

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

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

**Thursday, 22 June 2017**

**(Extract from book 8)**

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## **The Governor**

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

## **The ministry**

(from 10 November 2016)

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

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

**Speaker**

The Hon. C. W. BROOKS (from 7 March 2017)

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER (to 25 February 2017)

**Deputy Speaker**

Ms J. MAREE EDWARDS (from 7 March 2017)

Mr D. A. NARDELLA (to 27 February 2017)

**Acting Speakers**

Ms Blandthorn, Mr Carbines, Ms Couzens, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Graley,  
Ms Kilkenny, Ms Knight, Mr McGuire, Mr Pearson, Ms Spence, Ms Thomson and Ms Ward.

**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**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
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 <sup>2</sup>	Polwarth	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent <sup>3</sup>	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio <sup>4</sup>	Melton	Ind
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma <sup>1</sup>	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 <sup>5</sup>	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 <sup>6</sup>	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 <sup>7</sup>	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Brunswick	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

<sup>1</sup> Elected 31 October 2015

<sup>2</sup> Resigned 3 September 2015

<sup>3</sup> Resigned 3 September 2015

<sup>4</sup> ALP until 7 March 2017

<sup>5</sup> Elected 14 March 2015

<sup>6</sup> Elected 31 October 2015

<sup>7</sup> Resigned 2 February 2015

**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

### **Legislative Assembly committees**

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

**Standing Orders Committee** — The Speaker, Ms Allan, Ms Asher, Mr Carroll, Mr Clark, Ms Edwards, Mr Hibbins, Mr Hodgett, Ms Kairouz, Ms Ryan and Ms Sheed.

### **Legislative Assembly select committees**

**Penalty Rates and Fair Pay Select Committee** — Ms Blandthorn, Mr J. Bull, Mr Clark, Mr Hibbins, Ms Ryall, Ms Suleyman and Ms Williams.

### **Joint committees**

**Accountability and Oversight Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson. (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, 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, Ms Garrett 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*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan. (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

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

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

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

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

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee** — (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith, Ms Staley and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Ms Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing.

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

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**Thursday, 22 June 2017**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 9.33 a.m. and read the prayer.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Photographing of proceedings**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I wish to advise the house that I have given approval for still photographs to be taken from the public gallery during question time and government business today. The photographs will be used by the Parliament for educational and promotional purposes.

I have also given approval for an additional photographer to take photos from the press gallery during the address by elders prior to the second reading of the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Bill 2017. No additional lighting or flash will be used.

### **Notices of motion**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I advise members that notices of motion 9 to 13 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

## **PETITIONS**

### **Following petitions presented to house:**

#### **Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house that the Victorian Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017:

force children who are struggling, self-harming, suicidal, being bullied, or anxious to stay in the school environment for 28 days or more while permission is sought to remove them;

fine parents \$155.46 per day for removing their children from school without permission, even if they are protecting them from harm;

impinge on human rights under both the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

give bureaucrats with no knowledge of home education unlimited powers to review home educators' plans, progress and learning styles, and to make decisions affecting their registration;

were drafted without consultation with significant stakeholders, including home educators and home educator peak bodies such as the Home Education Network; and

will put a significant and unacceptable financial and psychological burden on home educating families.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria move to disallow the Victorian Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 pertaining to homeschooling (part 6).

**By Mr PAYNTER (Bass) (887 signatures).**

#### **Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the undersigned residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the house the current decision to return management of the Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve to Parks Victoria. We are opposed and object to the management of the reserve being no longer in the hands of a highly qualified, experienced, active and well-functioning community committee of management.

With the support of the Frankston community, the volunteer community committee of management made a commitment to protect and enhance the natural heritage and biodiversity of the Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve and share the story of the traditional owners of the land, creating a conservation hub for the people of Frankston and those who visit the vibrant city of Frankston. The community committee of management have maintained the reserve and improved the conservation values in their short-term management, opening the reserve to the public for the first time in almost 100 years, whilst saving the taxpayer hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We see the threat to this area as a part of the wider issue of environmental sustainability, that western society is currently grappling with, and that the management of this area by Parks Victoria, who by their own admission are unable to effectively manage their existing estate of parks and reserves due to under-resourcing, will result in the loss of a vital community asset providing essential environmental services, wildlife corridor and breathing space, which will have unforeseen environmental consequences for future generations. Local extinction of koalas and other iconic native wildlife is one such example of unforeseen environmental consequence.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria support the retention of the existing access arrangements and regulations for the reserve, including maintaining the presence of two rangers at the reserve during opening hours — Thursday to Sunday 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Support for the existing access arrangements, regulations and ranger presence is absolutely crucial if we are to protect our breathing spaces, save the remaining native species inhabiting Frankston and protect the biodiversity of the area.

**By Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (805 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Gembrook be considered next day on motion of Mr KATOS (South Barwon).**

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Services for people with autism spectrum disorder

**Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) presented report, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered that report and appendices be published.**

## DOCUMENTS

**Tabled by Clerk:**

Auditor-General:

Follow Up of Selected 2014–15 Performance Audits — Ordered to be published

Maintaining State-Controlled Roadways — Ordered to be published

*Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978* — Summary of Variations notified between 8 May and 19 June 2017 — Ordered to be published

*Multicultural Victoria Act 2011* — Victorian Government Report in Multicultural Affairs 2015–16.

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club and Mooroolbark Football Club

**Mr HODGETT (Croydon)** — I am pleased to see both the Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club and the Mooroolbark Football Club were successful recipients of the latest round of the VicHealth active club grants program announced yesterday. The Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club received \$3000 for flags, football kits, junior football, football, promotional materials, official jackets and traffic cones. The Croydon Rangers are a successful American football team located at Croydon. They are members of Gridiron Victoria and compete during the Australian winter period against other teams located around Melbourne.

The Rangers play at Ranger field in Croydon and have had a very successful history, with many players selected to play for Victoria and Australia. In fact on 13 May this year I attended at Ranger field and watched the Gridiron Victoria Women's Victoria Bowl, with the Rangers winning 12-7 against the Melbourne University Chargers.

Maroondah City Council recently installed drainage and replanted the grass, and the field is looking absolutely magnificent. I will continue to work closely with Maroondah City Council towards delivering much-needed upgrades to the clubrooms, change rooms and grandstand to make this precinct more spectator friendly for those that want to watch the Rangers' local games.

The Mooroolbark Football Club also received \$3000 for Eastern Football League fees, jumpers, trainer's equipment, first aid equipment and press advertising. The Mooroolbark Football Club is located in Mooroolbark, with the men's team playing in division 2 of the Eastern Football League. Mooroolbark Heights Reserve in Longfellow Avenue, Mooroolbark, is the home of the mighty Mustangs, and the junior ground is at Kiloran Park, Hawthory Road, Mooroolbark.

