

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Wednesday, 4 May 2016

(Extract from book 6)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

HANSARD¹⁵⁰



1866–2016

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

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

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

Speaker:

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER

Deputy Speaker:

Mr D. A. NARDELLA

Acting Speakers:

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier:

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier:

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

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

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals:

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals:

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Wednesday, 4 May 2016

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

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Mountain Highway, Bayswater

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition draws to the Legislative Assembly's attention the desperate need to keep the existing three-lane carriageway in each direction on Mountain Highway, Bayswater.

As part of the Bayswater level crossing removal project, the plan is to reduce the road's capacity by 33 per cent.

Mountain Highway is a busy thoroughfare for businesses, local families and those heading to the Dandenong Ranges and surrounds.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly require the Andrews Labor government to leave the capacity of Mountain Highway as it is and not remove any lanes.

By Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (1342 signatures).

Abortion legislation

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that because of the abortion legislation passed in Victoria in 2008:

abortions are allowed to be performed up to the point of birth;

babies in the womb who have reached the age of viability and older are being aborted;

it is not necessary for medical care to be provided to babies who have survived an abortion;

there is no obligation for medical professionals to facilitate the provision of access to appropriate services such as pregnancy support, counselling, housing, mental health and other such services for pregnant women experiencing physical or emotional distress.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council of Victoria support the Infant Viability Bill 2015 introduced by Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins which will rectify the problems with current law outlined above.

**By Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (1236 signatures),
Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (3908 signatures),
Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (1472 signatures) and
Mr WELLS (Rowville) (1542 signatures).**

Safe Schools program

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house their concerns that the Andrews Labor government is compelling all Victorian government secondary schools to have to implement the Safe Schools program. Furthermore, the petitioners are concerned that Victorian parents will be prevented from deciding whether their children should participate in the Safe Schools program.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the Andrews Labor government to stop compelling all Victorian secondary schools to have to implement the Safe Schools program. Furthermore, the petitioners request that Victorian parents should be allowed to determine if their children will participate in the Safe Schools program.

By Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (693 signatures).

Christmas carols in schools

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

Residents in the Morwell electorate draw to the attention of the house that the government has imposed the ban on singing traditional Christmas carols in Victorian government schools.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria ensure that the Andrews government reverses this decision and allow students attending government schools to sing traditional Christmas carols.

By Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (13 signatures).

Bus route 788

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the electorate of Nepean request that 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) (247 signatures).

Tabled.

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

Ordered that petitions presented by honourable member for Forest Hill be considered next day on motion of Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill).

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 Morwell be considered next day on motion of Mr NORTHE (Morwell).

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Community visitors report 2014–15

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing), by leave, presented government response.

Tabled.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Financial and performance outcomes 2013–14 and 2014–15

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) presented report, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.

Tabled.

Ordered that report and appendices be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Clerk:

Auditor-General — Managing and Reporting on the Performance and Cost of Capital Projects — Ordered to be published

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — Report 2015 under s 96

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Report on the 2015–16 Budget Estimates

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 — SR 33

EastLink Project Act 2004 — SR 36

Electricity Safety Act 1998 — SR 32

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 — SR 34

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983 — SR 35

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 32, 33, 34

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 24 May 2016.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

UnitingCare Harrison

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) — I recently visited UnitingCare Harrison at Gifford Village to meet the acting CEO of UnitingCare Harrison, Sharon Wolstenholme; Ted Smith from Croydon North Uniting Church; and other members of the support service. It was great to visit again and see exactly what this organisation does to provide support and assistance to people in Melbourne's east who are at risk of abuse, neglect or homelessness. It also provides free community meals and activities, just to name a few of its activities. Support services such as UnitingCare Harrison at Gifford Village are a great way to support our local community in times of need and are also a great way to bring residents of our community together. It was a delight to visit Gifford Village, and I look forward to supporting it in the future.

The Babes Project

Mr HODGETT — On another matter, last Saturday night I had the pleasure of attending a charity event in support of The Babes Project, and I rise to congratulate Helen Parker and Bec Gebert and the rest of the wonderful team for putting on such a successful evening, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

The Babes Project is a local not-for-profit organisation based in my electorate that relies heavily on the financial support of donors and the hard work of volunteers working tirelessly to provide support to mothers during the perinatal period. The Babes Project has supported and assisted hundreds of women in Melbourne to deal with their pregnancies, and because of its popularity there is a significant wait for pregnant mums to receive assistance.

The organisation is in much need of a new office to set up an additional support service in another area of Melbourne to keep up with the growing demand. I

again implore the Premier and his Minister for Health to take a look at the tremendous work of and assistance provided by those at The Babes Project and assist them in the acquisition of a new office, whether that be through grant funding or some other means of financial support.

Werribee electorate schools

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I am thrilled to inform the house of several vital school projects listed in the 2016 budget that will benefit my Werribee electorate. Manor Lakes P-12 College will finally be able to complete the build of its school, with \$10.9 million allocated for construction of stage 5. I met with the then principal, Jason Smallwood, in 2015 along with the Minister for Education, and we received a presentation and tour of the school grounds from student leaders at the college. We saw at first hand the difficulties encountered with the unprecedented growth in Manor Lakes and the pressure this has placed on the staff to adequately deliver their educational programs.

Warringa Park School will also receive funding for land acquisition and planning for expansion needed to ensure students with special needs are given the opportunities they deserve. Marie Hayes, the acting principal at Warringa Park, discussed with me the stresses on the school with the population growth in the area. This funding will reassure students with special needs and their families that they will be in a place that is adequately directed towards their educational needs.

Werribee will also be home to one of Victoria's 10 tech schools at the Victoria University campus. Secondary school students will be able to gain vital science, technology, engineering and mathematics — STEM — skills, expanding their opportunities with skills for the future.

These investments are providing essential support for school programs to operate effectively and efficiently and will assist our students to reach their full potential.

Anzac Day

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — Anzac Day again provided an opportunity to remember those who served and those who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. I say well done to the RSL on the dignified air of the services. In particular I noted the continued attendance of families at services and how well the RSL is handling the passing on of the torch to the next generation.

John Burfitt

Mr CRISP — Congratulations to John Burfitt on his efforts with a charity fundraiser for a local Port Arthur charity. As the 20th anniversary of the Port Arthur massacre was being commemorated and Red Cliffs was reflecting on those lost, John was raising funds for the Lever Jary Memorial Trust Fund.

Yelta rail turntable

Mr CRISP — For the Murray Basin rail project to deliver its full economic benefits to grain growers, GrainCorp is investing in handling facilities to load longer trains more quickly. One such site is at Yelta, which is at the end of the Mildura line. On the site of the Mildura riverfront there is a rail turntable which is currently unserviceable and is scheduled for relocation. It would make sense to relocate the turntable to Yelta in conjunction with the GrainCorp upgrade, and I call on the Minister for Public Transport to not waste a great opportunity.

Mildura Base Hospital

Mr CRISP — The Mildura Base Hospital is busier than ever. Recent data shows the hospital has had an extra 200 ambulance attendances, an extra 500 patients have been admitted and bed days have increased by 440. The hospital is very much in need of additional resources, and I call on the Andrews government to recognise this increased activity and fund extra beds, extra staff and extra services to cater for the growing demand.

Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — Last Saturday I had the pleasure of opening the Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens conference, which this year was hosted by the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens. The botanic gardens in Geelong are magnificent and are really a must see for anyone visiting Geelong. They are the fourth-oldest gardens in Australia, having been established in 1851. Proudly, in 2002 they were the subject of a major upgrade, thanks to a multimillion-dollar grant from the Bracks government, working in partnership with, amongst others, the Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens and its then president, Jayne Salmon.

I was pleased to have an opportunity to talk to Jayne on Saturday. She reminded me that the first conference ever held in Geelong for the botanic gardens was

opened by my son's grandmother in 1994, so I felt very special to be there on Saturday. The friends group has been a very active organisation since its formation in 1985, and I thank all of those who have volunteered their time over that period, including the current president, Alison Martland.

The Australian Association of Friends of Botanic Gardens is made up of 58 groups from right across the nation and provides an important opportunity for member groups to network and share ideas and information. This conference focused on the theme of botanic environments and their survival in a time of global warming and had numerous eminent speakers. I was pleased to be the opening speaker at the conference, because the Victorian government has a clear focus on and commitment to tackling climate change and understands the needs botanical gardens will fill in the future as we continue to focus on climate change.

Wantirna Primary School

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — I had the great pleasure to visit Wantirna Primary School and the new library that was funded and subsequently upgraded by the former Liberal-Nationals government. I pay tribute to principal Sue Fergeus and all the hardworking staff and students on the upgrade to this very important facility.

Ferntree Gully railway station

Mr WAKELING — I have had an issue raised by a blind constituent regarding the Ferntree Gully railway station. There are no tactile tiles at the station, which does not provide the assistance for our blind community with respect to utilising the station. On behalf of this constituent I have written to the Minister for Public Transport. It is self-evident that the minister needs to take action to upgrade this facility and make sure it is compliant for our blind community.

Anzac Day

Mr WAKELING — Congratulations to all those in the community who attended services on Anzac Day. I would like to congratulate the work that the Boronia RSL did, including Anne Boyd and the organisers for organising the Ferntree Gully dawn service at the quarry at Peregrine Heights. I also had the pleasure of joining Alan Tudge, the federal member for Aston, at the Salford Park Community Village for its annual service. It was a wonderful event. I congratulate all involved and thank members of the Knox community for their attendance at the many events on Anzac Day.

Country Fire Authority volunteers

Mr WAKELING — It is imperative that this government listens to the concerns of and protects our hardworking volunteers in Victoria's Country Fire Authority. I would like to pay tribute to the work of those in Ferntree Gully, Boronia and Scoresby. It is imperative that this government does what it can to support our volunteers.

Saul Same

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — Saul Same recently passed away at the age of 96. A true friend of Labor and a champion of the Jewish community, he will be sadly missed. An immigrant from British-controlled Palestine after World War I, Saul served his country with valour and distinction with the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II. He then built the iconic Glowave brand as a leading Melbourne entrepreneur. Over time Saul's generosity to social and community projects both here in Victoria and in Israel came to be recognised when he was awarded the Israel Goldstein Prize by the Keren Hayesod Foundation. A wise counsel to Labor leaders from H. V. Evatt onwards, Saul was a friend of anyone who supported peace, anti-fascism, workers rights and diversity. Having met Saul many times, including at the Elwood Shule, his reputation as a pillar of the community was richly deserved. His remarkable life will not be forgotten by all those who knew him.

Ree Izett

Mr FOLEY — I also sadly note that Ree Izett recently lost her courageous battle with breast cancer. Her contributions to the cultural and artistic life of this state, particularly to governments and community groups, are numerous and many, so they too will be long remembered. Ree's common thread of decency and commitment to social justice, cultural access and participation in our community will be truly and remarkably remembered. I extend my condolences, particularly to her long-enduring friend and sister, Maxine, and also to her many family and friends.

Saul Same

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — I would also like to pay my respects to Saul Same's family after his recent passing. He was certainly a great contributor to Melbourne's Jewish community.

Government performance

Mr SOUTHWICK — Victoria has a great deal to be proud of, with the state's booming population

growth a good indicator that this is the best place to live. However, Melbourne, the world's most livable city, which encompasses electorates like mine of Caulfield, is at risk of losing its global reputation because of the disastrous decisions of Premier Andrews and his hopeless Labor government.

The *Herald Sun* front page of 3 May refers to Victoria as a 'lawless state', a state that has a severe lack of leadership on law and order from this Labor government. Victoria is suffering from low police numbers, soft bail laws and having police pursue criminals with one arm tied behind their back. Many residents in my electorate of Caulfield have contacted me to express how worried they are about the large spike in crime and how scared they are of the gang activities the Premier has let blow out of control.

This government has been blessed financially with taxes from a large property boom, much of which can be attributed to significant overseas investment that in turn has created needed infrastructure jobs. The Premier's budget, which targets these overseas investors, is yet another massive hit by this government to the confidence of potential investors in Victoria. I am sure the premiers of New South Wales and Queensland have thanked him for the extra investment they will receive at the expense of Victoria. The stupidity of this Labor government will hurt the state's property market, jobs and the economy. The foreign investor tax also demonstrates the two-faced nature of the government.

Patrick Cronin

Ms WARD (Eltham) — Usually in these members statements I am celebrating my community; today instead I mourn with my community. Only a few weeks ago a vibrant young man, a 19-year-old, played a game of footy with his brother for the Lower Plenty Bears. Later that night he was hit by someone in a shocking and thoughtless act of violence, leading to his death a few days later. I speak today in recognition of the life of Patrick Cronin. I want to acknowledge the deep loss felt by his family, and I thank them — his parents, Matt and Robyn, his brother, Lucas, and his sister, Emma — for their thoughtfulness in donating Pat's organs to help others in this state. I commend their bravery.

I have been very moved by the way in which my local community and in particular the Lower Plenty Football Club and the Research Junior Football Club have helped our local community to process this loss. I thank Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School in Eltham for offering support to those who knew Patrick and his family and for its amazing display of old footy socks calling on people to 'Stop the coward punch'. I thank

these groups for the leadership and kindness they have shown in helping our local community deal with this terrible loss. Patrick was by all accounts a gentle and kind boy, much admired and respected. This was a senseless crime that tragically showed us that much work still needs to be done to prevent such a tragedy from striking another family.

Kerry Share

Ms WARD — Today I acknowledge the life of Kerry Share, a beautiful, kind, funny, smart woman with strong social values and a strong feminist backbone and Catholic faith. I thank her for her support of me and the Labor Party and for raising an exceptional son, who will continue to shine.

Art Town

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — Along with local residents, I recently joined the Art Town walk put on by the Chapel Street Precinct. Attendees were treated to a showcase of artists using Chapel Street as an inspirational canvas. The final results were impressive at the Art Town awards night at Chapel off Chapel with many impressive pieces of art, all inspired by Chapel Street. Shopping strips like Chapel Street are the heart and soul of local communities. Innovative, creative events like Art Town bring new life, new visitors and new shoppers. Congratulations to all artists involved, to Art Town producer Margaret Kernich, to president of the Chapel Street traders John Lotton and to all members of the committee for another terrific event.

South Yarra railway station

Mr HIBBINS — In last night's federal budget no funds were provided for South Yarra station. In question time in the Legislative Council the government confirmed that the federal government has not sought to include South Yarra station in the Melbourne Metro rail project. South Yarra residents have been left swinging in the wind by the federal government and have been taken for a ride by their federal member. The federal government must now at least allocate some of the \$10 million planning money for Melbourne Metro to do detailed design work for South Yarra station and include it in the Melbourne Metro project.

Occupational health and safety

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — Workers Memorial Day falls on 28 April each year. It is a day to mourn and pay tribute to workers who have lost their lives at work. Workplace fatalities and serious injuries

happen because workplaces are not safe, and all of those injuries and fatalities, or most, can be avoided.

I was saddened but proud to attend the workplace memorial service at the Victorian Trades Hall Council on 28 April and to stand proudly with working people, trade unionists and their families, the minister responsible for WorkSafe, the Minister for Finance, and many other Labor parliamentary comrades to pay tribute to those who have lost their lives in workplace accidents and to pledge to do what we can to make workplaces safer and to remember those who have been taken from us far too early.

Over the past year 24 Victorians as young as 21 have lost their lives at work. This figure, however, does not include the many more who struggle with daily living or die early because of debilitating injury or illness. It does not include those who have contracted industrial disease through exposure to hazardous materials — for example, asbestos and other carcinogenic chemicals, to name a few. Industrial disease is an insidious affliction and often one that the individual must fight all the way to get any sort of compensation or medical expenses paid, if they are ever successful at all. I believe as legislators we must do more to recognise industrial disease and ensure that employers make workplaces safe and take precautionary measures to protect workers from exposure.

Grampians Grape Escape

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — This year the Grampians Grape Escape celebrated its silver jubilee, attracting over 7000 visitors through the gates. This fantastic event showcases not only the natural beauty of the Grampians National Park but also our scrumptious local food, cooking featuring our premium local produce and talented foodies, amazing local wines and stellar entertainment — a perfect event to shop local and eat local. A big thankyou to all involved in coordinating this feature event for western Victoria, particularly Grampians Tourism, Northern Grampians Shire Council, the many major sponsors of the event and the local exhibitors that ensure each and every year is a great success.

Regional and rural roads

Ms KEALY — It is extremely disappointing that the Melbourne-centric Labor government has again neglected country roads in this year's budget, allocating a shocking 10 per cent less funding than the Nationals-Liberal coalition delivered in its last year in office. It is essential that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Premier understand the impact of

their ongoing cuts to country roads. Again I invite them both to travel to western Victoria and see firsthand the terrible road conditions that our local people must endure.

Warracknabeal education precinct

Ms KEALY — The Minister for Education has snubbed the wishes of the Warracknabeal education community and the recommendations of the Department of Education by scrapping the planned Warracknabeal education precinct. The budget allocation for Warracknabeal Secondary College may only be used to upgrade existing buildings rather than rebuild at the proposed education precinct site as planned. As a double blow, not enough funding has been provided to enable the precinct build to go ahead — a very frustrating and unfair situation for the school community to have to decide between rejecting the money or turning their back on their planned education precinct. The Warracknabeal education precinct is a wonderful concept and should be supported by government to ensure the best possible educational environment is available to our country students. I urge the Minister for Education to revise the funding specifications for Warracknabeal Secondary College and immediately release sufficient funds to make the Warracknabeal education precinct a reality.

Saul Same

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I rise to acknowledge the passing of a truly special man who led a remarkable life. Saul Same, who was also acknowledged in the house yesterday by the member for Essendon and today by the member for Albert Park, was a remarkable man. He was a successful businessman, known for the Glowave brand that was a well-known Australian and international shirt company. He was also a philanthropist and a long-time supporter of the Labor Party through good times and bad. Bill Shorten summed him up with this quote:

Saul dined with governors-general, he advised prime ministers and he offered four generations of Labor leaders the wisdom of his counsel and through it all remained a humble, courteous, decent man.

I am fortunate enough, along with the member for Albert Park, to have had the privilege of knowing Saul Same, although not as much as I would have liked to have known him. I met him when I was in Young Labor. I was fortunate enough to go to one of the events that he held with the Jewish community at his home — he would open his home for these events — and he treated me with as much courtesy and respect and time as he did the leader of the Labor Party at that time. I

thought the next year when I caught up with him that he would forget who I was, that I would go up and say, 'Hello, Saul, I am Marsha. I met you last year at ...', but Saul knew who I was, and every year we would reconnect and make contact. He was a special man.

Arthurs Seat Skylift

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — Next week, weather permitting, a heavy-lift helicopter will start putting into place the first pylons for the new Arthurs Seat sky lift. The sky lift is an all-weather, fully accessible, gondola-based lift that will replace the old 1960s-style chairlift. Construction of both the top and bottom stations is well underway, and the new lift will be well and truly operational by the end of the year. Despite the understandable objection of a handful of local residents and the completely mystifying opposition to this job-creating project by a few local councillors, the completion of the project is finally approaching. I fully support the action of the Minister for Planning calling in the final stages of the project. This will enable a smooth and professional completion.

Chris Dixon

Mr DIXON — On another matter, I would like to take this opportunity to thank members on both sides of the house for their concerns and support during my wife Chris's recent illness and untimely death. Chris has left a hollow in our lives that will never be filled. She does, however, leave a wonderful legacy in our beautiful children Julia and Martin, plus the enduring love and affection of two generations of children she has taught. The 500 people who attended her funeral were a testament to the love and esteem in which she was held. Chris now rests in peace with our daughter Monique. Chris, we love you to the moon and back.

Anzac Day

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I would like to give my thanks to the RSLs in the Ivanhoe electorate, to our veterans and to the community for supporting and acknowledging the commemoration services across my electorate in the lead-up to and including Anzac Day.

I was pleased to represent the Premier at St Paul's Cathedral for the statewide Anzac service in the lead-up to Anzac Day, as well as, along with the federal member for Jaga Jaga, the Honourable Jenny Macklin, to participate in laying a wreath at the Ivanhoe RSL service that Sunday afternoon with president Fred Cullen, OAM. We also had an Anzac Day service for Heidelberg RSL, and I am pleased to thank Tim Hogan for his work as MC and in arranging that service.

There was no service at the Simpson army barracks this year. That was a service that usually attracted thousands of people from my local community. It is unfortunate that that was not able to occur this year, but we respect the range of reasons that the Australian Defence Force was unable to continue with that service.

I would also like to thank the West Heidelberg RSL, which has had an almost \$2 million redevelopment of its facilities. It was a great celebration, as well as a commemoration, of our veterans there and the hard work that they do. The Cherry Street service, supported by the Watsonia RSL, was also very well attended in McLeod. I was very pleased to see the growing number of people in my electorate supporting those services and our veterans, particularly at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

Member for Nepean

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding eulogy given by the member for Nepean, Martin Dixon, upon the passing of his wife recently within his electorate. It was one of the most courageous eulogies that those who were in the congregation on the day had the privilege of witnessing. It gave a keener insight into the attributes of the member for Nepean. I wish him and his family all the best.

Sandringham Hospital

Mr THOMPSON — On another note, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding work of the medical staff and nurses at the Sandringham Hospital for the work that they do in meeting the medical needs of the local Bayside, Kingston and wider Melbourne communities. Work undertaken there is life saving. I have had land in my office in recent times multiple letters from people who have described family trauma they have encountered, and owing to the skill and service of members of the hospital, people have been resuscitated, revived and treated in ways that have enabled them to go on to lead productive lives. It is a most valuable resource to the community.

Sandringham College

Mr THOMPSON — I note that in the recent state budget that no funding was given to Sandringham College senior campus. That is an important matter that needs to be addressed into the future. Ongoing work needs to be undertaken to further develop Sandringham College at Holloway Road and at Bluff Road to enable it to continue to provide and support the work of outstanding teachers.

Nigeria schoolgirls kidnapping

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — It is just over two years since terrorists tore through the village of Chibok, Nigeria, and ripped more than 200 schoolgirls from their community in a violent rampage that shocked the world, launching the viral campaign #bringbackourgirls. Recently mothers, sisters, friends and aunts of the captive girls rallied in the streets to again bring to the world's attention that their girls are still missing. We know what that means — their girls are being raped and bashed, forced into marriage and conversion to Islam, even used to carry or detonate bombs; and also, in a horrifying act of misogyny, they are used as a recruiting tool to attract young men to join Boko Haram.

We also know that when these women escape or are rescued they are shunned by their families on return. They are often carrying children after being raped, or their families believe they may have been radicalised while in captivity. There is often no happy ending. Some girls are so overcome with trauma and depression that they are averse to receiving help from anyone. There are reports of Stockholm syndrome.

The Nigerian government claims to have almost defeated the ISIS-affiliated Boko Haram, so I ask: where are the girls? Why are they not where they should be, with their families in their village and back in the schoolroom? We know that Islamic militants do not like girls getting an education. As Malala Yousafzai said:

Let us remember: one book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world.

On the cusp of Mother's Day I ask all of us to raise our voices, send our prayers and ask the Australian government and all governments to do more. I cannot help but ask myself whether, if those 200 girls had been Australian or American, or boys, more than a social media campaign would have been launched to secure their freedom. This represents the world's failure to stand up to terrorism and stand for our civilisation.

Country Fire Authority memorial service

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) — Today, 4 May, marks the feast day for St Florian, the patron saint of firefighters. I thank members of the Country Fire Authority (CFA), both past and present, for their volunteering to protect members of the community and their assets in the case of fire across regional Victoria.

Last Sunday I had the honour of attending the CFA's annual memorial service, which this year was held in

Wodonga — and it is good to see the minister is in the chamber. This year's service commemorated 10 years since the deaths in the line of duty of Trevor Day, of the Campbells Creek fire brigade, and Rebecca Helwig.

Rebecca was a member of the Barnawartha fire brigade, which is within the Benambra electorate. Mrs Helwig had been a volunteer for 10 years, and her husband, Shayne, was also a volunteer, a lieutenant in the same brigade at the time. Their passion for the brigade and volunteering saw their three sons, Garry, Blake and Bo, join. I well remember the incident involving Mrs Helwig, as at the time I was an operational member of Victoria Police. Her death devastated her family and the wider community.

The CFA is an emergency service and is there to serve the community, protecting life and property. There are dangers involved, members realise, but I am grateful that memorial services such as that over the weekend are held to give all of us an opportunity to remember and say thank you to those who have paid the ultimate price.

I ask St Florian, the patron saint of firefighters, to continue to look over firefighters, both paid and volunteer, but maybe to also look over the Minister for Emergency Services at this time, as she is being placed under significant pressure and most likely bullied by the union and her own Premier.

Oak Park Primary School

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Oak Park Primary School community, which I visited on Monday of this week. The school had requested that I come along to present a new Australian flag, which I had organised, and I was able to do this on Monday. In presenting the flag to the students at Oak Park Primary School I discussed with them the importance of living in a fair, equal and multicultural society and community.

Also while I was there I was asked to present the student leadership badges and the school captain badges to Aleisha and Mitchell. It was certainly an exhaustive selection process for the students as to who would be this year's school captains. Each of the grade 6 students had to write a campaign speech. Two girls and two boys were selected, and they then had to present these speeches and the students had to vote. The successful candidates gave their speeches to the whole school on Monday whilst I was there, including to the teachers and to their parents. Their parents were certainly very proud, and I and the Labor candidate for the federal seat

of Wills, Peter Khalil, who was with me at the time, both questioned whether we had some future candidates in our midst.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Bryan Nolan, the school principal, and also the school council president, my good friend Rory Sercombe. This is certainly a beautiful school, which was redeveloped by the previous Labor government under my predecessor, Christine Campbell. Those opposite no doubt left schools in the northern suburbs to rot, but Labor rebuilt schools last time and is rebuilding schools this time.

Camberwell Hockey Club

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — On Saturday, 30 April, I had the pleasure of visiting once again Camberwell Hockey Club in my electorate for its Women in Sport day. It is the second time I have been able to visit Camberwell Hockey Club on this occasion. It also held very successfully last year, as one of the pilot clubs, the Fair Go, Sport! initiative run by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. These are both great initiatives, and I was pleased to be able to say a few words at the invitation of Rosemary Kelly, who heads up the women's program at Camberwell Hockey Club. I was very proud to be able to say that Camberwell Hockey Club is not only a great club in terms of its sporting excellence, but it also sets the finest example for clubs across the state because it uses the community spirit it has built up over many years to pursue inclusion, engagement and respect, and that is something to be admired.

Hawthorn electorate student leaders

Mr PESUTTO — Last week I ran the second of my student leadership series in my electorate, where I invite student leaders from schools in my electorate to visit my office to discuss their perspectives on leadership. I particularly wish to thank those schools that were able to attend at this time: Auburn High School, Camberwell High School, Scotch College, Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School, Siena College, Camberwell Primary School, Canterbury Primary School and Swinburne Senior Secondary College. It is always fascinating to hear what are very mature perspectives by young students, and it gives us confidence to believe that our future is in good hands.

Frankston electorate schools

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — McClelland College has received \$5.8 million to rebuild its school hall in the state budget, and for that I thank the Minister

for Education and his staff for seeing the desperate requirement of this school. The college principal, Amadeo Ferra, has said:

The McClelland College community appreciate the support of our local MP, Paul Edbrooke, who has been a fierce advocate for the people of Frankston. We now have the opportunity to create a sports facility of the standard that our young people deserve. This will assist us in helping to develop happy, healthy and resilient kids at McClelland.

I would really like to thank the school community for putting their trust in me to ensure that we work to a system of funding in Frankston, not just ignoring schools that need the funding and buying votes from others. This school consists of hardworking teachers, staff, parents and students, and they have all done a fantastic job to get this result.

Mahogany Rise Primary School also scored a commitment in this budget, with \$200 000 being committed to building new kitchen facilities to build on the capacity of the school's brekky club and provide more meals for kids that will perform better with full tummies. The Andrews Labor government has handed down some fantastic, meaningful commitments in Frankston, ensuring that Victoria is the education state.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: financial and performance outcomes 2013–14 and 2014–15

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am pleased to make a contribution this morning on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's *Report on the 2013–14 and 2014–15 Financial and Performance Outcomes*, which the committee chair tabled earlier today. Of course this is normally an annual event, but given that the Parliament was prorogued in October 2014 the 2013–14 outcomes were not dealt with until the installation of new committee members and the two years were done concurrently. So it is an atypical report in an atypical year.

What is also atypical is that there was a series of public hearings on the outcomes — I think the first in living memory and probably the first for many decades. So it has been a worthwhile exercise, in my view. There was one hearing per department, held in February this year. Perhaps the last thing this particular committee needs is extra public hearings; we certainly do enough of those. As a consequence, the decision was greeted with a distinct lack of enthusiasm, you would have to say, by some. But, as I said, it was a worthwhile exercise, and

certainly from the feedback I had both from members and from the public service itself it was productive.

I want to concentrate in my remaining time on some of the points in the outcomes for 2014–15. Firstly, I want to note the impact of almost half a billion dollars — \$497.7 million — in extra stamp duty, which was not expected when the budget was brought down. This is a huge increase, and I contrast that with the increase in the consumer price index for that year of 1.1 per cent. There was a total tax take jump of 7.4 per cent for the year, with a CPI of only 1.1 per cent, so it is certainly a healthy boost for a Premier who indicated that taxes would not rise on his watch. It is interesting that at the same time the government is demanding that local government tighten its belt and stick to CPI plus a little bit, its own tax take is jumping by more than three times the maximum it is allowing local government to raise.

There was a windfall. What was the windfall applied to? Was it applied to reduce the deficit? Had it been used for that purpose, the government would not have recorded the deficit that it did. Had it been used to pay out debt, debt would probably still have gone up but it would have gone up less than it in fact went up over the year. Unfortunately neither of those two things happened. The money was simply spent. It is unfortunate, though, that from the presentation of the accounts it is not exactly clear what it was spent on. We do know that \$166.4 million was set aside in the midyear statement for the Melbourne Metro and to get some work happening on the western distributor. There was \$20 million set aside for community service obligations and for TAFE. There was some \$20 million for the family violence royal commission and \$10 million for Infrastructure Victoria for that first budget year. That is a total of only \$216.6 million, so where the rest went we are really not sure.

The other issue I want to cover briefly this morning is that of reprioritisations. Reprioritisations are neither surprising nor exceptional, but my view and the view of the committee is that we need much greater transparency in determining exactly what things were reprioritised from and where the spending went to. It is certainly not easy. It is damn near impossible to determine from the accounts exactly what happened. In fact even when the departments were asked to provide further detail, while they provided some detail you still could not track the money through.

Section 4.5 of the report does address this issue, but it is important to note that the committee has recommended that the budget format be retained. Unfortunately the budget format was changed this year from a

departmental level back to an aggregate level. The former government reported the reapportionment at a departmental level. The current government reported it at a departmental level for the 2015–16 budget, but unfortunately it has now gone to an aggregate. I certainly hope the recommendation will be viewed in light of the former.

The issue is that budget paper 3 provides great detail on initiatives, but then it is open to departments to reapportion the money. We simply do not know whether that money has been reapportioned and the programs effectively killed off or whether they have been completed and there are further funds available. We do need greater transparency in that area, and I certainly hope that aspect of the committee's report is taken on board by the government.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian state election undertaken by the Electoral Matters Committee. At the outset I would like to thank the committee chair, the member for Brighton, and also the other committee members — the members for Pascoe Vale, Nepean and Morwell, and Fiona Patten and Adem Somyurek in the other place. I think the committee worked very well together. It was a cooperative group. In the main, when you look at the report it is probably fair to say that 99 per cent of it was agreed.

There were 57 submissions received covering a wide range of issues. We had four days of public hearings. We met with relevant stakeholders, including of course the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC). A lot of the submissions that we received did go to the work of the VEC. I acknowledge the commission's good work in the conduct of that election, but the recommendations in this report do note that there are some improvements that we think could be made. On all of those matters we were in agreement.

If members want to get to the juicy, potentially scandalous bit, they should go straight to chapter 6. The rest of the report everyone agreed on. Chapter 6 is where you will find the contentious bits. I think it is fair to say that the reason they were contentious is that the evidence we were provided with was not consistent. There were allegations of bullying, intimidation and impersonation, and in most of those cases the evidence that we were provided with was hearsay. It was opinion, it was subjective and it was often countered by other evidence with a contrary point of view.

An example of that is the evidence provided by the former member for Carrum, Donna Bauer, who provided evidence that the intimidation and bullying that occurred at the Carrum early voting centre developed to such an extent that the VEC was required to call the police on two occasions. They are pretty serious allegations, so it was prudent for the committee to then seek further information from the VEC in regard to whether or not complaints had been made and whether or not the police were required to attend. We did send off that correspondence and the response from Liz Williams, the deputy electoral commissioner, was that at the Carrum early voting centre the police were not called. When looking at the evidence in chapter 6, we need to be very cautious and bear in mind that there is evidence covering both sides.

There were two matters that were essentially not agreed upon by committee members. One was the public sector use of fire trucks, ambulances and uniforms. Recommendation 19 in the report is:

... the public sector code of conduct be amended to prohibit public sector workers using government property ... and that penalties be developed for a breach of this type.

That was one recommendation the government members on the committee did not agree with for the reason that there is currently a public sector code of conduct that covers issues such as impartiality and the use of resources. On reading that code of conduct it seems to adequately cover the field. There are penalty provisions within the code of conduct, and whether or not they were followed in the instances that were raised with us is questionable. The response to that is not to bring in more avenues and more sanctions when there is already something there that just may not be being used, so there was disagreement on that. We also thought that there may potentially be unintended consequences for public sector workers who may attend to vote either before or after work. Would it be considered campaigning if they are walking around with a how to vote flyer? Could that be interpreted as them campaigning? So there were considerable issues with that.

However, there were a number of issues that we did agree with and some of them we hope will lead to better election management by the VEC. There was an acknowledgement that there was the highest rate of informal voting during this election. We are recommending that the VEC continue to analyse informal votes in every district and region, to report upon those and to implement education campaigns in areas where there is high informality. The average of over 5.2 per cent informality across the state is too high, and in some areas it was over 8 per cent, so it is very

important that we do that. I commend the report to the house.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Ms ASHER (Brighton) — I wish to also make a couple of comments in relation to the inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian state election. The first comment I wish to make is on early voting. More than 1.2 million Victorians voted before election day — that is, 34 per cent of votes cast were cast before the election, which completely transforms the way election campaigns are now run. Of those, 26 per cent of voters voted in person — that is, 912 000 people voted in person — at early voting centres, and that was a 67 per cent increase compared to the 2010 Victorian state election.

I again refer honourable members, and I am sure I will have many opportunities over many weeks to speak about this report, to the chart which begins on page 29 and which points out electorates with very, very high percentages of early voting. For example, in South-West Coast over 49 per cent of the electorate voted early. In Niddrie it was 43 per cent, in Ovens Valley it was 46 per cent — some of these numbers are very, very high, and obviously parties and Independent candidates will change tactics around that. It is partly in view of that that the committee recommended what seems to me to be the obvious — that these votes should be counted on election night. It is absurd that we all hang around and there is this huge pile of votes that are not actually counted. Recommendation 3 is at page 41, and it is not just simply that these votes are counted; there are a range of recommendations around that to allow the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) to count.

Basically, as I said, these votes are not counted until the Monday, and this is all down to the Victorian method in which the ballot boxes are actually managed. As one person said, just change the way the ballots are cast. We are saying that if you vote in your home electorate, put the ballots in a different box and actually count them on the night. From my perspective, as long as the scrutineers know the votes are being counted, the VEC should be able to deliver that on the night. The VEC counted 2000 early votes — postal and in-person votes — at the last election, and in fact it made an offer to the committee that it could count the first week. We did not think that was particularly relevant, in part — again, if members look at the chart on page 38 — because the second week is when the bulk of the number of votes are cast. Something like three-quarters happen in that second week, so while we are very

grateful for the offer from the VEC that it could manage counting in week one, we think that the home votes should be counted on the night. I think it is a nonsense that these votes cannot be counted.

The deputy chair, who spoke before me, did make reference to chapter 6, which is in relation to behaviour outside booths. There was a finding on page 152 obviously indicating that intimidatory behaviour did occur outside the booths, though the committee disagreed on how to deal with it. There is a minority report, which obviously puts forward the coalition's view of this. Clearly the tactics at the last election were highly contentious. There were a range of people in uniforms campaigning, and whether or not the uniforms were fake, the Country Fire Authority felt very strongly that it was being impersonated by the United Firefighters Union (UFU). From my perspective, I thought it was nonsense that the head of the UFU said there was only one fire truck, a decommissioned fire truck, that went all over the state of Victoria for the election campaign. That is implausible, because those fire trucks were everywhere. Again, the recommendation has been touched on.

In conclusion I thank the deputy chair, the member for Yuroke. I thank also the members for Pascoe Vale, Nepean and Morwell and Ms Fiona Patten and the Honourable Adem Somyurek, members of the Legislative Council, for their work. I also thank the staff and those who made submissions and came to the public hearings; they helped us enormously. I thank the Labor Party for pairing for the member for Nepean, it was greatly appreciated. I wish the government well in its deliberations, and I hope that the government will implement all of the recommendations in this report.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I also rise to speak on the report, including the minority report, tabled by the chair of the Electoral Matters Committee. The report is obviously the combination of all of the work done on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 state election. As the member for Yuroke said in her contribution, and I would like to say again at the outset, this committee, whilst potentially open to a fair degree of partisanship in the matters that it considered and given the parameters of the inquiry, certainly conducted itself in a conciliatory and constructive fashion. It was a great pleasure to be involved in the work of the committee on this important inquiry.

I thank the chair, the member for Brighton, and the deputy chair, the member for Yuroke. I also thank the

other members of the committee who contributed to the work and the secretariat for the work it has done. In particular the member for Yuroke, as deputy chair, asked me to convey my thanks to the secretariat of the committee: Mark Roberts and his team. Like the member for Brighton, I would also like to thank those who submitted and contributed in all the varied ways to the work of our committee on this occasion.

The inquiry was obviously wideranging and did consider most aspects of the conduct of the election, from Victoria's electoral system and trends in electoral participation to early voting, methods of voting, community engagement with the electoral process, political campaigning during the 2014 election and an evaluation of the Victorian Electoral Commission and general administration of the election. Whilst much of this was not necessarily new, and it certainly was not particularly controversial, it was nice that most of it was able to be agreed upon. As such, I would like to concentrate most of my remarks on the chapters of the report relating to early voting and political campaigning, the associated minority report, and, I guess, the general administration issues in relation to the election that go to some of those issues.

As has been said earlier, and as I think we all know as candidates and as members of this place, early voting is on the rise, and in particular early attendance voting is on the rise. Obviously early voting typically takes the form of postal voting and early attendance voting. There were 912 000 people who attended an early voting place before election day in 2014. Whilst at the end of the 2010 election those of us involved thought that there had been a massive increase at that time, the increase at the 2014 election represents a 67 per cent increase in early voting by attendance when compared to the 2010 election. In some electorates, as the member for Brighton also indicated, that was well over 40 per cent of voters. In places like Niddrie, St Albans, Ovens Valley, Sunbury and Wendouree, well over 40 per cent of people voted in early attendance voting.

Ms Knight — They couldn't wait to vote for me.

Ms BLANDTHORN — They could not wait to vote for the member for Wendouree or the member for Niddrie, I am sure, both of whom are in the chamber with us at the current time. I do not think any of us here need statistics to tell us about the increase in early voting. Certainly in my district of Pascoe Vale it was also quite high. Early voting is important, particularly for shift workers and carers, and that is why in particular I would like to mention early voting today. They are two cohorts of people we need to provide for. Our recommendations provide for a period of around

two weeks — specifically 11 days, I think, is what the recommendation refers to. If we do not continue to provide that kind of accessibility in early voting, the people who will be penalised by that will be shift workers and carers.

I turn to the political campaigning chapter and the minority report — as the member for Yuroke said, ‘the juicy bits’. Political campaigning is as old as democracy itself. The thing that concerned me most about the discussion that we had here was that it felt to me, particularly as a unionist, that what we were attempting to curtail was legitimate political organising by people who had an interest in what the outcome of the election was based on their industrial needs and their industrial requirements. There is already a code of conduct for the way in which people in the public service need to conduct themselves. That we should put an extra overlay on that in terms of talking about elections, I think, is a limitation on freedom of association, a limitation on freedom of speech and a limitation on freedom of expression. It is also an unnecessary limitation and in some ways an impossible limitation, because whilst you might stop the person turning up and campaigning in uniform or in something that looks like a uniform, you may not necessarily stop them turning up wearing a T-shirt that —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomas) — The member’s time has expired.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Electoral Matters Committee inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 state election. The conduct at the 2014 state election could be described in a number of ways, and I think the committee used the word ‘robust’ quite often. As the member for Yuroke said in her contribution, when we conducted this review it was very wideranging; there was a whole range of areas which we inquired into. It is important that these inquiries take place because a fair democracy requires that voters are able to exercise their vote at every opportunity, and the way that people vote or exercise their vote these days has changed dramatically over these past years, particularly with the onset of early voting.

The inquiry did note some of the attributes of the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) and the current practices in place that work well. However, as other members said, it was also an opportunity for the committee to identify a number of areas of reform and improvement. What we subsequently did as a

committee was to come up with 23 recommendations and 6 findings. Again, the election campaign itself, which is covered in chapter 6 and is a key focus of the report, was indeed robust. My personal opinion is that a number of boundaries were pushed in terms of what is described as appropriate behaviour.

