victoria is back in the planning stage. There is a document headed 'Help us

plan for Victoria's river red gum parks', so the agency is back doing some more consultation. Part of the problem with all of this consultation that has been occurring is that in my area a lot of people view this with great suspicion and some of them did not even bother to turn up because they figured that the decisions were already made. This is extremely disappointing, and I am hoping that Parks Victoria can continue to work its way through these particular issues as it needs to.

Talking about some of the echoes that come out of what VEAC has done — and I see that in this bill we are giving VEAC more powers and that worries me greatly — we have had a number of families whose lives have been significantly changed if not devastated. West of Mildura two families were incredibly impacted. The Pippin family at Cowra Station, just downstream of Merbein, was impacted because for whatever reason red rising country, which has not got a river red gum on it, was deemed to be part of the park. It had been grazing land and cropping land for early settlers who grew grain crops. The family lost enough of that property for it to have become non-viable, and it is now on the market.

Just past the Pippins's boundary is Kulnine Station that belonged to the Harmer family. Theirs is the same story — that part of their land was lost, enough to make the property non-viable, and now they are seeking to sell what is left. I think they believe that the government ought to buy that from them at a premium to counter what has been lost out of their lives on, again, red rising country, which has got little to do with red gums but is going to be taken.

With all this extra land, we come back to what the Leader of The Nationals said in his presentation — that if Parks Victoria cannot look after the land, it becomes the neighbour from hell. I am sure it does not want to be the neighbour from hell but it has just got too much to look after and take care of through all of this. There is land it cannot look after, and it will deteriorate. There will be noxious weeds, there will be vermin and there will be other pests that will take over that land and eventually infest other land or when a crisis occurs will cost a great deal to fix up and the environmental value will only be seen to go backwards. The VEAC process has led to a flawed outcome. It has ended up badly for the environment, and it has ended up badly for the people. To be giving extra powers to VEAC is something to be viewed with suspicion.

With so much of this, it seems too that Labor has gone out of its way to upset country people. That has been on access to the river and similarly with Country Fire

Authority (CFA) volunteers. When we look at the build-up of fuels in the river bends, you realise it is the CFA volunteers who know the tracks, who know this country like the back of their hands. They have got the local knowledge, and they have got the local experience — and no doubt they will be the ones who will be going into the river bends to try to sort out the fires if and when they occur.

Again, it is a disaster that has been a long time in the making. It is going to take a great deal of work by Parks Victoria to convince people that the river red gum park benefits them. It is going to take a long time for people to think that there is a good reason to give VEAC more power. I know the bill talks about providing the power to do more investigation and provide more advice to government, but in many cases I think that VEAC has been instrumental in giving advice to government that it wants to hear and therefore you end up with a death by a thousand cuts for those people who live near to and enjoy the river. Those people who enjoy the river on the whole take care of it during those trips to the river. It is vital for people in Mildura, in a hot, dry climate, to have dispersed access to the river, for them to be able to go fishing or waterskiing or to just spend a day by the river where they want to in their favourite spot and not have access restricted.

Parks Victoria has inherited a difficult problem from VEAC. I urge Parks Victoria in its consideration to make sure that there is as little impact as possible on the communities, particularly in my area, having access to camping and the other great traditions and family times and enjoyment that come from dispersed access to the Murray River.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. As other speakers have indicated, the bill amends the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park, including providing for the addition of 240 hectares to the park as well as making amendments to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001. I am particularly interested in the fact that this bill will facilitate the granting of Aboriginal title to the Dja Dja Wurrung people.

In preparing for this contribution I was reminded of a lunch I had a few years ago with Senator Scott Ryan. Scott and I were at Melbourne uni together, and we were on the student council in the early 90s. Scott said to me, 'Look, you should read a book called *Guns, Germs and Steel* by Jared Diamond'. I did, and it was a rollicking read. It starts with a scene from the late 1960s

or early 1970s. I think Jared Diamond was in it with a guy from Papua New Guinea, and they were walking along a beach. At that stage Papua New Guinea was a territory of Australia as a consequence of Australia having been awarded a class C mandate by the League of Nations after the First World War, when the territory had been annexed from Germany and was part of the reparations.

This gentleman from Papua New Guinea said to, I think, Diamond, 'How come the West is what it is and we're not like the West?'. So he was asking why it was a fact that the West has been quite powerful from an ascendancy point of view. In *Guns, Germs and Steel* Diamond talks about geography and the impact that geography had upon national development. One of the theses put forward in *Guns, Germs and Steel* is that in Western Europe you had a horizontal latitude and you had easy passage of movement. What that meant was that you did not have contained communities and technological innovations could be replicated because you had a similar climate across the horizontal. Therefore you had instances where technological advances could be shifted and changed and moved easily.

Equally, though, diseases when they arose could be easily transferred. Of course when you had the great plague of the 1300s, it had a profound impact upon the development of Western civilisation as we know it. The reality is that the labouring class of Western Europe seized their rights from a labouring perspective and struck out and that led to the emergence of the middle class, albeit over the passage of time, whereas the bonds of servitude were tightened in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless it meant that, for example, diseases were far less likely to have a dramatic impact upon those communities.

If you look at what happened when white settlement occurred, you see that the Dja Dja Wurrung people were devastated by two smallpox plagues in 1789 and 1825 because of the fact, as Diamond says in his thesis, that you had people who had not been exposed to that disease, and when it hit, it devastated those communities. It is interesting to consider the way the Dja Dja Wurrung people talked about those plagues. They talked in their mythology about Mindye, the giant snake that was sent by Bunjil to blow magic dust over people to punish them for being bad. That was the way that through Indigenous mythology they tried to explain something they could not explain, something that was not known.

Of course in many respects Australia, like other nations, was in deep conflict from a philosophical perspective

but also from an economic perspective. Clearly with the Enlightenment you saw Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the late 18th century talk about the rise of the noble savage — the sense that man was corrupted over time and that the noble savage as envisaged on a pristine, isolated South Sea island or in an isolated or remote community like Australia was almost like the high point of human civilisation.

In many ways what we saw was the corruption of humanity through the rise of technology. The reality is that, in terms of both germs and also guns and steel, you saw those communities devastated. Despite those notions of enlightenment, when settlers sought to settle the lands there were two waves of dispossession of the Dja Dja Wurrung people — firstly from the south in 1837 and then from the north in 1845. You saw real conflict emerge on those frontiers.

I remember reading Henry Reynolds for the first time. Henry had a really interesting perspective. He was writing in the late 1960s. He was in a wide academic area, and he was talking about the process of dispossession as seen through an economic lens. The reality is that fertile farming lands like those in Victoria lend themselves to small-scale agricultural developments, and therefore the tendency would be for the settlers to come in and look at trying to cultivate the land, subdivide the land and graze cattle or sheep. But they did not have a requirement for labour. Therefore there was that intrinsic level of conflict that emerged in terms of the way in which they engaged with the Dja Dja Wurrung people, so when cattle were killed or found to be wounded, the settlers reacted badly.

There was also a lot of sexual conflict whereby white male settlers on their own out in remote areas sought to abuse Indigenous women. Again there was a degree of conflict because traditionally, as I understand it, there were instances where clans would look at exchanging partners as a way of building kinship and ties. There is an argument that some in the Dja Dja Wurrung may have looked at it and thought, 'Well, this is just the way in which we would try to deal with this new clan, this foreign clan, and it is a way we can build kinship ties'. The reality is that it led to conflict. Munangabum was one of the clan leaders who led some of the fighting against dispossession. When he was shot and wounded without cause the settlers who had perpetrated his wounding were arrested and tried, but because Aboriginal people could not give evidence in court they were acquitted.

The bill is important because I think it is part of that process of healing and making reparations for what has been done. I note too — and I have not read this book,

but I do want to try to read it when I get a chance — that Bill Gammage's book entitled *The Biggest Estate on Earth — How Aborigines Made Australia* talks about the way in which this land was cultivated, looked after and nurtured for hundreds and thousands of years and the way in which when white sellers began to look at these areas, as they started to dispossess the local Indigenous tribes, they found good land, land that had been cultivated and that had been looked after. It was probably somewhat overgrown because if smallpox had come through and decimated those communities in 1789 and 1825, with Melbourne then settled in 1835, and settlers were only then starting to make inroads into those communities, it may have been a generation from the decimation to when they actually started to be dispossessed of the remnants of that land. You could see that occurring.