Women's football continues to grow, and the club is establishing an under 12s and an under 14s girls team. This grant will go some way to assisting the junior club achieve this outcome. Congratulations to both the Croydon Rangers Gridiron Club and the Mooroolbark Football Club on being successful recipients of the latest round of the VicHealth active club grants program.

## Queen's Birthday honours

**Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police)** — I want to offer my sincere congratulations to a number of very worthy recipients of this year's Queen's Birthday awards. Anne Brackley, who I am proud to say has been a work colleague and friend for almost 20 years, received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her lifetime contribution to Girl Guides Victoria — 41 years of leadership. She has also touched the lives of many people in Drysdale and Clifton Springs, including through school, through children with a disability and of course through her work at the SpringDale Neighbourhood Centre. She is a very, very worthy recipient.

I also want to acknowledge Jocelyn Grant, who received an OAM for her significant contribution to Queenscliff, especially the Queenscliffe Historical Museum, including 12 years as president. Lorraine Stokes was awarded an OAM for her contribution to the community of Portarlington. She was instrumental in establishing the Portarlington Neighbourhood House, being the inaugural president, and was part of the Portarlington Mussel Festival and the Port Arts Network. It has been an absolute privilege working with these three amazing women.

I also want to acknowledge Darryl Thomas of Clifton Springs, Stan Canny of St Leonards and, last but not least, Brian Bourke, who was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for his service to the legal profession and football and as co-founder of Amnesty International. I also want to congratulate Hugh Seward, who is a long-time friend and also my GP.

### **Pauline Hanson comments**

**Ms NEVILLE** — On another matter, I would like to record my condemnation of the comments made by Pauline Hanson regarding children with autism. I was absolutely horrified. They were about segregation of and discrimination against people in our community, and these views should not be tolerated.

### **Swan Hill Jockey Club**

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — I want to congratulate the Swan Hill Jockey Club for another very successful three days of racing over the June racing carnival in Swan Hill. Local trainers were very prominent in the winner's circle, and congratulations go to Jane Duncan, Con Kelly and Austy Coffey, who trained winners over those three days and absolutely thrilled the locals. Austy Coffey also teamed with his son, Harry, as trainer and jockey in a number of races to enter the winning circle. I would also like to thank Darren Weir, who has strong links to the area, for his great support of the carnival. His team had six winners over those three days.

### **Steam Rally Echuca Moama**

**Mr WALSH** — I also had the opportunity to open the 54th Rotary Club of Echuca-Moama steam rally, a great event for Echuca. Over 700 exhibitors were in the rally and took great pride in restoring and bringing along the vintage machinery. Over 200 volunteers assisted, and congratulations go to Cliff Downey as the event organiser for all the work he did in putting it together with the Rotary club.

I also thank the Moama Bowling Club for their sponsorship of the event. They are great sponsors and sponsor many other events in Echuca.

### **EastLink tolls**

**Mr WALSH** — Finally, I would like to raise the concerns of country Victorians who use utes as their primary vehicle. When they come to Melbourne they are now charged a lot higher EastLink tolls. Country people who have a ute who have to come to Melbourne for work or pleasure are severely disadvantaged by the

tolls they have to pay compared to people who own a motor car.

### **St Francis of Assisi Primary School**

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) — I was delighted to visit the year 6 students of St Francis of Assisi Primary School in my electorate last Friday. We had a great discussion about the different levels of government, and let me say that these students know a lot about how we are governed and have some really, really terrific ideas. The country is in absolutely good hands with these future leaders.

There were also spontaneous cheers all round when I told them about this government's funding to replace the roundabout with traffic lights at Dalton Road and Childs Road. It is amazing how such a transformative road project actually resonates right across the community, regardless of age or cohort. It is a great school, as all of our schools are in the north, and I am sure my northern parliamentary colleagues in the chamber can attest to that.

### **Findon Primary School**

**Ms D'AMBROSIO** — I also had the opportunity to visit Findon Primary school, another great school in the community. It was excellent to sit down with a fantastic leader, the principal, Paula Cosgrave, to hear about the priorities for Findon Primary School and how they will spend the \$200 000 allocated to them from our recent state budget. The school is extremely grateful for the things that this money can help them to do.

I was then shown around the school's excellent sustainability initiatives that have emerged from their participation in the ResourceSmart Schools program. I then spoke at the school's assembly and was lucky enough to see a video that the student environment committee had put together to educate the school about recycling bins at the canteen. So thank you to everyone for showing fantastic leadership on sustainable education. Ours is a government that knows that we all have a role to play in building a better society and protecting our environment for future generations — and the school's too.

### **Karin Orpen**

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — Firstly, I place on record my congratulations to those recipients of Order of Australia medals in the Queen's Birthday honours. I would like to particularly note the recognition of Karin Orpen, a former councillor with

the City of Knox. She has served the Ferntree Gully community for a long period of time, and I wish to place on record my congratulations to her for this worthy award.

### **Foothills Community Care**

**Mr WAKELING** — I would like to also congratulate Steve Barrington and the team at Foothills Community Care for their wonderful work in providing meals at the Ferntree Gully guides hall. They have been doing that on a Wednesday night for 10 years. I was pleased to attend the event with the Knox mayor, Cr Darren Pearce, and Jeff Summers, the chairman of the Ferntree Gully and Rowville community branches of the Bendigo Bank. I congratulate them all for this wonderful work.

### **Rotary Club of Ferntree Gully**

**Mr WAKELING** — I was pleased on the weekend to attend the hand-over dinner for the Rotary Club of Ferntree Gully. I would like to place on record my congratulations to Christine Anderson and her team for the wonderful work that they do for the Ferntree Gully community. They have only a small number of members but they had done a significant amount of work. They have conducted regular sausage sizzles to raise money for local and regional projects.

### **Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club**

**Mr WAKELING** — I would also like to congratulate the Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club, which recently launched their new electronic scoreboard funded by the Knox City Council. Congratulations to the council and congratulations to the club.

### **Russell Owen**

**Mr DONNELLAN** (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — Last Friday I was fortunate to have been able to award a local volunteer, Russell Owen, the Carlos Loyola award. This is a local award which was named after Carlos Loyola, who has given 25 years service to the Doveton Special Soccer School and given dignity to kids with disabilities who are able to play soccer, including state and federal representatives. Carlos always chooses the award winner, and it is very much about long service to the community. It is not just for a one-off event or a one-off fundraiser; it is very much about a continuous commitment.