The recommendations themselves focus on a number of key areas, and chapter 3 covers early voting in detail. Recommendation 2 suggests a change to the by-election period of voting. We saw in some of the by-elections in recent times a four-week period to vote. One would have to say that the consensus among candidates and political parties and probably the community more generally is that four weeks is far too long, so the committee has recommended a two-week period.

As was said earlier, the increase in early voting has provided some challenges for the VEC in terms of its control and making sure it has resources. The counting of votes is also critically important. I think one of the frustrations for all is knowing that on election night in some cases only a small percentage of votes are counted, depending on how many people have voted early. The committee felt very strongly that we should be doing more and could be doing more to ensure that early votes are counted in a more timely manner. On election day and at pre-polls, where you do have long queues, it can be a difficult situation, particularly if somebody is aged or has a disability or otherwise. Some of our recommendations talk about better enforcing queue controls and at least being able to have people who are having difficulties come to the front of the queue.

A lot of work is described in section 5 about that engagement with the aged community, the culturally and linguistically diverse community, the visually impaired community and the disability community and making sure that they have every opportunity to access polling booths, whether they are pre-polling or otherwise. On reflection I note that the early voting centre in the Morwell electorate was blessed with good weather in many respects. If it had rained or otherwise, it was very much unprotected. We have to make sure that the VEC has accessible polling booths in those areas.

Campaigning was a key part of the committee’s inquiry, and we looked at ways to improve, enhance and find efficiencies and also at how-to-vote cards. We also looked at the behaviour at booths. The member for Brighton, along with the member for the Nepean and me, tabled a minority report. I think all would agree that it is simply unacceptable that we have bullying or

intimidatory behaviour towards volunteers and party workers who are just doing their job. As part of that we believe that the Electoral Act 2002 could be amended and enhanced to strengthen existing laws on those types of behaviours at polling booths.

In conclusion, I thank the wonderful chair of the committee, the member for Brighton; the deputy chair, the member for Yuroke; the members for Nepean — —

Ms Spence interjected.

Mr NORTHE — The deputy chair is wonderful too. I also thank the members for Nepean and Pascoe Vale along with Mr Somyurek and Ms Patten in the Legislative Council for their work. In addition I thank Mark, Nathaniel, Bernadette and Maria for their assistance.

Electoral Matters Committee: conduct of 2014 Victorian state election

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I also rise to speak on the Electoral Matters Committee report on the inquiry into the conduct of the 2014 Victorian state election. In particular I speak to finding 6, which states that the committee found that intimidation of volunteers and party workers occurred at the 2014 election. I think it needs to be acknowledged that in general people behave pretty well at polling booths, and people have a pretty genial kind of festive air to them when they participate in polling. Most people like to catch up with friends, neighbours and people they see passing by, and they do not mind a bit of friendly ribbing with the opposing candidate's volunteers as well. It is often a bit of fun. There are often lollies on tables and stories that get shared. It is usually not a bad place to be. In fact we have seen as much with this report. I think only about 17 of the over 400 complaints that were lodged had to do with the behaviour of candidates and their volunteers and teams.

What I want to speak about is that sometimes during elections people can be tired. They are passionate people, and they can be anxious about how their campaign is going. It is to be expected that in this contest of ideas, which elections are, there will be differing views that will be expressed at polling stations. These views should always be expressed with respect. What should not happen is physical harassment, jostling, nasty barbs and intimidation. What also should not happen is lying about behaviour or exaggerating reports of behaviour for political gain.

Every time there is a state election the usual suspects trot out the line that Labor volunteers are out there

being thugs, stealing signs and bullying. This is absolute rot. I have worked on Labor Party campaigns in the seat of Eltham for nearly 20 years, and I have never seen this behaviour by Labor Party candidates or volunteers. A former federal Liberal Party candidate spoke on ABC 774 during the 2014 Victorian election campaign complaining about Labor Party behaviour, and this was while my own parents were driving around the Eltham electorate replacing my garden signs, including a sign next door to my house that had my face burnt off.

We had a Liberal Party volunteer physically restrain my campaign volunteers from entering my campaign office, which was next door to the early voting station. This volunteer also physically restrained voters from entering my campaign office. This person was only sanctioned after repeated requests that the candidate himself sanction her when a complaint was made to the returning officer. We had a Liberal Party candidate physically jab and elbow a young female ALP campaign worker as she was handing out my how-to-vote cards. We had a bullish young man with a thick gold chain stalk up and down the street in front of the early voting station bellowing out campaign slogans as if he were selling discounted sausages at the Queen Victoria Market, intimidating many.

We had aggression directed by Liberal Party volunteers towards off-duty paramedics and firefighters, including a man standing quietly in the street with his materials and his young son. We even had the local Liberal candidate claim that an ambulance had deliberately rammed his car when in fact the ambulance had accidentally backed into an unmarked black sports car. The ambulance driver had no idea who the car belonged to. This was an attempt by the Liberal candidate to unjustly paint these people as thugs and bullies, and nothing could have been further from the truth. These were good, fun people to be around who were representing their community and going about it in a way that was polite and respectful.

I want to talk about those volunteers who stood at polling booths and tried to badger and provoke firefighters who were standing there volunteering their time to stand up for their community. They were telling them that firefighting did not cause cancer, that they were liars, that by standing there and asking for presumptive legislation they were absolutely wrong and that their friends who had died from cancer had not died because of their firefighting activities. I can only ask the house to imagine how hurtful it would have been for those firefighters to stand there and listen to that kind of rubbish. These people did not care what they were saying to not only Labor Party volunteers but

also volunteers for the Greens and volunteers supporting firefighters and paramedics. They were exceptionally rude.

But this was not everybody who was a volunteer for the Liberal Party. I had some great conversations with Liberal Party volunteers while at my booths. We talked about the history of Monash, and we talked about the state of the world. We had lovely conversations. There were good people, but bad behaviour needs to be called out and lies should not be told.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Standing and sessional orders

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — I move notice of motion 2 in my name in an amended form, which is:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended on Tuesday, 24 May 2016, so as to allow:

- (1) the sitting of the house to be suspended at 1.45 p.m.;
- (2) the Speaker to take the chair at 2.00 p.m., interrupt business, and the house proceed in accordance with paragraphs (3) to (7);
- (3) Legislative Council members to be admitted onto the floor of the house and to remain until the motion for a parliamentary apology for laws criminalising homosexuality and the harms caused has concluded;
- (4) the Premier to move a motion for a parliamentary apology for laws criminalising homosexuality and the harms caused and the Leader of the Opposition, Minister for Equality and one representative from each other party, including Council representatives, to speak on the motion; and members speaking after the Minister for Equality to each speak for up to 5 minutes;
- (5) the Speaker to put the question on the motion at the conclusion of the contributions referred to in paragraph (4);
- (6) the Minister for Equality to immediately move a motion to take note of the apology;
- (7) any business under discussion at the 1.45 p.m. suspension to be resumed at the completion of the take-note motion or when the take-note motion is adjourned.

In support of the motion I begin by thanking all parties, particularly the opposition, in the Assembly for the constructive way in which they have approached this issue. This speaks volumes for the cooperative manner in which this matter was dealt with in its original form on the last day of sitting of the last Parliament. The leader of opposition business, and indeed me in that term, together with the then member for Prahran, were

able in the best spirit and the finest traditions of this Parliament to arrive at an agreed position to reflect on the expungement provisions for homosexuality convictions that date back to pre-1984 in a move by, as I understand it, the then Attorney-General, Haddon Storey, and the then Hamer government.

What that bill at that time and what this proposition before us today is based on is that we saw unjust and prejudiced laws against homosexual acts prior to decriminalisation in March 1981. Quite frankly, these laws caused great damage and had lifelong consequences for not just the individuals convicted but also for their families and many of the communities surrounding them. Following the passage of that bill in the manner I have described and in the subsequent election campaign, the Andrews Labor government committed to a formal state repudiation of and apology for these discriminatory laws and the harms they caused.

This apology will follow the introduction of the expungement scheme for historic homosexual convictions which commenced on 1 September 2015 as per the legislation introduced by the former government. The changes to Victorian legislation recognise that homosexual sex between consenting adults should never have been a crime. Under the scheme now in place an individual can make a confidential application to the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation to have their conviction or finding of guilt for a historical homosexual offence expunged. But let us be clear: these laws are now and indeed prior to their removal from the statute book in 1981 were always wrong. They should really have never existed. They were unjust then, and they are unjust now and clearly a breach of human rights. Victorians who have been directly affected by these laws have unacceptably waited a very long time for justice.

One of life's great joys for many of us is growing up and experiencing the excitement of attraction and the wonder of emotional and physical intimacy with another. We come to know ourselves through our love for others. For this aspect of what it is to be human to be characterised as shameful and indeed illegal is really appalling, yet this is precisely what past laws that criminalised homosexuality did. The damage done by these laws is untold. We know that young lives were derailed; people were publicly shamed in newspapers; they were ostracised by family and friends; jobs were lost and studies abandoned; and the burden of a criminal record was carried for decades, affecting employment prospects, volunteering and community

participation opportunities and in many instances the freedom to travel.

Depression and anxiety, drugs and alcohol, and sadly sometimes suicidal incidents came in the aftermath of these convictions. We know that the very existence of these laws and the societal attitudes that made them possible led to these harms in and of themselves, regardless of people being convicted. A great price has been paid by a few for the bigotry of many. But in reality we have all been diminished by these discriminatory laws and our failure, as was originally undertaken in 1981, to seek the expungement of them.

There is no question that the greatest burden of these unjust laws was on those who suffered convictions under them and lived with that burden in silence and indeed in secret. As well as the cost visited upon those convicted, the impact on the broader LGBTI communities also needs to be acknowledged. These laws forced people who should have been able to participate fully in their own society to hide a key aspect of who they were and to conceal their sexual orientation from a hostile world in order to keep themselves safe. The cost to gender and sexually diverse Victorians because of these laws and the regrettable attitudes that made them possible is immeasurable.

It is time for the Victorian government and, more broadly, the Parliament and the people of Victoria to come together to pay our respects and apologise for laws that should never have existed in the first place. An apology may not erase the hurt and distress caused by these laws and their application, but we sincerely hope that it provides an opportunity for some relief, comfort and peace.

We cannot undo what has been done. We can, however, endeavour to remove any remaining discrimination and bigotry and reform laws and policies to support that. We are committed to this — it is a commitment we took to the last election — and I would like to think it reflects the finest traditions of this Parliament. Again, I thank the opposition for its foreshadowed support in one of many steps that will be taken to ensure LGBTI equality in this state.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — As the Minister for Equality indicates, the motion before the house in its amended form reflects a position that has been agreed both between the different parties and between the different houses. We welcome the fact that the government has listened and responded to the concerns that we raised about the form of the initial motion, and as a result the motion that is in the form now being put

before the house, which we expect will be agreed to shortly, will provide far greater opportunity for participation, both by members in this place and by members from the other place, and the presentation to the chamber of a variety of perspectives and views from different parties. The form that is being followed under the amended motion for this sitting and for the consideration of the motion is very similar to the form that was followed in the previous Parliament for the apology in relation to forced adoptions.

As the Minister for Equality indicated in his remarks, this motion follows reforms that were made with bipartisan agreement in the previous Parliament which built on the decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Victoria that took place in 1981 and provided for the expungement of convictions that occurred under that legislation prior to its repeal. As the then government made clear at the time, it is now generally accepted in the community that consensual sexual acts between two adult men should never have been a crime, and that was reflected in the legislation that was passed in the previous Parliament, to which the motion being contemplated today proposes to add. It is welcome that we now have agreement on the form of the motion that comes before the house, and we look forward to the contributions that will be made on this issue when the substantive matter comes up for consideration on 24 May.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — It gives me great pleasure to support the motion moved by the Minister for Equality. I also want to applaud the bipartisan approach that both the minister and the manager of opposition business described. For many gay men, or for men generally, this could not come too soon. As the minister very eloquently described, the state's and the Parliament's power in this area of people's lives has had untold impact. That is the rub of having a parliamentary democracy and a government — you can do things that oppress minorities, or you can do things that liberate them.

In the past across a whole range of areas we have unfortunately seen those people who have occupied these places doing things to oppress minorities and not always being conscious of it at the time. Again, as the Minister for Equality said, one of the most special things people can have in their lives is the sharing of love and intimacy with another consenting adult. In my view there is no room at all for the state to get involved in that space. It is horrendous to think that people who had consenting sexual relations ended up before a court, with lawyers or in police interviews, being penalised. It is almost like a parallel universe to me, perhaps because

in my time it was not something that I ever would have contemplated the state would ever have done.

As the minister described, this is a really important step. I am very proud to be part of a Parliament that is bringing both houses together. The power of Parliament to restore justice, even in a symbolic sense through this apology, is very powerful not just for those men but also their families. It had an untold impact, as the minister said. There was the emotional impact, the impact on jobs, the impact of criminal records and the toll on people hiding something they should never have had to hide.

This is a really important step to clean up and admit a huge mistake of the past and in doing that to set and reinforce the agenda of equality. That is the power of Parliament — to be able to do that. That is the power of politics — to change people's thoughts and perceptions of what is right and what is wrong through moves like this and through a whole range of other legislative actions that both sides of politics have taken over the last few years.

It gives me enormous pleasure to support this motion. I commend the Premier and the Minister for Equality for bringing this to the house today as an example of the change that proper thought, consultation and reflection can have. I know there are people on my side of politics and definitely on the other side who have changed their views on these matters over time. I think this is just another important step in reinforcing a new way of approaching things that are natural and intrinsic to someone's humanity. Again, it expresses the power of the Parliament to change people's perceptions.

I commend the Premier and the Minister for Equality, and I look forward to making a more substantial speech when the motion is debated on 24 May.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I also rise to support the motion on behalf of the National Party. In supporting the motion, I think it is very, very important to acknowledge the work that the manager of opposition business has done in negotiating to get a successful outcome for this motion. The original proposal to have upper house members called in but only have them sit in the gallery and not have them be part of the discussion was a mistake. Full credit is due to the manager of opposition business for renegotiating that so that there is an opportunity for upper house members to also make a contribution on this apology.

It is also very important for the house to be aware that we would not have the opportunity to make this apology if it were not for the very good work of the

previous member for Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown, who took on this particular issue as a mission and, with the support of then Premier Ted Baillieu, brought into this place the legislation that expunged those criminal records. So for both those people, but particularly for Clem — —

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr WALSH — Ted was gone, was he? I correct the record; it was Denis Napthine who was the Premier, but I know that Clem had a lot of support from Ted on that particular issue. I thank the minister for his correction.

I put those things on the record. We would not be standing here debating this motion and coming back in the next sitting week to have an apology if that legislation had not been introduced and passed with bipartisan support, as has already been said. Again, we have proved that with negotiation we can achieve a reasonable outcome. It is a pity that we had to do it and that the work was not done in the first place to have the lower house talk to the upper house before deciding on how it was going to be invited.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — I rise to speak on the motion for the suspension of standing orders for a parliamentary apology for the laws criminalising homosexuality. I welcome the changes to this motion, which will allow not only the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition but also the Minister for Equality and representatives of other parties to speak on the apology motion.

Such laws ruin lives and careers. They are discriminatory laws that criminalise love, sexuality and people for just being who they are. As other members have done, I acknowledge the work done by the previous government, the previous Parliament and certainly the previous member for Prahran, Clem Newton-Brown, to expunge these laws. I certainly welcomed that, and a parliamentary apology should follow. I will be speaking more on that when that apology comes.

As the Victorian Greens spokesperson for LGBTI equality, I acknowledge, as I am sure the Minister for Equality or any member who takes up the cause of LGBTI equality would acknowledge, that when you enter into this space, you walk in the shoes of giants — of all those people in the LGBTI community who have fought so hard for so long for equality. In our privileged, special position as legislators and parliamentarians, it is up to us to use our role, whether it be through legislation or through this apology, to

further the cause of equality. We will certainly be supporting this motion.

Motion agreed to.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

The SPEAKER — Order! I call on the member for Gippsland East — —

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Frankston is warned. The member for Gippsland East, on a substantive question.

Police resources

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — My question is to the Acting Minister for Police. At 2.30 p.m. on Sunday of the Anzac Day long weekend in Lakes Entrance three 14-year-old girls were confronted and chased by a gang of intoxicated men, estimated as being in their late 20s. While hiding from them, the terrified girls rang their mothers, who in turn rang the Lakes Entrance police station, but there was no answer because it was closed. The girls ran to an elderly man's house. He too called the Lakes Entrance police station, but again there was no answer.

This is the third time police resourcing in Lakes Entrance has been raised, so rather than quoting the act, buck-passing or giving more of his lame excuses, what does the minister have to say to these three girls and their families, who could not get police help at 2.30 on a Sunday afternoon of a long weekend in one of Victoria's busiest tourist towns?

Mr SCOTT (Acting Minister for Police) — I thank the member for his question, and obviously there is a very distressing situation for the member's constituents, and I certainly emphasise with their situation.

In terms of what I am doing as minister and what this government is doing, there has been an announcement of a \$596 million package to increase police resources. Obviously that includes 406 new sworn police, 52 specialist and support personnel, and that includes building upon the work that was done in the last budget, which includes 400 police custody officers, to free up police for the front line. Those deployments are obviously made by the Chief Commissioner of Police, as members opposite well know.

In terms of the contribution that can be made to this particular — —

Mr Wakeling — On a point of order, Speaker, this is a very important question. This regards Lakes Entrance, and the minister is yet to even utter the words 'Lakes Entrance'. He needs to provide an answer to the Lakes Entrance community on this very important issue.

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

Mr SCOTT — In terms of allocations of police resources, which is the important role the government plays in supporting the chief commissioner and the police, it is important to compare the record of the current government with the former government. In four years the former government in its budget allocated \$725 million — —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, a circumstance was raised by the member for Gippsland East that was directly in relation to an experience that three 14-year-old girls had, so in relation to relevance: the question was clear as to what the minister can say to these three 14-year-old girls and their families about their experience in Lakes Entrance. The minister needs to be brought back to answering that serious question and the example that has been put to him in this chamber.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair does not uphold the point of order. The minister is being responsive. The Chair is unable to direct the minister to respond in any particular direction; members of the opposition know that. The minister, to continue in silence.

Mr SCOTT — In terms of the resources that this government has put into the police portfolio, there has been in two years over \$922 million of resources put in. From the four years of the former government there was only \$725 million, and in terms of the allocations — —

Mr T. Bull — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance: if the current government can promise extra police to Barwon pre-election, it can make some commentary around Lakes Entrance now.

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

Mr SCOTT — In terms of the allocation of resources — and the determination of those resources is made by the police commissioner, as members opposite

well know — the government in two years has allocated more resources than those opposite did in four.

Supplementary question

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — Given the minister has just provided another lame-duck excuse, can he now stand up and give a guarantee to the families of these three girls, to the people in the town of Lakes Entrance and the many thousands of people who holiday there annually, that he will ensure —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Malvern is warned; the Chair will not warn the member for Malvern again. The member for Gippsland East is entitled to silence from all members, including the member for Malvern. The Chair is unable to hear him.

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Warrandyte

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair determines and adjudicates on the basis of what the Chair hears and what disrupts the Chair. The member for Warrandyte will withdraw from the house for the period of 1 hour. The Chair's rulings are not laughing matters.

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

Police resources

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — Given the acting minister's recent answer, can he now at least give a guarantee to the families of these three girls, to the people who live in Lakes Entrance and to the many thousands of people who holiday there annually that the police station will not be closed during future peak holiday periods so that people who are there can get help when they need it?

Mr SCOTT (Acting Minister for Police) — I thank the member for Gippsland East for his question. What I

can guarantee is that we have allocated resources to provide for 406 police officers and 400 police custody officers. I trust the police commissioner to make allocations in relation to protecting the community. I will commit to pass on the concerns to the commissioner that have been raised by the member and ensure that he is apprised of the concerns the member has raised.

Ministers statements: education funding

Mr MERLINO (Acting Premier) — I rise to inform the house of a new initiative arising from yesterday's federal budget. In response to the federal budget I requested that my department undertake an analysis of the impact on Victorian schools. This new analysis by the Department of Education and Training outlines the ramifications of the decision by the Turnbull government not to fund the Gonski agreement. This analysis, undertaken —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Wakeling — On a point of order, Speaker, I raise the issue of relevance. Sessional order 7 indicates that the minister can only advise the house of new initiatives, projects or achievements. Talking about the federal government's budget has nothing to do with any of these, and I would ask you to call on the minister to come back to complying with the sessional orders.

Mr MERLINO — On the point of order, Speaker, as all members of this house would know, the federal budget has a significant impact on the operation of Victorian schools. The new initiative that I requested was that an analysis be undertaken by my department, the Department of Education and Training, on the ramifications of the federal budget on Victorian schools. That is entirely appropriate and entirely in order with the sessional orders, and it is important to discuss these matters within the Victorian Parliament.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will call the manager of opposition business, who will be heard in silence. I have warned members on both sides and I have indicated that I will not warn them again.

Mr Clark — Speaker, this point of order raises an important issue about the interpretation of sessional order 7. It raises the broad question of whether or not asking a department to undertake an analysis is an initiative for the purposes of this sessional order. You will recall that this sessional order arose from a position brought to the house by the government saying that it wanted to end Dorothy Dix questions, it wanted to end

point-scoring and it wanted ministers statements to be informing the community about things that the state government was doing on behalf of the community.

If this sessional order is interpreted so that simply asking the department to prepare a report and give some advice to the minister can constitute an initiative, it makes a mockery of the sessional order and shows how little the government actually considers constitutes an initiative.

Ms Allan — Speaker, further on the point of order that has been raised, which I am urging you to rule out of order, the Acting Premier is being entirely consistent with the spirit of sessional order 7. I remind those opposite that they actually opposed the introduction of these sessional orders. The manager of opposition business went to the fact that these ministers statements had the intent behind them of informing the community. That is exactly what we are seeking to do here — inform the community about the impact of the federal government’s budget, in this case on Victorian schools. We can only do that if the Acting Premier asks his department to take action to do the analysis required to provide that information to the Victorian community.

What is making a mockery of this question time, Speaker, is the fact that members opposite do not want to hear the answer. They do not want to hear the outcome. They would rather gag debate on the matter.

Mr Pesutto — Further on the point of order raised by the manager of opposition business, Speaker, if the Acting Premier has the analysis, then sure, he can come back and alert the house to that. But simply asking the department for the analysis cannot be an initiative, and it makes a complete mockery of the promise the government made to end Dorothy Dixers.

Mr Pakula — Further on the point of order, I think the member for Hawthorn has just undermined the point made by the member for Box Hill. If the delivery to the house of analysis is an initiative, then the commissioning of that advice must surely be an initiative as well.

Mr Watt — On the point of order, Speaker, *Rulings from the Chair* of December 2015 actually leads somewhat to this point. On page 170, under ministers statements, government business, it states:

Ministers’ statements must focus on government business.

They may briefly mention ... previous governments, but must not concentrate on this area.

I would argue that previous governments should be seen in the same light as the federal government,

inasmuch as you can talk briefly about the federal government but should not concentrate on this area. The minister is clearly concentrating on the federal government and not the state government, so I would ask that you rule his statement out of order.

The SPEAKER — Order! I quote from sessional orders as adopted by this house on 12 February and amended on 6 August 2015. Sessional order 7 states::

... minister may seek the call to make a statement of up to 2 minutes to advise the house of new government initiatives, projects and achievements.

The Chair views it in the following way.

Seeking a review or analysis from a government department in relation to the federal budget and how it might impact on state affairs is a new initiative. However, this is not an opportunity to prolong that contribution and speak about the federal budget. Ministers should refer to what the government may do in relation to or in response to the federal budget. Doing so in passing remarks will be accepted, but not beyond that.

Mr MERLINO — This analysis undertaken by the Victorian Department of Education and Training shows that Victorian schools will be approximately \$950 million worse off in 2018 and 2019 and every single year beyond that. This new analysis by my department has broken down the impact to a local school level. The member for Malvern says that ‘this is actually a really positive outcome’. So I ask you, Speaker: is Northern Bay P-12 College missing out on \$4.1 million a really positive outcome?

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer to your previous ruling, and you mentioned that in passing reference could be made but that the substantive part of the response needs to be in relation to what the government is doing. We have 28 seconds left, and I have not heard anything in relation to what the government is doing. I ask you to draw the minister back to actually responding to what his government is going to do.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair asks the Acting Premier to come back to making a statement and to refer to what the government initiative is in response to the federal budget and in light of government review or analysis of it.

Mr MERLINO — In stark contrast to the federal Liberal government, the Andrews Labor government has delivered in both its budgets its full obligation under Gonski and the biggest capital program that this

state has ever seen. Malvern Primary School is missing out on \$500 000. How about Windscreens gives Malvern Primary School a call and tells them that that is a really positive outcome.

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

Mr Wakeling — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister just said he was quoting the member for Malvern in his contribution. I ask him to table the document.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Was the minister quoting?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair has asked a question of the Acting Premier. Was the Acting Premier quoting from a document?

Mr Merlino — I have produced the document.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Acting Premier has already provided a document.

Prison capacity

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is for the Acting Minister for Police. This week a man accused of stealing and setting fire to two vintage cars worth over \$1.5 million was released back into the community on bail because, in the words of magistrate John Hardy, today Victoria's jails are just too full. Is it not a fact that with crime rising —

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr GUY — I wouldn't victim blame any more 14-year-old girls, Don.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair can hear loudly and clearly the member for Melton. The member for Melton is a senior member of the house. I request that he stop disrupting while the Leader of the Opposition is on his feet asking a question. The Leader of the Opposition will start again.

Mr GUY — Is it not a fact that with crime rising and gang violence increasing magistrates are now being forced to release people back into the community because there are simply not enough places to put them in jail?

Mr SCOTT (Acting Minister for Police) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The answer to his question is: not true, and the prison system is not full. On advice I have, as of Friday the prison system had vacancies of 543 beds.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — The new juvenile bail laws are a farce. The minister is closing police stations, not hiring anywhere near enough police on the front line, and now offenders are being released back into the community because the minister has not produced enough new prison beds. With magistrates now saying the state's jails are 120 per cent full, what is the minister actually doing to stop violent offenders being released back into the community on bail because there is not enough space to keep them behind bars?

The SPEAKER — Order! The Acting Minister for Police to respond to the Leader of the Opposition. The Acting Minister for Police is equally entitled to silence, and the Chair will ensure that is the case.

Mr SCOTT (Acting Minister for Police) — The premise of the question is not correct. As I outlined in my earlier answer, the prison system is not full. As of last Friday the prison system —

Mr Guy interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition. The minister is entitled to silence. The Chair requested, if not demanded, silence for the Leader of the Opposition. He does the same for the Acting Minister for Police. The Acting Minister for Police, to continue in silence.

Mr SCOTT — As I outlined earlier, the prison system as of last Friday had vacancies of 543 beds.

Ministers statements: family violence

Ms RICHARDSON (Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence) — I rise to update the house on the government's initiative to deliver a 10-year plan to end the harm of family violence. The development of this plan will be one of the key tasks to be undertaken by the new Family Violence Steering Committee and the Victim Survivors Advisory Council, led by Rosie Batty. In keeping with recommendation 187 of the royal commission, we will release this plan later this year. But we know that plans and good intentions are not enough to end the harm of family violence. That is why we have announced \$572 million as an initial investment and to begin the implementation of 65 of the 227 recommendations.

Ending the harm of family violence here in Victoria enjoys bipartisan support, but family violence does not end at the border. It has rightly been described as a national crisis and a national disgrace. Changing attitudes and the status of women is going to take time, and it is going to require a dedicated effort from all governments — local, state and federal — and from all leaders of all political persuasions. That is why many in the sector are disappointed at the minimal investment for family violence provided in last night's federal budget towards the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*.

There was much anticipation that the \$100 million investment announced by the new Prime Minister in September last year would mark a turning point in federal government investment. However, only \$110 million was added to the commonwealth's effort. An average investment of \$36 million over three years for the whole of Australia falls well short and in fact barely covers the cost of the current family violence national advertising campaign, so it is hard to see how many of the national plan's initiatives will actually be delivered by this investment.

Actions always speak louder than words. That is why we are not waiting for our 10-year plan; we are making significant investments now. Moreover, our 10-year plan will be delivered alongside further significant investments in family violence, because we know we need to walk the talk on family violence.

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Section 6F of the Country Fire Authority Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Act 2011 states:

The Parliament recognises that the authority is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

Why is the minister still refusing to rule out the United Firefighters Union's (UFU) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) demands, which directly contravene this act, such as giving the UFU power of veto over Country Fire Authority (CFA) management decisions —

Mr Edbrooke interjected.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Frankston

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

Honourable member for Frankston withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — Why is the minister still refusing to rule out UFU demands such as giving the UFU power of veto over CFA management decisions, removing the authority of volunteers to direct paid staff during operations and mandating seven career firefighters to be at every event before any volunteer can respond?

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — Certainly this Andrews Labor government does respect the objects of the act. It respects the incredible work that our firefighters do right across this state. Unlike those opposite, we did not cut tens of millions of dollars from our fire services. We did not say there was no link between firefighting and cancer. And because we have respect for the objects of the act and because we have respect for our paid and volunteer firefighters, any agreement that is reached will make sure that that respect is right through it and that both career and volunteer firefighters are looked after.

Honourable members interjecting.

Supplementary question

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — The minister voted to support the 2011 amendment to enshrine the volunteer charter into the CFA act. Will the minister now guarantee to Victoria's 60 000 CFA volunteers that she would prefer to resign than sign up to a UFU EBA demand that directly contravenes the volunteer charter?

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — I, like every one of my colleagues, am very proud of the volunteer charter. We are very proud of the work our volunteers do. The Premier, the Acting Premier, all of the cabinet and the members are very proud of the work that our volunteers do, and we will

make sure that there will be no agreement that does not respect their work.

Mr Battin interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook is warned. The member for Gembrook had an opportunity to ask a question of the minister. The minister responded. She is entitled to silence.

Ministers statements: youth employment

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I rise to inform the house of two initiatives being taken by the Andrews government in response to the Turnbull government's latest budget and its effect on young Victorian workers. These initiatives include writing to the federal Minister for Employment expressing this government's concern in relation to a new pathway program that was announced in the budget. This new scheme will pay young workers \$4 an hour. I have also asked my industrial relations department to investigate the impacts of this policy on Victorian workers, particularly those earning minimum wages and those young Victorian workers currently employed on junior rates.

In the federal budget last night the Liberals announced a new scheme where young workers who apply for a welfare payment can work 15 to 20 hours per week and receive \$4 an hour. This scheme exploits young workers and undercuts the minimum wage in Victoria. This program is aimed at unemployed people under 25 who apply for any kind of welfare payment.

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to your ruling on a previous statement that was made — that is, in passing, reference can be made to the federal budget, but the substance of the statement has to be the initiatives that are being undertaken and what the government is doing. That is not what is happening at the moment and I ask you to draw the minister back to making sure that the substance of her statement is about what the state government is doing.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, it is entirely appropriate for the Minister for Industrial Relations to provide to the house an analysis of the impact of the federal budget on young people in Victoria. It is interesting that the Liberals opposite would rather stand up for their federal Liberal mates than young people in Victoria. As the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence has already outlined to the house, and indeed the Acting Premier, you have provided the capacity for this information to be

provided to the house in previous statements, and I ask you to rule in that consistent way.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, I support the point made by the member for Ringwood. The minister has had ample opportunity to outline the situation, as she perceives it, to the house. She must now proceed to inform the house and the community of what her government intends to do about the situation that she has been outlining.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ferntree Gully!

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker — —

The SPEAKER — Order! I have not called the Attorney-General yet. The member for Hawthorn should allow the Attorney-General to take a point of order in silence. I now call on the Attorney-General.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to two things: firstly, that the minister at the outset of her statement indicated two actions that she was undertaking — one, correspondence, and two, an analysis. But, secondly, I indicate that the minister's statement is taking an almost identical form to the previous statement by the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, to which no objection was raised by those opposite whatsoever.

Mr Watt — On the point of order, Speaker, you have already made a ruling on this in relation to the Acting Premier. This is exactly the same as it was for the Acting Premier, except for the fact that I would say the current minister presented at the start. Yes, I agree with the Attorney-General. But that does not mean that just because she makes a passing reference to something she has done at the start, she gets to spend the next 2 minutes talking about the federal government. You have already ruled. All I am asking you to do is to uphold your ruling on the earlier statement.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair has now formed a view. In passing, the Chair indicates that the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence was generally in order. Comments made in relation to the federal budget in passing are accepted. The Minister for Industrial Relations has made her point in relation to the federal budget. The Chair now calls on the minister to come back to making her statement.

Ms HUTCHINS — Australian Fair Work laws that apply here in Victoria state clearly that unless you are

receiving course credits, it is illegal for an internship to be paid below the minimum wage. That is what these policies are; they are labelled as an internship, but in fact they are nothing more than an opportunity for young workers — —

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is defying your ruling completely. I ask you once again to bring her back to stating what the government is doing. She has made her passing reference, as you have stated. You have called her back, and I ask you once again to stop the minister defying the rulings of the house. It is very inappropriate — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Acting Premier! The member for Ringwood, to continue.

Ms Ryall — That was very inappropriate of the Acting Premier. I do ask you to uphold your ruling and bring the minister back.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister should focus on the state government's initiatives in response to the federal budget. In the view of the Chair, the minister has made sufficient passing comments in relation to the federal budget. I uphold the point of order as put by the member for Ringwood, and I ask the minister to come back to making her statement.

Ms HUTCHINS — Earlier this year this government made a submission to the annual wage review calling for fair pay increases to ensure we do not create an underclass of working poor here in Victoria. The Andrews government called on the Fair Work Commission to take into account the increase in the pay gap between minimum and medium wages that is currently rising. As a result we are seeing more and more people working beyond the poverty line.

Mr Pesutto — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister appeared to be reading from documents. I ask that she make those documents available.

The SPEAKER — Order! Was the minister reading from a document?

Ms HUTCHINS — I was referring to my notes.

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

Social housing advocacy and support program

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — My question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing and is with regard to the social housing advocacy and support

program (SHASP), which works to prevent evictions in public housing by providing early intervention tenancy support. This program was subject to a funding cut under the previous government, and data obtained by the Greens shows there was a significant increase in evictions following these cuts. I ask the minister why the government has chosen not to restore funding to this effective service supporting public housing tenants to avoid eviction.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I thank the honourable member for his question, because as he rightly points out, what we saw under the previous government were record cuts to social and public housing in this state. There is no better source than the recent Royal Commission into Family Violence when it identified that social and public housing had over \$300 million ripped out of it by those opposite, and that man there is responsible — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on a point of relevance, I think it was a pretty straightforward question to answer. I thought I would raise a point of order simply because the member for Albert Park was shaking so much I thought he was going to trip over. I thought I would just give him the chance to recover given that he is shaking so badly; I am not sure he can stand clearly.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair reminds the Leader of the Opposition about taking frivolous points of order. The Chair does not uphold the point of order. The minister, to continue.

Mr FOLEY — The Leader of the Opposition reveals himself to be a little man in every respect.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr Burgess interjected.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Hastings

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

Honourable member for Hastings withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Social housing advocacy and support program

Questions and statements resumed.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair warns the Leader of the Opposition again. The Chair would rather not order the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw from the house. I now request the Leader of the Opposition to desist and to respect the rules of the house. The rules of the house also apply to the Leader of the House. The minister, to continue in silence.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — As I was indicating in response to the member for Prahran's question, as he correctly identified in his question, what we saw under the previous government was a record cut in public and social housing to the point where, for the first time in Victoria's history, we saw a net reduction — —

Mr Gidley — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to *Rulings from the Chair 1920–2015*, page 165, which states that attacks on the opposition are inappropriate in question time. If this besieged minister does not have any solutions to Victoria's housing problems, he should sit down and stop wasting the Parliament's time by attacking the opposition and breaching the forms of this house.

Mr FOLEY — On the point of order, Speaker, my answer was precisely in keeping with standing orders, because the honourable member for Prahran in his question specifically identified cuts delivered to SHASP by the former government. Cuts overseen by former minister Wendy Lovell in the other place for the first time saw a net reduction in social housing units in this state. That is Wendy Lovell's legacy to the people of Victoria and the public tenants of Victoria. My answer is perfectly in keeping with the question and the standing orders.

Mr Hibbins — On the point of order, Speaker, while I did refer to previous government cuts in my question, the substantive part of the question was why the government was not funding the service. I think the minister has given 2 minutes of background, and it would be reasonable for him to be asked to go back to the substance of the question, which is about why the government is not funding this program.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister was entitled to refer to previous government administration methods, but the Chair now upholds the point of order as put by the member for Prahran and requests that the minister come back to answering the question as put by the member.

Mr FOLEY — As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, this government, having inherited such a mess in public and social housing, now has a record investment on the back of the family violence royal commission. A half billion dollar commitment to deliver in this space a housing blitz fully funded for the next two years has been set out in this budget as an initial down payment by this government. That will provide a net increase not only in social housing units but also a thorough, wide program to make sure that we have head lease arrangements in place and that we have support for social housing groups so that those most vulnerable of Victorians, who those opposite abandoned, are cared for in their most vulnerable times, particularly those families and children fleeing family violence.

Supplementary question

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) — My supplementary question is: if the government will not restore funding to this critical service that prevents homelessness, how will the government support people with at-risk tenancies in public housing, in community housing and also in the private rental market?

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I thank the member for Prahran for his supplementary question because it gives me the opportunity to further explain to the house the fully funded, immediate down payment, two-year response that this government has delivered in the context of the invitation from the Royal Commission into Family Violence to deal with the most pressing issues around social and community housing.

We have, in our initial response to that family violence royal commission, indicated a raft of capital and program changes that will, through the social housing unit — —

Mr Hibbins — On a point of order, Speaker, I appreciate the minister is giving a broad answer about housing programs, but the question was specifically about high-risk tenancies and keeping people in those tenancies, so I ask that the minister be brought back to the actual specifics of the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair does not uphold the point of order. The minister was being responsive. Whilst the minister may not have delivered what the member for Prahran wanted, the Chair is unable to direct him to respond in a very specific way. The minister, to continue.

Mr FOLEY — As I was indicating before I was so rudely interrupted, what those opposite and the member for Prahran fail to appreciate is that the range of — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

Members for Malvern and Ferntree Gully

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Malvern and the member for Ferntree Gully will withdraw from the house for a period of 1 hour.

Honourable members for Malvern and Ferntree Gully withdrew from chamber.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Social housing advocacy and support program

Supplementary question

Questions and statements resumed.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — Unlike those opposite, who after 521 days of opposition have yet to actually ask a question in this important area, I thank the member for Prahran for his interest in this area. This government is committed to protecting all public housing tenants.

Ministers statements: hospital performance

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I rise to advise the house about another very important achievement of the Andrews Labor government. We know that on the back of last week's record investment in health in our state budget — and I could remind the house of a \$2.45 billion boost, including the largest

ever one-off investment in elective surgery — our hospital system has enjoyed some very positive and promising improvement in the performance data that was released last Friday.

More patients were treated in our emergency departments in the last quarter than ever before — that is, some 422 000 patients. Our analysis has demonstrated that we have been able to deal with that demand whilst actually understanding that many of those patients were at very, very high acuity with very, very complex conditions.

Remarkably when it comes to the number of patients that have been waiting in emergency departments for over 24 hours — and I remind the house that under the previous government that was a number that blew out to 1100 patients that were waiting for longer than 24 hours in emergency departments — that number has now reduced to just 30 in the last quarter, and that is the best result ever on record. I make the point that it is still too many, but this is an incredibly promising improvement.

We have reduced the waiting list for elective surgery in the last quarter by over 1000 people. We have treated more than 42 000 people — much better than we ever saw under the previous government. Whilst our government is making these significant improvements in our health system, with a lot more work to do, I make the point that we saw in last night's federal budget billions cut from health, a GP co-payment back by stealth, nothing for prevention and no investment in health capital at all — a very big difference between the approach of the Liberal Party and the Labor Party. We will keep investing.

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

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — My question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. As the minister responsible for public sector enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations, did the minister attend the Premier's meeting with the United Firefighters Union's Peter Marshall, or was she sidelined like the Minister for Emergency Services?

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I thank the member opposite for the question, but unlike the member opposite when he was Minister for Industrial Relations, this government is proud that it bargains in good faith, that it has an open

door and that it can actually walk and chew gum at the same time by being able to deliver a responsible budget and get great industrial outcomes in this state. I do need to note — —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, it was a very specific question about whether or not the minister attended a particular meeting. The minister is not allowed to respond to that question simply by giving a general dissertation on industrial relations policy. I ask you to bring her back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The question referred to EBA public sector matters. The minister is being responsive so far. I ask the minister to continue. The Chair does not uphold the point of order.

Ms HUTCHINS — In terms of setting the scene of industrial relations in Victoria, something that those opposite do not know much about, in coming back into government the Andrews government has committed to re-establishing Industrial Relations Victoria and a central bargaining unit, which have done an excellent job to date in talking with all parties across our public sector, bringing the parties together and negotiating. That is their role.

As their minister, I constantly meet them and get updates from them on how various disputes are going. I am very proud of the fact that only two weeks ago the Victorian public service (VPS) negotiations came to a head, and in fact 95 per cent of public servants in this state voted in favour of that VPS agreement. We inherited — —

Mr D. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the VPS negotiations have nothing to do with the question asked. I ask you to bring the minister back.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the minister to continue.

Ms HUTCHINS — Let me just put on the record, because this is only the second question that I have been asked in the portfolio of industrial relations by those opposite — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Industrial Relations is entitled to silence. The minister will continue in silence.