The bill is important because again it is looking at recognising the wrongs that were done, and it is trying, I suppose, to look back and right what was a previous wrong. The Enlightenment had many great ideas and great concepts in its own way, as did the Reformation in terms of what Martin Luther did in broadening out and ensuring that there was a degree of education, knowledge and information that was shared and dispersed amongst the community, but it led to these flashpoints and conflicts and you saw terrible results occur in these communities.

So now, as legislators in the 21st century, by recognising that traditional ownership we are making up for past ill deeds toward the Dja Dja Wurrung people through this important piece of legislation. I commend it to the house.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to rise and make a brief contribution to the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. Before I do, I pay my respects to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers throughout Victoria and acknowledge the land that I live on is protected by the work that they do.

The National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill amends the National Parks Act 1975 in relation to the Greater Bendigo National Park. It amends the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 (VEAC act) to broaden the council's advisory role, and it enables government responses to recommendations by VEAC and the former Environment Conservation Council.

The bill provides that Villawood Investments is donating 245 hectares as native vegetation clearance

offsets elsewhere, and the land is one-third cleared and two-thirds native vegetation. The bill makes amendments to the Greater Bendigo National Park of approximately 245 hectares, increasing it from some 17 300-odd hectares to nearly 17 600 hectares. The amendments will also simplify the description of areas of the park which extend to 100 metres below the land surface. It is pretty straightforward what that is doing.

The bill amends the VEAC act to expand its functions to the carrying out of assessments and to providing advice on matters that, because of their limited scale or technical nature, may not warrant investigation, which creates a more flexible process that can be tailored to a particular request.

As the Leader of The Nationals said earlier in his contribution, if you are going to increase the size of parks, it is very important that you manage the parks that you have got appropriately. I have said in this house, as many others have too, that sometimes Parks Victoria can be the neighbour from hell. I have the example certainly up in my region of Ovens Valley, where the blackberries, the wild dogs and the samba deer really get out of control. It is beyond a joke, but whenever we talk about trying to get some assistance, there never appears to be any money to support that. With the wild dog budget being slashed, again this cost is picked up by the private sector — that is, the neighbouring landholders.

The member for Ivanhoe was quite misinformed when he talked in his contribution about the coalition's savage cuts — or what he claimed were savage cuts — to national parks and the coalition making no additions to national parks. I refuse to stand here in this place and be dictated to by city-centric MPs who claim they understand what is going on in the bush. Those opposite talk about investing in parks and people and supporting national parks, but at the end of the day, if they really want to support country Victoria, they should look no further than the CFA. Instead of declaring war on and trying to dismantle the CFA, they really could do some work there with our volunteers. Instead they gloat about their Greens alliance and how they can support their business partner.

Certainly the member for Ivanhoe also spoke about the removal of cattle in the High Country. What a cunning stunt that was. We are talking about 400 animals in the High Country. The cattle do not wallow, and they do not disturb the ground. We have got 1.6 million to 2 million samba deer in the High Country, but nothing gets said about that. We refer back to the 400 cattle that are going to cause all of this damage. The government undermines the CFA, but who is going to be there to

protect our native vegetation when the fires start? He also said that it demonstrated very clearly what the government is committed to — and I agree with that — the war on volunteers and the lack of investment in regional Victoria.

We have all heard the saying, ‘Don’t bite off more than you can chew’. You must learn to manage what you have got already before you start expanding into further territories. I certainly hope that those opposite take heed of that warning and start looking at what they have got. Clearly there needs to be some reconciliation done between what they currently manage before they want more.

Again, I can only see as far as the CFA at the moment, because if we lose that passion of those volunteers in regional Victoria, we will be vulnerable. The member for Bendigo West said that Labor will never cut budgets to national parks. That is a pretty big statement. They will never cut budgets to national parks, yet police stations are closing, the CFA is being dismantled and law and order is at an all-time low while crime is increasing at 12 per cent year on year. Government members are very quick to stand in this place and dismantle the CFA and talk about not making cuts, but at the end of the day, what is really important to all of our communities, not just our regional communities but our metropolitan communities as well, is the mess the government is making of law and order in this state.

Of course we cannot maintain our environment for the people that live in regional Victoria — —

Mr Carroll interjected.

Mr McCURDY — We have heard about these 12 sniffer dogs from the member for Niddrie for years and years, but we are still waiting for him to deliver now that he is in government. We are waiting to see what he is going to deliver, because he talks about what we did not do, but it is his turn now. The opportunity is ripe, and we are waiting and waiting, but nothing comes.

Mr Carroll interjected.

Mr McCURDY — He has got an ice task force, so what has he been able to produce with that ice task force? I think absolutely nothing. You can talk about his past — —

Ms Thomas — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, of course this debate is taking place late in the day, and a fair amount of latitude has been given to speakers. However, the current speaker is talking about the ice action task force and sniffer dogs. I do not see that that

has anything whatsoever to do with national parks. I ask that you bring the speaker back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! It has been a wideranging debate, and I have been as guilty as anyone else in relation to this matter, but I would encourage the member to try to come back to the bill. Alternatively, if he wishes to diverge, he may wish to talk about Martin Luther and the Reformation.

Mr McCURDY — While I have the bill in one hand I feel that I am at least addressing the bill in some part. It is small but it is important that we have at least got the bill close to hand.

The bill does talk about national parks, and it also mentions the CFA in there somewhere, but that might just be my copy. There is no doubt about it. As I said, there are big statements from those on the other side, but again it is their turn to deliver, and we are still waiting for them to deliver. Given the government’s constant attacks on what the coalition did not achieve and its alliance with the Greens and the unions and their factions, it is really quite surprising that it managed to be able to organise anything at all.

On the bill, I can say that although we are not opposing the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016, we do encourage the government to look after what it has got first, and certainly that includes our volunteers, and the CFA is right at the top of that list at the moment. We know it is only there at the moment because we do not know who is to be next. The State Emergency Service (SES) is very concerned at the moment about where things are headed, and we will certainly make sure that we defend the SES like we have the CFA. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016. I congratulate the new Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on bringing this bill to the house, and I note that it is a great step forward to have a minister who has the portfolios of energy, environment and climate change — they are all with the one minister. This is about recognising that we will not be able to make any impact on the threat of climate change unless we support our environment by investing in renewable energy. I think that is a great step forward, and I congratulate the minister.

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) was established under the Bracks Labor government in 2002. I note that in 2000, in the

second-reading speech for the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Bill, the Honourable Sherryl Garbutt, MP, Minister for Environment and Conservation said:

The government strongly believes that the quality of life of all Victorians depends on properly managing our environment and protecting our precious natural and cultural heritage. Decisions made by government should ensure that Victoria is not running down its natural assets and thereby building an environmental debt. The government has committed to building in the principles of ecologically sustainable development to all government decision-making.

That was a great step forward in this state under the Labor Bracks government. Of course we all know that Sherryl Garbutt followed in the footsteps of that other great environment minister, Joan Kirner. We on this side of the house had occasion to again reflect on and celebrate Joan Kirner's life and her extraordinary contribution to this state at an unveiling of a portrait of Joan in our party room last night.

The bill amends the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 to establish an alternative and more flexible process which will enable VEAC, when requested by the minister, to carry out an assessment or provide advice on matters that, because of their limited scale or scope or their technical nature, might not require an investigation under the currently available process. This aims to establish a process fit for task that can be tailored to a particular request. The bill will also enable government responses to recommendations of VEAC or the former Environment Conservation Council (ECC) to be amended. Any amendment must be tabled in Parliament and published. The tabling and publication requirements are extended to amendments or revocations of recommendations of the former Land Conservation Council to provide greater transparency.