Russell Owen, along with his wife Judy, has made enormous contributions to our community for many, many years. Russell has been involved not only with

the local Narre Warren mechanics hall but also with the state body. He has also undertaken, I think, approximately 10 to 15 years work as a lollipop man. He has contributed extensively as a volunteer at the local football clubs, and also for many, many years both at a local and state level of the Australian Air League with the Berwick squadron and also the Victorian group. This is very much a person who finds great delight and joy in his life from doing this. I know that a couple of days afterwards Russell and Judy were going on a long holiday. It was just marvellous to see someone who gets so much joy from giving so much to others. Well done, Russell.

### **Inner Wheel Club of Wandin**

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — It was an honour to be able to attend the Inner Wheel Club of Wandin's changeover dinner on Tuesday night. Congratulations to the irrepressible, outgoing Nola Sharp and a warm welcome to incoming president Ann Wettenhall. Inner Wheel are not just a friendship club; they also raise funds to donate to many organisations and charities. I am very much impressed by the moneys raised for cord blood donations and the very practical packs they sew and make up for girls in developing countries who would otherwise have to stay away from school during their menstrual cycle.

### **Member conduct**

**Mrs FYFFE** — As we go into the winter break I call on those opposite to reflect on the rorts and abuse of privileges by their fellow Labor members and especially their leader, the Premier, and cabinet members' lack of condemnation of the CFMEU's threats to partners and children of over 100 legally employed men and woman. Do they really want to go down in history linked to a Premier who ordered the signing of employment forms prior to the 2014 election for the employment of so-called red shirts, something that he knew was outside the guidelines and is now being investigated by the Ombudsman? Do they want to be linked to the member for Melton and his rorting — a man who has refused to pay back the full amount after having been caught? Do they want to be linked to the member for Tarneit, who not only rorted the second home allowance but also put his girlfriend on the payroll as his electorate officer, who travelled the world with him and who I have been reliably informed has very rarely put in an appearance in his electorate office?

### St Albans level crossings

**Ms SULEYMAN** (St Albans) — On Saturday, 17 June, the St Albans community came together to celebrate the completion of the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings. The day was energetic and attended by over 3000 locals, who with pride welcomed the transformation of St Albans. In 2014 the Andrews Labor government made a very clear commitment to remove the dangerous and congested level crossings at both Main Road and Furlong Road in St Albans. For the past two years the Andrews Labor government has wasted no time in removing these level crossings. I would like to thank the contribution of the stakeholder liaison group of locals throughout the level crossing removal process. It is an absolutely fantastic achievement, and I would like to also thank the St Albans traders who went along with the project process. The quick removal of the Main Road and Furlong Road level crossings is yet another tribute to the great work and success of the Andrews Labor government, and I am extremely proud to say that we finally did it.

### Ramadan

**Ms SULEYMAN** — On another matter I would like to thank all the organisations who hosted iftar dinners throughout the month of Ramadan. The successful blessed month of Ramadan comes to an end on Sunday, and I take this opportunity to wish the Muslim community a very happy Eid and Bayram.

### Timber industry

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) — Today I call upon the Premier to become actively involved with the Myrtleford Carter Holt Harvey dispute and help this great town get back to work and back to normal. The Fair Work meeting yesterday was unsuccessful in resolving the dispute. The company, Carter Holt Harvey, has agreed to another vote next Friday to decide the future of returning to work. This community is hurting, and I am willing wherever possible to provide support to help this community get back to normal. Myrtleford could really use some assistance from the Premier in its hour of need. I urge the Premier to show some support for Myrtleford.

### Herbicide contamination

**Mr McCURDY** — I want to place on the record the concerns I have for vegetable growers in my region who have been hit very hard by the major herbicide recall by Syngenta. I have had calls and visits from constituents who have been caught up in this major

herbicide debacle, and I seek the assistance of the Minister for Agriculture in the other place to ensure that the clean, green environment we work in in Victoria is not compromised, but more importantly that growers who have been financially affected are given assistance to ensure their claims are treated fairly.

### Karyn Forge

**Mr McCURDY** — Congratulations to Karyn Forge on over 30 years of dedication and commitment to the education of our children. Karyn began her career as a classroom teacher at Yarrunga Primary School and ended up being its principal for the past five years. Karyn's leadership and positive, progressive approach to education have always been a great asset to the school and the wider Wangaratta community.

### Queen's Birthday honours

**Mr McCURDY** — I congratulate Brian King of Bright who was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to community health, primarily for his services to Alpine Health.

I also congratulate Max Porter of Yarrawonga who received an Order of Australia Medal for his services to the community of north-east Victoria through a range of organisations.

### Queen's Birthday honours

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Industry and Employment) — Today I rise to congratulate two members of the Williamstown electorate who have been recognised in the Queen's Birthday honours, both being awarded the Order of Australia Medal.

During her 99 years of life Ella Bambery has had a huge impact throughout Williamstown and Victoria. Her achievements begin with performing for servicemen and personnel at internment and prisoner-of-war camps and hospitals during World War II. In 1949 Ella joined the Williamstown Little Theatre, serving as a performer, committee member and treasurer until the 1980s. Ella has also been a volunteer and phone counsellor for 13 years and has volunteered with both the Southern Cross nursing home in Newport and Meals on Wheels. I think that this level of recognition is only fitting for someone who has devoted decades of her life to her community, as Ella has.

Terry Heazlewood has also received overdue recognition. Many universities and students within Australia and other countries, including New Zealand, Cambodia, China, and England, have benefited from Terry's service to higher education. Years spent

devoted to the tertiary sector, mainly in accounting, culminated in Terry being appointed the foundation professor of accounting at Charles Sturt University. Despite his incredible commitment to tertiary education, Terry has also found time to devote himself to charity, having been a member of the Lions Club for over 40 years and holding several positions.

I would like to congratulate Ella and Terry on the recognition they have received and the contributions they have made to the Williamstown electorate and Victoria.

### Crime rates

**Mr HIBBINS (Pahran)** — I would like to thank the Toorak Road South Yarra traders association for having me at their recent traders meeting on crime and the Stonnington police for attending and providing insight into their role and how local businesses can work together to both prevent and respond to crime. Local police have attended similar events, most recently at Carlisle Street but previously at the Horace Petty public housing estate and for residents who live in apartment buildings in Prahran.

I know that traders and residents certainly appreciate greater collaboration and open lines of communication with police, which is a key part of community safety. At the government level more must be done on crime prevention policies to reduce reoffending rates and put young people at risk on a better path, rather than continuing on with a revolving door prison system and a youth justice system in crisis.

### Plastic bag ban

**Mr HIBBINS** — It is time to ban the plastic bag. Support continues to grow from communities and local councils. Both Port Phillip and Stonnington councils have passed motions in support of banning single-use plastic bags. I urge the government and the opposition to support the Greens private members bill that we have put forward to ban single-use plastic bags. It is time to join the war on waste and stop plastic bags and plastic pollution from ending up in our bay, rivers and oceans.