Ms HUTCHINS — Almost one-third of all EBAs in this state had expired when we came to government, and we have spent the last 16 to 18 months bringing

those back up to the plate. In amongst all of those agreements — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Questions and statements interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Member for Hawthorn

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn was warned earlier. The member will now leave the house for the period of half an hour.

Honourable member for Hawthorn withdrew from chamber

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Questions and statements resumed.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — Unlike those opposite, we are up to the task of negotiating with our public sector, with our employees and with our services. Of course the Premier is entitled to meet with whomever he wants. Of course the Minister for Emergency Services is entitled to meet with whomever she wants, and we encourage that. Our door is open. We have the capacity to bargain in good faith, unlike those opposite.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention to sessional order 11(2), under which you can determine that an answer is not responsive to a question. I submit that the minister was not responsive to a very simple question about whether or not she attended a meeting. I ask you to direct her to provide a written response.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the minister was giving quite a comprehensive answer, I would have thought, in relation to the heavy workload she has been tasked with in the industrial relations portfolio. I would suggest that the member ask his supplementary question so the minister can continue to provide further information before he jumps to this point of order.

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

Supplementary question

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — Given that the minister is unable to inform the house whether or not she attended a meeting, I refer the minister to the fact that her department was given an extra \$2 million in this year's budget to, and I quote:

... deliver a more efficient enterprise bargaining framework.

I ask: given that extra funding, does the minister's presumed absence from this meeting contribute to a more efficient outcome, or is the fact that the minister is not even turning up to a major enterprise bargaining agreement negotiation simply evidence this extra \$2 million was a waste of public money?

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations) — I am happy to talk on the \$2 million commitment we have made in the recent budget to the central bargaining unit. The bargaining unit has been a fantastic asset to this government, unlike when those opposite were in government. What did they do? They stood as a roadblock to productivity in this state. They shut down any genuine industrial relations negotiations that happened and dragged them out. We were left with a mess of industrial relations in this state, and we are getting on with cleaning up that mess and in fact putting investment into the productivity of this state. That is something we are proud of.

Ministers statements: infrastructure projects

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) — I rise to inform the house about the achievements of the Andrews Labor government in delivering the infrastructure that Victoria needs. It may have escaped the attention of those opposite that last week I brought down a budget — a trifling matter involving \$60 billion of state revenue. That showed this government's resolve to go it alone and to get it done. We decided to fully fund Melbourne Metro and the western distributor. That is \$2.9 billion over the forward estimates for Melbourne Metro and \$1.46 billion for the western distributor. That is the kind of investment that many suspect those opposite are incapable of.

I confess that last night I felt vindicated because it is clear that the Turnbull government has not had a change of heart. Last night what we saw was just business as usual from the coalition.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I draw your attention again to sessional order 7 and your previous rulings. The Treasurer is now proceeding to debate the budget of another parliament, another government, and I ask you to bring him back to

informing this house about his government's initiatives, projects and/or achievements.

Mr PALLAS — On the point of order, Speaker, this is about our achievements and the infrastructure that we are getting on and delivering. I thought perhaps the opposition might want to talk about a budget — not the Victorian budget; maybe, for example, the federal budget — but this is all about the expenditure and the achievements of this government, with or without the federal government.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Treasurer can make in passing comments in relation to the federal budget. I ask the Treasurer to continue making his ministers statement and primarily refer to state affairs.

Mr PALLAS — The federal budget does of course have a direct impact upon Victoria's share of national infrastructure. It comes in at 9.7 per cent as a consequence of this. In the face of that, in our budget the government has put in place its 10-year capital plan. That is to make the investment that this state needs to get on and do it, regardless of what a commonwealth government proposes.

The commonwealth's recent change of heart and proposal to change the national partnership agreement that this state is a signatory to will effectively require allocations of asset recycling funds into Melbourne Metro. Victorians will not be fooled, because this is money that is Victorians' right. It is not money that the commonwealth has any right to dictate on as to where it goes. This government will continue to fight for a fair share for Victorians. We will continue to do it despite the apologia that we hear from those opposite.

Mrs Fyffe — My point of order, Speaker, is in regard to ministers statements. I wonder if you could possibly provide some guidance to the house on what you consider is a reasonable amount of the 2 minutes that are given to each minister that can be used for referring to, commenting on or complaining about other jurisdictions such as the federal budget. Today we have had statements lasting almost 2 minutes, 1 minute and 25 seconds and 25 seconds. I would like some guidance for the smooth running of this session.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Chair will take that point of order on notice and continue to have discussions in relation to these matters in the Standing Orders Committee. The Chair will continue to have discussions in the Standing Orders Committee in relation to the interpretation of standing orders, including the standing order that the member refers to.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Ovens Valley electorate

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — (Question 7533) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. How is VicRoads permitted to demand a medical examination for a person to retain a drivers licence without giving a reason to the licence-holder? I refer to VicRoads and its blatantly belligerent behaviour toward Mr John Paola of Bright in the Ovens Valley. VicRoads demanded that Mr Paola take a medical examination to maintain his drivers licence.

Mr Paola was not given a reason why he needed to produce a medical report and has never refused to do this, but he clearly stated that VicRoads would need to pay for the medical examination if it could not inform him as to why it was required. VicRoads refused to pay for the medical examination, so the medical examination was not undertaken.

On 23 November 2015 VicRoads issued a suspension of Mr Paola's drivers licence. On 23 March 2016 he received a letter from VicRoads apologising for incorrectly requesting the medical examination and apologising for any inconvenience caused. Mr Paola requested compensation for legal costs and incidental expenses that totalled \$1134.50 and was offered a mere \$50.

Sunbury electorate

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — (Question 7534) My question is for the Minister for Mental Health. Last week's state budget provided \$356 million for better access to mental health services, importantly investing in the prevention of suicide. This announcement has been extremely well received in Sunbury, Gladstone Park, Tullamarine, Diggers Rest and Bulla. Specifically, \$27.5 million was allocated for new suicide prevention initiatives. Today I ask the minister when these initiatives will begin.

Nepean electorate

Mr DIXON (Nepean) — (Question 7535) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: what is VicRoads' costing of the proposed Mornington Peninsula Freeway overpass at Jetty Road, Rosebud? I understand by way of background that VicRoads has conducted a cost-benefit analysis of the overpass, which is a recommended option of its own recent investigation into traffic congestion on the southern peninsula. Obviously to

have done that analysis VicRoads must have an estimated cost for the project, so I am asking: what is that cost?

Macedon electorate

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — (Question 7536) My question is for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. I congratulate the minister on the recent announcement of the Wander Victoria campaign, a fantastic and whimsical campaign encouraging people from Melbourne to come and spend time in many beautiful parts of regional Victoria. In particular I encourage people to come to visit Daylesford and the Macedon Ranges. It was my pleasure to brief accommodation providers in my electorate about the campaign, but what I would really like to know at this stage is: how will the Wander Victoria campaign particularly assist tourism operators in my electorate?

South Barwon electorate

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — (Question 7537) My constituency question is to the Minister for Emergency Services, and it relates to Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club. Life Saving Victoria in 2014 provided a list of its priorities for upgrades to surf lifesaving clubs around the state. In order, they are: one, South Melbourne; two, Jan Juc; three, Cape Paterson; four, Wonthaggi; five, Brighton; six, Edithvale; seven, Anglesea; and eight, Portsea.

In the Andrews government's first two budgets the minister has overlooked Jan Juc, despite an ageing 50-year-old building and OHS issues too numerous to mention in the time I have. The club has over 900 members. Last season it conducted 19 rescues, 1324 preventative actions and over 50 first-aid actions on one of Victoria's most dangerous beaches. The coalition committed \$1 million for new clubrooms at the last election.

I ask the minister: why, despite Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club ranking second on Life Saving Victoria's priority list of clubs in need of upgrades, did she again overlook it for funding in the 2016-17 budget?

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — (Question 7538) I direct my constituency question to the Minister for Planning. I refer to the recently announced Living Heritage grants initiative in last week's state budget. As members may be aware, the state district of Essendon has a number of heritage buildings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so I ask: can the minister

advise what heritage grants are available for heritage buildings in my electorate?

South-West Coast electorate

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) — (Question 7539) My question is for the Minister for Emergency Services. In my electorate of South-West Coast I have over 50 local Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades and hundreds of committed CFA volunteers. The ongoing push by the United Firefighters Union (UFU) leaders in their demands for more power in their enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations with the government is creating growing unrest among volunteer firefighters. Long-serving firefighters have told me in recent days they are over it and just want to resign.

The current situation, where militant union leaders want to gain control for control's sake — this being reflected in the veto aspect of the proposed EBA — is nothing short of belligerent and is insulting to volunteers and their contribution. Only last week volunteers vented their anger over the UFU sending late-night messages via the emergency paging system. Surely pagers should be for emergencies, not union propaganda. I ask: when will the minister put an end to this issue and restore common sense so these volunteers can get on with doing what they do best in our regions and we do not risk losing this important grassroots safety net?

Bentleigh electorate

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — (Question 7540) My question is to the Minister for Education, and I ask: how many students are funded under the program for students with disabilities in the four secondary schools within the Bentleigh electorate? This is an area of significant interest to me. Southern Autistic School is in my electorate. I have had numerous discussions with the principal about transitions from the special school system to the mainstream setting. Currently I have an intern working with me on a report entitled *What Measures Contribute to the Effective Inclusion of Autism Spectrum Disorder Students in Mainstream Secondary Schools?* and the information that I have requested in this question is of vital importance to that report.

Burwood electorate

Mr WATT (Burwood) — (Question 7541) My question is to the Minister for Education. Ashwood School is a specialist school with a fine reputation in educating students with a mild disability and is situated in my electorate of Burwood. Helen Hatherly, OAM,

and all the teachers and staff do a magnificent job in somewhat difficult circumstances. Storage King, a business in my electorate, situated in an industrial estate more than 1 kilometre's walk away, has provided space on its site so the students can have a place to learn. The former Liberal-Nationals government understood that this was not a desirable situation and committed to capital funding for the school.

I note there have been two Labor state budgets since the election, and Ashwood School has been ignored on both occasions. I have met with the principal on a number of occasions and also with the school council. The specific question that I ask the minister is: when will the Andrews Labor government provide the much-needed funds to upgrade the facilities at Ashwood School to accommodate the students so they do not need to be taught offsite in a warehouse at an industrial estate?

Eltham electorate

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (Question 7542) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. What steps can be taken to improve Montmorency station and finally give my commuters a roof over their platform? We have just seen another record-breaking hot summer and another El Niño of unprecedented proportions forecast. Only this week we have seen wild weather that left a third of Eltham without power for 18 hours on Sunday.

Climate change is not just about increased temperatures; it leads to more extreme weather events. Winter is coming, and there is no doubt there will be many torrential storms. I congratulate the minister for investing \$141 million in upgrading the Hurstbridge line, which will duplicate parts of the track and help work out how to duplicate Greensborough to Eltham. I acknowledge that these improvements will take time.

In Monty, at the bottom of Were Street, lies a stretch of bitumen that masquerades as a train station. On this stretch of bitumen sits an aged, unused ticket office with a little roof and two myki machines. Montmorency residents deserve better; they deserve to be protected from the sun and rain.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Invitation to Legislative Council members**

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Equality) — I move:

That:

- (1) the Legislative Assembly invites members of the Legislative Council to attend a sitting of the Assembly in the Legislative Assembly chamber on Tuesday, 24 May 2016, at 2.00 p.m., for the consideration of the motion for a parliamentary apology for laws criminalising homosexuality and the harms caused;
- (2) the lower public gallery on the opposition side of the house be deemed part of the Legislative Assembly chamber and the Assembly standing orders be applied for the time that Council members are invited onto the floor of the house; and
- (3) a message be sent to the Legislative Council informing them accordingly.

Motion agreed to.**Sessional orders**

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — I move:

That the following new sessional order be adopted, to come into operation with immediate effect:

‘18 Procedure for a division

Standing order 164(1) is suspended and the following to apply:

When a division is requested, the Clerk will ring the bells for 4 minutes as indicated by the timer.’

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition does not oppose this motion, but I do place on record that the opposition is not completely convinced that it is necessary. It obviously arises out of some of the relocations of members from the accommodation that is colloquially referred to as the chook house to some temporary accommodation near the rear entrance to the Parliament building. Whether or not that requires an extension of time to come to the chamber may be debated, but it is not a matter that the opposition will oppose, given the government is moving this motion.

Motion agreed to.**LAND (REVOCATION OF RESERVATIONS — REGIONAL VICTORIA LAND) BILL 2016***Statement of compatibility***Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) **tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:**

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the charter), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Land (Revocation of Reservations — Regional Victoria Land) Bill 2016 (the bill).

In my opinion, the bill, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of bill

The bill will provide for the revocation of permanent reservations over four areas of Crown land in regional Victoria. This will enable the sites to be re-reserved for other purposes, support appropriate management arrangements, facilitate future use and development, or enable the land to be sold.

Human rights issues*Section 19 — Cultural rights*

The bill provides for the revocation of permanent reservations at Burke’s Flat, Campbelltown, Lake Charm and Walpeup.

It is proposed that some of these lands may be sold at a future date. As such it may be perceived to limit the opportunity of Aboriginal persons to maintain a relationship with that land. However, to ensure that these interests are not impacted, consultation has taken place with relevant traditional owners where a recognition and settlement agreement has been entered into (Campbelltown). Furthermore, prior to any future sale of land, any known prospective claimants under the Native Title Act 1994 will be consulted to ensure no loss of potential interest.

Section 20 — Property rights

Clauses 4, 6, 9 and 11 of the bill provide that, on revocation of the reservations, the land is deemed to be unalienated land of the Crown, freed and discharged from all trusts, limitations, reservations, restrictions, encumbrances, estates and interests.

These provisions could be perceived to operate to deprive persons of proprietary rights that are held in relation to the land that is the subject of these clauses. However, the provisions are not intended to abolish known rights, but, rather, give land the requisite characteristics of unalienated Crown land. There is a licence granted under the Land Act 1958 in relation to the land at Campbelltown to which clauses 5 to 7 apply, but a licence is not a proprietary right and, in any case, is preserved by clause 7 of the bill. As there are no proprietary rights held by individuals in land subject to

the bill, the bill does not limit the right protected under section 20 of the charter.

Hon. Lisa Neville, MP
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water

Second reading

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

The proposed bill will provide for the revocation of permanent reservations over four areas of Crown land. This will enable the sites to be used for other purposes or be sold.

In Victoria, permanent reservations over Crown land may only be revoked under the provisions of an act of Parliament. Acts for the revocation of permanent reservations are a normal part of government business, and Parliament has passed many of these acts over the years. Indeed, the proposed revocation at Walpeup in Victoria's north-west region was included in a bill introduced by the former government in 2014, but which was not debated prior to the 2014 state election.

Burke's Flat — removing a redundant reservation purpose

The bill provides for the revocation of a redundant permanent reservation and a restricted Crown grant over a site at Burke's Flat in the north-west region of Victoria, approximately 30 kilometres east of St Arnaud.

In 1890 the site was permanently reserved for the purposes of a 'Mechanics Institute and Free Library' and a restricted Crown grant issued to the original trustees for that same purpose.

The site was never used for that purpose, and no building was constructed on the site. A mechanics institute building was in fact constructed on the adjoining Crown allotment, but was subsequently demolished in 1994.

The Crown grant is also being revoked because there are no known successors to the original trustees to surrender the restricted Crown grant under the provisions of the Land Act 1958.

At this stage the status of the land will remain as unreserved Crown land until such time it is determined whether to sell the land, or to reserve it for another public purpose. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will manage the site in the interim.

Campbelltown — removing a redundant reservation purpose

It is proposed to revoke a redundant permanent reservation for a 'Site affording Access to Water' at Campbelltown, situated in the north-central region of Victoria, approximately 20 kilometres north-west of Daylesford.

The site was permanently reserved in 1875 for the purpose of a 'Site affording Access to Water'. The existing reservation reflects older methods of moving livestock, and the site is no longer used for that purpose.

Revoking the permanent reservation will facilitate the potential sale of the land to the adjoining landowner, who currently holds a licence over the land under the provisions of the Land Act 1958. To provide for interim management arrangements, the proposed bill provides for the continuation of the licence under its existing terms and conditions. The licence will be surrendered as part of any future sale of land process.

Under the Land Use Activity Agreement, which is part of the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement 2013, the Minister for Environment, Water and Climate Change must consult with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation before the revocation, and any subsequent sale, may occur. The corporation was advised of the proposed revocation in accordance with the agreement and raised no objections. Further consultation will be undertaken with the corporation prior to any future sale of that land.

Lake Charm — removing a redundant reservation purpose

The bill provides for the revocation of a redundant permanent reservation over a site at Lake Charm, approximately 15 kilometres north-west of Kerang.

The site was permanently reserved in 1910 for the purposes of a 'Mechanics Institute and Free Library'. A mechanics institute building was constructed on the site, but has since succumbed to the ravages of time and termites and was demolished in 1946. The site is now vacant and no longer used.

Trustees were appointed by an order in council dated 15 September 1911, but a restricted Crown grant was never issued. The original trustees are deceased, and there are no known successors to the original trustees.

At this stage the status of the land will remain as unreserved Crown land until such time it is determined whether to sell the land, or to reserve it for another public purpose. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning will manage the site in the interim.

The land was part of the area that was the subject of a native title claim by the Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa and Wadi Wadi peoples that was not successful. This does not equate to extinguishment of native title. Currently, it is not proposed to sell the land, but if it is considered in the future, then any prospective claimants will be consulted.

Walpeup — supporting the future of the former Walpeup Agricultural Research Station site

The bill provides for the revocation of redundant permanent reservations over six Crown allotments at Walpeup, 30 kilometres west of Ouyen on the Mallee Highway. These Crown allotments form part of the former Walpeup Agricultural Research Station (also known as the Mallee Research Station), which was closed in 2009. The total area of the site, including a temporary reserved allotment of approximately 6 hectares that is not part of this bill, is approximately 1040 hectares.

Since the closure of the research station in 2009 there have been a number of short-term occupation arrangements put in place, and a number of ideas put forward for the future use of the site, but there have been no sustainable long-term options for the site. This is in part due to the size of the site and the various public land values of differing significance to be found on the site.

There are a range of different public land values present on the site, including vegetation of high significance that may be suitable for further protection (primarily on the east side of the site), and other land primarily suitable for agriculture, and which may be sold (primarily on the west side of the site). The site also includes a large amount of built infrastructure, including a conference centre, offices, dwellings, and infrastructure associated with agricultural research.

Essentially, due to the history and size of the site there is not one single use or management arrangement that would provide for the future of the site. Rather, there are a number of arrangements that would achieve suitable outcomes. Revoking the permanent reservations over this site will give flexibility to facilitate appropriate arrangements for all of the distinct parts and values of the site.

To provide for interim management arrangements, the land will be temporarily reserved for 'public purposes' and the Primary Industries Committee of Management Incorporated will be appointed as committee of management. The department will undertake this process administratively under the provisions of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act.

The revocations at Walpeup were included in the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 which was introduced into Parliament by the previous government, but was not debated prior to the 2014 state election.

Conclusion

The bill provides for the revocation of four Crown land reservations which will enable future and appropriate uses of those lands, providing certainty to communities and affected individuals.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 18 May.

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Statement of compatibility

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, (the charter), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

In my opinion, the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

1. Overview of the bill

The purpose of this bill is to make a number of miscellaneous amendments to various acts. For the purpose of this statement of compatibility, relevant amendments include amendments to the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 to provide for the immediate suspension of the registration of a veterinary practitioner in certain circumstances, and an amendment to the Wildlife Act 1975 to enable the Game Management Authority to prevent a person who has committed an offence under that act from applying for a new licence for a specified period.

2. Human rights issues

Suspension of veterinary registration

Clause 16 of the bill inserts a new section 26A into the Veterinary Practice Act 1997 (the act) enabling the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria to suspend the licence of a practitioner in relation to whom a preliminary investigation is being conducted regarding the practitioner's health, until any investigation and hearing into the matter is completed. Under section 25 of the act, the board may appoint one of its members to conduct a preliminary investigation if the board believes the ability of the practitioner to practise veterinary medicine or surgery may be affected due to the physical or mental health, incapacity or severe substance dependence of the practitioner.

Similar provisions regarding suspension already apply in circumstances where a preliminary investigation is being conducted into the professional conduct of a practitioner.

Right to equality

Section 8 of the charter provides that every person is entitled to equal protection of the law without discrimination and has the right to equal and effective protection against discrimination. Discrimination is defined by direct reference to the definition of discrimination and the associated list of protected attributes contained in the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

In my view, although clause 16 of the bill enables the board to suspend a practitioner's licence while a preliminary investigation is being conducted in relation to their ability to practise due to their physical or mental health, incapacity or severe substance dependence, this does not amount to discrimination on the basis of the practitioner's 'disability' (a protected attribute). Clause 16 inserts new subsection 26A(2), which provides that the board must not suspend a registration unless it reasonably believes that the ability of the practitioner to practise veterinary medicine or surgery is likely to be affected to such an extent that to allow the practitioner to continue to practise would pose an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the public or endanger the health and welfare of animals. The basis for suspension is therefore the ability of a practitioner to practise safely, rather than any disability they may have. For this reason, in my opinion the right to equality is not limited and even if it is, any such limit is clearly justifiable under section 7(2) of the charter.

Right to fair hearing

Section 24(1) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence or a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing. The fair hearing right encompasses the concept of procedural fairness and may extend to disciplinary and regulatory proceedings where the ability to practise is at stake.

Clause 16 may affect a practitioner's right to fair hearing to the extent that the board can suspend registration without first giving the practitioner an opportunity to be heard. However, in my view this does not amount to a limitation on the right to a fair hearing.

The right to fair hearing is not absolute and unfairness must be assessed by reference to proceedings in their entirety. New section 26A(6) stipulates that upon suspending a registration, the board must immediately serve a written notice on the practitioner advising them of the suspension, the reasons for it and the practitioner's ability to make submissions to the board regarding the continuation of the suspension. The board must consider any submissions made by the practitioner and ensure that the investigation is conducted as soon as possible. Moreover, in determining to suspend registration, the board must reasonably believe there to be an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the public or the health and welfare of animals. This threshold will only be reached in exceptional circumstances.

It is therefore my opinion that there is no overall unfairness. To the extent that a different view is taken about this, I consider any limitation on the right to fair hearing to be reasonable under section 7(2) of the charter, by reference to the purpose of the suspension powers and the various safeguards outlined above.

Restrictions on making application for wildlife or game licence

Under section 25DA(1) of the Wildlife Act 1975, the Game Management Authority may cancel a wildlife licence in respect of specified birds or a game licence if the authority is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that (a) the holder of the licence has been found guilty of an offence against that act or (b) the holder of the licence has breached a condition of the licence. Clause 21 of the bill amends this section to provide that if the authority cancels a licence under s 25DA(1), it may also specify a time not exceeding five years within which the person may not apply for another wildlife licence in respect of specified birds or a game licence. This power is separate from the power to impose a criminal penalty for an offence under the act.

Section 26 of the charter provides that a person must not be punished more than once for an offence in respect of which they have already been convicted or acquitted in accordance with law. Section 27(2) of the charter provides that '[a] penalty must not be imposed on any person for a criminal offence that is greater than the penalty that applied to the offence when it was committed'. These rights are relevant to clause 21, as the clause enables the authority to impose further consequences on a person who has committed an offence, including where the relevant offence was committed prior to the commencement of the amendment.

However, neither section 26 nor section 27 of the charter precludes a civil consequence that is preventative or protective, rather than penal, in nature. Holding a licence under the act is a privilege, in that it enables a person to engage in activities which would otherwise be illegal. Restricting a person's ability to apply for particular licences for a specified period therefore simply involves restricting access to a privilege. The purpose of the restriction is to enable the authority to adequately regulate the wildlife protection scheme and manage the risk of future offences, rather than to punish the offender. It therefore does not amount to a criminal punishment, and does not limit the rights in section 26 or 27 of the charter.

Hon. Jacinta Allan, MP
Minister for Public Transport

Second reading

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

The bill will make amendments to a number of acts.

Amendment to the Domestic Animals Act 1994

The Domestic Animals Act 1994 provides for the identification and declaration of dogs to be of a restricted breed. If a dog declared to be of a restricted breed was not living in Victoria before 30 September 2011, the dog cannot be registered with local council and is subsequently euthanased.

In early 2015, the government passed legislation to place a moratorium on the euthanasia of restricted breed dogs while the economy and infrastructure committee inquired into restricted breed legislation in Victoria. This moratorium applies where the cause for their destruction is simply that they are a restricted breed. It does not apply to dogs that are dangerous or dogs that are destroyed for other reasons.

The final report of the inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs was tabled in Parliament on 23 March 2016. The government is required to respond within six months of the final report being tabled.

The current moratorium expires on 30 September 2016. An extension to the moratorium will enable the government response to be implemented while preventing unnecessary euthanasia of any dog being held by councils in the meantime.

The bill extends the current moratorium until 30 September 2017.

Amendment to the Public Administration Act 2004

The bill amends the Public Administration Act to replace the chairperson of the Game Management Authority with the chief executive officer (CEO), as the person with the functions of a public service body head in relation to employees of the Game Management Authority. The role of

public service body head is operational in nature and relates to employment duties. Under the Public Administration Act 2004, the chairperson of the Game Management Authority is currently the public service body head for the Game Management Authority. Having the chairperson as public service body head and involved in operational activities has the potential to blur accountabilities. Making the chief executive officer the public service body head is more appropriate.

The chair will continue to appoint the CEO to ensure clear lines of accountability.

Amendments to the Wildlife Act 1975

The Wildlife Act 1975 contains many serious offences; for example, hunting threatened species or protected wildlife, and hunting game outside the game season. If a court finds a person guilty of an offence under the act, it may sentence that person without convicting them. In such a case, the Game Management Authority can cancel or suspend a licence, but it may not refuse to grant an application for a new licence despite the applicant having been found guilty of an offence under the act. The bill amends the act to permit the Game Management Authority to refuse to grant an application for a new licence to an applicant who has been found guilty of an offence under the Wildlife Act.

The bill also makes further amendments to enable the Game Management Authority to specify a period of disqualification for the holder of a cancelled licence for up to five years and to require the return of a cancelled licence to the authority within a specified period.

The Game Management Authority may currently cancel a game or wildlife licence if the person is found guilty of an offence or breaches a licence condition, but it may not disqualify such a person from immediately reapplying for a game licence. This results in unnecessary administrative costs as the Game Management Authority is likely to refuse such a reapplication. As licences may be granted for a maximum of five years, it is appropriate that the Game Management Authority be able to refuse applications for up to five years. The requirement to return a cancelled licence to the Game Management Authority within a specified period is consistent with other agriculture portfolio legislation.

The bill includes the offence of hunting, taking or destroying game during close season on the list of offences for which the Game Management Authority is empowered to conduct controlled operations in order to collect evidence. This change will improve the Game Management Authority's capacity to fulfil a key regulatory function.

The bill amends the definition of 'punt gun' to provide for the use of 10-gauge calibre firearms or firearms with three barrels for hunting game. Under the Firearms Act 1996 a person can obtain a licence for the possession, carriage and use of a firearm for certain genuine reasons. Hunting is a genuine reason for obtaining a licence for a category A or B firearm. However, provisions of the Wildlife Act relating to punt guns currently prohibit the use of firearms with greater size bore than 12 gauge or firearms with more than two barrels. These firearms are already permitted in Australia for hunting game. These provisions are a legacy from a time when very large gauge firearms were used to hunt ducks for commercial purposes, which is no longer permitted. Regulations made under the principal act will continue to restrict the firearms

that can be used for hunting game and the government will undertake consultation prior to any changes being made to the current regulations in this respect.

The bill makes the CEO of the Game Management Authority responsible for reporting controlled operations to the Victorian Inspectorate; currently the board is responsible for this reporting. This change assigns responsibility to a single person, as opposed to a board which has several people. Further, as this is an operational responsibility, it is appropriate for the CEO, not the board, to be responsible. This will ensure the board is not involved in such activities.

The bill allows for a more streamlined process that will allow for wetland closures and changes to the bag limits of ducks during the duck season to be more efficient. In particular it will provide for notices prohibiting, regulating or controlling the taking, destroying or hunting of wildlife and emergency closures, and any amendment of the same, to be published in the *Government Gazette* rather than a newspaper. This will enable timely closure and reopening of wetlands while retaining sufficient notice periods. The current requirement to publish an intention in print media and the additional lead times associated with doing so has been demonstrated to unnecessarily delay the implementation of decisions. The government will continue as good practice to notify the community about closures or openings through media releases, websites, advertisements, and hunting organisations in addition to the new minimum being a *Government Gazette* notice.

The bill allows the minister, when an emergency closure of a wetland is required, to rely on the advice of the Game Management Authority in a circumstance where the Emergency Closures Advisory Committee is unable to come to a recommendation. This will further enable the timely closure and reopening of wetlands where necessary.

The bill also includes a new, independent chairperson of the Emergency Closures Advisory Committee.

Amendment to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992 requires the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to maintain the Victorian Agricultural Chemicals Advisory Committee. This committee provides advice to the secretary on regulation and control of the application of chemical products. A review conducted by the former Department of Primary Industries showed that costs exceeded benefits for this committee. The bill repeals this requirement. The Victorian government remains committed to maintaining ongoing consultative processes with stakeholders including discussion papers, presentations and meetings.

Amendments to the Veterinary Practice Act 1997

The Victorian government is committed to ensuring the highest quality of veterinary care is available to pet and livestock owners in Victoria. The veterinary profession is regulated by the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of Victoria (the board) underpinned by the Veterinary Practice Act 1997. Veterinarians work in stressful environments which can have adverse effects on their mental and physical health. In the rare instances where this threatens human health or safety, or animal health or welfare, if the

practitioner were to continue to practise, it is important that the board can take action. This is done through limiting professional privileges, for example access to controlled drugs, accorded to veterinarians through suspending their registration.

Currently this action can only be undertaken following an initial investigation into the practitioner's health, and only then with either the agreement of the practitioner or if the board decides to pursue a formal hearing. Changes in this bill will resolve potential delays by permitting the board to suspend registration at the start of an investigation in circumstances where there are concerns for public health and safety or animal health and welfare, should the practitioner continue to practise.

Further changes in this bill close the loophole whereby a veterinary practitioner who is subject to a formal hearing may reduce the sanctions against them by becoming unregistered. This bill levels the playing field for practitioners and previously registered practitioners who are found guilty of unprofessional conduct by the board.

Amendments to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 enables inspectors to protect an animal in a situation where the inspector believes an offence under the act is being committed or is about to be committed, by issuing a notice to the person in charge of the animal to ensure that the offence is not committed or ceases to be committed. The bill amends the act to ensure that a notice to comply can be issued to the relevant person, whether that is the owner of the animal, the person in charge of the animal or another person. This change will ensure that a notice can be issued to the most appropriate person, including a person mistreating an animal they do not own or have responsibility for.

The bill makes further amendments to increase the maximum duration of a scientific procedures premises licence, scientific procedures fieldwork licence and specified animals breeding licence from three years to four years. This change will reduce regulatory burden on licence-holders and align the duration of the licence with the four-year compliance inspection frequency. The current options of applying for licences of one, two or three years duration will also remain, to accommodate small businesses that may only need a licence for a short period, for example a one-year licence to undertake an environment impact assessment.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WALSH (Murray Plains).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 18 May.

APPROPRIATION (2016–2017) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 3 May; motion of Mr PALLAS (Treasurer).

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — I am pleased to resume my contribution on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016. Last evening I was raising the issue of parking at Maroondah Hospital and the crisis that is evident there at this point in time, and I took the opportunity in the adjournment debate to ask the Minister for Health to join me in a consultation process with residents of my community and the surrounding community to discuss how a redesign of the cancer centre to incorporate hundreds of additional car parking spaces might be able to occur.

Interestingly, a member of the community — a lady in her senior years — responded to my Facebook post in relation to the parking crisis last evening by mentioning that she had an appointment at Maroondah Hospital yesterday but had to cancel her appointment because she could not get a park close enough to enable her to walk, with a back injury, the distance that would be required for her to attend her appointment. This is a classic example of the day-to-day problems that are occurring as a result of the car parking crisis. People who are sick, who need health care and attention, who are unable to access a health service because of the car parking crisis. It is very real. It is palpable in the community. I call on the minister to respond to my adjournment matter in a positive way and in a spirit of bipartisanship and to expand the breast cancer centre to include hundreds of additional car parking spaces for our community so that community members can access their health service.

Just recently I have raised on many occasions the closure of the Nunawading police station, which is on Maroondah Highway and very close to public transport. To this day road traffic signs direct people to the police station, but they find that the police station is closed. There have been reports of a woman who had an altercation on the Eastern Freeway and made her way to the police station to find a closed sign on the door. In addition, a man who is disabled had his wallet stolen and made his way to the police station, but it was closed.

The response to that has been, 'Well, there's another police station in Forest Hill'. The point is that when the former coalition government funded and built the Forest Hill police station it was in addition to Nunawading police station, not in place of it. The

Nunawading police station has been in existence since I was a child. It is required. We have an increase in crime — it is up by 8 per cent across Victoria. We have domestic violence issues that chew up police time. We have ice. We have rampant gang violence. This is a time when people need to be able to access their police station in Nunawading, but it has a closed sign on the door, redirecting people elsewhere.

We have heard time and time again the issue of falling police numbers per capita, or the ratio in terms of the growing population in this state, yet we continue to see the number of police — and it takes significant time to train them — falling in comparison to the population. This is at a time when we have increasing crime, when people are perhaps fearful for their safety and when we also have heightened awareness of terrorism. This is not the time to allow police numbers to drop. It is a time when we need to keep ahead of the curve, not behind the curve.

In raising the Nunawading police station, I note the other aspect is that the Premier and the Minister for Police said they would not close police stations. The issue is that no-one in my community has been consulted. The community groups have not been consulted about the closure of the Nunawading police station, and the Premier has not even had the decency to tell the community that he has closed the police station. The issue is that if people are not told about it — if the Premier, after saying that the police station would not be closed, has not been honest and up-front with them and has not had the decency to tell them that it is closed — they have the expectation that it is still operating, and rightly so when traffic signs direct them to the police station.

The question is: why has the Premier made promises he has no intention of keeping? That is the pattern of behaviour we have seen from this Premier. There is no point saying, 'It's the chief commissioner's responsibility', when the Premier and the police minister made the commitment. I draw those issues in my community to the attention of the house, and I ask the government to put my community first.

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — It is a pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016, because nothing says more about the government than the agenda it sets out in its budget. This budget does a number of things, but one thing it has not been able to do is elicit a question in question time from the opposition, and I take that as a ringing endorsement of the Andrews Labor government's second budget.

Last year's budget was about getting on with it and honouring the commitments that we made to the people of Victoria. This budget is about getting it done, building upon last year's work and the strength of the Victorian economy — an economy that is the fastest growing in Australia and an economy that is forecast to grow by 3 per cent in 2016–17. Also, Victoria's principal exports of education and tourism are at record highs when it comes to enrolments and visitor arrivals.

The budget contains an estimated surplus of \$2.9 billion in 2016–17 and an average surplus of \$2.1 billion a year across the forward estimates. Unemployment is falling. Under the former government, the unemployment rate rose from 4.9 per cent in 2010 to 6.9 per cent in 2014; it is now at 5.7 per cent and is projected to fall further, to 5.5 per cent in 2018–19.

Last week we saw in the tantrum of the member for Malvern, which turned out to be a budget reply, his principal complaint, being that there was no jobs plan. I suppose that is what you get when you reply to a budget that you have not actually read, because had he waited, had he actually reviewed the budget documents, he would have seen this policy, *Jobs for Victoria*, which brings together everything we are doing to create jobs for this state — that is, investing in infrastructure like the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel and the western distributor, investing in skills and education, cutting payroll tax for up to 36 000 businesses and assisting workers in the automotive manufacturing industry to find new opportunities.

I think that is very, very important, even in an electorate like mine which is not normally associated with manufacturing, particularly by people who have rarely passed through the Bentleigh electorate. There are half-a-dozen manufacturers who will be directly affected by the departure of the automotive manufacturing industry. One of those is a fairly significant brakes manufacturer that has been in East Bentleigh for probably around 100 years. Three hundred people currently work there, and the company unfortunately will be shutting down towards the end of next year. We have a plan to help those workers transition to new opportunities. Part of that is our investment in infrastructure, particularly our investment in rail, which will mean that people will be able to reskill to work in the rail industry and other industries.

But there are a number of things, as Labor members, to be proud of when it comes to this budget but none more so than our investment in health, which involves an extra \$2.45 billion. That of course includes the announcement that was made by the Minister for Health recently of a record \$335 million boost to

elective surgery, which will mean around 3100 more coronary artery bypass grafts, around 6700 more hip replacements, 6800 more knee replacements, 22 000 more sinus and ear operations, and 34 000 more eye surgeries. There is nothing more important than the health of Victorians, and I am also very pleased that the budget includes \$135 million for Victoria's first heart hospital, just around the corner from the border of my electorate.

In the area of police — and we have heard a lot about police this week — \$596 million is in the budget to give police the resources they need to respond to gang-related crime, gun crime, terrorist threats and family violence. That includes more than 400 police. I was actually earlier this week, on Monday, over at Moorabbin police station. Our local police are very pleased with this news; morale is high amongst our local police. It was also great at the police station to welcome the new police custody officers, out of the 400 that we funded in last year's budget, to Moorabbin. That will mean that local police, instead of babysitting prisoners, will be out on the beat.

Regarding family violence, no government in the history of this country has done more to tackle family violence than this government, and I acknowledge the Premier and the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence for this. We have provided a \$572 million statewide funding boost over two years, which includes a \$152.5 million housing blitz — something that is particularly important. We heard a bit about that in question time today.

The Melbourne Metro rail tunnel is fully funded. There is \$2.9 billion over the forward estimates to progress construction of the project, with a balance fully committed in capital expenditure beyond the forward estimates. This really is game-changing infrastructure. It is untangling the knot in the city loop and making sure that we can put more trains across the network more often. It is good news for the Frankston line, and it will also create a lot of jobs.

There was also a significant investment more generally in public transport in this budget of \$1.9 billion, and that includes additional rail rolling stock, \$875 million for 28 extra high-capacity metro trains, on top of the 37 provided for in last year's budget; \$280.4 million for 27 VLocity carriages; \$105.2 million for five X'trapolis trains; and \$15 million for upgrades to trains on the north-east line. These are not trains that are going to be built overseas. These are trains that are going to be built right here in Victoria, unlike what we saw from the former government. The rail rolling stock industry in this state supports 10 000 jobs, and with the departure

of the automotive manufacturing industry, that is the role that governments should play — making sure that we prioritise local content.

If I could now just move to education and say that nothing makes me prouder to be a member of this government than what we have done in the education space. When we say we are going to make Victoria the education state, it is not merely a slogan or a slogan on numberplates, although I have seen them around on the Monash Freeway and on the Nepean Highway; there is a lot more substance to it than that.

Last year we had the biggest education budget in Victoria's history. This year we have the biggest school upgrade blitz in Victoria's history, with an investment of over \$924 million to build new schools and upgrade classrooms. This includes \$63.6 million for modern relocatable classrooms to ease the pressure on growing Victorian schools; \$28 million to continue removing asbestos from school buildings; \$16 million for the new School Pride and Sports Fund to help strengthen community pride in schools and build sporting facilities for students; and \$12 million to plan upgrades at 35 existing schools to accommodate growth and update old facilities.

I will move to outline some of the local achievements in education. Last year we funded the upgrade of McKinnon Secondary College and Bentleigh Secondary College. Both of those are currently at the detailed design stage, and we expect construction to begin this year. This year the government has funded a further five schools, including Valkstone Primary School. There is a bit of a story behind Valkstone. It was one of very few schools that had funding allocated to it by the former government in its fourth and final budget. The funds were for a rebuild of the school, but after detailed design work it has turned out that the school is at least \$2.5 million short. We have therefore made sure that Valkstone Primary School is one of the schools that will receive funding for the planning and design of stage 2 and the construction of stage 2 as soon as possible.

Tucker Road Primary School is a growing school, with 600 students or thereabouts. The school does not have a gymnasium, so it does not have a space for students to participate in a whole-of-school assembly. It is not uncommon for students at Tucker Road Primary School to be out on the asphalt for an assembly in 35 to 40 degree heat. That is just unacceptable. This funding will mean there will be better sporting facilities, particularly for netball, which we are all very pleased about.

In our new School Pride program \$150 000 is allocated to refurbish the East Bentleigh Primary School main building. That has been welcomed by the school. That is another growing school which has a lot to offer to local families, and the principal, Maria Shearn, has been very appreciative of the work this government has done with her. But what I am most proud about is the government's investment in the education of children with special needs. There are three special schools in my electorate, and I am always left in awe of the dedication of so many among the staff, teachers and families who just want the best for the children they care for and educate. They always go beyond the call of duty, and they deserve to be supported with the best possible facilities. I am pleased that \$68.5 million has been allocated to upgrade 20 specialist schools.

One of those schools is Berendale School in my electorate, which has received \$2.2 million for an upgrade. Another in my electorate is Bayside Special Developmental School, which has received planning funding for a major upgrade that will include a playground that will be accessible to children with disabilities, which is something we are all very excited about.