Other minor amendments to the act include updating the definition of public land to remove redundant elements and clarifying that there is no need to advertise vacancies on VEAC for additional members who may be appointed because of their technical expertise relating to a particular request. The amendments will enhance the usefulness of VEAC and enable government responses to VEAC and ECC recommendations to be amended as a result of changed circumstances or government policy.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge that as part of this government's commitment and that of our Premier to increasing the representation of women on government boards — and indeed the Premier has boldly stated that under this government at least 50 per cent of all appointments to such boards will be

women — I thought it was fantastic to see that my predecessor in the seat of Macedon, Joanne Duncan, has been appointed to VEAC. As Acting Speaker Halfpenny well knows, Joanne Duncan served in this place for 15 years. I certainly hope to follow in her footsteps in that regard. I had the opportunity earlier today to read through Joanne's valedictory speech, and she did note that it was historic that she won that previously safe Liberal seat back in 1999. She had held it ever since, and indeed she won it when through a kind of sleight of hand at the time, the Liberal Party decided it wanted to impose Rob Knowles on the people of Macedon, or Gisborne as it was then. That did not go so well.

Joanne has been appointed to VEAC, and that is fantastic. Members in this house will know that over the entire period of her time in this place, Joanne was on the Environment and Natural Resources Committee. She served on that committee for 15 years. You will not meet anyone more passionate about protecting our natural environment — protecting it but also having a realistic and pragmatic approach to matters such as forestry. One of the issues Joanne talks about is that in the very early 2000s she was faced with managing a dispute in the Wombat State Forest around what would be sustainable logging practice within that forest. With Joanne's advocacy, quite an innovative approach was established, with the Wombat forest community forest management cooperative process being put in place. I can tell members that to this day people associated with the Wombat forest and people in Wombat Forestcare speak exceedingly highly of Jo and the work that she did there to balance out those competing interests. I take this opportunity to commend Gayle Osborne for the work that she does with Wombat Forestcare.

Those opposite talked a lot in their contributions about volunteers, and not always in relation to this bill. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank all of those Landcare volunteers, all of those friends of our parks, our gardens and our forests out there in our community — the unsung heroes of the environment movement who provide much-needed care to our public lands. I want to congratulate them.

I am very, very blessed in my electorate, an electorate of course all members are welcome to visit at any time they choose. I will very happily take them on a lovely walk through the Hepburn Regional Park or the Lerderderg State Park. I could take them to Hanging Rock. One of the first things this government did was to move to ensure that Hanging Rock will be protected now and into the future by ensuring that there is proper community consultation in place and proper care of Hanging Rock's environmental values. I could take

them to Macedon Regional Park or Hepburn mineral springs. There is lots to see and do any time that members would like to come and visit some of the beautiful parks we have in the Macedon electorate.

Going back to the bill, of course I commend it to the house. That goes without saying, and I wish it a speedy passage. This is but one of Labor's many achievements in regard to protecting our natural environment and national parks. Under Labor governments we saw a major expansion of the parks system in the 1980s and early 1990s, including in East Gippsland, the Victorian Alps and the Mallee. We have seen a significant expansion of protected wilderness areas. We have seen new and expanded box-ironbark parks and a world-class representative system of marine national parks and marine sanctuaries. Of course the Great Otway National Park and the Point Nepean National Park were also delivered by a Labor government. The Otway forest park was created as well as new and expanded river red gum parks.

Since coming to government in 2014 we have been hard at it. One of the first things we did — and one of the first bills I spoke on, and very proudly so — was to reinstate the ban on cattle grazing in the High Country. When we talk about political opportunism and poor decision-making, we need look no further than the ridiculous piece of legislation the coalition pushed through when it was in government to let cows back into a national park. Cows do not and never will belong in national parks. This is a great bill. I commend it to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

BUDGET PAPERS 2016–17

Debate resumed from 7 June; motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing):

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

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — It gives me pleasure to rise to make my closing remarks in relation to the budget papers take-note motion before this house. I had spent some time discussing the Shepparton electorate and many of the needs of our region and also congratulating the government on providing the funding for the redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health, our local hospital. But I also note that the expected lease of the port of Melbourne will not only provide the money to remedy 50 dangerous and

congestion-causing level crossings across Melbourne but also fund the Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund. That has an emphasis on boosting exports and supporting Victorian farmers from paddock to port. Given the recent issues facing our highly efficient and export-focused dairy farmers and the general concentration of them in northern Victoria, along with the many other export-focused primary industries, I am looking forward to seeing some well-funded positive initiatives in my electorate from the fund. I will work with the government closely to identify the sorts of initiatives that we would like to see in our region.

There are many areas I have mentioned. Some of them perhaps I would have liked the time to expand on more. Many relate to infrastructure, and it is a travesty that here in Victoria we receive only 9.7 per cent of Australia's infrastructure funding. As a result regional Victoria receives only 3 per cent of that. There is much to be done at a federal level to make sure that Victoria gets its fair share of that infrastructure funding, and I find it quite extraordinary that in this current federal election campaign there is so little said about that and so little advocacy for Victoria to receive its fair share of that infrastructure funding.

One of our communities' responses to the social distress in our region is that community leaders have got together and set up the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project. This is a project that is taking a long-term approach to dealing with social disadvantage in our area. It looks to the notion of 'from conception to career', so it is looking at young people's starts in life. The project is an influencer rather than a deliverer of services, and I will be seeking to facilitate discussions with our education, health and human services and other ministers and our lighthouse project team to ensure that government departments and agencies are supportive of this project at a state and local level and that we work to cooperate in putting in place a number of projects that have been identified as highly important for our region. The project proponents are firmly of the belief that, in addition to resources in the form of money, the Greater Shepparton community will be well served by more effective coordination and utilisation of existing resources, many of which are controlled or funded by government.

What does this mean for government? Government can often be much more effective by regulating, deregulating, facilitating or really being innovative with its powers. In closing, I will continue to work hard for my electorate to ensure that its needs are highlighted and brought to the attention of government, particularly in pre-budget negotiations.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — It is my pleasure to rise in support of a great Labor budget — a budget grounded in fairness. There is much to be proud of in this budget. It reminds me of what our motivation should be in sitting in this place, and that is to deliver for our communities, to make this state strong and to look to the future and prepare for it — basically, to leave the place better than we found it. And there are few who would doubt that Victoria is a much better place today than it was under the previous government. It is a stark contrast — four years of inactivity, self-indulgence and neglect versus 18 months so far of hard work, activity, investment and progress.

While I am contrasting, I think it is fair to say that the Victorian budget handed down in late April is everything that the federal budget, handed down a week later, was not. Our budget goes to the heart of fairness. It looks after our most vulnerable and offers solid support for the businesses that support our workforce. Our budget has heart, but it also has smarts. In contrast, the federal coalition budget was underwhelming and utterly unimpressive. It was limp. It was so boring on its surface that you could be mistaken or inclined to think that the Turnbull government was hoping that you might forget it even existed. It offered nothing for low-income earners. It offered no vision. But the worst of it was what lurked beneath its surface, the sinister reality that was buried beneath it, and that is this: it maintains the brutal cuts of 2014 — cuts to schools and higher education, cuts to Medicare and cuts to families and pensioners.

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers and as somebody with two relatives with an intellectual disability, I was disgusted to see the \$1.6 billion in savage cuts to disability supports that vulnerable Victorians rely on. It means that some 30 000 people with disabilities — people like my Auntie Jeanette and Uncle Paul and another aunty, Auntie Kate, who passed away before I had a chance to know her — have their disability payments cut and their capacity to work reassessed. The commonwealth has cut support and will no longer provide incentives for businesses to create meaningful employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Prime Minister Turnbull has also axed a vital information campaign, a campaign that could not be more important at this time, in the lead-up to the launch of the national disability insurance scheme on 1 July. The federal budget constitutes a broken promise; it broke Mr Turnbull's promise to deliver on disability housing, training and support for advocacy to ensure that people with a disability can live their lives the way they want to live them. These cuts betray our most

vulnerable and the people who care for them. It is an outrage, and it is a national disgrace. Scott Morrison, the federal Treasurer, will not talk about that. Malcolm Turnbull wants to hide that fact. But be in no doubt, the federal budget was every bit as brutal as the infamous 2014 budget. In fact it is the 2014 budget; it has not changed a thing. The federal government needs to be honest about that.