### Cyclist safety

**Mr HIBBINS** — I also condemn the government for voting against the Greens ‘metre matters’ bill that came before this house recently. All states are now moving towards a mandatory passing distance for vehicles from cyclists. We need to start taking cyclist safety seriously, and the government can do that by passing that legislation.

### Tweddle Child and Family Health Service

**Mr CARROLL (Niddrie)** — I rise to acknowledge the important work of the Tweddle Child and Family Health Service, an early intervention family health organisation with a proud 97-year history of creating social change for Victoria’s most vulnerable parents, babies and toddlers. Tweddle was started in 1920 by Joseph Tweddle, a businessman with a concern for the declining health of babies and the future population of Melbourne’s west, where today 250 babies are born per week.

Last week we celebrated Infant Mental Health Awareness Week from 12 to 16 June, and in the middle of this important week Tweddle hosted a Babies, Business and the Bottom Line breakfast at Moonee Valley Racecourse, with a focus on the first 1000 days and building resilience in babies, toddlers and parents. I had the pleasure of attending this insightful event with my parliamentary colleagues the Minister for Health and member for Altona as well as the member for Essendon and listened to two wonderful guest speakers, Western Bulldogs president Peter Gordon and leading American psychiatrist Dr Bruce Perry, MD, who shared their insights on the power of resilience and the importance of investing in services like Tweddle to reduce a child’s achievement gap and increase the likelihood of a healthier life. Tweddle fosters resilience in thousands of vulnerable families every year, changing the trajectory of their lives.

I want to put on record my thanks and appreciation to Tweddle for their services, led by CEO Jacque O’Brien, with the support of a strong board: the chair, Dr Nicole Milburn; the deputy chair, Heather Johnson Way; the treasurer, Melanie Telford; and members Doris Whitmore, Jordana Hunter, Carla De Campo, Bryce Prosser, Dr Tam Nguyen, Dr Jane Edwards, Denise Patterson and Alexandra Hoskins. Well done to Tweddle’s communications manager, Kerrie Gottlieb, who did a lot of the work to make the breakfast the success it was, and also to Professor Ravi Savarirayan of the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, who was there and did a lot in support of this breakfast. Tweddle have a vision for a centre of parenting excellence for the west, and I look forward to working with my parliamentary colleagues to help them achieve their vision.

### Neil Kellett

**Mr WATT (Burwood)** — I rise to acknowledge the imminent induction of Neil Kellett to the Southern Football Netball League hall of fame. Neil did not have a lengthy or decorated playing career, although he

played at Jordanville Young Christian Workers and briefly at Ashburton, but it was in his administrative posts that he excelled. What he describes as ‘a sort of amalgamation’ between Jordanville YCW and Burwood Football Club resulted in Neil becoming secretary at Burwood. That was in 1976, and he was in that position until after Burwood’s 1979 premiership. He moved into the role of Burwood president ahead of the 1980 season.

Although Burwood did not play in 1980, as president of the dormant club Neil remained active, working to wipe out significant debt and ensure Burwood would have a team upon its return to competition. The Burwood players were distributed amongst other clubs for the 1980 season, but Neil made it clear that these players were expected to come back for the 1981 season. He was instrumental in a merger of the Burwood and Essex Heights football clubs that spawned the birth of the Ashwood Football Club. He became the vice-president in its inaugural season. He then went on to be president in 1988–89. He also became president once again in 1996, when Ashwood won the flag. Congratulations, Neil.

### **Alstom Ballarat**

**Ms KNIGHT** (Wendouree) — On Thursday, 29 June, I will be attending Alstom Ballarat’s 100-year celebration with my colleague the member for Buninyong. This is an incredible achievement. Alstom is so important to Ballarat in so many ways. The jobs, of course, are critical to our local economy, and the company is critical to our local supply chain. The people behind those jobs and that supply chain are our community. Alstom recognise that, and they give back. During recent downtime between contracts, the workers spent their days doing maintenance work at places like Reid’s Guest House, a place for those at risk of homelessness, and Ballarat Secondary College, to name just two. They have a wonderful mentoring program for local young people, and the list goes on. If that does not show commitment to Ballarat, then I do not know what does.

I want to thank the management of Alstom for their commitment to Ballarat and for their advocacy for the Ballarat worksite, particularly Torben Fink-Jensen for always being at the end of the phone line and always being willing to meet to discuss the future of Alstom in Ballarat. I want to thank all the workers for the skilled and professional work they do, which makes their trains the best in the business, and the union delegates for their hard work advocating for the retention of work in Ballarat. It is such a pleasure to work with you guys. One hundred years ago there were hundreds of workers

at the Creswick Road site. There were so many workers that they had their own social club and their own cricket team. I know that Alstom, with its strong past, has a strong future in Ballarat. Happy birthday, Alstom — and many, many more!

### **Torquay-Jan Juc Neighbourhood Watch**

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — I was pleased to attend the Torquay-Jan Juc Neighbourhood Watch meeting held at the local Torquay police station last Wednesday to learn about the crime prevention initiatives of the group. The Torquay-Jan Juc Neighbourhood Watch group is one of the most proactive groups in Geelong and the Surf Coast. After a highly successful summer season during which they campaigned and raised awareness about their ‘lock it or lose it’ campaign it was terrific to hear about their continuing project of installing anti-theft screws on the numberplates of cars, which I have been highly supportive of. Well done to all at Torquay-Jan Juc Neighbourhood Watch, especially to coordinator David Cheatley, and to the Torquay police for providing immeasurable support to the group.

### **Royal Geelong Yacht Club**

**Mr KATOS** — I congratulate the Royal Geelong Yacht Club on being named the yacht club of the year at the Victorian Sailing Awards held at Sandringham Yacht Club on Sunday. The Royal Geelong Yacht Club sailing school was crowned the best in the state, winning the 2017 Discover Sailing centre of the year award. It had tough competition from 40 other sailing schools from across Victoria. It is worth acknowledging that the entire crew of more than 25 instructors at the sailing school are all young Royal Geelong Yacht Club members who had completed the training themselves. I congratulate Commodore Chris Williams and Phil Clohesy on this magnificent achievement of beating 90 other yacht clubs in Victoria. It is certainly a great achievement for the club and for Geelong.

### **Grovedale Men’s Probus Club**

**Mr KATOS** — Last week I was a guest speaker at the Grovedale Men’s Probus Club where I spoke about my family’s history and my journey to politics. There were many informed questions asked, but most of them unfortunately focused on the crime that has engulfed the local area of Grovedale.