There is one final local achievement that I want to promote today. I know there are a number of St Kilda supporters in this chamber, but I am not one of them. The government has included a further \$4 million on top of the funding already allocated in previous years to bring the Saints marching back to Moorabbin in my electorate. It really is their spiritual home. But this \$30 million facility will be much more than a home for the St Kilda footy club. It will be the only facility in Victoria where all levels of football are housed under the one roof — that is, the South Metro Junior Football League, the Southern Football Netball League, and of course the St Kilda Football Club. The other big boost as part of this funding is a significant improvement in facilities for female participation. I saw in yesterday's news that St Kilda has put in a bid to be part of the female league that commences next year. Should that bid be successful, that team will be based at the Moorabbin reserve, and we are all very excited about that.

Finally, I want to refer to some of the comments made by the member for Ripon yesterday in her contribution to the debate. She said this budget was not a budget for battlers. Indeed she said this budget failed battlers. It pains me to do this because I get along well with the member for Ripon, but you can certainly trust a member of the Institute of Public Affairs to make that claim. I have news for the member for Ripon and for everybody else on the opposition benches: the battlers

are not their wealthy property developer mates. The battlers are those families struggling to make ends meet and pay school costs because they had their education maintenance allowance ripped from them by the former government. The battlers are those young people who are impacted by the former government's harsh TAFE cuts. The battlers are those workers whose penalty rates those opposite want to take away. They are the battlers.

Georgie Crozier, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council, in the lead-up to last year's grand final, was marching up and down Centre Road, Bentleigh, collecting signatures on a petition essentially against penalty rates. You will never see Georgie Crozier or any member of the Liberal Party marching up and down the streets of my electorate in support of workers. You will never see that. That is the fundamental difference between us and them. The Labor members are on the side of the battlers. Make no mistake: we are the party of the battlers. This is a true Labor budget that supports the battlers in health, in education, and in job creation in this state. I commend it to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — It is my pleasure today to rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016. This is a budget which introduces big taxes. It promises big but it delivers little — and I think those six words really sum up what this budget is about.

The problem is, as we know and as the performance over the last 16 months or so has clearly demonstrated, that Victorians cannot rely on the promises of this government. We all remember when the Premier, on the eve of the 2014 state election, went out on the front steps of Parliament House and said there would be no increase in taxes, fees or charges. He looked straight down the barrel of the camera and said to Peter Mitchell and Channel 7 viewers, 'I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian'. Those are words which are now absolutely haunting this government.

Despite a windfall in revenue, this government just cannot help itself. I find it particularly concerning that at a time when this government is demanding rate capping by local government, when it is preaching to local government and telling it that it should live within its means, in just two years it has jacked up taxes by \$3.7 billion. That is a 20.7 per cent increase. I challenge members opposite to find me somebody whose wage has increased by 20.7 per cent in the last two years. The member for Bentleigh said the Labor Party is the party for battlers. If it were, it surely would not be jacking up taxes by 20.7 per cent.

Those increases include a 15 per cent increase in the fire services levy. That means every property owner in Victoria will pay an extra 15 per cent on the fire services levy when they get their rates notices. Even though we have, again, local government rates capped at 2.5 per cent, people will pick up their rate notice and discover that in the last two years the fire services levy has increased by 15 per cent. And what is that money being used for? It is being used to deliver on the secret, backroom deals that this Premier had done with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) in return for the UFU's support at last year's election, like the addition of 350 paid CFA firefighters.

I can tell you, Acting Speaker, that in my electorate I have volunteers scratching their heads about that, because they are not quite sure where a request for 350 additional paid firefighters came from in just one or two years. Volunteers warned of the consequences of these policies before last year's election, and we all remember the open letter that the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria board wrote to the people of Victoria on 26 November. They said — and these are their words, not mine:

We are also concerned that Labor's policy will reduce CFA's volunteer firefighting force by thousands of volunteers, pushing volunteers out of CFA stations and hundreds of CFA trucks off the road when we need them for major fires such as Black Saturday.

They go on to say:

We support and welcome additional paid support and resources for CFA, provided these resources are required and provided that the CFA determines the need, not a union. Don't be fooled, the plan announced by Labor is not about improving community safety in Victoria, the detail included in their announcement is about giving the control of CFA to a union.

Those are not my words, Acting Speaker, they are the words of Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, the peak body representing 60 000 volunteers in this state. Property owners, farmers and small businesses in regional Victoria are not paying for a better fire service, they are paying for the Premier's 2014 election campaign. They are paying for the work that the UFU did to get Labor elected. They are paying for the UFU to stand on polling booths for the Labor Party and to hand out fliers for it.

The member for Bentleigh referred to the TAFE cuts supposedly applied by the coalition before the 2014 election, and he referred to the 'education state' — the wonderful slogan that this government has introduced. He said it is not just a slogan. If it is not just a slogan, I would encourage him to dig a bit further and examine some of the outcomes from the training portfolio.

Before the state election, as we all know, Labor promised it was going to grow student enrolments in TAFE. Labor candidates all signed a pledge saying that they would restore funding to TAFE, and the platform that they went to the 2014 election on promised a rebuilding of vocational education and training. Despite all of those higher taxes, the budget papers and the annual reports for TAFEs tabled last sitting week show that the government has cut funding to government-subsidised training and has cut funding to TAFE.

I will give a few examples, because there are a few looks of scepticism on the faces of those on the opposite side of the house. The annual report of The Gordon in Geelong shows that funding for government-subsidised training there has been cut by \$23.3 million just in one year. At Federation University funding is down \$5.7 million under this government, including \$2.1 million less for training. Holmesglen Institute funding for training is down by \$3.9 million. Wodonga TAFE funding is down by \$4.5 million.

Remember what government members said before the election? Steve Herbert, the Minister for Training and Skills, said the sector is in crisis. The Premier described young Victorians as victims of austerity measures. The member for Wendouree, who is not in the house at the moment, described funding levels for TAFE as 'devastating'. Guess what? Funding for TAFE now is less than when we left office. Funding to train students is substantially less now than it was then. The minister continues to sit on the full-year training data for the 2015 training year, which will actually reveal the true extent of the cuts that the Labor Party is now proposing for TAFE. I thought it might actually slip out the door yesterday in the shadows of the federal budget, because it is going to be very ugly. And I am sure that we will see it carted out the door some time on a Friday afternoon when members of the media are all distracted doing other things. We started to get a bit of a picture of the training sector in the budget, so I will just go through some of the numbers for the benefit of those opposite.

Last year there were 91 165 fewer government-subsidised enrolments in training in Victoria — 91 165 fewer! There were 800 000 fewer government-subsidised module enrolments. There were 27 million fewer government-subsidised student contact hours. The number of apprentices and trainees commencing in Victoria's training system was down by almost 5000. There are 65 856 fewer students enrolled in government-subsidised courses. As for young people, there was a 4.8 per cent decline in the participation rate of 15 to 24-year-olds in

government-subsidised training, and a 1.3 per cent decline in the participation rate of 25 to 64-year-olds in government-subsidised training. That is not just a lie that the government purported to the Victorian people was the case before the election; that amounts to an absolute betrayal of Victorians.

It puts me in mind of Shakespeare's play. I think even Brutus on his way to stab Julius Caesar on the floor of the Senate could learn a thing or two from those opposite: where are their hollow and meaningless protestations now? Are those opposite now banging down the door of the Premier and asking him why he has cut funding to TAFE, why he has failed to deliver on his commitments to Victorians and to training and why the government has in fact reduced funding? They are not, they are all sitting there, meek and quiet. They all know that they went to the 2014 election on the back of a lie.

What are they doing now? They are certainly not raising the bar. Instead they are trying to reverse the collapse of enrolments by lowering their targets for next year. Government members say, 'Oh well, we never promised extra enrolments. What we promised to do was improve the quality, and that is what we are doing'. Have a look at the targets in the budget paper. It actually shows that they are reducing the quality. Just 53 per cent of students last year who completed vocational education and training in 2015 actually graduated with an improved chance of employment. Labor is reducing that target by 11 per cent. Labor expects that under its training system fewer people actually graduating from TAFE will be more employable. That is the upshot of it.

With the time I have left, I want to focus on some of the issues within my own electorate. As I have said, for regional Victoria this has been an incredibly disappointing budget. As the Leader of The Nationals pointed out yesterday, many of the commitments in this budget have been back-ended or they are on the never-never. The Shepparton hospital, which affects a large part of my electorate, will receive just 3 per cent of the funding it requires in the coming financial year, and I think the government needs to clarify where that money is actually coming from. I have spoken to hospital CEOs in my electorate who are desperate for funding and are concerned that the \$200 million in the government's new Regional Health Infrastructure Fund includes the Shepparton hospital, which would leave very little for other country hospitals if that fund were to stretch across all of regional Victoria.

The part funding for Benalla College is still \$11.5 million short of what the school believes it needs,

and just \$868 000 has actually been budgeted for the coming year. I want to pay credit to the school's principal, Barb O'Brien, and the school council president, Stephen Lister, and also the wider community who have actively campaigned for this funding. They have done a very good job, but there is now real concern that Labor thinks its job is done on Benalla College. We put aside the first \$5 million. We provided a commitment to fund the remaining \$15 million for that school. I do not want to see this government put \$3.5 million into a school that needs \$15 million and to then see the government put the college to the bottom of the list. I am concerned by the phasing of the funding that the government has announced, and I am concerned that the government will now consider its job done and will wash its hands of the college.

Other projects that were overlooked in this budget include the Waranga Memorial Hospital. This hospital is a campus of Goulburn Valley Health. It provides acute and palliative care services, and we made a commitment that we were going to spend \$7 million to co-locate the hospital with the Waranga Aged Care Hostel. The community has tried on many, many occasions to engage with the Minister for Health about the need for funding for Waranga. She has actually bypassed the hospital when she has toured the region to cut ribbons on health projects that were funded under the former coalition government. Members of the community advisory committee actually travelled to Kyabram to speak with her, and she refused to speak with them. I would encourage the minister, I would invite the minister, to meet those members of the Rushworth community who are so passionate and concerned about the state of their hospital.

Just quickly, I want to mention rolling stock. What was announced — or what was not announced — for the Shepparton and north-eastern lines was incredibly disappointing. Jaclyn Symes, in the Legislative Council, said that her new year's wish — and you would know, Acting Speaker McCurdy, being on the same train line — was for new rolling stock on the north-eastern train. We certainly did not get that. After raising expectations through the regional network plan, which people participated in in good faith, we have now seen that the government could not even find enough money for one train. Instead we got \$15 million to fix some air conditioning, which was just 1.1 per cent of the money that was allocated towards rolling stock upgrades.

There is still no funding for the Kilmore-Wallan bypass, no funding for a Nagambie ambulance and no

funding for Seymour College, which desperately needs rebuilding.

Labor promised that it would deliver for all Victorians. For country Victorians all this budget delivers is higher taxes. In country Victoria we understand the patterns of the weather and we understand droughts. We understand good times and we understand that bad times come as well. But we know that with a Labor government we do not just have weather-related droughts but we also are exposed to funding droughts. That is where we are at the moment. We are in a funding drought, and many people are now just praying for rain and praying for a change of government.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — It is a great pleasure to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016. I want to begin by congratulating the Premier, the Treasurer, the ministers and all their staff for their commitment to Victorians and importantly the people of Geelong. This is a true Labor budget. Geelong is a big winner in this budget. It is all about jobs, with a record investment in infrastructure and other projects to create new jobs and help workers gain a foothold in the fast-growing sectors that will define Victoria's economic future. For the opposition to claim there is no jobs plan is simply wrong. A jobs plan was attached to the budget. Maybe this hypocritical opposition should take some time to read the jobs plan.

Under the Andrews Labor government Geelong will not only see planes in the sky but will now also see cranes in the sky. This is a clear message that the Andrews Labor government is honouring its commitment to the people of Geelong. I spent a few days after the budget was released talking to people on the street, talking to my constituents about the budget and hearing how they felt about it. The message was very positive, and there were lots of congratulations from my constituents about the funding commitments that we made to the people of Geelong, particularly in education, in job creation and in getting our CBD into the state it should be in. The people of Geelong very strongly support the budget.

There is a \$325 million investment in jobs initiatives for infrastructure and services, which includes \$5.5 million for improving and providing planning for key projects to revitalise the centre of Geelong, such as a conference centre. A conference centre has been on Geelong's agenda for some years now. This is a positive for Geelong. It will not only create jobs in its construction but it will also create ongoing jobs for the future.

The government will prioritise support for retrenched automotive workers. The first auto industry task force meeting will happen next week in Geelong. I will be chairing the regional task force in Geelong, and this is aimed at assisting our auto industry to transition after the closure of Ford. We really appreciate the work the minister has done in this particular area.

There is massive investment in public transport and roads, with more V/Line rolling stock ordered to support further Geelong and Warrnambool services and to address overcrowding issues. There will be a new tech school in Geelong, and there is \$35.6 million in upgrades to 10 schools across the region. There is a payroll tax cut for approximately 36 000 businesses across Victoria, with the payroll tax-free threshold lifted to \$650 000 over the next four years.

In regional Victoria safe and reliable transport is everything, and the budget provides a massive investment to improve public transport and roads across rural and regional Victoria as well as creating jobs.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

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

That this house:

- (1) calls on Premier Daniel Andrews to reject an EBA between the United Firefighters Union and CFA that contains conditions that:
 - (a) allow the United Firefighters Union to direct or impede CFA activities;
 - (b) interfere with operational duties of the CFA; or
 - (c) impact on the rights of volunteer firefighters; and
- (2) calls on the Andrews Labor government to stop trying to force the CFA board and the CFA CEO to ignore section 6 of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, which provides that:
 - (a) the CFA has a responsibility to develop policy and organisational arrangements that encourage, maintain and strengthen the capacity of volunteer officers and members;

- (b) the CFA is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner; and
- (c) the volunteer charter requires the CFA to recognise, value, respect and promote the contribution of volunteer officers and members to the wellbeing and safety of the community and to consult with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria Incorporated on behalf of volunteer officers and members on any matter that might reasonably be expected to affect them.

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) — Acting Speaker, I am glad you read that into *Hansard* because it would have taken me about half of my time to just get through the paragraphs and subparagraphs of this matter of public importance (MPI).

This is a matter of public importance for the reason that our volunteer and career firefighters are so important to our community. The most important aspect of that system is that it is an integrated system. During this discussion I am going to talk about the politics of it and how important it is to our community, but more importantly I will talk about how it affects firefighters throughout our state. One of the biggest things that affects firefighters in our state is something we can never forget — that is, that the Country Fire Authority (CFA) was set up as a volunteer organisation. I refer to this point in my MPI, and to the Country Fire Authority Act 1958. Section 6F of the act states:

The Parliament recognises that the Authority is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

I have travelled around to some of the CFA stations, and I will say that many of the integrated stations do work in that manner. When you go down to ground level, you see many career and volunteer firefighters working together for better outcomes in the community. That is what they are there for, and that is what they should be doing. However, when the Minister for Emergency Services is placed in the position of having to make a decision, or work with the CFA board on a decision, to give a veto power or extra power to one of those parties, you are creating a divide throughout that whole network. It is the same as a fish: it rots from the head down. If you cause a problem at the very top, it is reflected the whole way through the industry and the whole way through that business.

When you add to an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) a clause like clause 21, which gives the United Firefighters Union (UFU) the power to say no to any decision of CFA management and no to any decision of

the CFA board, to me that amounts to putting in place an EBA that undermines confidence in the CEO who was appointed by this government. The CEO of the CFA, Lucinda Nolan, has a proud history in the Victorian police force, and she has made changes in community organisations that some of us in this chamber would never be able to do. Why? Because Lucinda Nolan has the strength, the ability and the capability to make those decisions. What she is asking for now is that the minister to simply rule out things — not go against good-faith negotiations — that are going to affect volunteer firefighters across this state.

The volunteer charter was enshrined in legislation in 2011 under the coalition government. Yes, the charter was originally drawn up by those opposite back in the early 2000s, but it is a charter that the Labor Party should be proud of. We are very proud to say that we supported it and enshrined it in legislation to ensure that no-one could go against it. It is sad that we now have a government which wrote that charter but which is trying to put in place an EBA that works against it and what it stands for. That is what is being put in place at the moment.

The minister is going to say that the CEO and the board have to make the final decision, and I agree with that. However, section 6A of the Country Fire Authority Act states that the minister ‘may from time to time give written directions to the Authority’. The minister has an opportunity to write to the CEO and to the board of the CFA. In that letter, she could simply say that under no circumstances will clause 21, which gives a veto power to the UFU, end up in that EBA. There are other sections in that EBA that I think will create issues for the CFA and will create issues for our volunteers. The clause that is causing the most problems for the CFA at the moment is clause 44.2.7, and I quote:

The presence of seven firefighters on the fireground prior to the commencement of operations save and accept where otherwise agreed between the UFU and CFA.

That clause would require seven paid firefighters to be on the fireground for any fire prior to operations commencing. The UFU will have you believe that no, it is not meant that way, that its operation is restricted to certain places where there are already UFU members. That is what the union is trying to say it means. If that is the case, why would you not amend clause 44.2.7 or remove it to take away the ambiguity that is causing huge concerns to country firefighters throughout Victoria, firefighters who are emailing not just me — I think someone just said ‘Who?’. If those on the Labor Party side opened their emails, they may understand exactly where the concerns are coming from. It is vital that those opposite start to listen to what the community

is saying, and the community is saying that at the moment they do not support this EBA and they do not support having seven paid firefighters on the ground.

The other fightback from the UFU at the moment is that all of a sudden there is one clause in the EBA that refers to volunteers — or it is saying it refers to volunteers. I can show members more Facebook posts than you can poke a stick at on my Facebook page that have come directly from UFU members who are saying, ‘This EBA is all about the career firefighters and nothing to do with volunteers. Tell them to keep their noses out’, that this has nothing to do with them and that everything in this agreement is about all firefighters. If that is the case, why is it that only paid firefighters are included in the description? Why does this EBA only describe professional career firefighters and never mention volunteers?

The definition of ‘firefighter’ in this EBA actually refers to paid or professional firefighters, yet all of a sudden one clause has appeared and now those in the union want to say this one clause is for volunteers. They want to say that this one clause is for volunteers, and that is where the seven firefighters come in — come on, we were not born yesterday. That is a direct quote from the enterprise bargaining agreement that is in place at the moment, and we are telling the minister that that one directly needs to be ruled out. It must be ruled out to protect the safety of Victorians and to make sure that we can support our volunteer firefighters at all of the fires they go to.

Another United Firefighters Union claim that has come out recently is that firefighters will be worse off under the current offer. There is an offer in place, and the one thing I will give volunteers credit for is that they do not want to get into an argument about pay rises. They do not want to get involved in comparing the current EBA to the new EBA in relation to pay or some of the safety conditions. I understand that there is a bit of media coverage out there saying that the offer originally on the table from the Country Fire Authority (CFA) was for a pay rise, but it also included the same conditions they currently have at the moment. It is important that we actually protect our firefighters and that we make sure this is in place in the future.

The veto is something that the CFA must strongly oppose. As we have said before, the minister has to come out on the front foot on this and say that no EBA will actually have this in it. It has to be black and white, a simple, ‘No, it cannot be in the EBA’. To say, ‘We are negotiating’, or to say, ‘We are trying to work around it’, to me says, ‘We are trying to find a way for the UFU to have control of the CFA’, and that is

something that we on this side of the house will not accept. The CFA is a volunteer organisation and should remain a volunteer organisation, and it is vital that the CEO and the board have the power and autonomy to make decisions as required and when they need to.

One other myth that has come out of this is that career firefighters are best placed to conduct community safety and education and that new community education roles should only be filled by career firefighters. The firefighters out in my area, who are all volunteers, do a fantastic job in our community. April, who also has Captain Koala with her, does a magnificent job. She is a CFA volunteer who spreads the word to schools as well. I actually go the opposite way; I think that volunteer firefighters are in the best position to work within their own communities to spread the word on fire safety and ensure that people can be protected going forward. It is volunteer firefighters who do the extra hours. When someone comes down to their station they have open days and pass out information. I have even seen a lot of our volunteer firefighters in their own time go to people’s houses to make sure that they can better protect themselves if a fire should come through. They want to make sure that fire prevention is in place as well, and that is super important.

Another matter we raised in question time is in relation to our brigade administrative support officers (BASOs), and they are so important. Again, these people are specialist employees who go around with the main target of assisting with any administration work in our volunteer stations. We all know — it does not matter whether you are in business, a community group or a school situation — that paperwork has increased over time. The red tape for these organisations has increased and will continue to increase. To assist the volunteer stations you have a BASO who can go out there, who is paid by the CFA and who can work with the local station to get the administrative work done.

When you speak to a volunteer captain — who is also normally a parent, in a relationship, working or someone who has other commitments outside of this area and who is already giving up enough time for training and to protect our community — you realise we cannot remove BASOs. To replace them with career firefighters is not replacing same for same. We are not replacing people who are experts in administration — people who can assist with grant writing, people who can assist with getting the paperwork done pre-event and post-event, people who can assist with events coming up — with career firefighters who in the whole term should be operational. They should be out actually fighting fires, not doing the background administrative

work in the volunteer stations. The volunteer stations are requesting that they keep in place what they have now with BASOs and their volunteer support officers.

Volunteer support officers is another great one. We are very, very proud to support volunteer support officers. They get out to stations and offer career advice and counselling. They can offer almost anything you want at the station to guide you in the right direction. They should not be career firefighters. That issue is frustrating, because when the UFU took the government and the CFA to court, it was to try to get volunteer support officers stopped. They did not want them. They went to court to stop them coming in, but now they are changing that to say not only do they want to support them, they want to be them and to take their role. This is just another opportunity for the UFU to unionise more positions in the CFA. It is something we on this side of the house will not tolerate.

As I said before, it is vital to hear not only our voices but also that members hear voices from their own electorates. Members opposite need to go out and speak to their communities. They need to understand what their communities are saying on this. I am sure their communities are saying, 'Get behind the UFU'. I am sure the member for Bellarine's constituents are saying, 'Get behind the UFU 100 per cent and do not worry about our volunteers'. They do not want to support them; that is fantastic.

I will just read a quick email which was addressed to the Premier:

By now you will be well aware that 421 CFA vehicles with around 1600 CFA volunteers held a motorcade to Parliament House in Spring Street yesterday.

They came in here because they support the CEO, the CFA board and the minister, but they are asking the minister to stand up and make sure that this is not in any EBA going forward and to stand up against the Premier, who is doing his secret deals to make sure that he can keep the UFU on side. Eric Collier is the president of the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria in district 8, and he is very passionate about this. He said:

There is a lot of anger out there in CFA volunteer land. Sixty thousand volunteers, families and friends ...

He has these people signing petitions to make sure that their voices are heard. He has an entire document that goes through everything.

Brian and Anne Crook wrote to me and said:

It is with great concern to my wife and I that we read in several of the Victorian newspapers about the proposed EBA ...

As you are no doubt well aware of the newspaper reports on this issue we will refrain from repeating them here.

Our concern is further increased as under the terms of the volunteer charter ...

They are concerned that this government is going to go against the volunteer charter. They are worried that this government is going to sign up to an agreement that goes against the charter that they wrote, that we all supported being enshrined in legislation, and I for one will not stand for that.

Volunteer and career firefighters are essential in our community. The integrated system was designed to offer the best protection to all of Victoria, and that integrated system is to a great extent reliant on having many volunteers available for surge capacity events. If you work the United Firefighters Union theory of having control over that entire volunteer organisation, you are tearing away at the very fabric of what the CFA was designed for. The CFA must be protected. We have put this MPI before the house to ensure that we stand up for our communities, and I will continue to stand up for mine.

Volunteer organisations across the whole state should be worried about this. The State Emergency Service should be worried about this and the lifeguards should be worried about this. This is the beginning of the United Firefighters Union finding its way into other emergency services. It wants to unionise all of those emergency services. I tell members now that this MPI is vital. We are going to give the Minister for Emergency Services 15 minutes to stand here and respond. At the end of that time we must be clear that this EBA with its proposed clause 21, that this EBA that refuses volunteers the ability to answer to career firefighters on the fireground, that this EBA that ensures seven paid firefighters at every fire across Victoria is not only not accepted but is ruled out here today.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! Before calling the minister, I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Barry Bishop, a former member in the other place. Welcome to the people's house.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

Debate resumed.

Ms GARRETT (Minister for Emergency Services) — We are here today to discuss a matter of public importance (MPI) as those on the other side profess sudden concern about our fire services. I say to members of this house that the hypocrisy is nothing short of breathtaking. The faux outrage, the pantomime of posturing and this new-found interest in our fire services from those opposite is a little too late from this mob. It has been the Andrews Labor government that has been working tirelessly to get things done by modernising and improving our fire services and giving them unprecedented personnel and resources to keep Victorians safe. We are tackling the challenges that the previous Liberal government left behind. We are working to unpick a range of problems that it helped create and then embed. We have the courage to make generational change because it is the right thing to do.

Members of the former government — those opposite — had four years to do something and make a difference. But what did they do? Nothing. Wait a minute, that is not right; they did contribute to making a toxic culture in our fire services by pitting people against each other. They ripped out tens of millions of dollars from our fire services. They failed to act on presumptive legislation, and they sat on reports into the emergency medical response program and Fiskville. There is no doubt that reform opportunities were missed by coalition members when they were in government. Things were too hard for them, and when they waded in they made a mess of things.

I have now been asked multiple questions on this issue in this house, but I say again for the record, I say again for those people listening and I say again to the volunteer and career firefighters that no agreement has been reached and that there will be no agreement that does not respect the work of volunteer and career firefighters. Our firefighters do such an extraordinary job keeping Victorians safe that they deserve everybody's best attempts at respect and not to be used as political playthings by those opposite. So I want to take a moment to reflect in my contribution in this matter of public importance debate on the matter of public importance — that is, the work firefighters do to keep us safe.

Let us reflect on the fire season just past. It was the longest in recent memory. It started in October and ran

through until March, and what an effort was made by our agencies. During five hot, windy months we saw a massive contribution to community safety from 32 000 firefighters. Career and volunteers, staff from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Country Fire Authority (CFA), the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water answered the call when our state needed them. Across Victoria there were 16 major fires in which a total of 148 houses and 68 sheds were destroyed.

Of course beyond those raw numbers sit stories of trauma and heartache. On Christmas Day, along with the Premier, I went to the state control centre to see the emergency response unfold at Wye River, as did the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. This was outstanding work as the mantra of Emergency Management Victoria 'working as one' came to life. Agencies covering every aspect of Victoria's emergency capability worked seamlessly and tirelessly to protect life and to protect property. All these agencies played their role to maximise the efforts in fighting fires and the recovery. Modern technology that the Andrews Labor government had introduced meant emergency management commissioner Craig Lapsley and his team were being fed real-time information as a helicopter hovered overhead to transmit the terrible images charting the progress of the blaze.

As awful as the fire was as it tore into the bush, we knew that many people's lives were being changed on that day, but without the unbelievable commitment from firefighters from the CFA, DELWP and Parks Victoria, the fire could have been so much worse. Our most important consolation on that day was that we did not lose a single life there or at any of the other fires that raged across the state. Again it is a great credit to the work done to change community behaviour through technology and better warnings and to implement the findings of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

I visited all the major fire sites this season, and I was struck by the sense of spirit in those affected communities: how when things are tough people come together to help in another's moment of need. The sense of resilience and determination to rebuild lives and homes left me in awe of the courage of those whose lives were changed so quickly by forces beyond anyone's control.

I visited the Scotsburn area shortly after that blaze and saw the absolute devastation of houses poleaxed to the ground and families weeping — again, no lives lost. I went back shortly after to assess the recovery process.

The sense of community and love was remarkable. Dozens of people from all around Australia came together as part of BlazeAid to fix fences. They were strong of arm, clear of purpose and filled with great humour. We were cracking gags as they chowed down some rolls before they headed back into the hot sun to help people they had never met before. I saw people who had lost everything but were more concerned about their neighbours than themselves. I met people traumatised and shaking but surrounded by compassion and, most importantly, hope. I visited the Barnawartha fire and met brave firefighters, career and volunteer, who stood side by side protecting the community and putting their lives on the line.

Let us not forget the aircraft operators, be it the boys flown in from the US and Canada or our locally grown heroes, who, under the Andrews government, flew the largest aircraft fleet — 47 aircraft. They made an enormous difference time and again flying into circumstances and environments we can only possibly imagine.

I went to public meetings and watched how Emergency Management Victoria manages the trauma of fire and its consequence. Again at the forefront are those who work so hard for their community without expectation of reward. Their payoff is pride in the knowledge they have saved a neighbour's home.

The government, state, federal and local, has, as it should, helped those communities in the aftermath of the fire season, be it with emergency relief payments, emergency re-establishment grants, infrastructure grants or the national arrangements. These payments, however, are simply a support to the exceptional resilience, the exceptional pride and the exceptional love that these communities demonstrate time and time again.

There are many challenges facing these fire services, which is why the Andrews government introduced the fire services review. From that have come a range of recommendations, which we are implementing. We are committed to boosting the number of women who choose firefighting as a professional career. Both the MFB and the CFA have very limited numbers of women — about 3 per cent. I visited San Francisco and met with the chief of the San Francisco Fire Department, a woman called Joanne Hayes-White. Her fire department now comprises 16 per cent women, and she shared some terrific ideas as to how we can increase the role of women.

As the Minister for Emergency Services, I am so proud of our CFA and our firefighters, both career and

volunteer. All members of this house understand that volunteers are the lifeblood of the CFA and their local communities. They are people who band together to make an enormous contribution to the places in which they live. Along with their local footy clubs or bowls clubs, they bring people with common interests together. They represent our state at its best, and they selflessly dedicate themselves to the protection of life and property. They are loyal to each other, and they are loyal to their community. Their collective efforts can make the difference between life and death. They turn up — rain, hail, shine, fire, flood or anything else Mother Nature throws at them. They include State Emergency Service volunteers, firefighters, lifesavers who patrol our beaches and of course those who defend their towns from fire.

We can be so proud that there are around 60 000 Victorians who don the yellow uniform to turn out for the CFA. No other state in Australia boasts such a large number of citizens who make up the core of its firefighting defences. We know that we are in one of the most bushfire-prone regions on the planet.

As the house is aware, last year I signed an agreement to share Victoria's information and knowledge with the state of California because California faces the same problems that we face here. When we explained how our fire services owe such a debt to their volunteer brigades, the Americans were amazed. We are the envy of many as we cope with a changing climate that means extreme weather, such as fire and floods, will become more severe and more frequent.

In my role as Minister for Emergency Services I have travelled to every region of the state to meet with CFA brigades to see what the state government can do to help them do their difficult job. I have made dozens and dozens of visits to fire stations, firegrounds, training colleges, championships, graduations and receptions. One of the responsibilities and privileges I have enjoyed the most has been to shake the hands of and award medals to scores of volunteers and career firefighters to acknowledge the outstanding services they have given to the community. Many have served for decades, and the pride they take in a job well done is something money cannot buy. The Andrews Labor government is committed to making sure that our fire services function properly and that the efforts of all involved are acknowledged and respected.

Last year we made two key appointments which will shape the CFA for many years. We recruited former top police officer, Lucinda Nolan, to be the CFA's new CEO. I work closely with Ms Nolan. She is a creative, dynamic, modern and committed leader who will create

a stronger service, which in the end is about improving Victoria's protection and safety. Chief officer Joe Buffone is another outstanding leader who has vast fire operational experience. He knows what it takes to bring out the best in all our firefighters. The CFA is in very good hands as it heads down the path of progress and change. Change is not easy, but it is essential.

We return to where we started. There has been no agreement reached in this matter. Negotiations continue. They have been long, and some may say they have been arduous. However, here we stand with no agreement. The only agreement that will be reached is one that respects both paid and volunteer firefighters. Firefighters perform an important and often dangerous job for the community. It is right that career firefighters get proper wages and employment conditions. We respect the role that unions play in pursuing those conditions for their members.

The CFA and the government are committed to getting a new, balanced agreement that delivers for career and volunteer firefighters and, most importantly, provides a world-class fire service to the Victorian people that keeps them safe. This is not the time to create political footballs of our fire services. This is the time to stand together in support of our career and volunteer firefighters. While these have been long and difficult negotiations, the negotiations will only conclude with an agreement that provides respect to those tens of thousands of people — people who we have all met and who we are proud to say form part of our community. Only an agreement that respects that across our community will be entered into by this government.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — It is a pleasure to join the debate and to support the member for Gembrook in his matter of public importance (MPI) before the house. I put on the record what a great job he is doing as the Shadow Minister for Emergency Services. He is actually continuing the tradition from this side — joint parties of people who are very supportive of the Country Fire Authority (CFA). The previous minister, Kim Wells, the member for Rowville, and Peter Ryan, the former member for Gippsland South, both did a lot of work for the CFA when they were ministers, and the member for Gembrook is continuing that great work.

I say to the minister that her words of support for the CFA will be hollow words if she does not actually back them up by ruling out the most contentious clauses in the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) discussions. The volunteers are relying on her to stand up to the Premier, to stand up to United Firefighters Union

(UFU) secretary, Peter Marshall, and to stand up the UFU on behalf of the volunteers.

I was here with a number of my colleagues, including the member for Gembrook and the Leader of the Opposition, a few Saturdays ago when 421 fire appliances drove past the steps of Parliament House — something that was organised at about 24 hours notice to raise this issue and to make sure that particularly those who sit on that side of the house understood how important this issue is to the volunteers. One of the things they actually did was to bring flowers along for the minister because they believed that she was going to stand up for them and do the right thing by them as volunteers and not back the Premier and the UFU on this particular issue.

Graeme Jilbert from the Swan Hill brigade, who is actually the vice-president of the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), brought along some chocolates. I am not sure if the volunteers on the steps ate the chocolates or whether the minister actually got the chocolates from Graeme, but he brought those chocolates along because he had great faith in the minister that she would do the right thing by the volunteers. I ask that she not let the volunteers down on this particular issue.

Today is actually International Firefighters Day, so it is interesting that we are having this debate on this particular day. International Firefighters Day was set up after the tragic loss of five lives in Victoria in 1999 at the Linton fire burnover, so today is a special day for firefighters. We need to keep that in mind as part of this debate.

My very first role in public life as a 19-year-old was as secretary of the Jarklin volunteer fire brigade. When I bought my own farm I moved and was a member of the Yando fire brigade. I was on the roster there, taking the truck out and doing all the things you do as a firefighter. When I was elected to Parliament I had the pleasure of attending a dinner at Boort for the Yando fire brigade, where two of my neighbours received service medals for being volunteers for the fire brigade for 65 years. They had been in the fire brigade their whole lives, since it was formed back in the mid-1940s.

The point I am coming to is that since the mid-1940s the CFA has been a volunteer organisation, supported by paid CFA staff. It was born in volunteerism and it will continue in volunteerism. Our communities rely on those volunteers to make sure we are safe from fire. There are no paid firefighters living in my electorate. There are no career firefighters living in my electorate. If we have the situation of a house fire in Swan Hill,

with the new rules and this enterprise bargaining agreement, the volunteer firefighters of the Swan Hill brigade are going to have to stand there for more than 2 hours while the paid firefighters drive from Bendigo or drive from Mildura, which is more than 2 hours away in both directions.

I know that people on the other side are saying that that is ridiculous. Yes, it is absolutely ridiculous. But they are the words that are on the page. Volunteer firefighters will not be able to lift a hose until seven paid firefighters turn up at the fire scene. For somewhere like Swan Hill, Echuca or Kerang, let alone smaller towns like Ultima or Gunbower, that is just absolutely crazy. That is one of the clauses the Minister for Emergency Services needs to rule out. She needs to stop saying there has been no agreement reached yet, because people are worried. The volunteers are worried that they will not be able to do their job and the community is worried that the volunteers will not be able to do their job. The issue around that is a real problem for the communities that I represent and right across country Victoria, as is this consultative committee.

The consultative committee in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, according to the fire services report, is not working and should not be included in the enterprise bargaining agreement for the CFA. The last thing we want is the United Firefighters Union and Peter Marshall having the right of veto over management decisions that impact on our volunteers and their ability to deliver the services they deliver to our community.

The volunteer charter, something that is set out in black and white, has been owned by both sides of politics. I would hope that the minister and those who speak for the other side would recommit to this charter but also recommit to making sure they will actually abide by it. It is not just about the charter itself; it is about making sure they abide by it. It says that the volunteer charter:

... is an agreed commitment by the state of Victoria, CFA and VFBV on behalf of CFA volunteers to each other —

that it will be a volunteer organisation. It goes on to say that:

... policy development and change should always be considered in terms of its potential to support and facilitate the volunteer contribution and the particular situation of local brigades ...

It goes on further to say that the elected representatives of the VFBV will be consulted on changes into the future.

The secretary of the UFU got to meet with the Premier, but I have noticed that he has not been tripping over himself to meet with the volunteers on this particular issue. This matter is of real concern to the communities. We have all had lots of emails; I have had quite a few. One was from someone in the Dumbalk brigade in the electorate of the member for Gippsland South. He has a great name — Barry Auchterlonie — and is a firefighter down there. He said:

Volunteers devote their time and effort to supporting and protecting their community, and many of the UFU's demands threaten the autonomy and efficacy in which we can continue to do this job.

Colin James from Toolamba talks about the issues facing the CFA. He said:

... the most recent being the ongoing intrusion of the UFU into establishing policies that extend way beyond their charter to represent career firefighters and to impose their influence over the entire CFA.

I refer to the Montrose fire brigade. If this brigade is not in the Deputy Premier's electorate, it is very close to it, and we know what an interesting relationship he has with CFA volunteers in his electorate and the issue of whether he told them the truth or not coming up to the election. Craig Williamson of that brigade said:

This reported secret non-financial deal is a direct attack on the operational ability of the Country Fire Authority leadership to perform their legislative responsibilities, the volunteer system and the Victorian community.

That comment is from a lieutenant in a brigade in the Deputy Premier's electorate.

Andrew Winter from Paynesville fire brigade in the electorate of the member for Gippsland East wrote:

I cannot accept any clauses or agreement that ignores, diminishes or takes away the control of the CFA and reduces the role of volunteers in this world-class organisation.

Another email is from Mark Sandford from the Echuca Village fire brigade in my own electorate. He said:

The management team of the CFA do a fantastic job and have my full support; please don't let the UFU dictate what they can and can't do.

They are just a sample of the emails we are all receiving. Those volunteers are relying on the minister to do the right thing by them, to abide by the charter, to stick to what has been developed by both sides of politics in Victoria and to support our volunteers and that organisation. Minister, please rule out the most contentious clauses so that our firefighters can focus on doing what they do best, and that is fighting fires in the community. Rule out the seven-up that have to come

before firefighters can fight a fire. Rule out the right of veto. Rule out all of those sorts of things that are going to make it too hard for our volunteers to do their job in the future.

I am really concerned that if this EBA is agreed to, if the authority of the CFA is undermined and the strength of the volunteers is undermined, our communities are going to be at risk from fire in future, because there will not be the surge capacity of volunteers to go and fight not only the house fires or the small grassfires but the major campaign fires. If you look at the number of brigades that travel right across the state four and five days at a time to attend our campaign fires, it is those volunteers who are the core of that effort. We have got to make sure that we do not lose that surge capacity and lose that spirit of volunteerism here in Victoria because the government wants to honour an IOU with the UFU because of what it did in manning polling booths during the last election. That is what this is all about: it is about those firefighters who intimidated and bullied people at polling booths.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water) — I want to start today by acknowledging the amazing passion, commitment and care that both our volunteer and our career firefighters bring to keeping Victorians safe, whether it is in fighting grassfires, bushfires, structure fires, marine fires or tyre fires. I would like to acknowledge all of them, including — and especially today — firefighters with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, water authorities and the Environment Protection Authority Victoria. Some of them are project firefighters; some of them are employed by the departments, who give up their summers and their time to fight major fires. Over the last summer we saw environment department and agency staff give hundreds of thousands of hours to managing fires, particularly at Wye River.

I have had the absolute privilege as a local member and as a minister, both this time and last time around when I was the Minister for Community Services, to meet, work with, offer support to and see firsthand the amazing work that they all do.

I have been part of the Bellarine brigades for the past 14 years, whether it has been attending their dinners at various openings and award meetings, whether it is in fighting for and then going along to the opening of the Ocean Grove station and its various iterations — a new station that is now integrated, with 24-hour career staff and volunteers working together — whether it was with the new Geelong station or whether it was the recent decision I made around enabling the Portarlington

station to expand on Crown land in Portarlington. Then there is the new Manningham station, the refurbished Queenscliff station and the new equipment in Ocean Grove and Wallington. In fact I will soon be visiting the Wallington Country Fire Authority (CFA) to do a handover of a truck.

As I said, I see our firefighters, whether they are career or volunteer, out in our community each and every day, not just fighting fires but supporting a whole range of causes in our community. It has been a real pleasure to have that interaction with them over the years.

I will now turn to this matter. In my view this matter today should be that this house condemns those opposite for running a scare campaign on issues they know not to be true. It is a scare campaign that has the possible impact of causing significant rifts that will impact on the ground, the work and the cooperation between our volunteers and career firefighters. In fact over the last couple of weeks I have received a number of emails from Bellarine. I have read and responded to each and every one of the eight emails I have received from those Bellarine firefighters or family members who have written to me; I have responded to each and every one of them to assure them that those opposite are misleading them.

I have also spent a number of hours speaking to volunteers and career firefighters in my electorate. I have spoken to the first lieutenant of the Ocean Grove brigade. The senior leadership team of the volunteers at Ocean Grove said to me that this government needs to get this deal done and that those opposite are misleading the community and the volunteers in that electorate. Volunteers are concerned. That is why I speak to them when they contact me. I made it very clear that what is being said by those opposite is incorrect. In fact a number of the volunteers in my community are out there themselves speaking to other volunteers to say it is rubbish. It is complete rubbish what is being said by those opposite.