But now to return to a great Labor budget that was handed down in the April just gone, I would like to use my contribution to primarily speak about the initiatives that impact on my electorate of Dandenong. I doubt I will have time to get to them all. As I have said before in this place, Dandenong is a vibrant, hardworking community. We are a community that is not understood by the conservatives, and they have never delivered for us. Those opposite have always taken a paternalistic view of communities like Dandenong, and it is budgets like this one that set Labor apart. It is budgets like this one that show the people of Dandenong the respect they deserve.

In last year's budget we saw a \$10 million investment in Dandenong secondary schools, funding stage 1 of the Lyndale Secondary College rebuild and further works at Dandenong High School in its redevelopment. This year we have built on this. We built on our commitment to education and our commitment to creating opportunity irrespective of a person's background. Across Victoria we are investing \$924 million in new and upgraded schools. In Dandenong we have contributed to progress on the rebuilds of Lyndale Secondary College by funding the planning of stage 2 so the project can continue without delay delivering for students the educational facilities they deserve. We have also provided funding to Dandenong West Primary School so it can draw up plans for a much-needed upgrade. This is a school committed to supporting its community. Principal Bev Hansen fundamentally understands that her school is more than just about classrooms, spelling and sums; it is about supporting community, supporting families and making a lasting difference.

We have also delivered \$350 000 to Wooranna Park Primary School so that it can upgrade its outdoor play spaces. Wooranna Park is an innovative and dynamic local school, and it gets quite a lot of international attention for the programs it runs, but its outdoor spaces are tired, and the kids frankly deserve better. This funding will transform the school's outdoor space, making it as vibrant and as special as its indoor spaces.

I will move on to speaking about jobs. The south-east has been hit hard by the loss of the auto industry, and

there is no shying away from that, but it is important that we do not forget or ignore the hundreds of businesses in the region that continue to grow, thrive and innovate. Dandenong has a pretty impressive transport manufacturing presence, whether it be trains, trams, trucks, buses or caravans — you name it, we make it. We had them all on display in central Dandenong a couple weeks ago with the Smart Manufacturing 16 event organised by the Committee for Dandenong, the South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance, the City of Greater Dandenong and dozens of businesses across the region.

This budget funds 27 new VLocity carriages to be made in Dandenong by Bombardier. That is a \$280 million investment. This builds on the 21 VLocity carriages that were ordered last year, meaning that this Labor government has ordered 48 new carriages. This is in addition to the 20 new E-class trams funded in last year's budget, which are also being manufactured by Bombardier. The new trains are part of our rolling stock strategy. This strategy sets out a 10-year plan for new trains and trams for Melbourne, giving businesses like Bombardier greater certainty and workers more job security.

We have also invested \$53 million for the establishment of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network, which will help people find employment faster so they do not drop out of the job market. There is \$5 million over the next two years to go to a new Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre, which will be in Narre Warren and will be of benefit to my community in Dandenong as well. We have also given \$116 million to establish 10 new tech schools, one of which will be in Casey. Students will be able to attend school at the same time as they develop their hands-on skills, meaning we are opening more doors for them and closing none.

I would also like to talk a bit about transport. I have talked about the benefit to Dandenong of our investment in transport infrastructure — namely, those train carriages. But we cannot talk about transport without mentioning the Melbourne Metro rail project. The Andrews government has fully funded this project, a project that constitutes the biggest transformation to our public transport system since the construction of the city loop. This project will enable more trains to run in and out of the city by giving the Cranbourne, Pakenham and Sunbury lines their own tunnel through the CBD. This is a huge benefit to train commuters in my electorate who travel on the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines. This project is essential to the future development of our train network and in that sense constitutes a

futureproofing of sorts, opening the door to further additions and developments into the future.

I mentioned earlier that the closure of the auto manufacturing sector has hit Dandenong hard. Previously the south-east had been neglected by governments. Our workforce was ignored, despite the fact that we employ about half of the auto supply chain workforce here in Victoria. But we were not ignored by the Andrews Labor government. Last year we announced \$46.5 million for the Victorian automotive transition plan, which provides a range of supports for auto workers and businesses. This year we are committing a further \$10 million to support businesses that hire auto industry workers affected by the upcoming closure of those major car manufacturers. The south-east, as I have said, is home to over half of Victoria's auto supply chain workforce, and these measures are vital to providing local workers and businesses with job opportunities and hopefully job security into the future.

Previously in this place I have spoken about the investment by this government in transitioning the automotive sector in the inner south-east. We have invested \$8.4 million to strengthen skills training and job search support in Melbourne's south-east, and the south-east was also the beneficiary of a \$10 million lift fund, which aims to stimulate private investment to create sustainable jobs and economic activity in the region. Our former Minister for Industry, the member for Mill Park, was tireless in her dedication to industry and workers in the south-east. I know that our new minister will be equally devoted, and I look forward over coming years to working closely with him, just as I did with the member for Mill Park, because I know that this government, no matter who is in that portfolio, is particularly dedicated to this area and is particularly dedicated to the workforce that works within it.

This government has also worked hard to ensure that Victoria is an inclusive place. This includes embracing our multiculturalism and our ethnic diversity. To this end we have invested \$49.13 million for three initiatives to support refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants. It will deliver greater support for English as a second language. I want to specifically mention our investment of \$24.3 million in extra funding to support multiculturalism, including fairer legal assistance to refugees. All up we have almost doubled the amount of funding for multicultural services in two years, and I think that is something to be incredibly proud of. Dandenong is the most multicultural electorate in Victoria, with over 60 per cent of my community having been born overseas, and many of these people are from refugee backgrounds. I am very proud to be a

part of a government that works to remove the barriers to a quality education for these people and a government that is acting to create opportunity and level the playing field.

Despite the attempts of those opposite to claim law and order as their domain, we know that this is just hubris with no factual basis whatsoever. We heard our new police minister speak recently in this place about Labor's record funding for additional sworn police officers. Over the past 15 years this has only been achieved with Labor funding. This year we have funded an additional 406 sworn police officers. I think that is also something to be very proud of. We have also committed \$19.4 million to continue and expand the community crime prevention program to provide grants that promote safety in communities across Victoria and prevent crime at its source. We have also invested \$32 million to expand the Drug Court to include a new Melbourne Drug Court. This will complement the existing Drug Court in Dandenong, a court that is widely regarded as a great success story in this state and one that, as a member for Dandenong, I get comments on quite frequently — and all positive I am proud to say.

Family violence is an issue that not only needed to be put on the agenda but needs to stay on the agenda, and our commitment to tackling it must be backed by meaningful action. We are doing just that. There is \$572 million in statewide funding over the time ahead to respond to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence — this includes more housing and crisis refuges, more counsellors, more prevention programs and more support for children who are the victims of family violence but are sometimes forgotten. This package will deliver 65 of the royal commission's most urgent findings. I think we can all get on board with the significance of that.

I would also like to touch on palliative care. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers, I have been doing some work in the past year in the end-of-life care space, and I have seen firsthand the incredible work of our specialist palliative care services. I am thrilled to see in this budget that the government has supported Very Special Kids to secure the ownership of its Malvern hospice, thanks to a \$3.45 million grant to buy the property, where it supports more than 90 families across Victoria who have a child with a life-threatening illness. Many in this place will have spoken to parents whose child has gone through Very Special Kids and will have been touched by those stories, as I was. In particular I have in mind a little boy called Marmaduke and his family.

Increasingly the claim that Labor governments are bad economic managers is being revealed to be exactly what it is — a bald-faced lie with no connection to reality. It is a mistruth and a distortion, plain and simple. Recently I was pleased to read an article by Stephen Koukoulas in the *Guardian*, who wrote:

... the ABS data shows that average quarterly GDP growth and average monthly increases in employment are stronger when Labor has been in government compared with the coalition.

Even recently dumped federal Liberal MP Dennis Jensen a few weeks ago described the coalition as 'the worst economic managers'. I think the same is true at a state level, and this budget — an Andrews Labor government budget — is a demonstration of great economic management. It delivers a budget surplus of \$2.9 billion 2016–17 and an average surplus of \$2.1 billion a year across forward estimates. The economy is forecast to grow by 3 per cent in 2016–17, which is above the 2.75 per cent forecast in last year's budget. Net debt is below the levels inherited by the previous Liberal government, and the unemployment rate has fallen from 6.9 per cent under the previous government to 5.7 per cent. It is projected to fall further in 2018–19. In our time in government we have seen 112 600 more people get into work, and 71 100 of those are full-time jobs. I think that is something to be very proud of. Those figures may be even greater for the last few weeks.