### **State Schools Relief**

**Ms KILKENNY** (Carrum) — As the Victorian government’s ambassador for State Schools Relief I am

delighted to announce that next week State Schools Relief will dress its 50 000th student for the financial year. This represents approximately one-third of all low-income children in Victorian government schools and is an extraordinary achievement.

The Andrews Labor government is committed to breaking the link between disadvantage and achievement, and the assistance State Schools Relief provides to Victorian families by providing uniforms and shoes to families in need is a key part of this. Our additional funding of \$15 million over four years is allowing State Schools Relief to extend their distribution program and help more Victorian families. Disadvantage should never be a barrier to getting a great education.

Also being rolled out by State Schools Relief is the Glasses for Kids program. With this program we are providing free eye-testing to more than 35 000 students from prep to year 3 at 250 schools across Victoria and glasses for kids who need them. The Andrews Labor government is investing nearly half a million dollars in this program to help these students and get them glasses. Where the program has already rolled out on average about 23 per cent of kids were found to need glasses.

Evidence shows that children with uncorrected vision problems can experience difficulties learning. The Glasses for Kids program is about identifying and addressing vision problems early and making sure that kids who need glasses but for whatever reason do not have them do not fall behind. It is expected that about 10 000 pairs of glasses will be distributed over four years. What a huge difference this is going to make to the lives of these kids. Congratulations to State Schools Relief on this fantastic work.

### **Queen's Birthday honours**

**Ms McLEISH** (Eildon) — Brian Bourke, Melbourne's longest practising barrister, was made a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday honours. For decades Brian has made a substantial contribution to law and the legal profession in this state as well as to the community. Brian is a life member of the AFL, VFL and South Melbourne Football Club, having devoted many hours to this passion. Brian is a hoot of a bloke with a giant heart, and this recognition is well deserved and overdue.

### **Road safety**

**Ms McLEISH** — Yesterday I tabled a petition calling on the government to halt the installation of road

barriers on Kangaroo Ground-St Andrews Road and instead undertake consultation to obtain a satisfactory road safety model. Having 1063 local signatures shows the extent of community angst about the installation. Local residents do want safe roads but they do not want the simplistic barrier solution offered by VicRoads. Suggestions they made during the consultation process were ignored. They think that the minister does not appreciate that communities understand which roads in their areas are dangerous and which are not.

Residents believe that they, along with other cyclists and motorists, are now at greater risk of harm than before these barriers were installed. Residents also believe the ambience of the community and the quiet country road in the green wedge, which has had no fatalities in the last six years, has been compromised and turned into a metallic mess. They are stunned by the installation of an additional 6 kilometres of barriers, which are believed to have come at a cost of \$4 million, while real problems such as potholes, corrugations and bad turn-outs onto this road remain unaddressed. This appears to be an overengineered solution, with barriers installed on the inside of bends, on straight roads and in 60-kilometre-per-hour zones. I urge the minister to look more closely at this situation.

### **Preston Market**

**Mr SCOTT** (Minister for Finance) — Save Our Preston Market is a grassroots community group led by Lori-Anne Sharp, Marion Harper and Chris Erlandson. The Minister for Planning and I have met with the Save Our Preston Market group a number of times to hear their concerns about what a proposed redevelopment of the market site means for the future of the market. They have run a strong community campaign, galvanising support for Preston Market and successfully highlighting the unique and important role it plays in our community. They recently presented to me and the Minister for Planning a petition with over 4000 signatures to protect the market.

The Preston Market is not only an iconic fresh food market in Melbourne's northern suburbs; it also plays a vital role at the heart of the Preston community. Not only does it provide access to high-quality fresh produce at affordable prices but it is also a community hub where people from all walks of life and cultures come to meet. There is simply nowhere else like it, and the role it plays in terms of bringing people together and promoting social inclusion cannot be understated.

I know the Minister for Planning supports the Preston Market and is seriously considering the best way to ensure that it has a strong and vibrant future. Also, the

Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, Mr Dalidakis in the other place, is personally engaged in this issue, particularly the future that traders play in the economic and social community life of Preston.

### Ramadan

**Mr SCOTT** — On another matter, I would like to wish the Muslim community Ramadan Mubarak during this time of fasting, prayer and contemplation, during the Ramadan religious observation. This is a very important time for a significant number of members of our community, and I wish the Muslim community well.

### Vicky the Truck

**Mr T. SMITH** (Kew) — Honourable members will be aware of the presence yesterday of Vicky the propaganda truck that was parked outside the Parliament. This ridiculous semitrailer, \$1 million worth of semitrailer paid for by the taxpayers of Victoria — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr T. SMITH** — Here we go, we have got the noise coming! It will drive around our state, clog up the roads and add to pollution — and for what? No-one knows. No-one has a clue. No-one can explain to me what this ridiculous waste of money is meant to be doing to further social cohesion and goodness knows what else.

### Member for Tarneit

**Mr T. SMITH** — We cannot see yet if the member Tarneit is going to turn up today. He probably should not. He ought to hang his head in shame. He ought to resign.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr T. SMITH** — I am glad the Premier is here. The Premier should boot the member for Tarneit out of the party room because we have learned today that he employed his girlfriend and then paid for her to gallivant across the globe. I mean, is there no honour in the modern Labor Party? This man is still here, still sitting up the back, taking his salary. He is not doing anything. He does not even live in his electorate but lives 25 kilometres away in the inner suburbs. The Lord of Tarneit is too good to live with his people. It is contemptible. He ought to be booted out of the Labor Party, and he should do the honourable thing and resign from Parliament.

### Buninyong electorate roads

**Mr HOWARD** (Buninyong) — Recently the Minister for Roads and Road Safety joined me in Sebastopol to announce funding to investigate and design much-needed upgrades along Albert Street. This follows approaches to me by a number of residents in regard to the Hertford Street roundabout and how we can best improve safety for pedestrians crossing to nearby shops while finding the right balance to keep traffic moving effectively down Midland Highway.

The work will also look at upgrades to the intersection of Midland Highway and Docwra Street. This busy intersection is close to the Magpie Primary School and has been an issue raised by parents at the school who have experienced safety concerns when turning onto the Midland Highway after school drop-off and pick-up times.

Bacchus Marsh is growing rapidly, with its population expected to more than double by 2041. That is why the Andrews Labor government is working to reduce traffic congestion across the town and improve safety for those who live and work in the area and depend on local roads each day. A \$3 million planning study will investigate options for an eastern link road to reduce congestion on Grant Street, which runs through the heart of Bacchus Marsh. A further \$2.5 million will upgrade the Gisborne Road and Holts Lane interchange to the Western Highway.