I want to make it clear: in communities like Bellarine we have volunteers who are career firefighters. We have volunteers at the Ocean Grove brigade who are career firefighters at the Geelong brigade. We have career firefighters who are volunteers and volunteers who are career firefighters. This is about integration and relationships on the ground in order to fight fires. That is what we do. I value each and every one of them. I value every volunteer in my electorate, I value every volunteer across the state and I value every career firefighter for what they do, whether they are in DELWP, Parks Victoria, the Country Fire Authority or the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Let us be clear about the facts: there is no deal; there is an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiation process underway. The EBA negotiation that I was recently involved in for my career firefighters was run through — as it should be — Industrial Relations Victoria (IRV). DEWLP, IRV, the Australian Workers Union and the Commonwealth Public Sector Union were involved in those negotiations; it was all done through that process. There was a negotiation for those career firefighters. Just like any other public sector worker in this state, they are part of a fair bargaining process. As the Minister for Industrial Relations said today, we have got IRV and we have got it resourced in order to manage EBA processes. They are negotiations. This is about getting a fair deal, a deal that needs to be done. We need to make sure that we have wages and conditions resolved for all our public sector workers and a fair deal for both our workforce and our volunteers.

There is no intention, nor has there ever been, to impact on volunteers. What we need to work out, and what both the fire services review said and the emergency management commissioner is working on, is how we build greater integration between our fire services and our paid workforce and our volunteer workforce, which is so critical.

The only threat to volunteers and career firefighters is those opposite, who cut out \$66 million last time they were in government and claimed there was no link between firefighting and cancers. Over the years they resisted presumptive legislation, fought and hid the Fiskville issue and put at risk volunteers. All we saw were funding cuts and a lack of investment in presumptive legislation. We are investing in new facilities and new equipment and in training and support for our volunteers and our career firefighters. In fact in the last budget I announced \$74 million for DELWP firefighters so that more project firefighters would be available for bushfires and for planned burning.

I had the absolute privilege at Christmas time to spend hours and days on end at the incident control centres in Colac and Wye River, supporting and working not only with the staff from the environment department but also with both CFA volunteers and career staff. I can tell those opposite that they might try to create a whole lot of problems and have a scare campaign, but on the ground people work side by side in the interests of the community. In aircraft management the CFA volunteer and paid staff work side by side, making decisions around where aircraft should go and around logistics and firefighting. Volunteers and paid staff work side by

side. That is the reality; that is the integrated service we need.

We need to value and to continue to value our volunteers. We need to acknowledge and value our career firefighters. They are critical for a future in fighting bushfires. We know we are going to have a higher risk of bushfires in the years to come; we know we are going to be drier and we are going to be hotter. We need to make sure that on the ground our volunteers are working side by side with our career firefighters, whether they are in the CFA or whether they are in the environment department and agencies. We need to know they are working side by side in our incident control centres, in our regional control centres and in the state control centre. Every time I walk into 8 Nicholson Street there are volunteers and paid staff working side by side in order to keep Victorians safe.

On this side of the house we are interested in making sure our volunteer staff have the training, the skills, the equipment and the presumptive legislation that are about supporting them into the future. On this side we are committed to getting a fair deal like with every other public sector worker through the EBA processes that we do day in, day out. This is about a fair deal for Victorians, a fair deal for our volunteers and a fair deal for our career firefighters. Those opposite may not have been able to achieve it, but on this side of the house we can achieve it, we will achieve it and we will continue to build an integrated fire service system in Victoria for the benefit of all Victorians.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — I rise to speak on the matter of public importance proposed by the member for Gembrook, and I do so on behalf of the Ripon electorate's Country Fire Authority (CFA) firefighters, brigade administrative support officers and other support staff. Ripon is home to some of the most fire-prone country in the world, from the Grampians region that seems to burn somewhere almost every year to the western environs of Ballarat that burnt this year at the Mount Bolton fires. Those of us in Ripon live surrounded by fire risk. We also live surrounded by 90-plus CFA brigades, rural and urban, which keep us safe from fire. They also attend car accidents, floods and other emergencies where there is no State Emergency Service unit available.

All of Ripon's fire brigades are volunteer brigades; there are no paid firefighters in Ripon's brigades. This is how it must be; the population density in most of Ripon and the nature of the fire season is such that paid fire stations operating across large rural areas will never work. So the proposed CFA enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) is of particular concern to the

firefighters of Ripon and the whole community. Any moves by the government to sign an EBA for paid firefighters that is not supported by CFA volunteers, including by individual brigades and their peak body, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, puts at risk lives and property in Ripon.

We are really here today because the Premier is bullying his Minister for Emergency Services. The *Age* editorial of last Saturday got it right. It says:

For generations, and through terrible tragedies, firefighters in this state have garnered tremendous goodwill. The UFU's —

United Firefighters Union's —

demands, though, are testing the limits of that goodwill. Stubbornness can be appropriate when it is for a worthy cause. Pigheadedness stemming from a quest for power is not.

Mr Andrews needs to wake up to himself. Behave like a leader and stop kowtowing to unions.

He also needs to stop bullying his minister. The minister has to come into this place day after day and attempt to answer our questions because she cannot resolve the negotiations. The Premier will not let her resolve them, because he wants to give in to the union's demands and she does not want to. So what does he do? He just bullies her.

Today one of the things we should think about is whether the clauses in this proposed EBA would breach the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, because a few parts of that act are pretty clear about the recognition of the authority as a volunteer-based organisation. To the extent that the EBA attacks that, one would have to say that the EBA goes against the act. I particularly want to talk about section 6F of the Country Fire Authority Act, which says:

The Parliament recognises that the authority is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

This act was last amended by the Country Fire Authority Amendment (Volunteer Charter) Act 2011. I was looking at the debate on that bill, and I turned to the contribution by the then member for Tarneit, the now Treasurer and member for Werribee. He noted:

My very first post-university employed job was as an official for what is now part of the United Firefighters Union.

Perhaps that explains a lot, because then he then went on to say:

It amazes me to learn, from having spoken to many of the volunteers in my community in Werribee, exactly what level

of altruism must motivate people to become volunteer firefighters.

He went on to say:

That level of contribution is quite outstanding.

And he went on to support the bill.

What did this bill do? It put into the act the volunteer charter. I will come to that in a minute, but the volunteer charter is now part of the act. Interestingly that volunteer charter was — and I am sure somebody from the other side will remind us of this — introduced by the Bracks government, and then it was signed by the Brumby government, but it was enshrined in legislation by the Baillieu government. I say to the Andrews government: it must recommit to this volunteer charter. I note that the Andrews government is the first government since the charter was introduced that has not signed this charter. I think this tells us quite a lot.

The then member for Tarneit went on to say that the bill:

... enshrines in legislation an integrated approach to service delivery, and that is critically important.

He concluded by saying:

The value of bipartisan support for this charter cannot be understated.

I do not know where the current government has gone wrong since then. At that time Labor members understood that volunteers are the backbone of the CFA and that we have to support them fully, but now they have this proposed EBA with clauses such as one providing that incident control cannot be by volunteers if there are paid firefighters on the fireground. There are uniform restrictions which are perplexing and which are vexing the minds of many volunteers because they do not understand why the professional firefighters must have a significantly visually distinguishable uniform that is only made available to them. Some aspects of firefighter uniforms are pretty similar because they are there to protect the firefighters. Is the Unighted Firefighters Union saying that only its members should get the appropriate kinds of uniforms? These are the sorts of clauses that people worry about.

All the way through this process the volunteers are concerned about control, and they have every right to be when there are clauses such as 36.4, which requires employees covered by the agreement to report only to operational employees under the agreement. This limits deputy group officers and other very experienced group

officers from controlling fire incident controls — and that is what they do; that is their job.

There are other clauses in this proposed EBA. The member for Gembrook mentioned clause 44.2.7 and clause 83.5, which require seven professional firefighters to attend a fireground incident before firefighting commences. In my part of the world that means that fires just do not get fought, everything will burn, yet the government will not rule this out.

Those of us on this side of the house have been talking about the CFA and recognising the need for independence of the CFA for some time, and I quote from the inaugural speech of Henry Bolte in 1947:

I appeal to all honourable members to try to bring about greater freedom for the brigades ... I am entirely in support of the idea, and I think every member who represents a rural area must also support it. To show how farcical the position is I would point out that there are brigades with effective equipment and plenty of manpower but without proper authority.

This proposed EBA goes to the heart of the authority of the CFA and its volunteer brigades. This will destroy the CFA, and that is why, prior to the last election, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria in an advertisement on 26 November said that Labor policy ‘has the potential to destroy the CFA’.

In my inaugural speech I called on the government to abandon this flawed attempt to pay off its union mates. It has not done that, and as a result we have this terrible, terrible situation where the volunteer fire brigades in this state are under sustained attack. It is about time this government just stopped, got rid of these clauses, understood that they are a terrible problem and got on with signing an EBA that does not hurt volunteers.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I am pleased to add my comments to this so-called matter of public importance (MPI). This MPI, which has been brought on by the member for Gembrook, is somewhat of a farce, because it is based entirely on misinformation and it looks to promote misinformation more and more.

Coming after the contribution made by the member for Ripon, who does not seem to understand where facts start, is a concern, but let me start by showing how ridiculous this debate has become. I will quote from a letter to the editor in last Saturday’s *Courier*. The author of the letter starts:

Can your readers imagine the following scenario? The Ballarat volunteer fire brigade in Barkly Street ‘closed’. The Wendouree volunteer brigade ‘closed’. The Sebastopol volunteer fire brigade ‘closed’. The Buninyong volunteer fire brigade ‘closed’.

And on it goes, and says:

Plus hundreds of fire brigades throughout the state of Victoria ‘closed’.

Who was the author of this letter? None other than Paul Jenkins, who of course was a member of this place who retired because of ill health back in 1999. Yet Paul Jenkins, Liberal Party member, loyal though he is to the Liberal Party, still thinks that he represents the Liberal Party in Ballarat, and he puts out letters to the editor telling people across Ballarat that all of our volunteer fire brigades across Ballarat are about to be closed because of actions by the Andrews Labor government. It just shows how stupid this debate has become, because it is based entirely on misinformation.

Let us make it clear. Paul Jenkins is a retired MP wanting to put his case. We heard the member for Ripon talking about similar sorts of situations. She was all woe, woe and woe, saying that all of our volunteer fire brigades would not be able to attend fires and what a disaster it was because all of these fires were burning out of control. That is simply not the case, because this misinformation is based upon suggestions that this government has resolved an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) with the United Firefighters Union (UFU), and that clearly has not happened. There has been no outcome on the EBA.

As members know, this EBA has been progressing slowly since February 2015. We know there has been a log of claims from the UFU, but there has been nothing signed and no agreement has been struck. There has been a lot of misinformation that has come out in recent weeks. The opposition, as oppositions do, likes to get its hands on anything it can to have a go at the government, so what better than a misinformation campaign around the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

We have heard from our minister today, as we have heard from our minister on numerous occasions over the term of this parliamentary sitting week and before, that no EBA has been agreed to and no EBA will be agreed to that is not fair and does not recognise the rights of both the career firefighters, who might be members of the UFU, and our volunteers. She has said again that no agreement will be struck that disadvantages our volunteers. We have heard that the minister has regularly attended meetings with the CFA across this state since she became a minister. She is a great active minister. She has attended CFA events with me out at Smythesdale. She has attended a range of other events where we have handed over the keys to new fire tankers and opened new fire stations. She has also attended events where awards have been given to

long-serving CFA volunteers. Clearly we appreciate the work of the CFA.

Over my time in Parliament I have met with representatives of all of my CFA brigades. At the moment I have over 16 volunteer brigades in my electorate. In my previous electorate of Ballarat East, which also took in the area from Daylesford through to Trentham and Kyneton, I had even more CFA brigades. I have been very pleased to meet with those brigades on many occasions and to be able to hand over keys to new fire tankers, which the brigades have been able to purchase with the support of the volunteer emergency services equipment program funding that has come from this government. The volunteer emergency services equipment program has been a great program, initiated under the Bracks government and continued under this government.

I have been able to attend openings of new fire stations on so many occasions, and I look forward, as a result of funding from this government, to attending the opening of a new Buninyong fire station in the not-too-distant future.

I have also appreciated firsthand the value of the great work that CFA firefighters did, because just ahead of the 2006 election, in November I had a fire burning across my own property in the Waubra area. It was a very anxious day for me. I happened to be at an event in Ballarat when I was called by my wife to say there was a fire burning across our property. She was at home just with our two children, who were under the age of five years at the time. She was having to react to the fire, which she had discovered started very near the front of our property and on a very windy, north wind day. It was quite an anxious moment. By the time I got to the property I found that the fire had mostly burnt across it. Thank heavens the CFA had been able to be out there.

At the time there were aircrews available to also help deal with the fire. I was so impressed to see that not only had neighbours come to assist but that something like 10 different brigades attended my place on that day and subsequent days to deal with the embers and to ensure that the fires were effectively put out and not allowed to continue to burn over the coming days. They did a fantastic job on my place at the time.

Of course more recently I have been out to the Scotsburn area following the December fire in that area of my electorate. I heard firsthand from CFA members of the great work that they did in very dangerous circumstances when the wind direction changed during the fire event and the fire took hold so quickly. They did a great job in saving the lives of all people involved

at the time and then in subsequent days both in supporting the community and also helping out to ensure that further works were done to address all the issues that follow on after a fire in terms of education of the community and so on. They did a great job.

It has been an honour for me over my years as a member of Parliament representing firstly the Ballarat East electorate and more recently the Buninyong electorate to be involved with the terrific volunteers who have supported our fire brigades from Ballarat to Millbrook, from Meredith to Linton and in all the rural communities across from there. I am delighted that as a result of the Andrews government's commitment of so much funding to the CFA, both in the last budget and in this budget, we have seen so much funding going to supporting the volunteer emergency services equipment program, which is so important to our brigades. They did a great job with their own fundraising, but this helps it to go much further, including assisting with the purchase of 20 new trucks that were constructed at Ballarat's SEM Fire and Rescue. That has been a great benefit not just to our fire brigades but to employment in Ballarat.

This government is very much aware of the great job that the CFA volunteers do and will continue to do for many years to come. This government has supported them in so many ways, and it will continue to support them. The matter of public importance in front of us today is, as I said at the beginning of my speech, a farce. It is based on misinformation that the conservatives wish to push for their own political ends. They do not worry about facts.

The fact of the matter is, as I said, that no enterprise bargaining agreement has been agreed to. We look forward to finalising the EBA with our firefighters, because whether they be career firefighters or volunteer firefighters, they do a great job in supporting our communities, helping to keep them safe from fire and of course doing the other work that CFA volunteers do, whether that be road rescue or other things some members of the career fighter brigade do. They are clearly strongly supported and will continue to be supported by the Andrews Labor government.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I am pleased to rise to join the debate on the matter of public importance (MPI) submitted by the member for Gembrook. As other speakers have said, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) is first and foremost a volunteer organisation and has been since just after the Second World War. Around all of Victoria 60 000 volunteers not only get out there 365 days a year to assist in fighting fires but also do other great work in their local communities,

such as fundraising for local events and really chipping in and helping out.

The crux of this MPI is that the Premier and the minister need to rule out these archaic and absurd clauses that are in the proposed enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) that is before the CFA board from the United Firefighters Union (UFU). The government is saying that the coalition is spreading misinformation, which is not correct. We have been quoting from the source document, which is the EBA itself. The government keeps saying that no agreement will be struck that disadvantages volunteers. I also remember this same government saying that not \$1 in compensation would be payable for not going ahead with the east–west link, but we are only at \$1.1 billion, and counting, so you cannot take the word of these people at all.

I will start with one particular clause of the EBA, clause 44.2.7, which requires the presence of seven firefighters on the fireground prior to the commencement of operations save and except where otherwise agreed between the UFU and CFA. I am quoting from the direct source document, which is the EBA document. That is what I am quoting from. That is where all these things are coming from. They are not coming from things that the member for Ripon happened to make up in a dream last night. This is from the source document. In fact, I say to the minister at the table, the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, that I would actually seek leave to table this source document, the EBA.

Mr Foley — You don't need to.

Mr KATOS — No! You are not listening. I sought leave to table a document.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! Is the member seeking leave?

Mr Foley — I oppose it on principle.

Mr KATOS — There you go; it is opposed. So the minister says it is — —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ryall) — Order! There is a process to go through.

Mr KATOS — There you go. The minister said it is already publicly available. If it is already publicly available and we have been quoting from this document in all our contributions today, how on earth can any government member say that we are spreading misinformation? It is a publicly available document, as the minister says. So we are quoting from this

document. We are not making this up. We have not got together this morning over a cup of herbal tea and decided that we would do this.

As I said, clause 44.2.7 requires that there be seven firefighters on the fireground. That would mean that you would need to have seven career firefighters on the fireground before volunteers can start fighting a fire. I will put that into context. I do not have any integrated stations in my electorate, but I have nine volunteer stations. The closest to an integrated station is Belmont, on the corner of Reynolds Road and Colac Road, which is also known as the Princes Highway. Say, for example, a fire broke out in Grossmans Road, Torquay. That is 17.4 kilometres from the closest integrated station. It is just coincidental that the Torquay CFA is in Grossmans Road, Torquay. If a fire broke out in Grossmans Road and those firefighters turned out, they would be standing there literally holding their hoses, waiting for the Belmont CFA to turn up, because under this clause they would not be permitted to start until seven firefighters were on the ground.

Another example is the Bellbrae CFA in School Road. Incidentally this brigade is at a new station that the coalition government funded with a half-million-dollar commitment to the people of Bellbrae. If a fire broke out in School Road, Bellbrae — for example, at the Bellbrae Primary School; I do not wish that upon the primary school and I certainly would not want that, but I am just using an example — it is 18.5 kilometres from the Belmont CFA.

The school is next door to the Bellbrae CFA, so again those volunteer firefighters would be standing there holding their hoses, waiting for the integrated station firefighters to turn up. It is absolutely ridiculous. It is almost like it is out of this 1950s England closed shop, with these absurd work practices.

The list of station wear is just ridiculous. The UFU wants to be able to dictate that volunteer firefighters cannot wear the same uniform as them. At an Anzac Day ceremony or on Remembrance Day CFA firefighters would not be able to wear the ceremonial uniform, because the UFU might dictate that they cannot. It beggars belief that in this modern day and age, with our modern industrial relations and our modern civilised society, we have these archaic, almost caveman concepts. It is absolutely ridiculous.

The veto of the CFA board is the main point of contention. The UFU wants to set up this consultative committee to have the power to veto the decisions of the CFA board. Where else in the public sector or where else in the private sector would the union in

negotiating with the employer then have the right to veto the decision of management or the board? It does not happen anywhere in the private sector. The only other example is obviously the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, which the minister herself has described as a disaster.

It is absolutely ridiculous if you look at some of this stuff — for example, union firefighters to only report to other paid staff and not to volunteers when responding to incidents. You might have a CFA controller, a volunteer with 30 years of fire experience, attending a fire, and they have got a UFU professional firefighter who has had 6 months experience. The UFU firefighter would not be able to take instructions from a volunteer firefighter who has 30 years experience. This is absolutely ridiculous. So 30 years of knowledge and experience in fighting fires would be thrown out the window. Two chains of command would be established and we would have this absurd situation which is actually dangerous. It just beggars belief. It is absolutely crazy.

The government's commitment to get more women into the CFA was mentioned earlier, which I think is a very noble commitment and a good commitment. Yet the UFU went to the court to prevent more women from going into the CFA. This is caveman knuckles-grinding-on-the-ground stuff. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Another government commitment was a commitment to a post-traumatic stress disorder trial. This just demonstrates the mindset and mentality of Peter Marshall and the UFU. I will quote a story from the *Herald Sun* of 16 February, which says:

The post-traumatic stress disorder trial was promised by Labor.

But in a letter to Emergency Management Victoria chief Craig Lapsley, seen by the *Herald Sun*, Mr Marshall attacked a plan to set up a trial at the Austin Hospital as a 'repugnant interference from an organisation that has no right to put in place a commitment that was made by the Andrews government to the UFU'.

So he is calling Emergency Management Victoria a 'repugnant organisation'. It continues:

He says an organisation representing volunteer firefighters is something 'that we are neither interested in nor have any involvement in'.

That just shows the mentality of the UFU. It is a clear separation and takeover attack. Its clear role is to get rid of every volunteer firefighter in this state. That is what UFU officials want. They want absolute control and they want paid firefighters in every station. It is

absolutely absurd what this EBA is proposing. Members on this side of the house have stated clearly that we have no issue with the government negotiating in good faith with the union, but absurd, ridiculous, archaic conditions or clauses such as this need to be ruled out immediately by the Premier and the minister.

I give credit to the minister. To this point she has fought hard, but it is clear now that we have a federal election coming on that Bill Shorten has no doubt got on the phone and said, 'We don't want these UFU guys campaigning against us. Fix it, Daniel. We can't have them going out and campaigning against us and donating to and supporting the Greens'. Because all of a sudden that is what all of this is about.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — I am pretty happy to rise on this matter of public importance, because it is absolutely true that the Country Fire Authority (CFA) is very important and is worthy of being discussed in this place. The CFA is very important to my community, and it has been for a very long time.

As I was growing up in Research there were still the remains of the 1967 fire that razed much of our community. I think there were only about two houses left. Many of the trees around my house still bore the scars of that fire. I remember making sandwiches with my mum and a bunch of other women in 1983 when many members of my community went off to fight the Ash Wednesday fires. The CFA is a very important part of my community, and it is a part that I respect deeply.

I also want to talk about Black Saturday, where five people I knew died in those fires — people I had grown up with, people I had walked the streets of Research with, people with whom I had spent a lot of time in my childhood and knew as an adult. The CFA again played a very important part in those fires, which is why I think it is outrageous that those opposite would say that members on this side of the house do not care about the CFA and do not care about volunteers in the CFA. The CFA plays an incredibly important part in my life, in my community's history and in the history of all Victorians. We know the long history of this volunteer fire service, and we know exactly how important it is to our community. We respect CFA firefighters, and we always have and we will continue to do so.

It is just petty politics to try to divide people on this. It is absolutely disgusting that those opposite want to play politics with something that is so important to people and is something that people have a deep commitment and attachment to. It is just unbelievable that those opposite have such a deficit in the area of policy that they have to play divisive politics in an attempt to split

the CFA down the middle by getting them to fight over something which does not exist. It just does not exist. The enterprise bargaining agreement has not been signed. There are still negotiations going on. The attempt of those opposite to create a firestorm over this issue is just a disgrace.

They should instead be participating towards a resolution, not trying to upset people, concern people, worry people and take people away from their day-to-day lives and get them upset about an issue that does not exist. It is just disgraceful that the politics of those opposite has descended to such a low level. It is absolutely terrible. The way that they demonise anyone who stands up for this community is just terrible. Those opposite care the least about this state. What they want to do is demonise those who care the most about this state and the people who live in it. That includes nurses, paramedics, teachers and, yes, firefighters. I really think those opposite need to have a good, hard look at themselves, start to focus on policy and stop playing divisive politics and trying to split this state. They should just stop it.

We know that there are negotiations to be had. We know that all of the parties in these negotiations care about this state. They have a passionate interest in the state. The CFA does, the volunteers do, the United Firefighters Union does, the state government does, the Premier does and the minister does. They all care about this state, and they all want a good outcome. They just have different ideas on how to get there, and that is what negotiations are about. Negotiations are an ongoing conversation. To try to hamper or hinder these conversations with divisive politics is just plain stupid.

I want to congratulate and thank the former member for Eltham for his role in securing \$9.6 million for the new Eltham CFA station in the 2010–11 budget. Thanks to the hard work of the former member for Eltham, that money was allocated to my community in the 2010–11 budget. It was allocated before the razor gang of the coalition came in and decimated the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the CFA. Those opposite came in and ripped out \$66 million. That is what they ripped out, and they have the temerity to tell us that we do not care about our fire services. That is just crazy.

My community will not believe that. After spending \$9.6 million building a new CFA station, after a new fire truck was delivered to Research last year and after \$50 000 was allocated in this budget to extend the CFA station at Research, I think actions speak louder than words. We have acted and shown how important our emergency services are to this government and to our community. We have acted. We do things; we get on

with it. Unlike those opposite, we do not play divisive politics, because that is all we have at our disposal. We actually care about our communities, and we invest in them.

Those opposite neglected our fire services for four years when they were in government. For four years they twiddled their thumbs and continued this idea of divisive politics, which they have continued in opposition.

Mr Nardella — They're good at it.

Ms WARD — They are very good at it; they are absolutely good at it. In fact it is the one thing that they excel at, and it is an unfortunate skill to have, I can tell you.

I also want to talk in the time I have left about Fiskville and the very interesting history that has been unravelled in relation to it. Fiskville has reinforced to me the importance of the CFA and how emotionally connected the CFA is to our communities and vice versa. What it also shows relates to the member for Gembrook, who is busy standing up, shouting to the rafters and carrying on like a pork chop today. How long did he stay on the Fiskville committee for?

Mr Edbrooke — How long?

Ms WARD — About 5 minutes.

Mr Edbrooke — Why?

Ms WARD — He was too busy. He was too busy to stay on the Fiskville committee and actually learn about the issues — the chemical pollution that happened at Fiskville and the things that led to its closure. He was too busy to actively contribute to that committee and to contribute to our investigation. It was an important investigation, and I commend the government for doing it, because it has been very important to let both our volunteer firefighters and our professional firefighters know the extent of the pollution at Fiskville and what it means for them — because the last thing that we want is for our firefighters to have uncertainty. We want them to be secure. That is exactly what those opposite are providing — they are providing uncertainty through their divisive politics.

Those opposite did not take any action on Fiskville. In fact what they did was allow \$6 million to go from Bangholme to Fiskville, not to clean it up but to build more buildings. They built more buildings at Fiskville. They did not clean it up. So I just find it unbelievable that they can stand here today and talk to us about how they support our fire services and how important those

services are. These are empty words — they are not actions — and those opposite have not done anything to seriously enhance our firefighters, whether they are volunteer or whether they are professional. The unbelievable hypocrisy of how those opposite present themselves in this place is just terrible.

I welcome the \$80 million that this government is going to put into decommissioning and remediating Fiskville, because I can tell you it is a mess. It is a mess of pollution on that site, and I am glad that this government has faced that, has recognised it and will do something about it. I am also glad that we are looking for a new facility for that district — that we are looking for a new place where the CFA can train its staff — because we know that the CFA does take training seriously, that it does want to train volunteer and professional firefighters and that it does want to have a service that keeps not only the community safe but also its firefighters. I welcome this government's contribution to that, I really do.

This is another example that highlights the investment, the real money and the real energy that this government and the Labor Party are prepared to put into our CFA. I reiterate the point again: actions speak louder than words. All that we have from those opposite are just empty words to try to create division. We do not have a real investment in our emergency services by those opposite. What they want to do, because they are a policy deficit zone, is create hysteria, drum people up and make people afraid. That is the only way they think they can get votes, because they have got nothing else going for them. That is all they have got going for them.

I want to say to the CFA volunteers in my electorate, who are great people, who are fun people and who care about their community — they do fun runs to raise money for other services within the community, they are there to help out on Anzac Day and they do a variety of things in our community, along with fighting fires — that they do have the support of this government and that we do respect the work that they do. Can I say on international Star Wars Day to my CFA: may the fourth be with you.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) — It gives me pleasure to rise to speak on the very important matter of public importance proposed by the member for Gembrook. Just to paint a picture from a local perspective in the electorate of Morwell, over the past decade we have had some of the most serious and complex sets of fires in our region. I well remember in December 2006, only a matter of weeks after the 2006 election, a fire that emanated from Coopers Creek. It went through our

district in the area of Toongabbie and Cowwarr and a number of homes were lost. Unfortunately at that time there was one fatality. It impressed on me straightaway, even though I had known a number of Country Fire Authority (CFA) personnel over a period of time, the importance of the role our CFA volunteers and indeed our career firefighters play in our communities in incredibly difficult times. Post the fires in December 2006 a whole series of fires that have occurred in our region have been enormously complex and large in nature.

In my electorate we have two integrated fire stations in Morwell and Traralgon. In discussing this issue I do not think there would be anybody who would debate the fact that career firefighters absolutely deserve fair pay and conditions. That is not in dispute. But what is in dispute — and this is certainly the feedback that I have had from those involved in local fire services — is that for the Premier to intervene in this enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) dispute, where there are serious divisions that diminish the functions and powers of the CFA, is simply unacceptable. Some might say, 'That is very well for you to say', but this is the theme that is coming through from a number of people who have written directly to the Premier and to the Minister for Emergency Services and copied me into the correspondence. It has been in local media reports as well.

An article in the *Latrobe Valley Express* of 2 May this year, under the heading 'Volunteer fears', says:

District 27's volunteer firefighters say they have been left in the dark while enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations continue with their paid counterparts.

As details of a draft agreement were leaked in recent weeks, volunteer fires have raised concerns regarding what the implications would be for their services.

It is understood the agreement with the United Firefighters Union would see a string of changes to current volunteer practices.

This is of concern to local volunteers, who say while they support the paid firefighters' quest for better pay conditions, they do not support a proposed shift in governance.

'It's when it impacts the volunteers and their job, that's where the issue lies', Yallourn North Fire Brigade volunteer Lance King told the *Express*.

That is just one example of a local perspective.

Andrew Ford from Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria was also quoted in this article. He is reported to have said:

... VFBV would not agree to surrender proper management and operational functions or 'to marginalise volunteers as the union demanded'.

'It has become clear to volunteers that the Premier went behind the minister's back and reached a deal with UFU branch secretary Peter Marshall which gives the union virtually all it wants' ...

In terms of that response and that article, it is mindful to reflect on some other significant incidents that have occurred in my electorate over these past years. I think we have students from Boolarra Primary School and Thorpdale Primary School in the gallery today. Their community was impacted severely by bushfires in January 2009 — not the Black Saturday bushfires but the January fires in 2009. The Boolarra community, led by its CFA captain, Todd Birkbeck, did an amazing job in protecting the community. It is very hard to describe; you had to be there to see how close this fire came to destroying the town. The volunteers in that brigade and surrounding brigades did an amazing job in protecting the community. Having said that, a number of homes were lost in that community and that was obviously devastating for those families. At the same time the Yinnar community was impacted by those fires.

We all well remember the terrible fires of February 2009, the Black Saturday bushfires. Again, our community was severely hit by those devastating fires. To contemplate now that 173 lives were lost across our state during that fire is hard to fathom. Unfortunately a number of local fatalities occurred and hundreds of homes were lost. It was just awful. In more recent times we have had the Hazelwood mine fire, a fire that ran for 45 days and created the most horrendous conditions. Career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, all agencies and departments — local, statewide, and firefighters from interstate and overseas — came to support each other during those difficult times.

The point I am making is that the respect for our firefighters in the community — and I do not differentiate between career and volunteer firefighters in this — is enormous, particularly given what they have been through in the past decade. There is not one iota of doubt about that.

I have received further comments from CFA volunteers on the EBA dispute. One comes from the captain of the Traralgon East fire brigade, who sent an email to the Premier and to the minister, amongst others, including me. I will not read out his whole email; I will just read the penultimate paragraph in which he said:

As a volunteer of 17 years and a current captain, I have grave fears of our CFA and I truly believe that our summer surge capacity and the public are at risk. If the UFU is successful on obtaining these requests, the CFA will lose many of its

volunteer members through resignation en masse. Furthermore, I am completely disgusted in the way the CFA logo is being covered up with the UFU log. Volunteer firefighters are then asked to drive these appliances to community events and emergencies.

As volunteers, we love our CFA and will always serve diligently. The logo is our pride. I will be asking other members not to accept a CFA vehicle which bares such markings on community events.

In the last couple of days I received another email — again it was addressed to the Premier — this time from Lieutenant John Holland of the Morwell fire brigade. In this correspondence John Holland, as a senior volunteer officer, expressed his personal dismay at these matters. I will read out part of his email, which says:

There is considerable disquiet within the volunteer ranks and if things turn out with the UFU EBA as reported, volunteers will be made redundant, especially at integrated stations such as Morwell. The current staff at Morwell are quite good to work with; however, if the rules change, they will have little choice and will have to work within their EBA. I fear that this would lead to quite a number of our members leaving the CFA as they will not feel valued or needed, which would be a great shame to say the least. We are currently fighting an uphill battle to keep our members engaged and feeling valued as it is.

He goes on to say:

Finally, if our Premier caves in to all the UFU demands, good luck with the future of the CFA. I have had over 30 years service with CFA and I am deeply concerned, not so much for me, but for our next generation of volunteers coming through. I have made lifelong friends over the years involved and have enjoyed all of my time serving the community (well, almost all).

They are not my words, they are not the words of coalition members, they are the words of our volunteers at ground level, many of whom have given decades of service to our community.

I cannot remember who it was who was speaking recently who mentioned attending CFA functions and events. It is one of the privileges and thrills of being members of Parliament. Each time you go to these events or award ceremonies, the volunteers say how proud they are to be part of a CFA family. Indeed the volunteers themselves can only do what they do with the support of family and friends. In my view, there is no more noble profession or volunteerism than that which occurs within our community. For people to take massive chunks out of their personal lives to serve and protect our communities is a noble profession. I was pleased that when the coalition was in government it was able to invest substantially in a whole range of station upgrades and in new vehicles across our CFA community. But might I say that the message to the Premier is loud and clear: do not diminish the functions

and powers of the CFA and make sure you respect our CFA volunteers.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) — I rise to speak on the matter of public importance. I quote the honourable member for Gembrook, who said, ‘I am going to talk about the politics of this’. That is all the honourable members from the other side of the house are talking about. They are talking about the politics and are pitting against each other and dividing the volunteers and the paid firefighters. They are causing divisions within the firefighting services not because it is going to benefit the volunteers and not because it is going to benefit the career firefighters but because they want the political benefit of volunteers supporting them.

If you have a look at what this process is all about, you see that the process is about the United Firefighters Union (UFU) negotiating its log of claims, and I will come back to talk about the honourable member for Gembrook, who does not understand the difference between a log of claims and an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA). I will go through that, although I might have to do it in crayon so he gets to understand it. I will do that for him. This issue is about the union negotiating its EBA through a log of claims that it has put forward — and honourable members have referred to that log of claims — to sort this out. What are we sorting out? We are sorting out the mess that was left to us by the Geoff Shaw government, by the legacy of the Geoff Shaw Liberal-Nationals party government that could not negotiate an EBA with a union to save its life. In actual fact it lost government because it could not negotiate EBAs not only with the UFU and the firefighters but with the ambulance officers and other workers represented by unions in its four long, dark years of empty government on this side of the house. We are sorting out this mess.

Let me explain to honourable members on that side of the house what a log of claims is and what an EBA is. A log of claims is what the employees and the union put before the employer and say, ‘These are the things that we would like to have. This is an ambit claim that we have that we are putting to the employer’. It is then up to the employer through negotiations to say either, ‘Yes, we want this’, or, ‘No, this is not acceptable’ and to negotiate that through. From the way that the honourable member for Gembrook has been speaking it is as though the EBA is the log of claims and the log of claims has been put in place as an EBA. He has no understanding of what happens. He spent 15 minutes talking politics, telling untruths and not putting to this house the reality of what is in actual fact on EBA and a log of claims.

We have this situation where members of the Liberal and National parties believe that this is the way they are going to get back onto this side of the house — by causing these divisions and by sending out emails and propositions to volunteers that are absolutely false. We have documents from the Mr Simon Ramsay, a member of Legislative Council, who is part of this process of geeing up the volunteers, of getting people to come to Parliament, of opposing the career firefighters — the paid firefighters — and of spreading those untruths that cause these divisions. Honourable members can see this; all they need to do is contact a volunteer fire brigade officer, one of the volunteers, because it has been emailed to them.

Then we have other information from the Leader of The Nationals. He came in here today, and what did he say? I will repeat what he said to this house. He said, ‘If I have a fire in Swan Hill, I then have to wait 2 hours for a crew of seven to come from Bendigo to go up to Swan Hill to put out the fire’. That is what he said. This mistruth, these outrageous statements that have been made by the Leader of The Nationals, is what this is all about. This political campaign is from the Liberal and National parties, whose members have not had an original policy or idea in their heads for the last 18 months. All members opposite want to do is cause division and cause the volunteers to fight the career firefighters, not to work in partnership. It is all about division.

It is all about those on the other side making sure of their position. What were they doing? The Leader of The Nationals said it. He said, ‘I was out the front with the volunteers. I got the photo opportunity; I got the video going’. He had the honourable member for Kew out there, I suppose, with the video camera. He turned it around and took a couple of selfies as well, then it was over to the Leader of the Opposition. That is what this is all about. That is what this matter before the house is all about. It is all about division and all about their political fortunes.

We are not going to put up with it. We are fixing up their mess. We are sitting down with the union to try and sort out the mess that opposition members left. To say that these negotiations are easy is wrong. They are not easy, but I tell you what: we are all genuine on this side of the house about trying to sort this out, but sorting it out means respecting the role of volunteers and making sure that volunteers are taken into consideration in these negotiations. It also means respecting the role and the right of the UFU to negotiate on behalf of its members — and one of the things those on the other side of the house in the Liberal Party and

the National Party have never respected is the role of trade unions in our society and in our community.

They do not believe in trade unions. The member for South Barwon said that this is all about the 1950s. Does the member for Eltham remember him saying that? This is all about the dark days — they were his words — of the 1950s, where you had trade unions, the representatives of the workers, discussing their conditions and salaries with the employer. Those opposite opposed that. At every opportunity they oppose trade unions negotiating for and representing their members and oppose workers out in the field who are trying to get the best for their members.

We do not believe in this divisive and conflictual campaign — this negative, nasty campaign against paid career firefighters here in Victoria. Instead of using their good offices and their good reputation — what is left of it after the Geoff Shaw government was defeated — to actually get the parties together and sort this out, those opposite are all about division. Not only are they about creating divisions in the firefighter area, but they are also about creating divisions within our society and within our communities. They stand condemned for bringing this matter of public importance before the house. They stand condemned because they have not got any solutions. They have no way of sorting through these difficult, complex issues. All they want to do is to be in front of a video camera. All they want is a camera taking photos of the member for Gembrook and the Leader of the Opposition out there supposedly being on the side of volunteers, but nowhere on the side of the paid firefighters who should also be respected.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — Well, that just continues a very, very bad day for the member for Melton after his disgraceful comment today during question time about the three young girls in Lakes Entrance needing to call 000. I can tell you one call he needs to make to 000 — he needs to call 000 to get a paramedic, because from the way he is behaving in this chamber I do not think he is very far off needing a paramedic himself. In fact when I was elected to Parliament he was sitting over there. He is now sitting further over there. I think his next seat will be in the public gallery, because that is where the member for Melton is heading. After his contribution today I can say that that is a wasted 10 minutes of my life.

Prior to that we heard from the member for Eltham. It is always interesting to follow the member for Eltham and some of her comments, but let me just pick up on one thing that she said about what she told her Country Fire Authority (CFA) members. I can give one suggestion to

the member for Eltham: why does she not go out to the CFA stations and listen to the 60 000 volunteers instead of going to the station and telling them what to do. Because what she is telling them is that the United Firefighters Union is looking to take over the CFA and that the union is proudly supported by this government.

Let me take a little step back in time to a time when the coalition government, as it did in the past, will today and will in the future, proudly supported our CFA, and in particular our 60 000 volunteers who have proudly served the CFA and continue to do so. Of course when you grow up in a small town like Pakenham the CFA is its heart and soul, and it continues to be the heart and soul of small country towns throughout Victoria today. I can remember a couple of situations in my lifetime where the CFA took on the mantle of protectors of our local community. I hark back to 1983 and the Ash Wednesday fires. What a tragic moment that was for the state of Victoria, where we lost 75 lives and would have lost hundreds, if not thousands, more if it had not been for our treasured CFA.

I can remember working in the city at that time. I caught the last train home to Pakenham. Smoke was filling the air and the train was stopped at Officer. We thought that we probably were not going to get through to Pakenham, but luckily we did. I met dad at the newsagency. The town was covered by smoke and there was an air of anxiety amongst our volunteer CFA members who had reached the station earlier in the day to attend fires right throughout the district. It was certainly a town on high alert. We looked to our CFA members then, as we do today, to act above and beyond what any member of the public should do. But they did it and they did it proudly, and they do it to this day and will continue to do so.

Later on that night there was a famous boxing match being held at the Melbourne town hall. There was the great Barry Michael fighting Frankie Ropis. I will never forget turning to Dad at about 10.00 p.m. in about round 8 and I said, 'Dad, perhaps we should be making a call and seeing if we should vacate the premises', and he said, 'Mate, I'm not leaving this TV until this fight's done'. So there was no way in the world that we were going to leave our house watching Barry Michael overtake Frankie Ropis in the late rounds of that great fight at the Melbourne town hall in 1983. Certain things sit in your mind and that was certainly one of them, because we knew with great comfort that we were surrounded by our wonderful CFA volunteers who would protect our community.

Then of course a few years later we did have a house fire, and I can remember to this day when the CFA

turned up we were out on the footpath and within an instant its volunteers had jumped up on the roof, taken off some roof tiles and put the fire out in one of the bedrooms. Again, it was CFA volunteers that proudly were called into action.