Needless to say, Victoria's AAA credit rating was confirmed within hours of the Treasurer's budget speech. It took credit ratings agencies no time at all to recognise the strength of Victoria's economy and, through this, the strength of our economic leadership.

This government has delivered more in two budgets than the previous government did in four. I think that is widely agreed by commentators across the state and across the country. We have kept to our values, and we have invested fairly and equitably. For that reason, it is a great Labor budget. It is a budget to be proud of, and I look forward to delivering many more just like it.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — It is probably no surprise that I am going to speak about the Country Fire Authority (CFA) in part of my contribution to the debate on the budget today. Obviously it is a fairly important topic. I am going to start with the State Emergency Service (SES). One of the very important roles of the SES is delivering during and after fires and storms. Its volunteers go out and protect the community. They help after floods. They do so much in our community, and a lot of the time, as we all know, it is thankless.

The Emerald SES has been very active in our community for a long time. Just prior to the last election its members approached the previous government and sat down and spoke about the difficulties they were facing in their current building, which is located just behind the junior football ground. It is basically a tin shed. They have four vehicles there, and they have a limited area for training. You would probably say it is quite dangerous in the limited area they have. They came to us before the last election and said they needed to start considering looking at upgrades and what they could do. We made a commitment to them of \$1.8 million for that upgrade.

Emerald SES members also approached the Victorian Labor Party. The local candidate, Collin Ross, came up and spoke to them and at that time said he would see what he could do and would try to work on that in the future. Since then, they have been asking for the Minister for Emergency Services to come out, and the member for Monbulk has kept saying, 'I'll work with you to try to get the Minister for Emergency Services out'. Now I suppose we are lucky because we have the Minister for Emergency Services in the electorate next door, so it will not be far for him to drive — across the road — to come up and visit the Emerald SES. I am sure that when he comes up there he will be able to explain to them why there is no funding for this building.

The Emerald SES members wrote in and said they had an issue in relation to bathrooms and trying to keep women and men volunteers involved, but instead of getting any funding to change anything, they got delivered a portalo. The portalo was put just outside that building, and they were told, 'Here you go. Here's your secondary toilet'. That does not actually suit what they need for the services up there for the men and women who go out and protect our community. I think it is vital that they get the funding for this in the future. We committed to it before the last election, and I will be sure to push through that we want this delivered in the next budget. Obviously it is not in this one. Again, it is a disappointment for the area.

I turn to talk about the Monash Freeway, which is obviously very important in my electorate, and I cannot believe it. We are actually lucky; we have the Minister for Roads and Road Safety at the table. Everybody wants to hear this one. The minister for roads, when we mentioned the federal government committing to a \$1 billion plan — \$500 000 million from it and \$500 000 from the state — said on the record that it was 'a bird-brained idea'. It is such a bird-brained idea that the Liberal Party has been pushing this for a fair while federally and said that it is going to commit to

that funding, but the state government said it is not going to do it. Now the federal Labor Party has come out and said it wants to put that \$500 000 forward and make it a \$1 billion project, but the state government still will not comment on it; it still will not come out and support it.

Commuters in my area are sick of it. The day we were putting down some notes for this speech was National Nightmare Commute Day — a day for people to go out there and talk about the issues they have in peak-hour traffic getting to and from work. On that day it was absolutely terrible to get onto the Monash Freeway. But that is normal; you can guarantee that any day. If you hop onto the Monash out in Berwick, it can take up to 2 hours to get into the city. We have further growth down there, with plans for new houses to be built. We have extra people moving into the area — we have 10 families per day moving in between Casey and Cardinia — and all these people are going to have to get onto a road, particularly the freeway, to get to work. We need to make sure that the road network is improved for there to be access and increased viability.

The current budget that the government has delivered for Monash Freeway, without the federal funding, will allow for an extra 2000 vehicles on that road per day. If what the government says is the case, that work is not going to start until 2018 and be finished in 2019 — if it is the case that it is going to start in 2018 and be finished in 2019. With 10 families moving in per day, the simple maths are that 60 per cent of families from one of those electorates and 70 per cent from the other will be using the freeway to get to and from work, so there will actually be 6000 extra vehicles on the road by the time the government delivers a project that will allow for an extra 2000 vehicles. So it will be 4000 vehicles behind. That is not planning. That is not looking to the future. That is not even a bandaid. That is not going to fix the issue we have down in the Casey growth corridor.

I call on the members for Narre Warren North and Narre Warren South to come out and actually say, 'We need this project delivered. We need a full fix for the Monash Freeway, not just something that is half — not a bandaid that is not going to fix it at all'.

The Casey Hospital is something that prior to the last election parties on both sides agreed on. At the time of the agreement the Labor Party came out and said, 'We will have \$106 million, \$107 million, towards the new Casey Hospital, and we will have it delivered in this next term of government'. It is quite interesting, because when we get to the budget — it is a \$106.3 million project — and see how much will be

delivered of \$106.3 million, there is \$2 million towards planning.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr BATTIN — Thank you very much. It might have been \$6 million, but it is only \$2 million towards planning, and the rest of it does not show in the forward estimates. Yet the government is saying it is now not going to be completed until probably 2020. That is not the commitment it went to the election with; it went to the election with the commitment it would be built and ready to go in that term of government, and now we see it has been pushed out to 2020.

This is actually the prime opportunity to show how poorly this government is working. Just across the road, St John of God is building a new hospital. It has gone through the planning stage, starting at a similar time. It is actually going to build a four-level hospital. It is going to have 250 beds, and not only is it going to be ready before 2020; it will be ready and open in 2017. In the same time this government will only do some planning to expand the hospital, St John of God will be up, ready to go, built and functioning. I think it is an absolute disgrace that this government talks about Casey Hospital when it has not even got the funding in the budget, or it says it is in some contingency further down the track.

I have mentioned Berwick Secondary College many times in this place. Berwick Secondary College in relation to youth suicide is something that we are all very cautious about; we all know a lot about it. It is sad to say that we have had a huge growth in the rate of youth suicides in that area. It is something the whole community needs to band together and make sure we have got the best assets as well as the best community to fight this and work with young people in relation to mental health. We have been lucky in the past that we have had organisations like headspace come down to the area. We have had programs run through universities and through local groups as well, getting young people involved in the community.

Berwick Secondary College has been asking for a health and wellbeing centre. It was committed to at the last election. We worked with the principal during our last stage in government when the school came to us and wanted \$1 million. We took the then Premier, Denis Napthine, there at the time when it was explained why it was so important to the community and what this particular centre would be able to do. It was not just for the students while at the school; it was also for them 12 months after leaving school, giving them an opportunity to go back and have somebody with whom

they felt comfortable and somewhere they could go and talk about other issues because of the suicide rate being so high for students in the first year of leaving school. No funding was committed, but the school has not given up. We are going to keep pushing forward with them, and we still want to see that delivered.

The only thing we have seen now is that obviously the state government has again ignored it; it will not put in the funding for this million-dollar project that is so important in my electorate. I will not go quiet on this one. We have got to make sure this gets delivered to the area, and we will make sure that it is delivered.

Ms Graley interjected.

Mr BATTIN — I note the member for Narre Warren South makes a comment. It is a state issue, and the state government will not do it. Do not try to pass the buck. The member for Narre Warren South should stand up for the community, not sit there and start calling out for somebody else —

Ms Graley interjected.

Mr BATTIN — Simon Curtis has done nothing for it down there — absolutely nothing. It is a state issue the member has ignored for all these years, and she continues to ignore it, and that is the problem.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr BATTIN — The member for Narre Warren South and the member for Narre Warren North are silent on it in this chamber. Maybe if they spoke about it in this chamber, that funding would be there. The members should not pretend to have a bit of faux anger now. They should actually go out there, stand up for it and bring it up in here — actually stand up and do it. They will not do anything.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr BATTIN — I will just get that right. We are talking about youth suicide, and you want to sit there and call me a loser? That is fantastic from the member for Narre Warren North. We will keep that on record, because that was a bird-brained idea he just came up with. Well done.