I am pleased to see that works are now underway on the Halletts Way project to create new entry and exit ramps on the Western Freeway at Halletts Way and a new bridge for pedestrians and cyclists to cross over the freeway. This will also be great for the people in Bacchus Marsh.

### ADDRESS BY WURUNDJERI ELDERS

**The SPEAKER** — Order! In accordance with the resolution of the house, I now ask the house to pause while the Serjeant-at-Arms escorts Wurundjeri elders Aunty Alice Kolasa, Aunty Gail Smith, Ron Jones, Allan Wandin, Uncle Colin Hunter, Jr, and Jacqui Wandin.

### Aboriginal elders escorted into chamber by Serjeant-at-Arms.

**The SPEAKER** — On behalf of all members I extend a very warm welcome to all our Wurundjeri elders to the floor of the chamber. I now invite Wurundjeri elder Aunty Alice Kolasa to address the house.

**Aunty Alice KOLASA** — Thank you, Speaker. We would like to pay our respects to our ancestors, elders past and present and the Aboriginal community present here today and to acknowledge all members of Parliament as well as the general public. To everyone present we say Womin joka Wurundjeri balluk yearmenn koondee biik, Welcome to our country.

Today we gather proudly, on this historic occasion, not only for us the Woi-wurrung people but for all Victorian Aboriginal clans and the state of Victoria.

Today a bill comes before the house to protect and recognise the uniqueness of the Birrarung. In our language, Woi-wurrung, this bill is called Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn, which means 'Keep the Birrarung alive'.

The Birrarung has been central to our cultural, spiritual, social and economic wellbeing since the Dreaming. Our ancestors and the Birrarung shaped one another, living in balance together for countless generations. The state now recognises something that we, as the First People, have always known: that the Birrarung is one integrated living entity.

When passed this bill will guarantee that the Birrarung will be protected by law and benefit from the custodianship of a body known as the Birrarung Council. As the First Nations people, our place in this new governance structure is also enshrined into law. Through this process the state has recognised the Woi-wurrung as the First People of the Birrarung.

The journey to achieving this type of structural inclusion has been hard won. It commenced from the moment of first contact and was the 'Yiookgen Dhan Liwik-al, the dream of our ancestors.

In the early 1840s, as the devastating consequences of settlement became apparent, our Ngurungaeta, brothers Billibellary and Bebejan, requested land for the Woi-wurrung from the Aboriginal Protector. They wanted to settle permanently along the Birrarung. They were unsuccessful, but a seed was sown.

Later their sons, also Ngurungaeta, Simon Wonga and William Barak, petitioned this Parliament for land ownership and economic freedom. In 1863 their advocacy resulted in the establishment of Coranderrk Mission Station on the banks of the Birrarung near what is now Healesville. Sadly, the introduction of the 1886 Half-Caste Act, passed into law by this Parliament, led to the ultimate destruction of Coranderrk and other missions. This act is understood to have been in response to the 1881 parliamentary Coranderrk inquiry, which marked the only occasion in

the history of 19th-century Victoria when an official commission was appointed to address Aboriginal peoples' calls for land and self-determination.

It is on their shoulders and that of countless others that we stand here today to walk along a shared path of recognition, rights, repatriation and reconciliation.

We would like to acknowledge the state for the inclusion of our language in the preamble to this bill. This is a first in this state's history. It is also an important achievement for our community. As a direct consequence of European settlement, Woi-wurrung has been dormant for generations. This is recognition of language revival.

These are clearly milestones to be proud of in a year that is already rich in milestones and anniversaries for Aboriginal Australia. There is a sense of change and a sense that we understand our shared past and are more committed to moving forward together in unity. We hope that further partnerships can enable first nations from across Victoria to truly affect the decisions and policies which impact their country.

To you, who share in the country of the Birrarung and the life it gives to all of us, we share with you our obligation to keep it thriving. Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn — keep the Birrarung alive. Thank you all.

*Honourable members applauded.*

**The SPEAKER** — Thank you, Aunty Alice Kolasa.

**Business interrupted.**

## DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

**The SPEAKER** — I acknowledge in the gallery the presence of a former member of this place, the current Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Cr Robert Doyle.

**Business resumed.**

## ADDRESS BY WURUNDJERI ELDERS

**The SPEAKER** — I now invite Wurundjeri elder Uncle Colin Hunter, Jr, and Wurundjeri elder Ron Jones to address the house.

**Uncle Colin HUNTER Jr** — Woiwurrungbaluk ba Birrarung wanganyinu biikpil.

Yarrayarrapil, manyi biik ba Birrarung, ganbu marram-nganyinu.

Manyi Birrarung murrondjak, durrung ba murrup warrongguny, ngargunin twarnpil.

Birrarungwa nhanbu wilamnganyinu.

**Mr Ron JONES** — We, the Woi-wurrung, the first people, and the Birrarung, belong to this country.

This country, and the Birrarung, are part of us.

The Birrarung is alive, has a heart, a spirit and is part of our Dreaming.

We have lived with, and known, the Birrarung since the beginning.

**The SPEAKER** — Thank you, Uncle Colin Hunter and Ron Jones. I now invite Wurundjeri elder Aunty Gail Smith and Wurundjeri elder Aunty Alice Kolasa to address the house.

**Aunty Gail SMITH** — Nhanbu ngarn.ganhanganyinu manyi Birrarung.

Bunjil munggary biik, wurru-wurru, warriny ba yaluk, ba ngargunin twarn.

Biiku kuliny munggary Bunjil.

Waa marrnakith-nganyin.

**Aunty Alice KOLOSA** — We will always know the Birrarung.

Bunjil, the great eagle, the creator spirit, made the land, the sky, the sea, the rivers, flora and fauna, the lore.

He made Kulin from the earth.

Bunjil gave Waa, the crow, the responsibility of protector.

**The SPEAKER** — Thank you, Aunty Gail Smith and Aunty Alice Kolasa. I now invite Wurundjeri elder Allan Wandin and Wurundjeri elder Jacqui Wandin to address the house.

**Mr Allan WANDIN** — Balliyang, barnumbinyu Bundjilal, banyu bagurk munggary.

Ngarn.gunganyinu nhanbu, nyilam biik, nyilam kuliny—balit biik, balit kuliny: balitmanhanganyin manyi biik ba Birrarung. Balitmanhanganyin durrungu ba murrupu, ba nhanbu murrondjak!

**Ms Jacqui WANDIN** — Bunjil's brother, Palliyang, the Bat, created Bagarook from the water.

Since our beginning it has been known that we have an obligation to keep the Birrarung alive and healthy — for all generations to come.

**The SPEAKER** — On behalf of all members I would like to thank you very much for coming in today to present those messages to us.