Of course in more recent times there have been the Black Saturday bushfires. What a tragic day for the state of Victoria where we lost 173 lives. At the time, I was living in Beaconsfield Upper, one of the areas that was ravaged by fire, and with 45-degree heat I was certainly looking for some guidance on that particular day. I had the family at home, and we were gravely concerned. It was not until the CFA turned up that day that we were provided with advice and guidance, and to this day I thank the CFA. This is echoed in the Pakenham township and surrounding areas and around the state of Victoria.

Townships like Pakenham and many other communities throughout Victoria hold their CFA units in the highest of esteem. Back in the days in Pakenham the siren would be sounded at 7.00 p.m. on a Wednesday night and again at 10.00 a.m. on a Sunday morning just to make sure things were in order. We knew back then that the CFA was the protector of our community, and it was highly respected in our area. Families like the Ramsdales, the Websters and the Marshalls come to mind when I talk about or think of the CFA volunteers.

The reason I mention that and a little bit of history is to make a point that the 60 000 CFA volunteers in Victoria today feel as if they are under threat from this government. This government that has been supported and will continue to be supported by the United Firefighters Union (UFU) has shown itself to be subservient to a union that is putting demands on the CFA which are completely untenable and for which we cannot stand. That is why this coalition opposition is proudly standing up for our CFA volunteers today.

I note that the Minister for Emergency Services has shown some support for the CFA, but she has not been supported at all by the Premier, who has organised side meetings with the UFU secretary, Peter Marshall. He has gone behind the minister's back, which is another issue for the government to deal with. Again today in question time the Minister for Industrial Relations refused to answer a question about whether she was at that meeting as well, so obviously there is a bit of turmoil in the government.

The heart of the subject, however, is that by allowing certain conditions in this enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) to even be discussed, the government

is refusing to show support for CFA volunteers. It is not ruling out the most ridiculous clauses in this EBA to date. It is refusing to rule them out. However, I think it is important that we remind this government what the CFA is all about. Members do not need to look any further than section 6F of the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, which clearly states:

The Parliament recognises that the authority is first and foremost a volunteer-based organisation, in which volunteer officers and members are supported by employees in a fully integrated manner.

This EBA, if it is left to stand as it is, will place that relationship in jeopardy. It will make the CFA unworkable. It is totally disrespectful to all CFA volunteers. Some changes need to be made. This EBA cannot be supported. We are calling on the Minister for Emergency Services, the Premier, the Minister for Industrial Relations and this government as a whole to not support this EBA but to support instead our CFA volunteer firefighters, who have shown their support to the state of Victoria for over 70 years

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) — I wish to make a small contribution to the debate on this matter. What I would like to say is simply that it is very much the government's position that the member for Gembrook is so good in his persuasive powers — I agree that he is good, but I do not know if he is that good — that he can persuade 60 000 volunteers to his way of thinking. The government thinks he can persuade them that the words in the enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) do not mean what they say they mean but that they instead mean what the member for Gembrook is telling them they mean. The government believes the member for Gembrook is so good that he can get 421 fire appliances brought into this city by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers of this state because they cannot understand the words that are in black and white in this draft EBA. If that is the position of this government — that the member for Gembrook has persuaded 60 000 volunteers to his way of thinking, even though the EBA does not say that — then I congratulate the member for Gembrook, because that is a very good job.

But the fact of the matter is that that is not the case. The fact of the matter is that the member for Gembrook has presented the lines of the EBA to the volunteers and they have drawn their own conclusion. They have drawn the conclusion that this government is trying to pull the wool over their eyes and bring United Firefighters Union control into the CFA, a proud organisation that was brought into existence as a volunteer organisation that is supposed to be supported by paid members, not taken over by paid members. If

the position of this government and the position of those opposite is that the 60 000 volunteers cannot work it out for themselves and are being led by this side of the house because they do not even understand what is there in black and white, that is an unreasonable position. I say if the government says that the agreement is not finalised, it should rule out those unfair clauses.

APPROPRIATION (2016–2017) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) — As I said earlier, the budget for Geelong is one of the best budgets I think I have ever seen from a Labor government. Located at Gordon TAFE in the city, the tech school will be a significant development for Geelong. It will be a state-of-the-art tech school that many of our young people are already looking forward to attending. It is the biggest ever investment in modernising, upgrading and regenerating Geelong schools.

The Minister for Education was in Geelong some time ago when we were running the education state forums. He saw presentations from students from all the secondary schools in my electorate. All of those students had a say about what they thought needed to happen in our education system. They praised their teachers — they thought their teachers were fantastic — but much of what they said was about the environment in which they were learning. They thought they needed a much better learning environment and that governments needed to invest in their future. This is exactly what the Minister for Education has done. For example, Belmont High School — a great school — has old buildings.

Mr Katos interjected.

Ms COUZENS — I know the member for South Barwon went to Belmont high, so he has an attachment to it. I am sure he is very happy that we committed to Belmont high, as are the teachers and students. Belmont high has very run-down buildings going back to the 1970s. The students there made it very clear that what they wanted was a state-of-the-art learning environment, which is exactly what we are going to give them.

It is similar for Manifold Heights Primary School. Funding has been provided for renovations to that school's toilet area to enable students to use the toilet safely. That was a situation where there was an outside door to the toilet block right next to a very low fence

bordering the street, and there was always concern about the safety of children because of predators who may have been lurking in the street and may access the toilet. I am very happy that we were able to provide the funding to ensure that those children will always be safe at that school.

Matthew Flinders Secondary Girls College is a fantastic school in the heart of the Geelong CBD. It has very old and historic buildings that need a lot of work. We have committed to upgrading that school, particularly its heritage areas which are really important to those students. Then there is Oberon High School, which is interesting because it is interested in looking at consulting with its community about whether it stays in that location or moves to Armstrong Creek. A lot of work is being undertaken there. However, that will take some time, so we have allocated funding to at least keep that school at a reasonable maintenance level until such time as a decision is made and that decision will be made by the school community.

We had already committed to rebuilding Whittington Primary School. That was a commitment that had been previously made. What we have also committed to is looking at building a community hub attached to the school. The reason for the hub is that with the high level of disadvantage in the Whittington community, Whittington Primary School has played a vital role in taking care of that community and providing the services and support that young families need in that area by running a playgroup to provide a connection with the school because there are very few services in the area. It is a very isolated area in the sense that there is just one entrance and one exit, and we are looking at that as well.

The community hub concept is fantastic. I and a number of other people have looked at what has been done in other areas, particularly disadvantaged areas, with new hubs being built and attached to the schools. We have taken that on board, and hopefully we will be able to get the City of Greater Geelong on board. We need it to share that load — —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms COUZENS — Now that we have commissioners, perhaps we will get some positive outcomes for Whittington and the Whittington Primary School. The community hub is a very important commitment for the people of Whittington. If we are going to rebuild the school, we cannot lose the community services that have been operating within that community. There was a risk of that happening because a new school would not have the same space as

the old school has. It has been interesting in that the school had identified that having a reading program was not necessarily the best way to engage parents, so it introduced an art program and it needed the space for the art program. With the construction of a new school, that space would not necessarily be available. There are a whole range of things that Whittington Primary School has been offering the community.

There are also the breakfast and lunch programs it offers every day for every child. Again, we do not want to see those things lost in that school community, and the only way to do that is to build on that hub so that the space is available. It would then incorporate some of the other services that are not at the school but close by, including the kindergarten, the day care centre and the community centre. They would be incorporated into the hub so that you have a real community hub providing services for all of that community.

The funding in this budget will improve and cater for growth, address disadvantage and ensure that those Geelong schools in the worst condition are fixed. There are a number of schools that are not as bad as the schools I have already mentioned that we are going to be funding out of this budget, but we will be working towards funding all of those schools into the future. I have to say that every secondary school in my electorate has now been funded for an upgrade, and I can only commend the Minister for Education on his commitment to Geelong and the time he spent in Geelong talking to schools, to parents and to the community about what our education needs are. The education state forum played a big role, and it was fantastic to have so many parents, teachers and schools involved in that commitment.

The government will also be contributing towards a fit-out of the Geelong Plumbing Industry Climate Action Centre in Breakwater, another significant training component in Geelong that is really important. There is already a climate action centre in Melbourne that has been operating for some years. What it is doing is training plumbers, and at some level electricians, on the most modern and up-to-date environmentally friendly solar panels and energy-efficient products that people will want fitted. Plumbers, electricians and people in those sorts of trades will need to learn how to do that, so that plumbing centre is a great initiative for Geelong.

Early learning centres also get a boost, with the government investing \$4.4 million to help struggling regional kindergartens to keep operating and \$133 million to make sure parents can access free maternal and child health services. Maternal and child

health services are particularly interested in what happens in our lower socio-economic communities. One in particular is, again, Whittington, which has not had that service for a very long time. Again, the City of Greater Geelong for whatever reason saw that the service was not working as well as it had hoped in that area, so it moved it out to a neighbouring neighbourhood. That meant that the parents of Whittington did not have direct access to a maternal and child healthcare centre. I thought that was quite an unacceptable decision, but with the community hub going in I am hoping that we will be able to get those facilities back into the Whittington community to ensure that parents have the support they need.

The budget invests \$2.9 billion in our health system so families in rural and regional Victoria have hospitals and services they can rely on. This includes \$200 million for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which will ensure regional health services can get the funds they need for local upgrades.

Again, health services are very important for Geelong. Barwon Health is our main provider of health services in the region, and we want to ensure that it can provide those health services to all the people in Geelong and in fact people right across the region. Barwon Health is providing services not only to the people of Geelong but right through to Colac. Colac has its own hospital, but University Hospital Geelong provides a big component of the health services people need in those areas. I commend the minister on her commitment to Geelong and to Barwon Health and to making sure that people in Geelong have the best possible health services they can get.

The other important factor for us in Geelong is the family violence commitment. There is huge funding in that area. Geelong has high levels of family violence — there is no doubting that — but we have some amazing systems already in place. Some of those have been trialled in Geelong, and we want to build on those. I have been working very closely with our family violence services to ensure that, no. 1, they get a slice of the pie when it comes out and also, no. 2, we are providing the best possible services. Family violence issues are really important, and I think the increase in the number of police across the state is really significant.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — Clearly this is another Labor budget that is true to its DNA: big taxing, big spending, lacking in strategy and accompanied by loads of spin. The Andrews government is failing to deal with Victoria's booming population. While Melbourne's congestion grows every day, there is no strategy to

encourage people to move to and invest in our regions. The regions are so important to Victoria's economy, because when the regions are doing well, Victoria does well. Regional Victoria is well placed to welcome population growth, but without a strong vision from this government we will miss this opportunity. There is no plan for jobs, infrastructure and growth, and this budget shows it.

I just want to give a couple of quick snapshots, because under this budget families and businesses will be worse off. State taxes have jumped by \$3.7 billion or 20.7 per cent in just two years. Stamp duty has gone up by \$1.6 billion in just one year. Insurance taxes is another one — up 3.6 per cent in 2016–17 to \$1.2 billion. Land taxes are increasing by 28.3 per cent in 2016–17. This is evidenced, particularly the last one, on page 148 of budget paper 5. This means there is less money in the pockets of Victorian families to spend and for businesses to invest. As I said, this is a big-spending, big-taxing budget which is not good for families.

I notice that these apparent rivers of gold are certainly well and truly flowing down in Geelong, but they are not flowing in Eildon. Again, Eildon has virtually been forgotten about; however, I had no expectation because that is pretty well what happened last year as well, so luckily I did not hold my breath. It is very clear to see that other areas have been well looked after and that regional Victoria has again been shunned.

Let us have a look at the bigger picture. Last year the Victorian economy was riddled with the cancellation of key strategic projects. These cancellations trashed our brand and trashed our finances. Victoria's reputation as a state to do business went down the gurgler. We saw the port of Hastings scrapped, and of course the east–west link was also scrapped. We have a government that is focused on 'spend, spend, spend'. It has lots of announcements, but they will not be completed for a very long time.

Only today — and this is extremely timely, I would have thought — an audit was handed down by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office entitled *Managing and Reporting on the Performance and Cost of Capital Projects*. Front and centre we can see that the level crossing removal program had no business case. Again, we see the spin that accompanies this government. It has placed such importance on business cases in the past. Now we see that it has six projects without a business case. I am sure that none of those have gone to Infrastructure Victoria either.

We know that before the 2014 election the then Leader of the Opposition promised not to increase taxes or to

impose any new ones. Of course that was just spin. There is plenty of evidence of him putting his mouth into gear and saying that, but then as soon as he got elected he started to break those promises. It did not take long.

I will just remind members about the 2015–16 budget. Labor hiked the fire services property levy by 7.2 per cent. It introduced a land tax surcharge for absentee owners of 0.5 per cent and a stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers of 3 per cent. Building on that, this year Labor has further hiked the land tax surcharge for absentee owners to 1.5 per cent. That is a renters tax. It has hiked the stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers to 7 per cent and tripled the brown coal tax. Where is that going to end up? If Labor has tripled that tax, then of course that is going to be passed on to families and to consumers.

The fire services property levy got another slam — up 7.3 per cent, which means it has gone up 15 per cent. Everybody who is a ratepayer will have that on their bill, and they will pay more taxes — when the Premier clearly said that Labor had no intention of doing that. Now Labor is starting to qualify what 'more taxes' actually means, which is 'not more taxes for these people but more for those people'. Labor is being very rubbery around the edges. As I said earlier, this represents an increase in state taxes of 20.7 per cent since the election. In two years, Labor has increased taxes from \$17.9 billion to \$21.6 billion. That is a \$3.7 billion increase.

On top of that there is car registration. If members look at the pre-election budget update compared to now, they will see it is up 10.1 per cent — that is, \$140 million. Labor has continued to raid state entities. This very much happened last year, and it has continued to happen again this year.

I want to refer the house to page 26 of budget paper 5. We can see that the Transport Accident Commission in particular has gone from \$342 million to \$629 million in the next year. That is an absolute hike. That is in the 2017–18 estimates. We see a big grab just before the election in 2018. I went back and had a look at the same table for the previous year and found that what was estimated there was only \$405 million. That has now gone up to \$629 million. That has been substantially rejigged since the last budget. Labor really cannot hide things. It really tries to hide things — slip things through — and take these grabs, but it is doing so just before the election so they have a little bit more money to spend.

The cost of the public sector is way up as well. From the PEBU to now it has gone from \$18.5 billion to \$21.3 billion. It is a very costly exercise running the public service. It is vast. With all the nurses, police and teachers, there is a lot in there. We see the total government expenses increasing, but we know there are no frontline increases. We did not see anything saying how many more nurses there are going to be. We know the costs of the public sector have increased because of the pay deals. There have been massive pay increases in the pay deals that have gone on behind closed doors, which are payoffs for the last election.

I want to turn to the rural and regional budget information paper, because it is very clear that this is based on regional cities rather than supporting the smaller rural communities. I represent smaller communities. I have something like 40 towns in my electorate. The largest towns are Healesville and Mansfield, which have a population of only 7000 each. I have all of these small communities. Let us have a good look at the map that is in the rural and regional papers, because it really highlights the big gap in the Eildon electorate. I have one commitment from this government in the Mansfield shire. It really does not care.

I want to touch on the Country Fire Authority (CFA). The estimated expenditure on it is down from last year. We have heard the way that members of the government have battled on and tried to defend their attacks on the CFA. The CFA is at risk of being overtaken by the United Firefighters Union (UFU), and we have heard substantial debate on that over the past few hours. The government has pulled money out of the CFA.

The next area is also particularly interesting; it is tourism. Tourism is extremely important in my electorate. It has the High Country, the Yarra Valley and the beautiful area around Marysville; everywhere in my electorate is reliant on tourism. One of the centrepieces of the government's tourism strategy is the \$101 million for the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund. How very misleading; this is spin city. Press releases were distributed widely in country Victoria about this \$101 million, but in fact when you take out the \$48 million that has already been dedicated to the Phillip Island penguin project, that is cut in half already. The rest of the state only has a share in \$51 million. Government members are telling people all across the state that they can have a share in this major tourism infrastructure program, but the figure actually is only half what they are purporting.

In the portfolio of Aboriginal Affairs I note that there is \$8 million in funding for the Budg Bim project in south-western Victoria. I am sure everyone in this chamber is very keen to protect Aboriginal culture and heritage, and certainly self-determination — it is all good — but I would like to see that portfolio put some action into the Healesville area, the Wurundjeri and in particular the Galeena Beek property across the road from the Healesville Sanctuary, because this is an extremely sensitive and significant piece of Aboriginal culture in Victoria, and it seems to be being ignored. The minister has failed to meet with the Aboriginal community despite their asking for a meeting on a number of occasions.

In the portfolio of agriculture, farmers have been left in the lurch for some time about what the government is going to do about the fox and wild dog bounties. I am pleased to see that the coalition's extremely successful fox bounty has continued. It eradicated some 320 000 foxes in our term of government. After uncertainty about what would happen, the fox bounty has continued; the wild dog bounty has not. The government is saying aerial baiting has been doubled. It pulled it out previously and now it has put it back in. I like to see that that is there.

On roads in the bush, again the Premier is happy to spend \$1.1 billion to avoid building a road in the city. But I am still lamenting the demise of the country roads and bridges program, and what a great program that was for the 40 rural shires that were able to share in that \$160 million, because it allowed them to get ahead. This has gone now, at a time when the government has put caps on council rate increases. The shires are really struggling, and this program would have been wonderful. I hear complaints about how tight the grant programs for rural communities are. The Regional Growth Fund was a winner. I am constantly hearing that Landcare grants are now non-existent.

Locally, there has been one solitary commitment — Mansfield Secondary College has been given \$3 million, but only \$110 000 of that will be delivered in this coming financial year, with the rest of the project to be completed by the second quarter of 2018–19. That \$3 million is only half what the school needs. It needs to demolish and rebuild the old B block that was built in the 1950s or 1960s. Now, \$3 million is not going to do that, and the school is not going to be able to construct half a building. I have visions of how it was when we came into government when every school had a master plan done for a new school building and they all told not only me but other members that they were next in line for a new school, but none of them was — it was all just on paper.

In Mansfield the hospital needs a capital injection. The ambulance station needs to be relocated and rebuilt, as does the fire station. The primary school needs to have an extra building to cater for growth. The new road that is proposed between Mount Buller and Mount Stirling to support tourism and also to support egress and access for the summer, because the resort management board has a very strong focus on green tourism in the summer, seems to have been put on hold.

Murrindindi Shire has missed out completely and was absolutely insulted. If you looked at what was in that area, you would see that an investment in rolling stock came up at Murrindindi Shire. I was very interested in that, and I wondered what train line that would be for because I do not have any train lines in my electorate, but it was pleasing to see that the government was investing in rolling stock. What an absolute laughing matter.

There are major roads — the Goulburn Valley Highway and the Melba Highway — that certainly need work. The facility development at Lake Eildon needs an injection of funds. What did the Yarra Ranges Shire get? Zippo! It needs the CFA station to be relocated. It needs a mountain bike hub. There are schools there that need work. They need flashing lights outside Woori Yallock and Wesburn primary schools. The Upper Yarra needs a whole lot of work.

I heard the minister spruiking what was the Interface Growth Fund and is now the Growing Suburbs Fund. The Yarra Ranges Council missed out on its no. 1 shovel-ready project because for some reason the government was very keen to get a project up in the Deputy Premier's electorate of Monbulk. It was not on its list, but it was keen to get it in there, so the no. 1 project, which is in my electorate, missed out.

There is a wonderful cycling strategy now, which will boost tourism and create jobs. The Yarra Valley trail links existing paths, and that absolutely needs to be picked up through this Growing Suburbs Fund, because all we have seen for Nillumbik in that Growing Suburbs Fund is funding for Eltham. The member for Eltham has been well looked after, the Deputy Premier has been looked after, but the people of the Yarra Ranges, and certainly those in the Eildon electorate, have absolutely missed out. There has been funding for projects that did not need doing in Lilydale, and there is one in Belgrave that was funded by the state and federal governments and the local council. The flowing rivers of gold did not make it to Eildon.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak about the Andrews Labor

government's second budget. This is yet another example of Labor values in action. This budget is the mechanism for ensuring that we can deliver the outcomes that we believe improve the lives of all Victorians.

A budget is the driving force behind seizing the opportunity and effecting positive change. It is a way we deliver on the commitments we put to Victorians when they gave us the important responsibility of governing in their interests. It is about making something of the time you are given to lead this great state. After all, one thing is for certain in our time in this place: eventually you will be defeated. Within this prism it is critical to not waste a moment. The opportunity afforded to us by Victorians who cast their vote 18 months ago must be taken up in good faith. Victorians want to see bold decisions and positive change that will leave their lives better than they were yesterday.

Today I want to talk about how this budget harnesses opportunity for all Victorians, how this budget continues to restore the notion of a fair go for all Victorians, how this budget provides the necessary infrastructure investments to help set our state up for the future, how it stimulates jobs growth and educates the next generation of Victorians who will underpin our future prosperity, how it secures much-needed funding for the prevention of family violence and how it supports extra resources for people experiencing mental ill-health. In this year's budget we see this state Labor government's values and priorities on show for everyone to see. This fills me with absolute pride.

It is firstly worth considering where we have come as a state. Here in Melbourne and in Victoria today in many ways we are a city and a state trying to manage our own success. We are renowned as the world's most livable city five times over. Whether it is our sporting capital nature and culture, our multicultural, harmonious and inclusive society, or the irrefutable fact that we simply have the best coffee of the nation, people want to live here. Also, it is our thriving tourism industry that attracts more and more people and that more and more people around the world want to see. We are a great place to live and to raise a family. More and more people want to seize the opportunities that our state offers and make a go of it.

To this end we have seen around 1800 people moving into Victoria's capital each week, and that goes with an additional 830 000 residents in the past decade. The growth in our population has helped support our economic prosperity and will do so into the future. In the coming 10 years we will see our population expand

to more than 7 million Victorians. One of our biggest challenges in the coming years is to manage that population growth, to maintain our quality of living and to create the jobs that will underpin that future prosperity.

With an ever-increasing population and the loss of the automotive industry, which will be felt hardest in my community, where the automotive component part manufacturing industries are based, we need to create more jobs. The dignity of work and the ability of individuals to provide for and support themselves are vitally important. It is an indisputable fact that under the previous government unemployment reached 6.9 per cent, and we saw an average of 46 Victorians lose their job each day while they were in office.

Behind each job loss is a story. It might be a family trying to make ends meet that will miss their next mortgage payment. It might be the young person who was casually employed and trying to make a go of it and who does not know when the next opportunity will present. It may be the Victorian in their late 50s who knows they need to work a few more years to be comfortable in their retirement but will likely not find someone to take them on. This government deeply cares about all these people and will fight every day to try to support more jobs and these people in Victoria. We have seen more than 112 000 jobs created since the Andrews Labor government came to office, seeing the unemployment rate drop below 6 per cent for the first time in years.

At the heart of this government's agenda is our \$12 billion infrastructure agenda, which is one of the levers governments can use to increase employment in our communities and try to stimulate economic activity. This is accompanied by a strong surplus, an affirmation of our AAA credit rating and forecasts of 3 per cent economic growth. Importantly this is a strong indication to the private sector that Victoria has wonderful conditions for investment to create future employment and to promote growth in various industries. At the epicentre of this agenda and the Andrews government's infrastructure agenda is the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, a project that is truly innovative, forward thinking and underpinned by a strong business case. It is only rivalled by the existing city loop tunnels in its scale and ability to transform our public transport network.

Of course the city loop commenced in 1971 with the passage of the Melbourne Underground Rail Loop Act 1970. At the time this was a momentous occasion, with the first discussions about undertaking construction of railway tracks and stations under the eastern and

northern sides of the central business district, and connecting them to the existing railway system in the vicinity of North Melbourne and Richmond, first occurring in 1929. Some 14 years on from 1971 the city loop was completed with the opening of Flagstaff station in 1985, and it continues to be the central nervous system of our transport network. Some 30 years on and with more services and more passengers being added to the network, the time has come to deliver the next rail tunnels for our city in the form of metro rail.

I welcome the Victorian government's announcement that it will not wait for the commonwealth government to prioritise infrastructure investment in our state. Instead Victoria will fully fund the metro rail tunnel over the coming decade with \$10.9 billion investment, starting with \$2.9 billion in the forward estimates. This amazing project will transform our city and have substantial benefits for commuters along the Frankston line, catering for an extra 20 000 passengers during peak hour and will return the Frankston train line to a dedicated city loop tunnel permanently. The project will commence in 2018 and include two new 9-kilometre rail tunnels under the CBD, as well as five new underground stations, and is expected to be completed by 2026.

With my community in the City of Kingston growing by up to 20 per cent in the coming years, we need to do all we can to respond to local congestion and get people home sooner and safer. That is what a project like the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel will do, along with the removal of dangerous level crossings in my community. This goes hand in hand with the widening of the Monash Freeway, which services the fastest growing region in Australia in the outer south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, while the western distributor will greatly improve travel from the western suburbs and provide that vitally needed second crossing to the city.

If we are to strip away the short-term political thinking and look to the future, these projects clearly act in the interests of Victorians. We cannot waste a day in providing the critical infrastructure that will support our employment clusters and improve productivity, while getting us home safer and sooner.

Another key pillar of this year's budget is the investment in education. It was former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam who once said:

Poverty is a national waste as well as individual waste. We are all diminished when any of us are denied proper education. The nation is the poorer — a poorer economy, a poorer civilisation, because of this human and national waste.

These words have had a profound impact on how I view education and my belief in its importance as a driver of longer term economic outcomes. Some decades later the Gonski review of 2011 broadly found the same thing, while highlighting that our literacy and numeracy were slipping when compared with our neighbours in the Asia-Pacific regions.

If we agree with the notion that education is an economic enabler, then the greatest support you can give a person who is trying to strive for something more and trying to lift themselves out of generational disadvantage is a proper education. It is unconscionable not to deliver the Gonski education funding reforms in full and in perpetuity. I call on the federal government to join with the state government in funding the Gonski education reforms in full. Unfortunately the commonwealth government shares the flawed ideology of the Victorian Liberal opposition, with the Prime Minister recently floating the idea of walking away from public education. It is an ill-conceived and heinous ideology that saw the previous state government pander to registered training organisations by slashing the funding of public TAFEs, which provide hope and opportunity for so many Victorians.

Thankfully our investment in TAFE and our \$320 million TAFE Rescue Fund, which has seen campuses that were closed by the previous Liberal government reopened under the Andrews Labor government, is allowing those skills to be delivered for aspiring people looking for work.

As an expectant father in 16 short weeks I want nothing more than to ensure that my little girl, along with all Victorian children, gets the very best chance in life. I will always fight for better funding for our schools and our TAFEs. I was so pleased to see in this year's budget that our specialist development school, Yarrabah, will receive master plan funding to investigate future needs, while Parktone Primary School will receive \$4 million, after a community-led campaign, which will provide a new school hall.

As recently as Friday I was pleased to visit Mordialloc Beach Primary School, which will upgrade its buildings and grounds with a \$250 000 investment. While Beaumaris is not in my electorate, I was pleased to see an additional \$13.5 million allocated towards the new Beaumaris High School, which is in addition to last year's allocation of \$6.5 million. Members might recall that the former government turned its back on establishing that school, despite a community-led campaign and nearly 100 community meetings from local supporters and parents. We listened to the calls of

the community and we are delivering Beaumaris High School.

While the government supports the creation of jobs and providing the necessary investment in education for our next generation of Victorians who so desperately need it, we must ensure that our community is healthy and safe. This budget delivers on this important notion. By the middle of this century more than one in five people will be over the age of 65, increasing from the current level of one in seven people over the age of 65. Having worked themselves to the bone most of their lives, paid their taxes, raised their families and contributed to our communities, they can proudly reflect on the Victoria we have today that they have helped to build. The prosperous and most livable city of Melbourne has come a long way and will only go from strength to strength for the generations to come. Having done so much for all of us, it is a basic expectation that we provide the necessary health care to them and support them in their retirement.

While health care is obviously universally used by all of us, it is our older Victorians who will rely so significantly on the health sector in the third stage of their lives. Many of those Victorians are waiting for elective surgery and care. They might have waited many months for desperately needed operations that will ease their pain and improve their quality of life. I am pleased that we are supporting Victorians who desperately need these procedures with a \$335 million investment over the coming four years. The funding means that around 200 000 people will be treated in the coming years, which equates to an extra 18 000 more patients being treated than last year. Importantly those waiting the longest for surgery will be prioritised under this package. I cannot wait to see this policy in action and the benefits it will derive for those attending Monash Medical Centre and Sandringham Hospital, which greatly supports residents in my electorate.

At the same time, though, I am equally filled with dread, knowing the gravity of the federal Liberal government cuts that will be inflicted in the coming years, the effect of which, as has been reported in the media, will be equivalent to shutting down two major hospitals. Again, we see the federal Liberals turning their backs on Victorians, and the silence from those opposite is deafening. In every sense they are Liberals first and Victorians second.

I want quickly to put on the record my strong support for the additional \$50 million to support our paramedics to improve ambulance response times, while the additional resources to our police force — some

400 additional police officers — will help keep our communities safe during difficult and uncertain times.

But for me the most critically important investment in this year's budget is the announcement of \$572 million to begin implementing the 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. As our community's biggest law and order issue and a devastating reality faced by too many families, this investment is critical to address the systemic issues, provide a much-needed housing blitz and ensure that in future all women and children are protected. As the leading cause of death and disability of women under the age of 45, we need to do all we can to bring about much-needed reform and keep women and children safe.

At its core, this is the Andrews Labor government budget that is recapturing hope, compassion and opportunity for all Victorians. It is in stark contrast to the budget that was put forward last night by the federal Treasurer, Scott Morrison, who delivered a \$16 000 tax cut to those earning as much as \$1 million, while a single mum with an income of \$87 000 and two children in high school was left \$4400 worse off as a result of that budget. I think Peter Martin encapsulated the challenges for the Treasurer when he said in his contribution in the *Age*:

It isn't clear from his speeches why Morrison got into politics, except perhaps to ensure that business is 'not unreasonably burdened' by government. That's what he said in his first speech to Parliament. He seems to believe in not getting in the way.

From the contributions of those opposite, it is a startling revelation that governments tax and governments spend, but you have to do the best you can with the opportunities that you are afforded and deliver for all Victorians. It was like Christopher Columbus discovering that the earth was round yesterday, and we had those opposite fixated on governments spending on infrastructure and trying to drive those economic outcomes. It is an absolute reality that this is a budget that we can be proud of as a state. It is a budget that harnesses Victorians' opportunity and gives hope for all. I commend this budget to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Following on from the contribution of the member for Mordialloc, it is just fascinating to note that clearly he and his colleagues on the government benches have no idea that certainly you need to tax — no-one would argue that — but you need to tax in a sustainable manner. A 20-plus per cent increase in taxes over two years might be sustainable for the government, but it is certainly not sustainable for the community; you just cannot keep that up.

But it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on what is obviously one of the most significant aspects of any parliamentary year. Unfortunately on this occasion we have the government treating the Parliament with a new level of contempt. One might not have thought that was possible, given the government's track record over that past 18 months, but it was and is absolutely a new level of contempt. Last week of course we had a one-day sitting. It is entirely reasonable to bring forward the introduction of the budget bills one week early, given the decision of the commonwealth to present its budget yesterday, but one would have thought the government would bring forward the whole budget week, not simply one day, at significant cost, purely to give the government a perceived political advantage. But that is of course what occurred.

Then, when the opposition proceeded to exercise its right to reply to the budget on that day — as the right to reply in the same week had been denied it by the decision of the government in terms of the sitting week — its members just got up and walked out. They treated the whole process with complete contempt. They treated the people of Victoria with contempt and treated the Parliament with contempt. I guess one can understand that because clearly the government does not want scrutiny. Why else would we be debating the budget bills yesterday and today when the estimates hearings have not even started yet?

The estimates hearings are supposed to be replacing the committee stage of the appropriation bills. That is the theory. We will never, ever get to a committee stage on the appropriation bills in this house, yet we are asked to consider them and to go right through all the detail before the Parliament or the delegates of the Parliament in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee have had the opportunity to interrogate ministers and senior officers of the Victorian public service. Along with the member for Essendon sitting over there, and a few of our colleagues, we are about to embark on 55 hours-plus of hearings.

Mr Pakula — You'll love it!

Mr MORRIS — As the Attorney-General says, I will love it. He knows that I will not answer in the affirmative to that. We have both spent way too much time doing that to think it is anything other than a damn hard grind. But 41 hearings, about 55 hours, yet we have effectively in this house already had the debate. Clearly the government does not want scrutiny, and it does not want to hear alternative views. I am not particularly surprised, because this budget is to some extent a work of fiction.

The government had very firm foundations on which to build this state when it came to office at the end of 2014, and it squandered that advantage. Instead of a sound structure that will support and nurture the Victorian economy, support and nurture jobs growth and support and nurture long-term economic prosperity for this state, we have a structure that does not have the capacity to build the roads, the railways, the schools and the hospitals that we need or any other piece of infrastructure that we so desperately need.

We have got population growth, as the budget papers show, of 1.8 per cent per annum compounding. We have only got employment growth on trend of 1.5 per cent per annum compounding. You have got a gap there. I understand it is not that simplistic, but you have a gap there to start with. How on earth, if you have not got the structure right, can you then afford not just to build the infrastructure but also to fund the services — the teachers, the nurses, particularly the police — that a growing population needs to service the state? The budget does not set up a situation where those things can be achieved. There are a number of false claims which I will come back to, but it is a budget built on debt without commensurate growth in infrastructure.

It is not about getting it done, unless 'it' is hoodwinking the Victorian public. It is not a budget about building for the future. It is probably more than anything else a budget about this Treasurer's survival — indeed not just his long-term survival but his immediate survival — because this is a Treasurer who proved to be incapable of getting a bill through the Parliament to facilitate the sale of a public asset, the sale of which had the support of both the government and the opposition. He could not even bring into the Parliament a bill or negotiate an outcome that would be able to achieve that end even though it had the support of both sides. We had to have the Special Minister of State come out to save the Treasurer's skin, so this budget is, I think, pretty much about the Treasurer's survival as much as it is about anything else. But far from boosting his chances of survival, it is much more likely to ensure that what you might call the feebly flickering flame of his current career is swiftly extinguished.

I did mention that the government had a good start when it took office in 2014, and it is interesting that the Treasurer has been making much of the so-called accumulated surpluses that he claims to have delivered. But of course the truth is that the surplus over the forward estimates, which was clear in the pre-election budget update — if you compare the total over the forward estimates with what the Treasurer is running around saying is a fantastic achievement — is in fact substantially less. It is \$1.3 billion or \$1.4 billion less

than he was left with in 2014. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, the Treasurer has had an enormous increase in taxation, and he has had an enormous increase in GST and a range of other very favourable moves in revenue. Yet the surplus is lessened, and the capacity to produce the infrastructure that we need is also not there.

There was over the four years to December 2014 substantial growth in jobs. As I said, we left the state in very good shape. In fact over the four years from December 2010 to December 2014 we achieved better growth in terms of jobs than any other state: 133 000 jobs compared to the next best, Western Australia — and for most of that time Western Australia was in the mining boom — which had growth of 120 000 jobs.

Labor makes very great claims about its jobs in this budget and in the utterings of the Treasurer, but the actual figures tell a very different story because between December 2013 and December 2014 — the last full year of the coalition government — we had growth of 77 950 jobs. If you compare that to the first full year of this government, it had growth of 33 837 jobs, so the government has delivered less than half of the jobs that the coalition delivered in its last year in office.

Perhaps more damning is the pathetic comparison with New South Wales, because between December 2014 and March of this year Victoria in total produced 66 278 jobs while New South Wales produced 147 553 jobs. This is a government that is claiming to have the economy really ticking over, really performing well, and if you compare the performance against states that were formerly in a mining boom — and of course they are coming off record highs — then you might say it is a reasonable result. But when you look at the most comparable state, the state of New South Wales, fewer than half the number of jobs were created. Substantially fewer than half the number of jobs were created. If you have a legitimately well-performing economy, you have jobs growth. You get to share the wealth, and the population gets to share in the prosperity. We might have a lot of surpluses, but we certainly do not have prosperity out there. We are not getting the jobs growth, and the community of Victoria is not getting its fair share.

Perhaps it is not surprising given the movement in the tax burden. In the last budget we had a boost in the fire services levy, land tax went up for absentee owners and we had a new stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers — and of course the government botched that. Not only did the government botch it and need to bring

in house amendments but the Treasurer did not bother to talk to the Minister for Planning. It was an entire surprise to the planning minister, I understand, on budget day, and of course it was designed with all the defects that you would expect when you do not actually talk to the people who would be in charge of administering it.

In this year's budget the land tax surcharge is up to 1.5 per cent for absentee owners. The stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers has gone up from 3 per cent to 7 per cent. We have tripled the brown coal tax. But of course it is not a brown coal tax; it is an electricity tax. It is a tax that will reach into the pockets of every Victorian and will particularly impact those who can least afford it. It is not as if electricity prices are starting off at a low point. They are already significant. As we know, they have gone up enormously in the last decade, not as much in Victoria as in some other places, but this is a tax that will impact on every individual. Of course the government has hiked up the fire services levy as well.

The story is similar when you look at dividends taken from the public financial corporations particularly. Time does not permit me to go through the figures in detail, but if you look at the additional dividends being extracted from the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) and you look at the additional dividends being extracted from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), someone has to pay for those. The VMIA particularly has an insurance function that goes across a range of bodies. It is not just government agencies; it is going across a range of bodies, particularly in the health area — the bush nursing hospitals, for example — and a whole range of other clients, and those clients will have to pay, because you simply cannot suck that amount of money out without doing some damage. Either the financial integrity of the institution is compromised, or the clients have to pay more. Of course when you are talking about clients of the TAC you are effectively talking about every driver in the state, unless they are driving a corporate vehicle. Again you hit those least able to afford those sorts of costs.

On a local level the entire map of the Mornington Peninsula had two projects on it. One that I was pleased to see was Mornington Primary School, which was apparently to receive \$5 million. It received substantially less than that in this budget — I think \$184 000 to assist with planning. Apparently the balance will be provided next year. It is a shame that the rebuild of Osborne Primary School was not also funded. I know the minister has been down to visit Osborne Primary School and nodded and made

sympathetic noises and gave every indication that the rebuild would be funded. He has not delivered. Mornington Special Development School has been on a promise since the days of the Bracks government for redevelopment. There is a site in Hastings ready to go, but unfortunately again it has not been delivered.

The only other project on the peninsula that is funded is the rebuild of Portsea Surf Club. I am sure the member for Nepean was pleased to see that. I should indicate to the house that my stepson, Simon Wilson, has been the president of that club. He is not now the president, but he was the president for a very long time, so there is obviously a direct interest in that for me.

In no way could this be considered a budget for the peninsula. There is nothing for the Mornington electorate, absolutely nothing in the Hastings electorate and next to nothing in the Nepean electorate. As I have indicated, this is a budget that is absolutely flawed and simply an endeavour to keep the thing moving for another year and hope that it does not hit the fan just yet.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — It is with immense pride that I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016. This state budget is a true Labor budget. It is fiscal, financial brilliance, and it is determined, resilient, disciplined, progressive, decent and fair. Contrary to comments from the member for Mornington, this budget is all about building for our future. I would like to congratulate the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance and their teams and of course our Premier on an outstanding budget. This is about grabbing opportunities, realising expectations and meeting our commitments and promises.

In this budget we are continuing to invest significantly in education, health and safety, and we are driving the economy with investment in major transport and infrastructure projects, and all of this of course with a very healthy budget surplus buffer. We are now the envy of all other states and territories across Australia, and quite rightly. We have got an enviable economic position with strong economic growth and significant jobs growth. We have got a secure AAA credit rating. Just this week CommSec recorded, in its *State of the States* report, that Victoria's economy continues to be the fastest growing in the nation. Our economic growth rate is up 4.3 per cent on a year ago, ahead of New South Wales, which is up 3 per cent.

This budget is all about steering Victoria towards an incredible and exciting future. But of course it is not just me saying this. We have heard previously that Mark Stone from the Victorian Chamber of Commerce

and Industry has said that this is a good budget for businesses in Victoria and that:

It shows that our economy is strong, it will create more jobs and importantly it will improve the livability for all Victorians and all of those that are coming to live here.

That is a pretty good wrap. Then of course we have James Campbell, our friend from the *Herald Sun*. He had this to say about the budget:

It's a great time to be alive and Victorian ...

Never has a truer word been spoken by James.

There are so many incredible and significant elements to this budget that I am not even quite sure where to start. But I guess in true Labor style this budget and its centrepiece are all about rail, roads, schools, education, health and of course jobs — lots of jobs, a jobs plan. This budget sets a clear and determined focus on capital investment and infrastructure projects with \$12.4 billion to build job-creating infrastructure projects.

We have heard that the Andrews Labor government is going to fully fund the \$10.9 billion Melbourne Metro rail project. As we have heard, this will deliver two new tunnels under Melbourne's CBD and five new underground stations. A massive \$2.9 billion in capital funding over the next four years has been committed to this extraordinary and visionary project. We know this is the biggest overhaul to our train network since the city loop.

This project will end train congestion in the city loop and allow more services to run across the network. It is a truly transformative project and something that we are going to be extremely proud of for years to come. It will be an exceptional legacy for generations and generations to come. But of course this project will also stimulate our economy now, create thousands of jobs and support hundreds of local businesses. So too will the order we are placing for an extra 28 high-capacity trains and a further five X'trapolis trains — trains that are going to be built in Victoria supporting thousands of Victorian jobs and thousands of Victorian families.