We also want to talk about emergency services in Victoria. Emergency service in Victoria is something that we all want to support. We want to make sure that going forward we have the strongest emergency services we can get. The CFA is going through a very difficult time at the moment, and we all know that. It is on record what is being done there. The disgrace is to

have an enterprise bargaining agreement that is going to be pushed through which will potentially cost \$600 million to \$700 million and which will hand control of the CFA across to the United Firefighters Union with 50 vetos in place, and those are not the comments from this side of the house; those comments are from people who are respected. Those are comments from the Crown counsel appointed by this government. These are issues that this government has created.

Then on top of that, for our volunteers, we heard the former Minister for Emergency Services today talk about the commitment made at the last election in relation to the presumptive legislation. While those opposite were speaking about presumptive legislation specifically for career firefighters, we were looking at it specifically around putting it in place going into the future and making sure it was equal for all firefighters, and we will continue to push for that to make sure that this government delivers that. This budget still does not deliver on presumptive legislation. The current Minister for Emergency Services, the Deputy Premier, stated at that time that this was going to be there in the first 100 days; the government was going to deliver it in the first 100 days. We have a statutory declaration saying he said that, but he did not do it. The next thing was that it would be 18 months. The government was going to deliver it in 18 months, but 18 months has passed and it is still not even listed in the budget. If the government is going to explain it now, where is it going to come from in the budget? It has not been stated anywhere in there and it is vital that this presumptive legislation gets brought in and it is vital that it is made equal for all firefighters.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr BATTIN — I will take up one of the interjections in relation to the funding. The funding over four years under a coalition government in Country Fire Authority (CFA) services increased each and every year above what it had been under the former government. Never once did it go below the amount provided in the budget of the Labor Party. The extra amount in relation to the bushfires royal commission for one year was for capital investment, and that is open for everybody to see. If members would like more information, I would be more than happy to circulate that.

The biggest concern arising from this budget is in relation to the enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs) across the state. Employee expenses are going to go up by \$2.8 billion. That is not for putting on extra police or

extra staffing; that is solely an increase in employee expenses.

We have a typical Labor budget. State taxes are going to jump by \$3.7 billion, public sector wages will be up 15.2 per cent, there is no funding for State Emergency Services (SES) capital works and Labor has broken its promises on presumptive legislation. Whilst all that is very bad, add to that that this government is now even removing something as simple and cheap as free entry for kids to Victorian zoos. How could you take that away? It is a small item that gives so much to families across Victoria. They could go to zoos at no charge at all. We had major events with a lot of young people coming at no charge to give people an opportunity they would not normally get.

I am going to finish by talking specifically about that EBA at a \$600 million to \$700 million cost to government. Where is that money coming from? Where is the \$600 million to \$700 million coming from that the Premier is signing up for with a cabinet-approved EBA for the CFA? In finding this \$600 million to \$700 million we will have two options. Either it is going to have to come from a fire services levy, which has already been put up by 7 per cent by those opposite because they do not know how to manage money, or as an alternative those funds will have to be found elsewhere from the CFA budget. If you have to find \$600 million to \$700 million over a period of four years, you are using about a quarter of the CFA budget to cover those costs, and that means a reduction in trucks, that means a reduction in stations, that means a reduction in capital equipment and that means a reduction in community safety. People have already gone on the record to express their concerns about the reduction in community safety.

The former chair of the CFA — the one sacked by those opposite, who has delivered and is passionate about CFA — has said that this EBA is potentially dangerous. He has gone on record and said that the cost will be between \$600 million and \$700 million, whilst the government is trying to say it is going to cost \$140 million to \$160 million over four years. These costs are a long way apart, and they need to be worked out. There needs to be an Auditor-General's review to look at them. Obviously those on the other side of the house do not have the competence to understand the budget at all. Obviously they do not have the capability to understand it. They need to sort this out and make sure funding is in place for the future. They need to have a review so that we can ensure safety. We need to make sure that Victorians remain safe.

The CFA is the lifeblood of the community and does so much for the community in my area. We must now stand up and respect CFA members. We must now stand side by side with our volunteers, and I invite those opposite to stand side by side with them and make sure an EBA that is fundamentally unfair does not go through. More importantly, it is an EBA that is simply unlawful.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — For the benefit of the shadow Minister for Making Things Up, I would just like to begin by quoting from the Bible — —

Mr Battin — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, members must be referred to by their correct titles. We have been pulled up on this side continually for that. If the member for Narre Warren South would like to refer to me by my correct title, it would be appreciated.

Ms GRALEY — I believe the member for Gembrook is the shadow Minister for Emergency Services. Is that correct? Yes. Thank you. The member might like to listen to what I have to say, because I am going to quote from the Bible for his benefit. There is one line in the Bible that I do believe in. It says about the Godly talk:

Not by their Godly talk but the fruit of their actions you shall know them.

Under the theme ‘Getting It Done’ this budget is an immense example of a government not just repaying the trust of the Victorian people in delivering on its election promises but also not wasting a moment — not wasting the privilege of government and not wasting the honour of serving — in improving the quality of life of all Victorian people. Now that the member for Gembrook has left the — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms GRALEY — He has gone to have a sooky la-la, as the member for Narre Warren North said, but I would just like to correct something that he did say. The member for Gembrook said that the government was stopping children from going to the zoo. However, I see a press release from the Premier announcing:

... that the upcoming 2015–16 state budget will provide \$5.8 million to ensure visits by children aged under 16 remain free on weekends, public holidays and state school holidays.

You really cannot believe much that the member for Gembrook has to say. I think my initial comments were quite apt.

As I have said, ‘Getting It Done’ is the theme of this budget, and it is certainly not just about talking but about delivering the things that matter to most Victorians. The things that matter to most Victorians, and certainly to the people of Narre Warren South, are around hospitals, schools, jobs and transport.

The budget papers very clearly show a new strength and a new confidence in the Victorian economy. When we had that lazy, crazy government from the benches of the Liberal-Nationals coalition, Victoria was competing with Tasmania at the bottom of the league tables, but now our economy is indeed the fastest growing economy in Australia. We are posting a surplus of \$2.9 billion, and residential approvals were at a new record level of \$21.3 billion in 2015. We have also had the largest fall in unemployment of all states since November 2014 and population growth of 1.7 per cent annually, the highest of all states and territories. That is because this government is making sure that Victoria is a place that people want to come to live and raise their families in. As the Treasurer said when he was delivering his speech, Victoria is winning again.

As the Premier, the leader of our party, is so fond of reminding us — and he does so rightly — we have the responsibility of governing for all Victorians, and that means we have to make the right investments. It also means that growth must be shared fairly across the state. As the budget papers show, one of the hallmarks of this budget is that every Victorian should be entitled to their fair share, and this budget certainly goes about that in the right direction.

I will give this government’s commitment in the health area as an example. Our commitment is that all Victorians will have better access to elective surgery sooner. The boost of \$167 million in the 2016–17 budget will mean 24 206 more shoulder repairs and 6764 more hip replacements. I do not know about the members opposite, but over the years I have had people continually come into my office saying that they wish they could have their hip replacement earlier. This government is making sure that patients do not live in pain but get into those surgery wards to get new hips. Hip replacement surgery is life changing for a lot of people.

This funding will also provide 6000 additional knee replacements, over 22 000 sinus and middle-ear procedures and nearly 20 000 more gall bladder removals. It is an astonishing fact that a lot of people want to have those operations, but at least they know they are not going to wait in pain and put stress and strain on their families until this happens. This

government has made an enormous commitment to reducing elective surgery waiting lists.

As we know, Casey Hospital will be getting a huge extension — an improvement, a modernisation. The member for Gembrook quite correctly recognised that Labor committed to it before the election, and the coalition members were Johnnies-come-lately in this space. They thought, ‘We’d better get down there and match Labor’s commitment’, and they did, but now they are out there criticising it, so you really cannot trust a word that the member for Gembrook has to say. As I said, we do have a very fast growing economy —

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Warrandyte police resources

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — My request is to the Minister for Police, and that request is for her to allocate additional police to the Warrandyte police station. I have raised this matter on a number of occasions on behalf of my community in the Parliament, by correspondence and through the petitioning of over 1000 local residents, yet this soft-on-crime Labor government will not listen. The latest crime statistics released just last week show an increase in crime of 10.9 per cent in the City of Manningham. This comes on top of this government’s closure of police stations throughout the state, a reduction of police numbers and a rise in statewide crime of 12.4 per cent from this time last year. Although the minister seemed able to direct 10 extra police officers to her own electorate, it is clear that the minister is playing politics in refusing to allocate police to electorates that desperately need them.