*Honourable members applauded.*

**Aboriginal elders escorted from chamber by Serjeant-at-Arms.**

## YARRA RIVER PROTECTION (WILIP-GIN BIRRARUNG MURRON) BILL 2017

### *Statement of compatibility*

**Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) 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 Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Bill 2017.

In my opinion, the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrong) Bill 2017, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with human rights as set out in the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

### **Overview**

The bill will be a new principal act that will establish a new body to be called the Birrarung Council, require the development of a Yarra strategic plan to provide an overarching framework for future land use, development and protection of the Yarra River and related land and create the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands. As a public authority, the charter will apply to acts and decisions of the Birrarung Council.

### **Human rights issues**

#### *Equality before the law (section 8) and equality of access to public office (section 18(2)(b))*

Section 8(3) of the charter provides that every person is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law without discrimination. Discrimination in relation to a person means discrimination within the meaning of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 on the basis of an attribute protected by that act. This includes discrimination on the basis of race. Section 8 of that act provides that direct discrimination occurs if a person treats, or proposes to treat, a person with an attribute unfavourably because of that attribute.

Section 18(2)(b) of the charter provides that a person has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to have access, on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office.

Clause 49 of the bill prescribes the membership of the Birrarung Council, which will consist of 12 members appointed by the minister. The main function of the council is to provide advice to the minister on various matters including the development and implementation of the Yarra strategic plan.

Clause 49(1)(a) of the bill requires that at least two members of the council must be nominees of the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council. In my view, the charter rights under sections 8(3) and 18(2)(b) of the charter are not limited by clause 49(1)(a) of the bill as the Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council is not restricted as to who they may nominate and, accordingly, the bill does not discriminate on the basis of race. While persons nominated are likely to be of Aboriginal heritage, there is no requirement for this to be the case. Further, under section 8(4) of the charter, this a measure taken for the purpose of assisting Aboriginal Victorians to participate in decisions about the use, development and protection of Yarra River land including the recognition, protection and promotion of Aboriginal tangible and intangible cultural values and as such does not constitute discrimination. Alternatively, to the extent that clause 49(1)(a) limits rights under sections 8(3) and 18(2)(b) of the charter, those limits are reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the charter given the importance of having Aboriginal Victorians with knowledge of relevant tangible and intangible cultural values informing the management of the Yarra River.

#### ***Right to privacy and reputation (section 13)***

Section 13(a) of the charter provides that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. Privacy is a broad concept and includes privacy of information about a person. Section 13(b) provides that a person also has the right not to have his or her reputation unlawfully attacked.

Clause 24(2) of the bill requires the lead agency to make a copy of all public submissions on a draft Yarra strategic plan made to it available for public inspection. To the extent to which any such submission may contain personal information about individuals, that clause engages the rights under section 13 of the charter.

In my view, the rights under section 13 of the charter are not limited by clause 24(2) of the bill, as the lead agency will collect and manage any personal information in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 and individuals making submissions will be given the opportunity either to consent to the publishing of any personal information in the submission or to request that the personal information be redacted.

Clause 43(1) of the bill requires each responsible public entity to prepare a report on the implementation of a Yarra strategic plan by the entity over the reporting period. From the information provided in each such report, the lead agency must, under clause 44 of the bill, give a report to the Birrarung Council to assist it with its reporting obligation to the minister under clause 57(1) of the bill. To the extent to which any such report may contain personal information about individuals, those clauses limit the rights under section 13 of the charter.

In my opinion, any interference with privacy or reputation caused by these provisions is neither unlawful nor arbitrary and accordingly compatible with the rights in section 13 of the charter. The interference is authorised by law, the circumstances in which it occurs is clearly circumscribed and it is reasonable or proportionate in all the circumstances. The information is necessary to enable the implementation of a

Yarra strategic plan to be monitored with a view to considering whether it is effectively achieving its purpose.

#### ***Freedom of expression (section 15) and freedom of movement (s 12)***

Section 15(2) of the charter provides that every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds. However, section 15(3) provides that special duties and responsibilities are attached to the right to freedom of expression and the right may be lawfully restricted in a range of circumstances, including where it is reasonably necessary to do so to respect the rights and reputation of other persons or for the protection of public order.

Clause 33 of the bill makes it an offence for a person to obstruct a member of a panel while the member is performing their functions or exercising their powers or obstruct a person attending a hearing before a panel. It is also an offence to repeatedly interrupt a hearing before a panel or, without lawful excuse, disobey a direction of a panel. A maximum penalty of 10 penalty units is provided for any breach of these provisions.

The provisions in clause 33 are reasonably necessary for the protection of public order under section 15(3) of the charter. They are lawful and reasonably necessary to achieve the objective of ensuring that public hearings before a panel operate in an orderly and fair manner without panel members or others in attendance being obstructed or a hearing being repeatedly interrupted or other disruptive conduct being engaged in. It is essential for the proper consideration of submissions referred to a panel that hearings are conducted in an environment that is free from interference or disruptive behaviour. To achieve that outcome it is reasonably necessary to empower the panel to control the conduct of its proceedings and regulate the conduct of persons attending a hearing. I therefore consider the provision is compatible with the right to freedom of expression under the charter.

Similarly, clause 33 of the bill might limit the right to freedom of movement under section 12 of the charter as a panel, in exercising its power to give directions, might direct a person to leave a hearing, noting that it is an offence to disobey a direction of a panel without lawful excuse. Under section 7(2) of the charter this limitation is reasonable and justified having regard to the need to ensure the protection of public order at a panel hearing and the effective and fair operation of a panel.

#### ***Right to participate in public life (section 18)***

Section 18(1) of the charter provides that every person in Victoria has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to participate in the conduct of public affairs. Under section 18(2)(b) of the charter every eligible person has the right, and is to have the opportunity, without discrimination, to have access, on general terms of equality, to the Victorian public service and public office.

These rights are engaged by the establishment of the Birrarung Council as a new public authority to advise the minister in relation to a Yarra strategic plan and on which there must be at least one representative of a local community group. Clause 52(2) of the bill provides that the minister may remove a member of the Birrarung Council from office at any time on specified grounds. This might be considered to be a

limitation on the right under section 18(2)(b) of the charter but, in my opinion, such a limitation is reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the charter.

The purpose of the limitation is to protect the integrity of the Birrarung Council and public confidence in its operations. The purpose of removing a member from office is to ensure that only persons fit to hold office remain as members. The grounds specified in clause 52(2) for removal ensure that removal can only occur if a member is unfit to hold office including because of misconduct, neglect of duty or inability to perform the duties of the office. There are no less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose that the limitation seeks to achieve.

For these reasons, I am of the opinion that any limitation imposed by clause 52(2) of the bill on the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs is reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the charter.