And of course we are removing 50 of the most dangerous and congested level crossings, including 11 along the Frankston line, which are going to ease congestion significantly and improve safety for all people along that line.

But equally, when we have improved public transport systems, we need to streamline our road networks. This is also a significant priority. I am pleased to see that this budget provides \$7 billion for road projects, including

upgrades to the Monash Freeway. It is also extremely important for people in the south-east, with \$154.5 million for the duplication of Thompsons Road. We are going to complete the 10.7-kilometre duplication of Thompsons Road from Frankston-Dandenong Road to Berwick-Cranbourne Road and replace the existing roundabout at Thompsons Road and Western Port Highway with traffic signals. This is on top of stage 1 of this total upgrade, which will see the duplication of Thompsons Road between Marriott Boulevard and the South Gippsland Highway and the removal of the level crossing.

Just like the upgrade of the Wedge Road intersection in Carrum Downs, which incidentally is about to be completed, the Andrews Labor government is getting it done for residents in Carrum and for road users in the south-east. I cannot overstate the importance and significance of this total road upgrade for residents and commuters in my electorate.

This budget also provides \$50 million for the redevelopment and transformation of the Frankston station precinct. Again, this is a significant project, which will revitalise the Frankston city centre, the gateway to the peninsula. It will help improve access to the vital business activity centre, stimulate jobs and provide for local jobs, particularly for our youth. Youth unemployment is quite high in the area.

We want to talk about jobs. We have heard that since the Andrews Labor government was elected in 2014 more than 112 000 new jobs have been created. More than 71 000 of these jobs are full time. This is more than the total number of jobs created under the entire term of the Baillieu and Napthine governments. The Andrews Labor government is getting Victorians back to work. The unemployment rate has fallen from 6.9 per cent in 2014, when we came to office, to 5.7 per cent and is projected to fall further to 5.5 per cent in 2018–19.

For small businesses this budget is terrific news too. There will be an increase in the payroll tax threshold to support small businesses, something the former Liberal government failed to do. This will benefit up to 36 000 individual businesses across Victoria. By the time this measure is fully implemented, businesses with annual Victorian payrolls of between \$4.8 million and \$31.5 million will have the lowest payroll tax burden anywhere in Australia. This will help businesses expand, hire more Victorians and boost jobs and investment.

We are going to help Victorians gain new skills, enter new industries and get back to work. This budget provides \$53 million to establish Jobs Victoria. This is a very significant investment because it will help workers in transitioning industries and those who are most in need of work, and I am talking about our young people and people, particularly women, who are escaping family violence. There is also \$111 million in additional funding to boost the six fastest growing sectors, and this is on top of the government's Future Industries Fund, which received \$200 million in last year's budget.

Again, these are all significant for communities in my electorate. This focused plan will, among other things, support many businesses in the south-east that are part of the automotive components market and that may be looking to transition out of that market. We are also going to establish an investment attraction fund because Victoria is well and truly open for business.

Significantly the budget will also see \$152 million for our creative industries. Growth in creative industries is twice that of the broader economy. Helping our film, arts, TV, screen, music and design sectors will mean more investment in Victoria, more tourism, more exports, and ultimately more jobs and economic growth. This will deliver real economic, social and cultural benefits for all Victorians.

I am going to spend a short time speaking about health because, when it comes to caring for Victorians, we all know that it is Labor governments that look after Victorian families. Contrary to comments by the member for Malvern in his budget reply, we all know that it is Labor governments that focus on the needs of Victorians, and in health and education this could not be starker. Victorians are still reeling from four years of cuts to and neglect of our health and education systems. We are still facing ongoing cuts from the federal Liberal government, with cuts of more than \$17 billion to Victoria's health services and billions of dollars in cuts to education and schools.

Unlike the former coalition government, the Andrews Labor government supports our hardworking doctors, nurses and paramedics with an extra \$2.45 billion for health. This is a significant investment in our health system. Hospitals will be able to take an extra 79 000 patients, hospital emergency departments will treat an extra 43 000 patients and waiting times for elective surgery will be slashed. There is a massive investment of more than \$900 million for new hospital buildings, health equipment and projects to increase the capacity of our hospitals and our ambulance service. This government genuinely cares for Victorians,

making sure that all Victorians get the care they need, whether they live in Melbourne or across rural and regional areas throughout Victoria.

I am very proud to see that an extra \$132 million in this budget will assist in managing critical demand in the mental health system. The Andrews Labor government will provide \$27.5 million to halve the number of suicides in Victoria and \$57 million for the expansion of the Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness program. This government understands the need for these programs. We understand the need to create a healthier, fairer and more inclusive society.

Another area I would like to mention, and one that was omitted in last night's federal budget, is the extraordinary commitment that this government is making to family violence and the prevention of family violence and gender equality; \$570 million for immediate funding has been allocated following the release of the report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. This package will deliver 65 of the royal commission's most urgent recommendations, including more housing and crisis refuges, more prevention programs and more support for children who are victims of family violence. We know that this is just the first step in what will be a very long-term process to address family violence, which includes changing negative attitudes towards women. Victoria is leading the way in tackling family violence and gender inequality, and it is an area in which we should be immensely proud.

We have also heard that an additional \$500 million will deliver an additional 400 police in Victoria as part of a larger package to keep our communities safe.

Finally, in the short time I have left I want to talk briefly about schools and education, because when you pare it all back, education is our starting point. It is what drives opportunity. It is what drives possibilities. Education is what drives economic growth for our future.

I noticed in the budget reply of the member for Malvern — I use the term 'reply' loosely because, frankly, it was more of a rant from the member for Malvern; I have to say it was quite bizarre and a bit uninformed and the relevance of many of the matters raised in it was questionable — that he did not mention education. It was an interesting omission, except for this:

Our state schools, especially in growth areas, just cannot keep up with local demand.

I have to say that I found the arrogance quite extraordinary, and it was matched equally by his Liberal friends in Canberra.

Actually we have no new government schools this year for one reason and one reason alone, and that is that we had to endure four years of the Baillieu and Napthine governments — governments so bereft of vision and governments of missed opportunities that did not invest in our education and did not invest in any new schools. It was an absolute sham and a disgrace for all Victorian families and for all Victorian schoolchildren. We know 220 new schools need to be built in Victoria. This budget will start to deliver on that, with 11 new schools to receive money for construction and \$287 million to acquire land to build or complete 23 new schools.

This budget also commits to funding of 10 new state-of-the-art tech schools as well as upgrades to hundreds of schools throughout Victoria. If there were ever any doubt about this government's commitment to education and to making Victoria the education state, that should be well and truly put to rest now. The Andrews Labor government is certainly getting on with making Victoria the education state. We are a government that is committed to all students, including same-sex attracted and gender diverse students, in our schools. I am immensely proud that the Andrews Labor government has funded Safe Schools, because not only should students get a first-rate education in first-rate facilities, but all students should learn in a safe environment free from bullying and discrimination.

I congratulate the Treasurer, the finance minister and the Premier on a visionary, progressive and outstanding budget. This is an in-touch, and in-form government and a government for all Victorians.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a response to the budget on behalf of the electorate of Mildura. But firstly, before we focus on Mildura and its issues, I would like to give an overview of the economic management of the state of Victoria. When the coalition left government, it left Victoria in great shape. Particularly the 2014 pre-election budget update showed that net debt was declining as a percentage of gross state product (GSP) over the forward period. Labor has chosen a higher debt path as a percentage of GSP, which is something our children and grandchildren will not be happy about when it is their time to pay off their parents' and grandparents' debts.

On taxes, the Premier on 28 November 2014 promised every Victorian would not have an increase in tax. However, the facts read that the fire services levy has gone up 15 per cent in two years, with 7.3 per cent of

that this year. The government has introduced a land tax surcharge for absentee landowners, introduced a stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers and introduced what will be known as an electricity tax on brown coal. It has also increased car registration fees by 10 per cent, something that I know many Victorians, particularly those in my electorate, will struggle with — that one-off registration fee. It is like a child with a bag of lollies. Labor will splash the cash on more public service wages, but the bag will eventually be empty. Particularly with public service wages being up \$2.8 billion over two years there is a rise in our public service of 15.2 per cent. That is certainly not consistent with what is happening in the wider economy and certainly not consistent with what is happening in regional Victoria and in Mildura.

I will now narrow the focus to regional Victoria, and I believe the Andrews government has missed an opportunity to create and support more prosperous regional communities through its budget. The tax increases have added billions of dollars to the budget, and how that bag of lollies is going to be distributed is certainly what I would like to focus on. The government could have invested in rural communities to make a positive difference to those families' lives. Rural and regional Victoria needs infrastructure projects that get underway now rather than being spread into the future, particularly as some of those are faced with very long time frames, some out as far as 10 years.

The areas I will focus on in relation to my electorate will be another hike in the property fire services levy. I am sure our local government colleagues will not be pleased to be dealing with those rate increases, as they will take the first calls from people who are annoyed about the increase in their rates. Then the Andrews government is hiking up our taxes to fix up some IOUs it has issued, in particular to the United Firefighters Union, whose members campaigned for Labor at the last election. This is a budget which has some opportunities but which also makes life harder for many families, and that is what I think will reverberate through with time.

I turn to what is important for Mildura. Transport is important to Mildura, in particular our road, rail and air services. The Murray Basin rail project, which we have been talking about for a very long time, is to standardise the Mildura line, which is the backbone, as well as the spur lines that run off to the Murrayville, Manangatang and Sea Lake lines. There are certainly some important exports that are carried from that region to port, such as grain, mineral sands and high-value horticulture. Grain is something too that there is a little money in the budget for, and GrainCorp, in its discussions around

Murray Basin rail, has been indicating for some years to me that there is — —

Interjections from gallery.

Mr CRISP — Perhaps, Acting Speaker, we need, if possible, to stop the clock while this situation is dealt with.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Order! Stop the clock.

Person escorted from gallery.

Mr CRISP — Back to the Murray Basin rail project. It has long been GrainCorp's ambition to be able to load longer trains more quickly, and that is certainly going to occur with this partnership. It will deliver savings to grain growers, and every dollar that is saved through this can be returned to my community. That is important. I note that GrainCorp also has a large catchment network, including sites in New South Wales, which contributes to Victoria's export industry.

What is really important for the economic handling of this issue is a 24-hour turnaround for trains, because locomotive drivers need to be able to turn around at the end of the line within 24 hours. This is absolutely vital. In order to do that we need to do more work above the Murray Basin rail project on level crossings, particularly to stop trains from slowing down. Cars slow down and so too do trains. We can achieve this in a number of ways. There are national standards on axle loadings, but we are only going at 21 tonnes, at 80 kilometres per hour. The national standard of 23 tonnes, at 80 kilometres per hour, would be preferable. However, I do note that it is level crossings that can make a 24-hour turnaround work. The federal government has injected an additional \$20 million into this project, and I suggest that money would be far more wisely spent on level crossings for this particular project. The use of those funds would leave a \$44 million surplus in this project from funds committed by state and federal governments. This should go to level crossings, and that would then give us that turnaround.

I now turn to roads. Country roads are Victoria's arteries. Local roads are crumbling and councils are struggling to do the maintenance. Arterial roads are struggling with increased traffic as we produce more in our state, particularly in our rural areas. In particular I have a number of roads in my electorate that carry a large amount of high-value agricultural exports, and they do need some work.

The Hattah-Robinvale Road carries almonds, wine grapes, wheat and citrus, and the Robinvale-Sea Lake Road is the quickest way for table grape containers from Robinvale to get to Sea Lake, and the quickest way for wheat to get to the Manangatang receival sites. Not a great deal of money is needed to put a metre of extra tarmac down to widen the shoulders, put bitumen on that and make a road that is safe for the heavy traffic in that area. There are partnership opportunities with the federal government, but Victoria will need to provide the matching dollars.

Also, Mildura's Benetook Avenue by-pass is high on its priority list. What has been done is that the passing lane between Mildura and Ouyen, specifically around Carwarp and Nowingie, has started and will be finished in July. The Mildura Airport extension is a good investment. Larger aircraft being able to use the Mildura Airport in most weather conditions is highly desirable, and with larger aircraft come more seats and less costs. I think this is a very good investment for Mildura and it will help keep Mildura competitive.

In relation to law and order I want to correct the record. Yesterday the member for Niddrie said — and I quote from the last paragraph of page 76 of *Daily Hansard*:

Those opposite ... talk tough on law and order ...

True — and I thank him for that. But then he went on to say:

... they were not willing to fund a single sworn ... officer ...

Of the 1900 police that were delivered during the last government, 48 went to Mildura. These may be figments of the imagination of the member for Niddrie, but they have made a real difference in Mildura.

Ice is a major problem in Mildura, and we have tackled it head-on. There is money in the budget for ice initiatives. Project Ice, which is a community response, has tackled this problem head-on and it has done a marvellous job helping the community and dealing with the hotspots as they have emerged. Former Chief Commissioner of Police Ken Lay has told communities wanting to look at ways to approach ice that they must visit Mildura and Mount Gambier, and many have visited us to look at this program. That initiative is one project that I expect should be funded in this budget. For those who want to get better after their use of ice, we have additional beds at the Mildura Base Hospital to unpack the mental health issues. We have headspace Mildura. There are cognitive therapy programs now available at Sunraysia Community Health Services to get these people functioning and back into the community.

On health, Mildura Base Hospital has been extremely busy in the last year. Recent data shows the hospital had an extra 200 ambulance attendances in the last month, with 500 more bed days in our area. Currently Mildura Base Hospital is full, it is overflowing, and the winter peak is not on us yet. I do note that there is a \$200 million Regional Health Infrastructure Fund. However, we are led to believe that \$168 million of that fund has already been committed to Shepparton. If that is the case, there is not much for the rest of regional Victoria. I think that is certainly an area where we do need some investment in our area.

On education, Robinvale P–12 College continues to work towards finalising its upgrade. It is a multicultural school in a multicultural community, and it is also waiting for the final stage of its fit-for-purpose education facility. The next step is seeking funding for a combined library for public and school use. After years of promises Merbein Secondary College has gained some funding. So too have Irymple Secondary College and Red Cliffs Secondary College. These projects can now get underway, although they will take some years to deliver. I also acknowledge that our poor participation rate, particularly at the higher end of secondary school, is a challenge, and I commend the Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network for its work in this area.

Finally, I would like to talk about water. Water is something we hear a lot about for southern Victoria and central Victoria, but the Murray-Darling Basin is a bigger challenge. The commonwealth has delivered to Mildura the Sunraysia modernisation project, which has converted many of our open channels to pipeline services. Now it is time for the state to follow on and do some of those bolt-on end parts of that project to complete the modernisation of the Mildura area. Due to it having to be a continuously operating system, this is something that could be done over time.

What probably drives us most is the need for security. Security in water is paramount in our economy. With security comes certainty, and with that certainty comes economic security. We have got to intervene in this chain of connected parts. In order to do that we need to look at additional storage. I note that the federal Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, Barnaby Joyce, has opened up the water storage debate with a commitment to a \$2 billion line of credit for water storage facilities. Victoria needs to take this offer seriously. It needs to get a project on the table.

How can we work with that security certainty and economic activity? What we need to do is provide additional storage, not for additional irrigation or water

but for our horticulturalists to bank their water and carry it over from one year to the next to give them certainty in our variable climate. That is what is needed. There is an opportunity to do that. Senator Joyce has done it. I urge the Victorian government to sit down with the other southern basin states — New South Wales and South Australia — and work out a way to do this. In partnership with the other states, the federal government and the entitlement holders, being the farmers, I think we can now build something that will secure the exports that will be so valuable to Victoria as we move away from the mineral boom in Australia and into an agriculture boom for my area and an advanced engineering and manufacturing boom elsewhere in Victoria.

We can be well placed. There are good markets for almonds, table grapes, citrus, avocados and asparagus, and even the wine industry is starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel, which is not an oncoming train. However, to have those investments made in that future economic activity, we need to solve the problem with water. We need certainty, and that is probably the biggest and most important thing we can do. The opportunity is there. We can enhance the storage and we can build more storage, but we need a bank where you can take your savings from one year and put them away for a year when you need them. All we need is airspace for our farmers to be able to put their water in and keep it secure for when the climate is against us and levels are low.

The environment is also a holder of entitlement, which means that it too could store its water. We could be very scientific about how and when we use the environmental water to get the best results. I think what we need is certainty in so many areas. I have been very passionate about the water, but we also need certainty in health and education.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — It certainly gives me great pleasure to speak on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016. This budget is all about getting it done, and getting it done we are. This is a great budget for Sunbury. I am so pleased that collectively over \$9 million has been allocated to Sunbury College, Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School — and I know that the member of Macedon is very proud of that school — and Kismet Park Primary School.

The Andrews government understands that nothing is more important than delivering on the commitments it made to the Victorian people and staying true to its word. Like last year, the budget delivers more in one year than those opposite managed to get done in four. Those long, dark years resulted in massive cuts to

TAFE, ambulance services in crisis, unemployment up and the disaster of the east–west link — a dud project from a government that was riddled by leadership instability and shambolic chaos.

In November 2014 Victorians voted to change all that and elected a government that was committed to investing in major projects that create jobs, keeping up with population demands and supporting services that give each and every Victorian the very best chance to succeed. I do not need to sell this budget. The selling has been done outside of the Parliament and outside of the Labor Party. It has been done by the business sector. It has been done by health services. It has been done by community groups and by the media. The budget has been extremely well received. The only group that wants to talk this budget down is the group opposite. It talks the state down, and we get on with it. That is the difference.

The budget has been so well received because it delivers and builds on our commitment to put people first and make Victoria the very best state in Australia. Compare this to last night's very disappointing federal budget — a budget with very little good news for Victoria, a budget that does nothing for people earning less than \$80 000 a year, a budget that does nothing for innovation, health, education or, importantly, infrastructure. In contrast the state budget is literally bursting with good news. We have heard a lot of that good news today.

I cannot resist starting on the Melbourne Metro rail project, the no. 1 transport project for this government and the most important project in the state. Our decision to fully fund and deliver Melbourne's new metro tunnel, the biggest and most important public transport project in Australia, once again shows our commitment to getting on with it. Five new stations, two 9-kilometre tunnels and a direct connection of the Sunbury line to the Cranbourne-Pakenham line is fantastic news.

We cannot wait for the federal government any longer. The Prime Minister likes to talk a big game on public transport, but he has not done much to match this. He certainly has not shown us any substance. This budget delivers metro rail in full and ensures a world-class public transport system that will obviously cater for our huge population increase. On top of this the city loop will undergo a \$134 million safety upgrade, ensuring it remains safe for the 130 000 passengers that use it every day.

Our good friends in The Nationals like to say that this government is city centric, but if they look more closely, they will see that only Labor delivers for

country Victoria. This budget invests \$1.3 billion for better regional rail services. The Ballarat line will undergo a massive upgrade, with \$518 million to duplicate the line to Melton, build new crossing loops, car parks, platforms and stabling and run more services for Ballarat and the suburbs in Melbourne's west.

More than 170 V/Line services will be added, meaning trains will run more often from Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Gippsland, Maryborough, Shepparton and of course Warrnambool. We are getting on with removing 50 of our most dangerous and congested level crossings to reduce congestion and save lives. Not only are we getting rid of these crossings; we are also ahead of schedule. I know that the Minister for Public Transport and her office were very pleased on budget day. We can add to this the \$140 million to be invested in the upgrade of the Hurstbridge line and the Mernda rail project, which will be fully funded by the Labor government, with \$588 million to build the 8-kilometre extension from South Morang into the heart of the Mernda-Doreen growth corridor.

The government is also aware of the significant pressure that population is putting on car parking at train stations across the state. That is why an extra 1500 commuter car parking spaces will be created at railway stations in the outer suburbs and regional Victoria. I am extremely hopeful that some of this funding will help relieve congestion in parking at Sunbury.

I have spoken a number of times in this house about the importance of health care, and I think one thing that distinguishes Australia from a lot of places around the world is the quality of our healthcare system. The doctors and nurses in our hospitals, our paramedics and everyone involved in health care do a wonderful job. The Andrews government is delivering in health with an extra \$2.45 billion. Hospitals will be able to admit 79 000 extra patients, treat an extra 43 000 patients in emergency departments and reduce waiting times as part of a \$1.63 billion boost for hospitals, ambulances and health programs.

Victorians are very worried about cuts coming from Canberra, not to mention the four years of neglect by the former government. All members of the house would have been extremely pleased to see the Minister for Health and the Premier announce a huge boost in this budget to slash the elective surgery waiting list. Nearly 200 000 Victorians will get the surgery they need sooner, with the largest single boost in investment to assist the elective surgery waiting lists in the 2016–17 budget. This will of course be of great benefit to my community and communities like Sunbury,

Gladstone Park, Tullamarine, Diggers Rest, Bulla and Gowanbrae.

This funding is equivalent to around 3100 more coronary artery bypass grafts, 6700 more hip replacements, 6800 more knee replacements, 22 000 more sinus and ear operations and 34 000 more eye surgeries. It is a significant investment, and it is certainly an investment that this government is extremely proud of, not to mention the \$817 million boost to infrastructure upgrades for our hospital ambulance stations, which will give our paramedics, doctors and nurses the modern facilities they need to do the very best job they can. I am conscious of the time, but I want to speak about a very important investment in mental health.

Obviously this is a critical component for oneself. This government takes mental health incredibly seriously, and we are determined to reduce the devastating number of suicides we see each year. This budget provides a \$356 million investment in mental health with a focus on providing better access to services and investing in prevention. I certainly commend the Treasurer, the Premier and the minister for the funding allocation in this area. I know that many people in Sunbury have raised issues of mental health with me, and there has been a widespread call right across the state for additional funding for services in mental health.

As part of the Andrews Labor government's 10-year suicide prevention framework which aims to halve the number of suicides over the next decade, \$27.5 million will be provided for suicide prevention initiatives, including trials of intensive community-based support for people who have attempted suicide and communities impacted by suicide in selected locations across Victoria as well as local community approaches to prevent suicide across six local areas. These trials will support communities to implement strategies, including workforce training, school-based support and mental health and literacy programs. I have heard a number of speakers talk about the values that underpin a budget, and I think that if you look at the funding allocation, you will see that this government has delivered for mental health with the programs I have just mentioned. I think that when it comes to the values of this government the proof is in the pudding.

The education state is happening. Last year's budget delivered in spades for education, especially in my electorate, and this year is no different. We believe that every Victorian child deserves to be the very best they can be and to be able to reach their full potential. The 2016–17 budget delivers over \$924 million to build

new schools and upgrade classrooms, the largest ever single investment by a Victorian government in school infrastructure. That is why Victoria is the education state.

We will establish the Victorian School Building Authority to deliver the construction boom. This will not just benefit students but also create jobs for construction workers and local tradies. Included in this package is \$287 million to acquire land to build or complete 23 new schools, many in Melbourne's growth areas where they are needed most; \$92 million for our 10 cutting-edge tech schools, something this government is extremely proud of; and \$68.5 million to upgrade 20 specialist schools in the poorest condition, including \$10 million to boost the Inclusive Schools Fund for students with disabilities.

I mentioned Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School earlier today, and I know the member for Macedon when she joined the Premier and the Minister for Education was extremely proud to stand with the principal, Joanne Nolan, and Brendan, the senior school principal at the Bullengarook campus. There are two campuses, one in Bullengarook and one in Sunbury. I know the member for Macedon was thrilled to be able to work with the Minister for Education to deliver such vital funding, something we are extremely proud of. That once again goes to show the values underpinning this government. All up, this means an additional \$1.1 billion is being spent in this budget to build, upgrade and maintain Victorian schools. This side of the house believes in education, and we stand by education.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr J. BULL — Thanks for the support from the other side! A key issue facing my electorate of Sunbury and many in the northern and western suburbs is population growth, and last year the \$50 million interface fund delivered key projects like the Sunbury warm water pool, which was a fantastic announcement — and I am very pleased to see the Minister for Local Government in the house. The minister has worked very hard to ensure that the Growing Suburbs Fund has been included in the budget. It is a \$50 million commitment. I believe there are 34 projects that got underway due to the fund in the last budget, and I certainly look forward to seeing projects roll out as a result of this year's commitment. This government understands that growth areas like Sunbury and other areas in the north need additional support to provide key services, and this fund is vital to the delivery of those services.

The Andrews government also understands that keeping Victorians safe is vitally important. That is why Victoria Police will get 406 new officers, including 300 frontline police, as part of a \$596 million package announced pre-budget by the Premier. This is also another fantastic announcement.

Since the Andrews government came to office, family violence has unfortunately been at the forefront of this government's heart and mind, and I know that all members will share with me in understanding and recognising the importance of and the devastation caused by family violence. I do say 'unfortunately' because I am sure that we all wish that it did not occur. It does occur, to the extent that it is the single biggest cause of death and disability for women under 45.

As we know, Victoria's first Royal Commission into Family Violence produced 227 recommendations, and this government has agreed to implement every one of them. We have provided a \$572 million funding boost in this budget, responding to these recommendations, and obviously the 65 urgent recommendations that we have already made announcements about, including more housing and crisis refuges, more counsellors, more prevention programs and more support for children who are sadly victims of family violence.

I am so pleased, as I mentioned earlier, that over \$9 million has been provided for Sunbury College and Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School. Kismet Park Primary School has received \$700 000 as part of this budget. This is obviously fantastic news for the school community and fantastic news for education in Sunbury. Sunbury College received \$3 million last year and in this budget receives \$4.8 million, another commitment by this government that is wonderful news and certainly welcomed by the school. I just want to put on record my thanks to the school and my congratulations on its advocacy for funding.

I have to say, though, that the highlight of this budget is the funding for special education. If we go back to values and the things that truly matter, I think funding for specialist education — funding for students with disabilities — is something that all governments should not walk away from but should stay committed to. A budget is a values statement which shows the priorities of a government, and I could not be prouder of our values. This is a great budget for Victorians. We are getting on with it, and we are getting it done. I would like to congratulate the Treasurer and the Premier on their outstanding efforts, and of course all the ministers. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — It is a privilege to stand up to speak on this year's state budget, which is the second budget delivered by the current Treasurer. Last year's budget was particularly disappointing, but it was his first year so I thought I would give him a go. But he has again disappointed. It sort of reminds me of one of those first-round draft picks. You expect a fair bit. In the first year you give them a little bit of grace, but then in the second year you start to think, 'If they don't come on a little bit, we're going to have to get rid of them'. It reminds me a little bit of Jack Watts when he played for Melbourne. He was a star-studded, first-round draft pick, but he failed to deliver. I think this Treasurer will be heading in the same direction before too long. He will have to be traded. We are going to have to look for a better model, because he has continued on the tradition of the great Labor Party and Labor governments of the past of being some of the highest taxing regimes known to man.

One of the things about sitting in the chamber over the last couple of days has been the ability to listen to those members on the other side. They must be reading from their handouts which have been handed to them by the Treasurer, because they are loaded with untruths and misnomers. Yet they continue to spout them, one after another. It makes me wonder whether they actually think for themselves and whether they actually read the data that is provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Outside of the chamber we tend to stick to the facts and the truth. If members read *Hansard*, they would see that there is quite a remarkable difference between reality and the spin being handed down by the government. If you only look at Timmy the Treasurer, you would understand where it is coming from.

The facts, quite simply recorded for historical purposes, are that this state was handed over in remarkable condition by the former Treasurer, who did an outstanding job. That will go down in history; I do not need to state that. You need only look at the statistics and the facts between 2010 and 2014 to see what a remarkable job the former Treasurer did. That is a matter of public record. If government members bothered to look, they would see that our state economy was probably one of the better state economies, if not the best state economy, in Australia. The budget surpluses at the time and also those projected were equal to or in excess of what the Treasurer quite publicly announced last week. He took quite a lot of credit for a job that had already been done by the former Treasurer. Congratulations to the former Treasurer on leaving such an outstanding economy.

As I said, that is just a matter of record. It is no great news to the state of Victoria or the public. In the previous term, jobs under the coalition government grew by 139 000 between 2010 and 2014. It is not too difficult to find out that the closest state to that was Western Australia, which had been going through the mining boom. So for Victoria to actually increase its job rate faster than any other state in Australia was a remarkable job. I am not quite sure how any member of the government could stand up and deny that. These are ABS statistics. Government members only have to use Google — if they know how to do that — to see that. It is just a matter of public record that Victoria had the greatest jobs growth of any state in Australia, and that was handed over to this Treasurer. Again, congratulations to the former coalition government and its Treasurer.

Probably the most damning statistic for this government is the fact that in the coalition's final year of 2014, 78 000 jobs were created. That is 78 000 jobs that were created in the state of Victoria in 2014. This compares to the current government's creation of 34 000 jobs. The former coalition government created 78 000 jobs in its final years compared to 34 000 in Labor's first year of government. That is a damning statistic. How any member of the government could stand up and say that they have had success in jobs growth is just not true. It just should not be said because it does not compare to the former coalition government.

It is a given that the coalition government supports business — small business and large business — and the Labor government does not. You only have to look at the statistics to prove that fact.

Previously Victoria was the greatest state in Australia for jobs growth. That is not the case now. We are now second, well behind New South Wales. One of the things you grow up with is a competitive spirit. You like to think that you are the best at something or you are very competitive and you can get one up. Of all the states, we have fallen behind New South Wales. Nobody should be proud of that: 66 000 jobs were created in Victoria and 147 000 were created in New South Wales, so we are getting smashed. I say to the Minister for Local Government, who is at the table, we are getting smashed by New South Wales. That is a shame because one of the things we need to do in the state of Victoria is to grow our economy. That means growing jobs, and the only way you can do that is to support small business.

Adding things like public holidays does the exact opposite. It is an absolute disgrace that the government has added an extra two public holidays — one for this

grand final parade. It is absolute nonsense. People are actually losing jobs because of the decisions that this government has made. Nobody supports additional public holidays other than the government's union friends. What a way to run an economy. What a way to purport to be growing small business. We have created 66 000 jobs to New South Wales's 147 000 jobs. We have lost our mantle as the greatest job growth state in Australia. You really have to wonder where this state is heading under this government. Bring on 2018. We are all looking forward to that. We are going to get this state back on track.

I mentioned earlier that Labor governments have a history of being the highest taxing regimes any country can have. It has been proven true again. Despite the former Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, stating prior to the election that there would be no tax increases, he has again done the exact opposite. If members have a look at the statistics, they will see that state taxes increased by 20.7 per cent between 2014 and 2016. This is all on the public record. I am not making this up; members can find it themselves on any of the databases. The Premier stated that taxes would not increase, yet the reality is something completely different. In two years we have seen an increase in state taxes of \$3.7 billion, or 20.7 per cent. That is beyond dispute. This government says one thing, but it delivers something else. That is a matter of public record, and the government will be held to account for that.

State taxes as a percentage of the overall state economy continue to increase. When we were in government we saw state taxes decrease as a percentage of the state economy. We predicted a percentage decrease of somewhere between 4.8 per cent to about 4.7 per cent. The projection under the current government of state taxes as a percentage of the state economy is 5.08 per cent up to 5.41 per cent. Again it is beyond dispute that this is one of the highest taxing governments in Australia.

The then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, promised that he would not increase taxes or impose new ones. Again we have seen the exact opposite. The fire services property levy has been increased by 7.2 per cent. He said taxes would not increase. A land tax surcharge for absentee owners of 0.5 per cent has been introduced. He said taxes would not increase, yet a 3 per cent stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers has been introduced. But he said taxes would not increase and he said there would not be any new taxes. Here are three examples of either new taxes or taxes that have increased — two new ones and one increase. But he said taxes would not increase, so which is it? What can we believe?

What this government does not realise is that introducing taxes like the brown coal tax impacts on every one of us. Government members talk about low-income earners, struggling families and so on, but the government is increasing their expenses. Do they understand the connection between increasing taxes and increasing the burden on families? What is it that they do not get? Do they not understand that when you increase taxes they are passed on to everybody in the state of Victoria? Is there something they do not understand about that very simple principle — that when you increase taxes families suffer? This government is making families suffer. How long is it going to make families suffer?

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr PAYNTER — The member for Macedon has finally found her voice. Families are suffering under this government. Government members do not understand that when taxes are increased, the burden falls onto families. It is a simple principle. Increase taxes or introduce new taxes, and families suffer. It is simple. The government is making families and the good people of Victoria suffer.

I say good evening to the member for Sunbury. He is not suffering; he always has a smile on his face because he is part of this heavy-taxing state government that we will have in place for another two and a half years.

The government thought it would increase the payroll tax threshold. Gee, Timmy the Treasurer has gone out on a limb here. He is increasing it by \$25 000 per year for four years. That is going to help small business no end! The Treasurer is a joke. What does he not understand about small business? Did he ask small businesses what they want? I do not think he did. They wanted the government and the Treasurer to decrease the payroll tax rate, not increase the threshold by \$25 000. They wanted a threshold increase of at least \$100 000, but they wanted the payroll tax rate decreased so that all small businesses could benefit — not just the ones under or over the threshold but all of them. What does the Treasurer not understand about small business? I can give him a one-on-one. Any member of Parliament can come to my office anytime, and we can have a chat about small business.

I can tell members what does not help small business: adding public holidays. Did government members ask small businesses what they felt about the grand final parade public holiday? They did not. I had businesses that did not open their doors; they closed for the day, costing the businesses hundreds of thousands of dollars and costing casual employees employment for the day.

They did not earn an income because the government closed the doors. Adding public holidays makes small business suffer, which makes families suffer. It is simple. Government members should talk to their constituents, and they will explain the basics of how the economy works.

There are a couple of good things in the budget for the good seat of Bass. We got \$48 million for the penguins — fantastic, great news for the economy, great news for tourism. I have done a quick calculation; it is about \$50 000 a penguin — great news —

Ms Thomas — You hate penguins.

Mr PAYNTER — I love the penguins. The \$50 000 per penguin is great news if you are a penguin. It is great news for Phillip Island and great news for tourism. I congratulate the Treasurer on finding \$48 million.

We have \$300 000-odd for the Wonthaggi education precinct; we wanted \$21 million. The good people of Wonthaggi were promised \$21 million for the education precinct. We got \$3 million for a Cowes police station, but no-one knows where it is going to go, and not even the police knew that they were going to get it.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2016–2017) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 April; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport).

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — It is a pleasure to rise to make some comments on the Appropriation (Parliament 2016–2017) Bill 2016. As I mentioned in my contribution on the Appropriation (2016–2017) Bill 2016, it is less than satisfactory that the Parliament, and the Assembly in particular, has been put in a position where we are now debating this bill before, in this case, the Presiding Officers and the clerks have had the opportunity, together with the Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, to appear before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. That will in fact occur on Friday morning, and it does, particularly in the context of this bill, make debate a little bit difficult, because the second-reading speech is probably the shortest second-reading speech I

have ever seen — probably the words do not run to much more than half-a-page — and of course, as most members know, the details in budget paper 3 are somewhat limited as well.

But the second-reading speech actually says:

In line with the wishes of the Presiding Officers, appropriations in the bill are made to the departments of the Parliament.

The inference of course is that the appropriations that are proposed are in line with the wishes of the Presiding Officers. A cynic might say that in fact what is in line with the wishes of the Presiding Officers is that the appropriations are made in the proportions that the Presiding Officers would like. That is an issue that I will explore on Friday morning, but unfortunately at this point we are not unable to verify that the Parliament — or indeed the Auditor-General — has been funded to the extent of financial support that it was seeking.

Given that the Presiding Officers have not yet presented themselves to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, I thought it might be worth looking at last year's presentation, which occurred on 20 May. No doubt some of the issues are still relevant. Of course the Parliament that appears is divided into four units: effectively three departments plus the committees — so the Council, the Assembly, the Department of Parliamentary Services and the committees, but of course with this bill we are also funding the Auditor-General.

We are not funding, in the case of the Parliament or the Auditor-General, the entire expenditure; a significant amount for both is funded through special appropriations. But nevertheless in total the amount proposed is some \$117 million. Of that \$15.789 million goes to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office and the balance goes to the Parliament. The balance appears to be pretty much in line with what was originally appropriated last year, and I think there is some commentary in the budget papers around the issue of carryover of funds and so on from members.

Last year, and rightly, I think, the Presiding Officers highlighted a number of pressures that are being brought to bear on the parliamentary budget. These are factors that are not entirely beyond the control of the Parliament, but to some extent they are. I refer to electorate office rent. We know what is happening in the property market; we know that not only have house prices grown in the last decade but also commercial property prices. The figures presented last year indicate that the rental expense for electorate offices had almost

doubled in the period 2005–06 to 2017–18, from \$3.73 million to a projected \$6.29 million. A substantially bigger gap occurs in the costs for the precinct rent and utilities. So perhaps they were artificially low in 2005–06, down at \$1.13 million, but they are projected in 2017–18 to be \$3.49 million. There is a similar trajectory in terms of IT: from \$3.43 million to \$6.23 million over the same period. Salary costs as well for electorate offices are up from \$12.35 million to a projected \$25.79 million in 2017–18.

Of course there are not only the fixed costs in terms of providing roofs over the heads of members and their electorate officers, as well as over the heads of parliamentary staff at St Andrews Place, but there is also significant work being undertaken around the precinct. I first took up my position in Parliament in December 2006, and I think from memory it was about June 2007 that a scaffold went up outside my office window and the nice view of the Dandenongs and St Patrick's Cathedral disappeared. The scaffolds went up when the work started, and we have all watched with interest the work that has occurred, from the far corner of the building near the car park, around the courtyard outside the chamber here and getting very close to the front of the building.

I guess when you have a building that is close to 160 years old, there is going to be wear and tear. Certainly I took the opportunity that was afforded to us some weeks ago to go up on the roof and to talk to the contractors undertaking the work on the stone. It is a significant investment, but it is an investment that I think will serve us exceptionally well for the years to come. Some years ago I think it was representatives of the National Gallery of Victoria who came along and said, 'You can no longer hang our paintings in the Legislative Council Committee Room because we do not consider that it is sufficiently weatherproof to maintain them in the manner that they should be maintained in'. When you get to that point, where the state Parliament is not able to appropriately hang works of art, then clearly you need to do something about it. The encouraging thing is, as I think I have mentioned in earlier parliamentary appropriation debates, that rather than doing a patch-up job, the work that is being undertaken in this context is of a high standard and will set us up for a very long future.

There were a few other things covered in the context of last year that are relevant. Of course we have had a significant expansion of security. That is an unfortunate necessity. I certainly do not have any quibble with the security, although my wife, who is stuck outside at the moment trying to get a car in the back gate because the

security will not let her in, might have a slightly different view. But it is necessary, and obviously the incident that we saw earlier this afternoon indicates that while we need to keep the house and the Parliament accessible to the people that it is here to serve, we also need to make sure that we are not seen as a soft target. Certainly work has been undertaken over the last couple of years, particularly increased security around the back of the building and the internal work in terms of putting doors in to segregate the public and members. While, again, you would rather that segregation did not have to occur, it is unfortunately a necessary evil, to use a cliché, but I think an appropriate one in the times in which we live.

With regard to the budget that we have before us, it is a very modest increase. We see from the initiatives portion of budget paper 3 that there are total output initiatives over the coming year of \$7.1 million; some \$4.4 million of that is for the Parliamentary Budget Office; and there is also an allocation of significant funds, \$1.7 million, to improve the staff leave arrangements at electorate offices. But beyond that there is not much in it. Over the forward estimates, if you take out the ongoing impact of the Parliamentary Budget Office and the staff leave arrangements, the growth in expenditure is very, very modest.

Budget paper 3 also identifies the usual details in terms of the outputs, and again there is not much very different in those apart from the issues I have identified. I think the point of the growing costs relative to the modest increase in expenditure is that there is really only one bucket that can be squeezed, and that is the bucket that services members of Parliament, and that obviously places us all under some duress.

Obviously we want a lean Parliament. We want a Parliament that is working well and not being in any way extravagant, but with some of the changes being made now, I have got to say, it does make it a little bit hard to operate in each case, and I will give two examples. The first is the change to electronic provision of most reports. I think that is a great initiative, and I now operate with very little paper in my own office, but with some documents, particularly if you are going to be using them in the house, you actually need physical copies, because you simply cannot have three or four pages up concurrently on an iPad — it just does not work.

Certainly yesterday and a few months ago I have had situations, once with the new budget update and once with the budget itself, where additional copies were sought because of the particular responsibilities that I have. While ultimately they were obtained, in the case

of yesterday a senior member of the parliamentary staff had to go to some trouble to obtain a copy for me. I am not sure that that is the most efficient use of time, and I certainly intend raising that issue with the Presiding Officers tomorrow, because I am not sure that we are really being served as well as we could be. But certainly we need to be doing as much as we can in terms of moving to electronic versions and so on.

There are just another couple of issues that I want to cover. One is a personal hobbyhorse, and that is the condition of the room in which we are working this afternoon. Obviously it is nearly 160 years old. We tend to think that apart from the obvious changes of the seating, from the benches to the rather more comfortable chairs that from memory occurred in early 2003, not much else has changed. But of course when you look at some of the old pictures — not photos, because this place predates photos — you will find that there used to be a door behind the seat occupied by the member for Narre Warren South. The door behind you, Acting Speaker McGuire, was not there, the Speaker's chair was a lot further back and the chamber was quite different.

We keep it going. This is a workplace, and I think the place, the fabric, is pretty well looked after. But I have to say what does offend me and has done for a number of years — I think going back prior to the time of Speaker Smith — are the black marks that we are getting on the fabric up there on the walls above the back benches. In a room of the this significance, being not only the home of the Victorian Legislative Assembly but of course for 27 years having been the home of the House of Representatives, you would hope a few of those sorts of things could be fixed up.