This issue is far too important to play games with. In recent weeks we have had two more break-ins to local businesses, with Thyme on the Terrace and the Riverview Cafe and Wine Bar the latest to suffer from this rise in crime. This comes after other break-ins at Cocoa Moon Cafe and Quinton’s Supa IGA. These crimes are affecting real people who are working hard in Warrandyte to make a living with businesses that add to the fabric of the community. Local police are doing the best they can and are supported by Warrandyte residents, but they simply do not have the resources to deal with this escalating crime. The minister should stop playing politics, acknowledge the communities

that need added protection from rising crime and send more police to Warrandyte.

Ivanhoe electorate small business

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — The action I seek is for the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade to visit the Ivanhoe electorate and meet with small businesses in the West Heidelberg industrial estate. As part of the minister’s visit I am sure that he could also attend a meeting with the economic development department of Banyule City Council. As a former resident of West Heidelberg of seven years and as a Banyule city councillor representing the Olympia ward in West Heidelberg for five years, I think that the West Heidelberg industrial estate is a very significant contributor to economic activity and employment in the Ivanhoe electorate. As part of that broader base in Melbourne’s northern employment and growth cluster, the West Heidelberg industrial estate would benefit from the minister’s visit, and in particular businesses like, for example, Chocolatier — a company that exports internationally to many businesses and that has many opportunities. I think that it would be great for the minister to come out and visit many businesses in my electorate that are providing great services in West Heidelberg.

The Banyule City Council does provide great support to businesses around economic development, and in meeting with those organisations and with Banyule City Council it would be great to hear about how the government can continue to support them in the investment that it puts into local government and local businesses in my electorate. There are many shopping villages in the Ivanhoe electorate that are represented by chambers of commerce. The mall in West Heidelberg, the East Ivanhoe shopping village, the Rosanna shopping village, the Heidelberg shopping precinct and Ivanhoe village are specific shopping villages in the Ivanhoe electorate that actually make sure that business prospers and that business provides great services in my electorate. We really are an electorate of several little distinct communities that provide employment, investment and job opportunities through businesses.

Back to Banyule City Council, I would be pleased to make sure that there would be opportunity for the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade to understand the economic development aims and goals of the community, the council and those different distinct shopping villages. There is great work and of course determination coming out of the 2016–17 state budget to cut payroll tax and boost trade funding, delivering more opportunities for growth, jobs and

investment. It is a budget that obviously provides payroll tax cuts for some 36 000 businesses across Victoria. With that payroll tax-free threshold, which is some \$650 000 over the next four years, there are great opportunities to come and talk to businesses in the Ivanhoe electorate that have continued to prosper. I look forward to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade visiting the Ivanhoe electorate very soon.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The action I seek is that the minister ensure that volunteers make the decisions on uniforms and workwear for volunteer firefighters. Schedule 20 of the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) requires that uniforms and workwear for all Country Fire Authority (CFA) operational staff must be agreed to by the United Firefighters Union (UFU). The minister needs to act to ensure that the UFU does not dictate what volunteers should or should not be wearing.

Volunteers are proud of their uniforms and wear them on special community occasions, including Anzac Day. Volunteers are as capable as anyone to offer advice on changes to uniforms and workwear. However, their concern is that this is an attempt to take volunteers out of uniform and further intimidate them into feeling like inferior firefighters. This is something that cannot be allowed to happen. Similarly, with workwear the concern is that there may well be two different forms of workwear dictated by the UFU, which will again send a message of disrespect or disregard and could even result in different levels of personal protective equipment. This also opens up the risk of a manufactured disagreement to prevent the issuing of new uniforms and workwear to new volunteers, thus restricting the volunteers' capacity to protect their communities.

Volunteers deserve better than this. They do not seek reward or recognition; all they have ever asked of government is to be respected. To have decisions on uniform and workwear made without consultation with volunteers or controlled to disadvantage volunteers is a clear act of disrespect by the Andrews Labor government. I call on the minister today to ensure that he acts to protect CFA volunteers from schedule 20 of the UFU EBA.

Nillumbik tourism

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and the action I seek is for him to visit the Shire of Nillumbik to see the amazing tourism assets that we have on offer. Nillumbik has great parks, like the Kinglake National Park, the Warrandyte State Park and Plenty Gorge Park; wineries such as Nillumbik Estate, Lovegrove and many more; villages and townships like St Andrews, Panton Hill, Diamond Creek, Hurstbridge, Wattle Glen, Kangaroo Ground, Eltham and much more; fabulous markets, including fresh fruit markets and the well-known and eclectic St Andrews market; fine food producers and also restaurants and eateries, such as the Windy Mile and many more — —

Ms Ward — A Boy Named Sue.

Ms GREEN — A Boy Named Sue, thank you — that was the one I was struggling for. Thank you, member for Eltham. There are many more throughout — —

Ms Ward — Piccolo Meccanico.

Ms GREEN — Piccolo Meccanico, that is right — we love our coffee there. All in all it is a fabulous offering from the Shire of Nillumbik, and there are great plans. I know there are some developers that are looking at breweries and distilleries and that want to be involved in expanding major events beyond what we have. We have the Hurstbridge Wattle Festival, the Eltham festival and many others, and there are iconic artist communities like Montsalvat and Dunmoochin. A lot can be done and there are a lot of ways we can market the tourism offering from the Shire of Nillumbik. I would welcome the opportunity for the minister to come and meet with the council to make it aware of how it can better link in with campaigns such as Wander Victoria so that the tourism businesses of the Nillumbik shire may benefit.

Mornington Peninsula Freeway sound barriers

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to make the Mornington Peninsula Freeway sound walls in the section between Safety Beach and Rosebud a funding priority. This is probably the only urban freeway in Victoria that has no sound walls — it has houses right up to it on both sides in just about all of the places, but it has no sound walls at all. As members can imagine, like any part of Victoria, the population is increasing, but in our area it has increased incredibly. Peninsula Link has added to

the freeway traffic, not only in terms of people commuting but also in terms of people visiting the area. More people are living there, so there are more people in the houses that used to be holiday houses, they are living there permanently close to the freeway. On the hours that traffic runs, residents tell me that it is quite busy up until midnight and that the traffic starts again at 5 or 5.30 in the morning.

Recently the section at Safety Beach was resurfaced, and some bright spark in VicRoads decided to put the roughest possible surface on it. The noise levels have gone through the roof on that section. Even though it is the newest surface it is incredibly noisy.

In relation to the Dromana to Rosebud section, after work by me and the community over the last number of years, we have already had VicRoads come out and test it. Most of the sections of that part of the freeway are above the acceptable noise level and should have sound walls. Instead of putting the walls up, VicRoads decided to trial, in a number of sections, different road surfaces which were quieter. That has cut the noise down, but VicRoads engineers have told me off the record that that really only makes a 5 per cent to, at best, 20 per cent difference in terms of a reduction in sound. For some reason the monitoring of it is over three years, which I think is just a stalling tactic. I would have thought one year would be the most — you are looking at a whole year's traffic.

The section from Safety Beach to Dromana, as I said, has just been resurfaced. I recognise the fact that VicRoads is going to rectify that mistake later this year. I also recognise the fact that VicRoads is going to work with the community and do the sound monitoring in that section. But obviously those two sections of freeway adjoin each other, therefore the decibel levels in one area are going to be the same in the other.

It is very, very important that VicRoads get on with that testing, because the case, I think, is already established and this matter is making life hell for those residents. They think they are being treated differently from all other residents in Victoria who live anywhere near a freeway. I think this is an urgent matter, a very important matter for the amenity and peaceful life of those people who live near the freeway — a growing number of them — and I ask the minister to make the testing and then the funding of the sound walls a priority.

Montmorency power substation

Ms WARD (Eltham) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I

seek is for the minister to brief me on what steps have been taken by Public Transport Victoria to address the ongoing issues experienced by local residents regarding the Stephen Street substation in Montmorency.