Mr Donnellan interjected.

Mr MORRIS — And then we would still be up at the Exhibition!

Just finally, I would like — this is always fraught with danger but I think it is certainly worth doing occasionally — to recognise the work of all the people who service and support the work that we do. Obviously in this chamber the most significant figures are the Clerks, the attendants and the Hansard people. The procedure office just out the door, but intimately linked, serves us exceptionally well; and there are our catering staff and security.

Generally I am pretty happy with the security. I probably have a slightly different view at the moment, but I think in a time of increased security and obviously increased stress as a result of that, they do a pretty good

job; and of course, we have the protective services officers (PSOs). I must say that I was not alarmed but a little bit concerned to read this morning that there is a proposal to spread about half the number of PSOs across both Treasury Place and here. Of course that is a decision for the Chief Commissioner of Police, but we are a soft target, and I think we all need to be a little bit concerned about that issue.

We also have the cleaners of course, and the maintenance teams, who go well above and beyond in terms of maintenance. Of course, knowing a little bit about that field and what it must be like to be working in a building of this age and heritage, to do it the way they do is certainly good.

Across the road at St Andrews Place are the committee staff. I greatly respect their professionalism. I certainly respect their work ethic, but I have got to say that due to a range of circumstances I have seen way too much of the staff of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in the last 15 months or so, and I am sure they will agree with me that we could probably do with a little more time apart. But as I mentioned to them directly on Monday, I certainly appreciate the work they do under the sometimes trying circumstances. Finally, the remaining staff at 55 St Andrews Place are in the IT and the security and electorate properties units. In those two offices in particular it is a matter of fact that generally as members we do not contact them unless we have a problem. Given the sort of life that we lead and the pressures that are upon us all, when we have a problem we generally want it fixed, and we want it fixed now. Of course the reality is that they cannot always fix it, but generally they try damned hard to do it, and they must deal with 128 members. I was going to say, 'And they deal with 128 different demands', but it is probably a whole lot more than 128 different demands, hopefully not always at once. I certainly appreciate the work they do as well.

I just reiterate my concern that we are being asked to debate these issues knowing that we will not get to a committee or consideration-in-detail stage on this bill, that we are being asked to debate it prior to consideration of the matter and the opportunity for the Presiding Officers to present to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on Friday. Under those circumstances, and with the obvious gaps in knowledge, I commend the bill to the house.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on the Appropriation (Parliament 2016–2017) Bill 2016. I feel as though I should channel the member for Mornington for a while and let everybody know that I too am going

to refer to budget paper 3, page 111, tables 1.2 and 1.27. That is how it is done at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), is it not? So we had better set the scene here and live up to the fine qualities of PAEC members and former ones, as I am.

As we know, the purpose of this bill is to provide the funding for the operation of the Parliament in 2016 and 2017. In other words it is to fund our workplace and fund the open house that is the Parliament for the people of Victoria and also the home of democracy in Victoria. It is really important that we make a significant investment in those very things — the Parliament, the people of Victoria and the democratic institutions of Victoria.

As the member for Mornington highlighted, in the tables in budget paper 3 we do see what he quite correctly termed a modest increase in funding for the Parliament to operate. Before he used the term 'modest', I was thinking of the words 'adequate' and 'not indulgent'. It certainly is not indulgent, because I know that we are public servants and very much have to live within our means and deliver outcomes for the benefit of all Victorians. We have to do that. That is why we have this process of having a parliamentary appropriation bill, and we have PAEC hearings where the Speaker and the President appear alongside their major officers to support them during that process to make sure that we are transparent and accountable for every cent that we spend on ourselves and on our workplace — on this magnificent building, this great institution of decision-making and lawmaking.

This budget includes \$128.9 million for the operations of this chamber, the Legislative Council, the parliamentary investigatory committees, the Department of Parliamentary Services, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Auditor-General. Just listing those institutions you realise that at just \$128.9 million we get pretty good value for money, because they play a very important part not only in making laws but in making sure that every cent that ministers spend on the rollout of the budget is in fact well supported by the officers of the Parliamentary Services department and other public servants and that the Auditor-General keeps a very watchful eye on all of us.

If you have attended meetings where one of the departments that you might be interested in — in my example it is the education department — is under the scrutiny of the Auditor-General, you realise what incredibly valuable work they do not only in making sure they spend our dollars wisely but, in doing that, in undertaking the research around that, making some

very wise recommendations about how we can perform our duties as a government, indeed our duties as an opposition, much more effectively and much more in tune with the expectations of the Victorian public.

I think we all sometimes pinch ourselves when we think the Parliament of Victoria is our workplace. The Parliament of Victoria was constructed between 1856 and 1930, and the first Parliament sat here in November 1856. Of course we know that this was the seat of the federal Parliament for many years as well — over 20 years. I have now served in this Parliament for over 10 years, and, as I said, I sometimes have to pinch myself to believe where that time has gone.

Because I have been a member of this house for so long I have had an office in the chook house, or the annex, and now have an office here in Parliament House. I must say — and I say this very fondly — that these buildings do need a lot of love and attention to keep these august buildings looking shipshape. Indeed when reading about the Parliament of Victoria it always comes to my attention that these buildings have never been completed. They are still very much a work in progress. When I bring visitors into the house and they see all of the stuff hanging around or that there is scaffolding and they ask what is going on, I often comment that it is a bit like the Sydney Harbour Bridge. As soon as you finish one section you find another part of the building that needs some love and attention or some work needing done, and this work is certainly ongoing. So it is very important, in making this appropriation in the budget, that we are very much looking after this building for the people of Victoria but also that it is a good workspace for us to be in.

Ms Thomson — And a safe one.

Ms GRALEY — And a safe one, definitely. I must admit that when you see young people come to visit you at Parliament — especially the schoolchildren — you notice their looks of glee and surprise when they come in here and see these ornate chambers, the statues and the paintings and everybody very busily working about the place. When you see it in their eyes and their smiles you realise what a very special place this is.

I would like to say, though, that when you take your visitors out to the chook house, or the annex, they are equally — I would not say smiling with glee — quite gobsmacked to think that parliamentarians have their offices in what at best can be described as old-school portables, I suppose. They say, ‘Is this really where you work?’. Most of us have had a pretty rugged trip to Parliament. We have done a lot of work in the community. We have spent a lot of time getting here.

We have put ourselves out there and got a lot of criticism along the way probably. It is not an easy gig being a member of Parliament — but hang on, I am very glad to be here doing it — but I think they do have higher expectations that parliamentarians would in fact have better digs to do their work in. In fact I remember one Queen’s Counsel saying to me, ‘I can’t believe you could be a productive person in this sort of space’.

So it is very pleasing to see in budget paper 3 the allocation that has been made for the new buildings that will house the staff. I know we will come in for some criticism for this. People like to have a go at polities, but I subscribe to the old adage that sometimes if you feed them peanuts, you get monkeys. Not that I am casting aspersions on anybody in here, but I am saying that we have an obligation to provide a professional workplace if we want good outcomes from the work of parliamentarians.

There are more reasons than that for why we need this new building. It is not only putting a professional face on the work of the parliamentarians and the staff; we also have an obligation to make sure that everybody who works here — indeed everybody who visits this place — enters a place that complies with workplace health and safety standards and is a healthy place to work in.

When I arrived in this place I remember standing on the front steps of Parliament House and thinking, ‘This is really the happiest day for life’ — or one of them at least — but after 18 months I was beleaguered with illness. There was a pretty sad thing going on. After asking the question, ‘Why me?’, I actually asked the question, ‘How did that happen?’. Your mind casts a wide net.

So I do commend the President and the Speaker for launching an investigation into health and wellbeing conditions in this Parliament. I hope it has contributed to the fact that we are going to get a brand spanking new healthy environment to work in in our new building. That is not only a good investment in our health and wellbeing but it is also an investment in people like me, who may think that their workplace may somehow have contributed to their illness.

I have read the *Victorian Parliament Cancer Study — Final Report*. It is an excellent report. I note that finding 6 says:

The most notable differences amongst the individual tumour types was a greater than expected number of cases of breast cancer (17 observed, 10 expected) and a smaller than expected number of lung cancer cases ...

Apparently parliamentarians do not smoke as much as the rest of the population. That triggered some pretty uneasy feelings, not only with regard to me but also with regard to other parliamentarians, former and present, who have also experienced breast cancer. The final summary of the report points out that:

The committee cannot identify evidence of an unusual incidence of malignancy amongst the groups studied.

No environmental exposure likely to cause cancer was identified in its immediate Parliament House or in the precinct.

That gives us some way of reconciling that there may be other issues at play in our own personal circumstances, but the best thing that this Parliament can do to make sure that nobody is second-guessing that, especially people who have experienced breast cancer, is to remove the chook house. I cannot say that I am not looking forward to the day when the chook house completely disappears and we get our new building to work in. It will be a good thing for a person like me, and for every other member of the Parliament — and indeed every staff member and visitor to the Parliament.

I would like to finish by referring to the work of the Auditor-General, as I have already mentioned, and also that of the budget office and the investigative committees. I have been very aware that a number of investigative committees have been operating, especially in the upper house, and of course there is the Parliamentary Budget Office. I really value the work that they do. Don Chipp used the phrase, ‘Keeping the bastards honest’. These committees and the budget office are very incisive, and I really appreciate the work they do because they focus on improvement.

We do not want to waste money. We want to continue to innovate and be responsive. But I must put on the parliamentary record that a little bit of shenanigans is going on in the upper house too. While we might want to keep the bastards honest and have a look at some of the things that may be going on, there is also a little bit of a witch-hunt going on up there, and the public are having to subsidise that. There is a little bit of wastefulness and ugliness and over-the-top behaviour. We need to keep a very watchful eye on just how that money is being spent in those investigative committees.

I want to finish my contribution by saying thank you to the people who work in the Parliament. Members of Parliament are not the easiest to people to get along with, but I must say that we really — —

An honourable member — Speak for yourself!

Ms GRALEY — I know that I am not the easiest member to get along with, I must say. But I would say that so many of the staff here really do go out of their way to assist us. I would especially like to thank all of the attendants in the chamber. I would like to say a special thank you to Pablo, who keeps me up to date with my Western Bulldogs news even when I am supposed to be cheering and ranting in the Parliament about something much more important. I certainly knew who the no. 1 draft pick was before most people in Melbourne, so thank you, Pablo, and all the other attendants in the chamber.

I would like to say a special thanks to the Hansard staff. Many people who follow me will say they make us sound much better than we ever expected to sound. I often pick up *Hansard* and say, ‘Oh boy, that all came together pretty well’, but I do not think that is exactly how I felt when it was coming out. So I send a special thanks to the Hansard staff.

I would also like to thank the people in parliamentary services. They have got an arduous job in finding us electorate offices, moving us into them and making sure that they are maintained well. I know that is not always an easy job — in fact it is a hard job.

For me, especially, the IT staff are always really helpful. I am a little bit backward where IT is concerned. I often ask the stupid question, but they always respond in a very positive way.

This bill is very important. It invests in the Parliament. It invests in the people of Victoria and their traditions of democracy. If we can keep on providing better and better facilities, I think we will deliver better government and better parliamentary performances. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) — I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Parliament 2016–2017) Bill 2016 on behalf of The Nationals. The purpose of the bill is to make provision for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund in respect of Parliament for the financial year 2016–17. I am certainly going to support what the member for Mornington said about the process of debating this bill. Normally it is done after the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee budget hearings, but here we are, doing it now. Probably all of us need to declare that we are all going to benefit from this bill because it does run Parliament.

The bill is split up into cost centres, and they are detailed in the schedule. We have the Department of the Legislative Council, the Department of the Legislative

Assembly, the Department of Parliamentary Investigatory Committees, the Department of Parliamentary Services, the Department of Auditor-General and a new one, the Department of Parliamentary Budget Office. That is something that we recently debated in this Parliament. I notice that the Parliamentary Budget Office will have an initial budget of \$4.4 million to look at costing various proposals, particularly around budgets and election campaigns, and to provide neutral assessments of certain proposals. The bill is also associated with some special appropriations for certain items as well.

Traditionally this bill provides an opportunity for the Parliament to thank all those who support democracy in Victoria, and there is a large number of staff who do that. On behalf of the National Party I want to add my thanks to all of them. Most of the departments and sectors have been spoken about by previous speakers so I will not go over them again. To all of those who support us, advise us, guide us and protect us, I take this opportunity to say thank you very much.

We can also look at the works that are occurring in Parliament House. It is a large job, and it is interesting. I noticed the stonemasons were here when I arrived some time ago. I expect they will probably be here when I depart this house, such is the nature of the job. It is a full refurbishment. As a member of the House Committee, I have been given information that suggests this is a very large job. It is a once-in-150-years job as far as a refurbishment goes. I have toured a lot of the works. I have been on the roof a couple of times, which is rather interesting, and I have looked at other places around the building.

I also note that we have a bathroom renewal program running, for which I am thankful. Some of those bathrooms are rather in need of renewal. I also note that there will be new offices constructed. After many decades of discussions, it looks like we have been able to find a way forward to create offices, and the previous speaker mentioned the importance of this. It is a project that I am very much looking forward to. I think the departments have done a lot of work to produce something that is compatible with the history of the building, taking into account the views that are required of the building and vice versa — what we can see from the building — to produce something that is functional and close to our Parliament. Well done to everyone who has been involved in the project. I know that it has not been easy.

We know about security. There have been some changes here, which is a modern reality. I notice that some of the doors that we now have at what we know

as the back corridor may serve a purpose beyond security in that they work on draught control, because sometimes in winter the wind can whistle through this building, between the front doors and the back doors. It is pretty amazing.

With that said, this bill is about the cost of supporting democracy. We are a transparent democracy, so people can see what democracy costs. In the greater scheme of things it is very wise for the people of Victoria to invest in our democracy in this way. I think they do get value for money, as many have said, and we only need to look at what is written on the floor in the vestibule to be reminded about what our democracy is and what we need to do ensure that it remains and thrives. With that, I commend the bill to the house.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) — I too rise to support the Appropriation (Parliament 2016–2017) Bill 2016, and I do it with great delight for a couple of reasons. The first reason is the way in which the budget enhances the ability of this Parliament to do its job in the best interests of the citizens of Victoria. I am talking about the additional resources for the Legislative Council committees. I do want to follow on from the member for Narre Warren South in relation to the work that they could do. If they choose to, they can do really meaningful work — or they can play politics. I hope that they will take the opportunity with their budget to do really meaningful long-term work that will benefit the citizens of Victoria and not just use it for political point-scoring, which is what we have seen most recently. It is an opportunity, and I hope that they will take up that opportunity.

I also want to talk a bit about the Parliamentary Budget Office, because I think this is an important initiative. It meets a government election promise to set up the Parliamentary Budget Office, which will give every member of Parliament — it does not matter which party and it does not matter if they are not a member of a party — an opportunity to properly assess the costings of policy options and to get that neutral view of policy costings. That has to be a real plus for members of Parliament, that they know that they have somewhere they can go to get that kind of advice. Again it enhances our capacity to serve our communities better by making sure that what we are putting up is realistic and meaningful and will do what we hope it will do. That is an important bonus in this legislation. It does meet the election commitment that we made, and it does reflect our commitment to ensuring that we have a parliamentary system that works the best way it possibly can.

The performance of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office and allowing better scrutiny of how that works is also important, because we do not want a system where there is not some appropriate parliamentary oversight for the Auditor-General as well. That is also important.

I want to get to the second point, which is about the renovations of this place and the standard of this place. It was not so long ago that we could walk around certain parts of this building and see paint peeling off walls and ceilings. We could see where water was coming in. We could see what that meant for the health and wellbeing of the people who work in this place — and not just members of Parliament but everybody who works in this place. Those problems did need to be fixed. We also know that a former Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, got very sick from being in one of the offices underneath the front stairs. In fact he became critically ill and could have lost his life as a result of the continual leakage that had occurred and the mould and stuff that had grown as a consequence in his office which was in what I call the dungeons or the stables and are now known as the ministerial wing. It is important that we correct these faults.

I want to talk about the precious chook house, the temporary accommodation that has been here since the 1970s.

Ms Knight — There is a song about it.

Ms THOMSON — Yes, there has been a song written about it. I think the member for Wendouree should read that song into *Hansard*, because it is a sensational song.

This was a building that was only ever meant to be temporary, but it has been there since the 1970s. There were issues with people falling down the stairs when rushing to get from the chook house to the chamber for divisions, running from the chook house and up the dangerous stairs and past the balcony. No-one should fear that they may fall down the stairs in their place of work in order to meet the commitments that they need to meet. For staff who have had to walk through and work in the chook house and get around and about it, it was dangerous for them as well. It is appropriate that we have a safe and healthy work environment for the people who work here.

I want to pay tribute too to the staff in this place. When we arrive at Parliament the staff members have usually been here for quite a considerable time and they are here after we leave. People do not really get to see that aspect of the workings of the Parliament, and we need to respect the work that the staff put in. We see the

attendants. They are visible, and we recognise their work and really appreciate it. We understand the serious work that our officials at the table here do in supporting us when dealing with legislation, understanding the procedures and making sure the Parliament runs properly and appropriately — and sometimes keeping us in check, but only when needed. But there are all those behind-the-scenes people who we do not really get to see — the maintenance people who look after our gardens and our offices and who clean this Parliament to keep it looking as pristine as it does.

There is of course the library staff and Hansard. I thank Hansard for making me sound so good, because I am sure that at least a couple of times I have read back my speeches in *Hansard* and thought, 'I am sure I did not say it that well'. So thank you, Hansard. It is important to get that on the record.

I thank the catering staff. We might not in the lower house be sitting the hours that we used to sit, but the upper house has been sitting some extraordinary hours and the catering staff have to cope with putting on meals and food for those people — for the staff and members — who are around for late hours. We have to acknowledge what they need to do to help keep us going.

For all the times that we have been narky with them because the cup of coffee has not come quick enough for us to drink before we have to get back into the chamber because there has been a flood of people requesting coffee all at the same time, I apologise fully right now. Here I declare I am probably one of those, and I apologise fully for that, but you have got to have that first hit of caffeine, really, before you are nice to anyone.

I think there are a lot of people in here who we really do not get to see but who we do recognise. They should be able to work in an environment that is healthy and safe and one that they can be proud of, because this is as much their house as it is ours.

I do not know about any other member of Parliament, but I am not as productive here as I would like to be. I think that once we have our new facilities where we have the technology and where we have the capability to actually work more efficiently and more effectively we will be better parliamentarians for it. I think it is necessary and welcome that we are going to build the new facilities which will give us modern offices that we can work from, that we can have our staff in with space for them to work from, where we can be efficient and effective, where we can look after our constituents and

from where we will also be able to contribute here in the Parliament.

Ms Knight — And the next generation.

Ms THOMSON — Yes, and the next generation as well. I think that is all crucially important to us as members of Parliament. I can regale chook house stories from here to eternity, because as a young Labor person — —

Mr Northe — Tell a few.

Ms THOMSON — I am about to. As a young Labor person I did spend some quality time in the Parliament sitting and watching it in action. It was a different place in those days and it was a different kind of member of Parliament. They were some amazing and fun times when you got to hear some of the best orators you possibly could get up in the house and debate. Clyde Holding comes to mind — he could get up and hold the Parliament spellbound — or the running barbs between Jack Simpson and Robert Maclellan, who would have running gags operating in the Parliament and then would keep them going on the fax machines afterwards between offices. Those sorts of things are the history of this place that no-one outside this place really knows, but they make it unique and special as a workplace. They are great stories.

There is, jokingly, our bordello that has moved from the chook house to the third floor, where we can relax and enjoy one another's company, which is so important in this place. I promised to get it on the record. I said I would, and I have.

Mr Pearson — Mission accomplished.

Ms THOMSON — No-one should ever think that I would renege on a commitment I make. The camaraderie that we need to be able to build with one another across the divide, not just within our own parties, and the ability to debate issues in the Parliament and then walk out of here and be able to joke and talk about our families together, that is what is important to our democracy. It is the capacity to realise that we all have our political views, that we all have a position on what we think is the way we should be dealing with issues that confront the Parliament, but at the end of the day when we walk out of this place we know that on 97 per cent of the things we deal with we really do agree.

We want this to be a vibrant Parliament that works, we want this to be a vibrant democracy that works, and we want to actually be able to produce for the constituents we represent. We all, I believe, want to leave this place

better than it was when we arrived. We want to have made a difference for the better in the lives of the people we represent. I think that if we are to have the capacity to do that in this house and in this Parliament, then the facilities need to encourage that. I am hoping that is what will happen with the new facilities when they are built and we move into them. We want to ensure that we maintain that.

I want to talk just a little bit — because we are resourcing the investigative committees with more funds and the joint committees with more money — about how important the work of committees can be. Again, this is an opportunity to show the Parliament at its best, when you put aside what your party position might be — because you do not have one yet — and you actually get to look at things for the longer term that may be really meaningful and may make an absolute difference. I think, Acting Speaker McGuire, that the committee you worked on in relation to the abuse of young people by people in the church and other organisations was a committee that demonstrated the Parliament at its best. I think that if we have our committees doing that kind of work, if we look for that which is common between the parties and if we look for what is in the best interests of Victorians, we are doing our job extremely well.

So I am pleased to be able to say that the budget for the Parliament has increased; that we will see these facilities meet the needs of modern times and meet the needs of the workloads of members of Parliament now, because there is a lot more demand on members. We are in a position now where everyone expects an immediate response. It cannot be a week ago. It used to be that someone would write you a letter and in six weeks time you would get a letter back, and then you would send it on to your constituent and the constituent was happy with that. But now if you have not responded to it in 10 minutes, you get the next email asking, 'Why haven't you responded to my first email?'. It is a more immediate society that we are in, and we need the facilities and the technology to help us in meeting that demand. We are not going to meet it perfectly — we are only human — but we can do the best we can with the facilities that enhance that opportunity.

I am looking forward to the changes in this Parliament. I am now in the TAF — the temporary accommodation facility, and it is better than the chook house — and I am hoping that it is not very long until we move into the accommodation that will mean that we are able to serve the Parliament and the people of Victoria better and more productively than we do now. I am proud to see this piece of legislation in the Parliament that

recognises the importance of Parliament and the importance of strengthening the capability of MPs to do their job, and to have resourced the Parliament to do that. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution to debate on the Appropriation (Parliament 2016–2017) Bill 2016. It has been wonderful to hear so many moving contributions on what is normally a fairly pedestrian piece of legislation. It is an important piece of legislation this year in particular. There are a few things I want to raise in my contribution, particularly in relation to the Parliamentary Budget Office, as well as the triennial performance audit of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office. The Parliamentary Budget Office is an exciting initiative of this Parliament and of this government, and the Appropriation (Parliament 2016–2017) Bill will provide, I think, slightly over \$4 million per annum to establish this important office.

As I mentioned in an earlier contribution, costings are an incredibly fraught exercise. They are incredibly demanding and they are very stressful, and if they go wrong, they can go spectacularly wrong in the context of an election campaign. I seem to recall that in 2006 the manager of opposition business, for example, had a double counting error that was exposed in the campaign and which derailed the then opposition's election campaign. Indeed I had a very near miss in my own case in the lead-up to the 1999 election for an error I made in relation to a costings issue. Thankfully my line manager, the head of economic policy in the then Leader of the Opposition's office, picked me up on it before it became a fatal error.

This will now be a thing of the past because there will be the capacity for any member of this place to submit a policy to be costed and audited by the Parliamentary Budget Office. This is a really important initiative, because really what you want to see happen is a degree of rigour and contestability in relation to policy development. You want the capacity to be able to stress test your thinking and your ideas and to give some thought to what you think you would like to pursue; to have a bit of rigour around how much it might cost, what the savings will be and what might be, for example, the best way forward in relation to the implementation of that policy. So the establishment of the Parliamentary Budget Office is a really exciting prospect and an important decision, and \$4 million worth of funding should ensure that you end up with a very good model and that you get well paid staff who can do the work. Last year — —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time has come for me to interrupt business. The member will have the call when this matter is next before the house.

The time allowed for the consideration of bills has expired.

TREASURY AND FINANCE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 April 2016; motion of Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

HOUSE CONTRACTS GUARANTEE REPEAL BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 27 April; motion of Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

LAND (REVOCATION OF RESERVATIONS — METROPOLITAN LAND) BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Mountain Highway, Bayswater

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) — This evening I rise to bring an issue to the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that he reverse the decision to reduce the lanes on Mountain Highway through Bayswater by 33 per cent as part of the level crossing removal project.

This morning I tabled a petition signed by over 1300 people who are furious about the decision taken without consultation. When I met with Knox City Council and VicRoads representatives a few months ago, they assured me that traffic had not increased along Mountain Highway in the last 10 years. That is the probably the most farcical thing I have heard in at least 10 years. When I asked which one of them lived in Bayswater, it was just as I thought: not one. Whenever I relay that conversation to local residents, they react in one of two ways: they burst out laughing then realise I am not joking, or expletives flow freely from their mouths while they shake their heads.

Those of us who live and work in Bayswater know the traffic congestion is already at an all-time high in the area and that reducing lanes will only push more traffic onto neighbouring roads, including Canterbury and Scoresby roads, which are already overly congested. The community does not want this. Local businesses do not want this. It will hurt trade in Bayswater, with small businesses anticipating significant impact. Some have already suggested that they will close up shop.

Part of the narrowing includes the permanent loss of parking for shoppers right out the front of food and beverage establishments. How can this not have an impact on those establishments? Why would the government consider reducing lanes in this busy area when we should be adding to our road infrastructure? Apart from the impact on locals, Mountain Highway is a major thoroughfare for neighbouring commercial and industrial estates, not to mention those travelling to surrounding areas, including the tourism spots like the Dandenong Ranges. Are we seriously being asked to believe that reducing lanes on Mountain Highway, regardless of the removal of the level crossing, will not add to the traffic chaos already seen in this area at peak times? Why remove the level crossing only to add another obstacle which will cause bottlenecks and traffic delays?

On my community's behalf I plead with the minister to listen to those best placed to advise him on this issue. I ask that he listen to the residents and commuters, who are outraged, and use his powers to intervene and stop this nonsense before irreversible damage is done.

Jobs Victoria Employment Network

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Employment, and the action I seek is for the minister to provide an update on the latest plans to assist residents on public housing estates into employment.

Recently I joined the minister at Linfox's West Melbourne facility at the launch of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network, which in the first round of funding will allocate \$25 million to target specific cohorts in our community, including refugees, retrenched workers, the long-term unemployed, disengaged young people, people with disabilities, public housing tenants and Aboriginal Victorians. This exciting initiative will play a critical role in getting people off welfare and into work. It is a great initiative, and I would welcome an update from the minister.

Dairy industry

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture, and I ask the minister to prepare and, if necessary, mobilise resources within her department and across government to assist the dairy industry in the wake of the dramatic price cuts announced by Murray Goulburn last week. I have spoken to a number of dairy farmers over the last week, including in my electorate of Gippsland South, and there are a range of views of farmers, from outraged and angry to depressed, bewildered and uncertain. Some have talked of getting out, and some have talked of the board needing to be sacked. Others, however, have been stoic in the face of the difficulty and concerned about where the future lies for the dairy industry.

I must say that many have been quite understanding and have indicated that this really is a part of farming and something that they have become used to over the years. This is something that will have a severe effect on the dairy industry, not just on Murray Goulburn suppliers and not just on the dairy industry in places like my electorate and the electorates of other members in this chamber. It will have a huge impact on the wider population and the wider economy in our towns and cities around regional Victoria.

We have other suppliers watching to see what they do with their prices. Fonterra is due to make an announcement very soon, and people are nervously watching that. Burra Foods has kept its price steady for now, but I know everyone is sceptical as to how long the other companies will be able to maintain the price as it is. I might say, by the way, congratulations to Burra Foods on its announcement today of a new capital deal. Hopefully that will be good for jobs in Korumburra and for the company's suppliers, but I must say that it is very disappointing that another Australian agribusiness has gone into majority foreign ownership. I pose the rhetorical question: where is the Australian capital looking for investments in Australian agribusinesses? It is very concerning that many of these companies are going offshore.

Further on the milk price issue, dry conditions have exacerbated for dairy farmers the results of the decisions of Murray Goulburn last week. I was at a farm at Toora last week where they had spent \$120 000 on hay this season alone. The message to farmers is: do not panic. Consider your options. Get the help you need to make sure you do the right thing for you, your family and your business, and talk to and look after your neighbours. You can get help from rural financial counsellors.

I am asking the minister to be prepared in case there is more assistance needed through rural finance counselling services and also to speak to her colleagues in the government about whether there is more mental health assistance needed. I note the minister has announced the dairy task force, which will meet tomorrow. That is pleasing, and I acknowledge that, but I hope that the government is standing ready to support the industry through this difficult time.

Wedge–Frankston–Dandenong roads, Carrum Downs

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and Minister for Ports. The action I seek is for the minister to come along to Carrum and join me as the new traffic signals at the dangerous intersection of Wedge Road and Frankston–Dandenong Road in Carrum Downs are finally turned on. The minister will recall that we attended this location on a very cold and wet day back in 2014 in an effort to draw attention to the very pressing need for action at this notorious intersection. Back in 2010 Labor committed to upgrading the intersection and installing traffic lights. For nearly four years Labor continued to campaign for an upgrade. Unfortunately the former Liberal government ignored residents' pleas to upgrade the

intersection, failing over three successive budgets to allocate any funds for its improvement.

The local area is undergoing rapid housing growth, and with the announcement in this year's state budget of more than \$1 million to construct a new sports and community pavilion at the Carrum Downs Recreation Reserve, which backs onto the intersection, the need to upgrade this intersection has increased significantly. Together with the local Carrum Downs community I look forward to welcoming the minister to Carrum Downs to celebrate with the local community when this notorious intersection is fixed once and for all.

State Emergency Service Knox unit

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Emergency Services, and the action that I seek is for the minister to take action to ensure that the hardworking members of the Knox State Emergency Service (SES) will have an operational home base into the future. It is imperative that I raise this issue because the Knox SES, which has been servicing the Knox community in various iterations since the 1960s, has been operating out of its current facility since the early 1980s. It is a facility that is owned and operated by Knox City Council, and owing to a relationship with Knox City Council the SES can operate its base and house its vehicles in that facility.

It has been mooted that Knox City Council may be looking at developing the site into a new facility for the Knox community. This would directly impact on the operation of the Knox SES. With over 50 active members, it is certainly one of the largest SES operations within the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, and we know the work that it does. I personally saw the work of this group during the hailstorm which affected the Rowville and Lysterfield communities a few years ago. At the time, it probably had the largest insurance impact of any damage event in a suburb or community within metropolitan Melbourne.

The SES operation base, which is at 102 Lewis Road, Wantirna South, and abuts the Lewis Road retarding basin, is in a prime location — next to Knox City shopping centre — for council redevelopment of the site. Whilst the organisation accepts that the council may be seeking to redevelop the site, it is looking to have certainty as to the future location of its operation base. Currently it is centrally located within the municipality of Knox. If the council requests that the SES relocate, it is imperative that provision be made for it to move to a suitable location that will adequately service the volunteers of this important unit.

It is important for my community that the SES members are provided with clarity and certainty as to the future of their operations, if in fact the council seeks to assume the land. Therefore I ask the Minister for Emergency Services to take action to work with the SES unit in Knox and Knox City Council to identify a future home for the SES, if one is needed.

Berwick and Hallam railway station car parking

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Public Transport and concerns parking at Berwick and Hallam railway stations. The action I seek is that the minister provide an update on the next steps in the construction of the much-needed new parking spaces at these busy stations. These are stations that often fill up very early, leaving many local commuters frustrated as they search for an elusive parking space.

I am regularly contacted by these commuters who have been battling to find parking spaces for years, as the previous failed Liberal government refused to do a single thing about the situation. In fact the last time parking was expanded at Berwick station was in 2009 under the Brumby Labor government. We provided more than 300 new parking spaces. Since then, we have seen the Liberals come to office, scrap the fully funded upgrade of Hallam station and do absolutely nothing about parking at our packed local stations.

These car parks were, and still are, bursting at the seams, yet for four long years nothing happened. We could not even get a toilet built at Hallam station. It has only been the Andrews Labor government that has been willing to get that done, and just a few weeks ago the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and I officially opened these much-needed facilities. They were long overdue, and the local community was finally able to breathe a sigh of relief and stop holding on.

The community was also thrilled by the announcement of \$19 million in the recent state budget for more than 1500 extra parking spaces at railway stations across Victoria, including up to 110 new spaces at Berwick and up to 50 at Hallam. This is yet another example of the Andrews Labor government just getting on with it and delivering for our local community.

Our community continues to grow, and more people than ever are using and relying on public transport to get to work. They deserve to have access not only to a reliable and efficient public transport system but also to a parking space at their local station. I look forward to

working with the minister to deliver these much-needed parking spaces for local commuters.

Kew East Primary School

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister meet with the principal of Kew East Primary School, Helen Fotheringham, to look at \$5.3 million worth of upgrades to that important primary school in my electorate.

Kew East Primary School in its current form was built in the 1920s, and there has not been a substantial upgrade to the building since then. I implore the minister to meet with the principal to assess the buildings, which have termite damage and water damage. Frankly, some of the buildings are falling to bits. Mr Dalidakis, a member for Southern Metropolitan Region in the Council, recently met with the school principal and myself. It was a terrific day and an enjoyable visit. I encourage Mr Dalidakis to make representations to the minister as I am making these representations now.

The school is oversubscribed. It is a very popular local primary school, and the principal, Helen Fotheringham, is an important member of our local community. She is doing a terrific job at that important primary school, but I repeat that the school itself is falling to bits in certain areas. The kids do a wonderful job, but the teaching spaces are not up to the required standard.

I understand that the government is talking about a massive capital works program for schools and that it has rivers of gold as far as the eye can see in terms of surpluses. I would encourage it to give consideration to directing some of that money to the Kew electorate for Kew East Primary School, which is very much in need of these funds.

Monash Children's Hospital

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Mental Health, who is in the chamber this evening. The action I seek is that the minister visit the Monash hospital in Clayton at the appropriate time this year to discuss with relevant stakeholders the fantastic Andrews government budget initiative of over \$13.5 million for a purpose-built mental health facility for children and young adults at the new Monash Children's Hospital.

I have had many discussions with the Minister for Mental Health regarding my strong interest in mental health policy, particularly as it relates to young people, and I appreciate the time the minister has afforded me

on this issue. I have also had the opportunity to visit the Monash hospital on numerous occasions to meet with the relevant clinical team and tour the facilities as well as visiting a family member who was a patient. I have also been a patient myself. The work they do at the hospital is amazing, but as we know there is always more support we can give them.

I was incredibly pleased to see in the budget this fantastic initiative for mental health in the south-east region at the newly built Monash Children's Hospital, which is scheduled to open early next year. The budget papers state:

The new facility will deliver specialist assessment and treatment mental health services for children and young adults up to 25 years of age including inpatient beds, community treatment and intensive and specialist care.

The south-east region has long needed more specialist health services, and I recognise that the Monash Children's Hospital, an idea of the previous Labor government, will fill that need.

Of course this funding for Monash is not the only way the government is providing for mental health issues. We are rebuilding the Orygen Youth Health mental health service and establishing a statewide child and family mental health intensive treatment centre. We have also established the annual reporting to Parliament of mental health services and the expert task force on mental health.

The minister has shown a very strong interest in and passion for mental health policy. As always, I will be happy to welcome the minister to the area to talk with stakeholders and also to work with the minister to provide support on this important issue.

Colanda Residential Services

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — I call on the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing to immediately make public his department's plans for the closure of Colanda Residential Services in Colac. The Colanda residential community has been home to hundreds of people in Colac since the 1970s. Today around 80 people still call it home. In many ways it is an old symbol of the way we cared for people, but nonetheless it is their home. It is an important place to the people who live there, it is an important place to the families who have loved ones there and it is an important place to the professional carers and others who work at Colanda.

In the recent 2016–17 budget the state government has allocated funds to support the closure of Colanda

Residential Services and made an additional investment in maintaining supported accommodation facilities around Victoria. It is this last line that has caused alarm and concern around my community. There are no dates, no programs, no clear plan. Nothing but uncertainty has been given to the people of Colac.

Residents, families, carers and support staff are understandably worried and concerned about their future. The city of Colac as a whole is concerned about Colanda's future. Colanda has been an important addition to the fabric of Colac, providing much-needed care, employment and diversity in our community. Last week's budget creates more concern and uncertainty than it needs to. Millions cannot have been budgeted for and allocated without a plan, and my community needs to know as soon as possible if jobs will be lost, if long-term residents of Colac will be made to move and if the 10 residential homes budgeted for will be built in Colac — and if not, where will they be built?

The Colac Otway Shire Council is currently developing its 2050 plan. The state government and the Colanda centre control a large area of land in the heart of Colac's rapidly expanding industrial area. What will the timing of Colanda's closure be? What will happen with the land? Will the 10 houses be built on site, or will the land become available for future development?

Many will welcome the government's commitment to making modern, contemporary housing available to more Victorians, but creating community-wide uncertainty is an unnecessary price to pay. It is a stressful and worrying matter that could easily be put to rest by the minister making public the department's plans for the closure of Colanda.

Hurstbridge railway line

Ms WARD (Eltham) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that the minister implement a public consultation process for the duplication of the Hurstbridge railway line from Greensborough to Eltham.

The Andrews government is to be applauded for setting Melbourne on a footing towards a 21st century public transport system with the metro rail tunnel and the ambitious and exciting level crossing removal program. The removal of the Rosanna level crossing and the duplication of the track between Rosanna and Heidelberg will without doubt improve the Hurstbridge line and traffic in my area. I congratulate the Andrews government on taking these steps and making this serious investment to ensure that the people of

Melbourne, and especially the people in my community, have a first-rate, modern transport system.

Part of the \$141.2 million upgrade for the Hurstbridge line will be set aside to plan for a future duplication of the line from Greensborough to Eltham, something that has never been done before. I applaud this government on its initiative.

I ask the minister to work with me regarding the plans that are in place so that there can be a comprehensive public consultation process to ensure that the future duplication meets the expectations of both the engineers and the community.

Responses

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) — I thank the honourable member for Polwarth for his interest in the future of the Colanda facility on the outskirts of Colac. This is a facility that was built in the 1970s, when a very different model applied to inform the community's view on how we should treat people with intellectual disabilities. On numerous occasions I have met with the families and industrial organisations that represent the workers and families in that facility. Indeed I have spent the best part of a day with the residents, the staff, the union and the families organisation about the future of that facility.

As the honourable member is newly arrived, I will take it that perhaps he was not fully informed on some of the history of Colanda — for instance, the former Baillieu government quite rightly took the initial step towards closing this facility by announcing a number of in-principle positions. Sadly, none of those was funded. The closed, separate nature of how we used to deal with people with disabilities by keeping them apart from the wider community is totally inappropriate in a modern, civilised community that looks to engaging people with disabilities in our community. This is not in any way reflect on the level of professional care delivered by the dedicated staff in that facility. The former Napthine and Baillieu governments took the view that this was not an appropriate facility for a modern, civilised world. That is a view shared by this government.

The facility falls within the Barwon trial area of the national disability insurance scheme and has been well supported by both the National Disability Insurance Agency and indeed the state government in making sure that that is the case. I have received representations from other members of the opposition in terms of making sure that the houses to which we are proposing to relocate people, in consultation with the families and the workforce during stage 1 of the closure, will be

delivered. Those houses, as has been agreed with the staff and families, will be variously located in Colac and Warrnambool.

Stage 2 will actually bring to an end this closed, separate and, frankly, less than best practice model. As we have indicated to the families, as we have indicated to the workforce, as we have indicated to local government and as I indicate to the honourable member — and I am happy for my department to provide him with a briefing — we will make sure that we design accommodation where families wish their loved ones to be looked after in the long term. We will build an arrangement that fits that model. We will make sure that we treat those people with the dignity and respect they rightly deserve. Some of them have been in this facility since 1976.

I thank the honourable member for taking an interest in Colanda. In many ways it is an important throwback. We look forward to working with its professional staff and providing them with suitable alternative opportunities in care, if that is their desire.

When it comes to the honourable member for Oakleigh's contribution around the \$13.5 million specialist mental health facility for children and young adults at Monash — which will have a remit much wider than Monash; it will be a statewide facility — what the very humble honourable member failed to indicate was that he chairs the expert reference panel for the statewide junior mental health plan, which was part of the process that came up — —

Mr Wynne — He is the architect.

Mr FOLEY — Indeed he is the co-architect of this fantastic proposition, along with the sector. The honourable member is quite right; this is an acute facility that is much needed. It will be designed to get some fairly unwell young people at the earliest possible point of their illness so as to speed up their recovery. It is about early intervention and support in a statewide facility that is much needed and which Monash Health has been particularly interested in partnering in. I thank the honourable member for his kind invitation and look forward to visiting the site with him. I look forward to continuing to work with the honourable member and commend him on the outstanding leadership and commitment he has shown to make sure that all Victorians with a mental health challenge are treated fairly and equitably.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) — The member for Bayswater and the member for Carrum raised matters for the attention of the Minister for

Roads and Road Safety, and I will make sure those matters are referred to the minister.

The member for Essendon raised a matter for the Minister for Employment, and I will refer that matter on.

The member for Gippsland South raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Agriculture, and I will make sure that is brought to the minister's attention.

The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, as did the member for Eltham, and I will make sure the minister's attention is brought to those matters.

Finally, the member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Education, and again I will make sure that that matter is brought to the minister's attention.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 7.28 p.m. until Tuesday, 24 May.