Over a number of years residents have contacted both my office and that of the previous member for Eltham, Steve Herbert, with concerns about issues such as graffiti and the illegal dumping of rubbish at the substation. I thank the minister for the support she and her staff have given in working through these issues over the last 12 months. I ask the minister to advise me what measures Public Transport Victoria is taking to ensure that ongoing graffiti and maintenance issues are addressed in a timely manner at the Stephen Street substation.

Dairy industry

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture. The action that I seek from the minister is that she meet with federal government representatives to plead for the dairy concessional loans to be more broadly extended to include dairy farmers whose short-term viability is now affected by the recently announced milk prices, which are below the cost of production, as well as to the associated business community.

Today Barnaby Joyce announced that if the coalition is re-elected he will establish a regional investment corporation to fast-track the delivery of loan schemes, highlighting the delays in the dairy concessional loans as a reason. It is disappointing that there has been a level of political conflict in the rolling out of these loans. While there is no doubt Murray Goulburn and Fonterra suppliers are the ones that are the most greatly affected, there is an enormous flow-on effect to others in our community.

I attended two forums last week convened by the Minister for Agriculture, one with representatives from local councils and the other with members of the business community who are impacted by the current pricing crisis affecting the dairy industry. Councils held concerns for their ability to attract and retain young farmers in the region: what security could they give them to invest in the district? Business owners spoke about worry for their own futures; they also held grave concerns for their local farmers, who are not just customers but often friends — such is the height of community concern for those in the industry.

There is no doubt that there are many in the rural business community who are already feeling the financial stress as a result of the dairy crisis and others

who are bracing for the economic downturn. These people range from those in the transport and stockfeed industry to veterinarians and our talented exporters who have already stopped sending product globally as a result of the oversupply of milk overseas.

These business owners were realistic about the expectations. In the immediate and medium-term future they expect jobs will be cut, and they will be cut soon, something our communities cannot afford. The milk prices are slowly being announced to the community, but they are all coming in lower than the price of production. I urge both the state and federal governments to extend their reach, particularly in relation to the dairy concessional loans, to those businesses associated with the dairy industry to ensure no-one slips through the cracks in this time of crisis.

Carnegie Primary School

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Education. The action that I seek is for the minister to visit Carnegie Primary School in the electorate of Oakleigh to meet with the leadership team and discuss how this government's latest budget commitment will transform this fantastic school. I would firstly like to personally thank the Minister for Education for working for the funding for Carnegie primary. He would recall that we have had many discussions about this, and the delivery in just the second Andrews government budget is outstanding. I would also like to thank the Treasurer, of course.

Just by way of background, weeks out from the election in 2014 the coalition announced, as it often tends to do just before an election, \$1.2 million for Carnegie primary if it were re-elected. The coalition's commitment had no time line; it was clear that these funds would only go a small way to meeting the longer term capital needs of the school, but of course any funds were welcome, even if the needs of other local schools were neglected during the coalition's four years of government. I was asked at the time by parents whether we would meet that commitment. I made it clear that we had already allocated \$5.7 million for Amsleigh Park Primary School and \$9.5 million for Glen Eira College, as well as making significant commitments to a range of other schools nearby the electorate of Oakleigh. Those commitments were fulfilled in the first Andrews government budget.

One thing I repeatedly said was that I would work directly with the school community, the principal and vice-principal, the school council president, Sue Harper, and parents to see what we could do in the future to meet their needs and get the best outcome. I

knew that Carnegie had a master plan, and it was something that needed to be fulfilled. I did not think it at all appropriate to provide a matching commitment weeks out from an election without a comprehensive evaluation of what exactly the school's needs were going forward. That would have been hollow and is not very good practice. I made it a goal to regularly meet and speak with principal Linda Jones, who is absolutely fantastic, and vice-principal Michael McCarthy, who is excellent, over the last 18 months to make sure that we could put the best case forward for the best outcome for this great school.

It was therefore a great thrill to be able to attend a school assembly at Carnegie in April to announce that in this year's budget the Andrews government would provide the school with \$4 million towards the completion of its master plan in full. As I said in this place in March last year:

While Carnegie Primary School offers a great education to local kids, there are always things we can do as a government to foster improvement.

I am really pleased that this government will be helping to foster that improvement. I look forward to the minister's visit to the school and to having some detailed discussions with the school team to make sure that we meet the future needs of this great school through this \$4 million in funding. I also want to thank my predecessor, Ann Barker, the previous member for Oakleigh, who started the investment in this fantastic school through the kindergarten on the campus and other improvements. I also want to thank the school council president, Susan Harper, for her outstanding leadership.

West Gippsland Healthcare Group

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that the minister arrange for the public release of the report on the review into the needs of the West Gippsland Healthcare Group and a subsequent transition plan. It is my understanding that both pieces of work have been completed, and their release will enable the appropriate planning to commence for the future service delivery of the group. The release of these documents will also facilitate further discussion and hopefully a decision on the construction of a new hospital on the greenfield site between Warragul and Drouin.

On 22 March a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, Harriet Shing, raised an adjournment matter for the Minister for Health on the same issue and indicated that the departmental review into the needs of the West Gippsland Healthcare Group was an election

commitment which had been discharged. However, an FOI request from the shadow Minister for Health for the same information, submitted on 3 May, was denied on the basis that the review had not been completed and no documents relevant to the request currently exist. Either the member for Eastern Victoria Region misled the Legislative Council on 22 March or the department is not being honest in the way it has dealt with the FOI request from the shadow Minister for Health. Either way, the Minister for Health must address this matter as people in the West Gippsland community deserve to know what the future holds for the delivery of health care in their area.

The staff and board of management of the healthcare group also need to be shown a little respect and appreciation for the outstanding manner in which they are currently coping with the enormous increase in demand for their services due to the continuing massive population growth in West Gippsland. Thanks to the professionalism of staff and practitioners, the quality of health care delivered at the West Gippsland Hospital is second to none. The board of management has been very responsible and has shown great foresight in planning for the future by purchasing the greenfield site in a perfect location between Warragul and Drouin, the two largest and fastest growing towns in the area.

All involved at the healthcare group and the community deserve to be encouraged, supported, kept informed of progress and not kept in the dark. They need to be given the confidence that this government is honouring its election commitment and, more importantly, is taking the appropriate steps to ensure the West Gippsland Healthcare Group can manage the increasing demand and continue to provide timely access to health services both now and in the future.

Geelong electorate family violence services

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — I call on the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence to join me in my electorate of Geelong to meet with local services that provide support to women and children experiencing family violence. The minister's visit will provide an opportunity for local services to discuss the government's reform agenda to help fix our broken family violence system and discuss what is needed to end family violence in Geelong. Geelong has a number of passionate and dedicated services, such as Minerva Community Services, Barwon Centre Against Sexual Assault, Bethany and the Geelong police family violence unit, and of course there are many dedicated workers on the ground.

I have every confidence that these services have the expertise and knowledge to address family violence issues in my community. I look forward to meeting and working with them and our great Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence.

Responses

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I will start from the bottom up. The member for Geelong raised a matter for the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence asking that she meet with local family violence services in Geelong.

The member for Narracan raised a matter for the Minister for Health seeking the release of a report into the needs of the West Gippsland Healthcare Group.

The member for Oakleigh raised a matter for the Minister for Education seeking that he visit Carnegie Primary School.

The member for Shepparton raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture seeking that she meet with the commonwealth to plead for an extension of the commonwealth dairy concessional loans scheme.

The member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport seeking a briefing on the Stephen Street substation in Montmorency.

The member for Nepean raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding noise walls on the Mornington Peninsula between Safety Beach and Rosebud.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events regarding a visit to the Shire of Nillumbik.

The member for Mildura raised a matter for the Minister for Emergency Services seeking that volunteers decide on uniforms for volunteers.

The member for Ivanhoe raised a matter for the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade about a visit to Heidelberg West small businesses.

The member for Warrandyte raised a matter for the Minister for Police, and despite the fact that his claims about the closure of police stations and reduction in police numbers are completely incorrect, I will pass all those matters on.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.22 p.m.