Clause 33 of the bill makes it an offence for a person to engage in certain conduct related to the functions and hearings of a panel. This potentially engages the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs as it may impose restrictions on their communications at panel hearings or indeed their presence at a hearing. However, I am of the opinion that any limitation imposed by clause 33 of the bill on that right is reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the charter. The intention of the limitation is to ensure that public hearings before a panel operate in an orderly and fair manner conducive to the proper consideration of submissions referred to the panel.

#### **Cultural rights (section 19(2))**

Section 19(2) of the charter confirms the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal persons including their right to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.

The bill relates to the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage by requiring the Yarra strategic plan to recognise and protect Aboriginal tangible and intangible cultural values (clause 21(b)) and by requiring the Birrarung Council to advise on the contribution of the Yarra strategic plan to the protection and improvement of the cultural and heritage values of the Yarra River land (clause 48(1)(a)(v)).

The bill promotes the cultural rights of Aboriginal persons by requiring that a Yarra strategic plan recognise and protect Aboriginal values and heritage and empowering the Birrarung Council to advise on the contribution of the plan to that protection.

#### **Property rights (section 20)**

Section 20 of the charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with law. This right is not limited where there is a law which authorises a deprivation of property, and that law is adequately accessible, clear and certain, and sufficiently precise to enable a person to regulate their conduct.

To the extent that 'deprivation of property' might extend beyond situations of forced transfer of title or ownership to any substantial restriction on a person's control, use or enjoyment of their property, section 20 of the charter might be relevant to part 4 of the bill which provides for the making of

a Yarra strategic plan. A Yarra strategic plan will include a land use framework plan that will be incorporated into planning schemes and may impact on how a person may use or develop their land. A Yarra strategic plan may apply to privately owned land that is located within 1 kilometre of a bank of the Yarra River or is the subject of a ministerial notice under clause 15 of the bill.

However, the circumstances and procedures by which a person's control, use or enjoyment of their property may be restricted are clearly set out in the provisions of the bill. I am satisfied that, to the extent that this could be said to amount to an effective deprivation of property under the charter, such deprivation will occur both in accordance with law and for a legitimate purpose, namely the protection of the Yarra River and land related to it from use or development detrimental to its environmental, landscape, cultural, heritage and amenity values. As such, these provisions will not amount to a limit of the property right in section 20 of the charter.

#### **Rights in criminal proceedings**

Section 25(1) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law. This right is relevant where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof on to an accused in a criminal proceeding so that the accused is required to prove matters to establish, or raise evidence to suggest that he or she is not guilty of an offence.

Clause 33(1)(d) of the bill makes it an offence for a person to disobey a direction of a panel without lawful excuse. In providing the defence of lawful excuse, this provision places an evidential burden on the accused, requiring them to show that there is sufficient evidence to raise an issue as to fact of the existence of a lawful excuse. As such, the presumption of innocence under section 25(1) of the charter is relevant.

However, I do not consider that an evidential onus limits the right to be presumed innocent. Once a person has presented or pointed to evidence as to the existence of a lawful excuse, the burden shifts to the prosecution to prove the elements of the offence. The question of the existence of a lawful excuse is a matter that is likely to be uniquely within the knowledge of the accused person and it is therefore reasonable for them to provide evidence on that issue. The prosecution will retain the legal burden of disproving the issue beyond reasonable doubt.

Hon. Richard Wynne, MP  
Minister for Planning

#### *Second reading*

**Mr WYNNE** (Minister for Planning) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I thank the Parliament for the opportunity that we have had today to have the traditional owners in for this bill. Can I commence by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their elders past and present, and elders from other communities that are here today. I would like to specifically thank the elders who have just spoken to Parliament: Aunty Alice Kolasa, Aunty Gail Smith, Uncle Colin Hunter, Jr, Ron Jones, Allan Wandin and

Jacqui Wandin. Thank you so much for your contribution to the Parliament today.

I also am delighted to acknowledge the Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Robert Doyle, who is in the chamber with us today. We very much welcome you here, Lord Mayor.

The Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn) Bill 2017 is a landmark in the history of our state.

It is a landmark because it is the first bill in Victoria to recognise the traditional owners of country by using their language for the title of the bill, and one of the first bills in Australia to include traditional owner language in the body of the bill.

It gives the traditional owners a say in the way we plan for and manage the Yarra River and its land. This is being enshrined in the law as well as in policy.

It is a landmark because it is the first time in Australia that a river, and the many hundreds of parcels of public land in which it is situated, is being recognised as the one living and integrated entity for protection and improvement.

This holistic approach blends the wisdom of traditional owners and 'caring of country' with contemporary Victorian values of the importance of nature to community health and wellbeing.

It is a landmark bill because it establishes a holistic approach to the management of this iconic river, and its land, that is centred on local community values and preferences. This will provide an overarching framework for the activities of the more than 14 responsible public entities.

It is a landmark because it establishes unprecedented standards for public transparency and accountability with multiple checks and balances to ensure the river and its land are protected for future generations.

It is a landmark because it will keep the Yarra and its country alive as the city responds to the impacts of climate change and, of course, continues to grow.

The Yarra is finally getting the protection it deserves.

I want to explain the meaning of the Woi-wurrung words in the legislation, and outline the size and scope of the reforms contained in the legislation.

Let me start with a Woi-wurrung translation.

As the elders have already indicated, the traditional owners' name for the Yarra is the Birrarung.

The translation of the title of the bill 'Wilip-gin Birrarung murrn' is: keep the Birrarung alive.

That is precisely what this legislation is designed to do — keep the Birrarung, or the Yarra, alive.

To achieve that end, the bill will declare the Yarra — and any parcels of public lands that come within 500 metres of the riverbank — the one living and integrated entity for protection and improvement.

The importance of the public parklands and open spaces along the Yarra River within metropolitan Melbourne will be recognised by collectively being called the Greater Yarra Urban Parklands.

The bill requires the development of a strategic river corridor plan for the Yarra River and its land. That plan will align and coordinate the efforts of the 14 responsible public entities with a common purpose.

The Yarra strategic plan will be prepared in partnership with the traditional owners, the eight responsible local councils along the river, and other government agencies.

It will give effect to a long-term community vision for the future use, protection and improvement of the river and its land that looks ahead at least 50 years.

That vision will be co-designed with the community.

And those activities will be closely monitored.

Under this legislation, all public entities must report at least every six months on the actions being taken to implement the community vision of the Yarra strategic plan.

The bill amends the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability Act 2003, requiring the commissioner to report on the environmental state of the river and its lands as part of the periodical report on the State of the Environment in Victoria.

And the bill also establishes an independent body — the Birrarung Council — to act as a voice for the Yarra and its land in planning and decision-making. It will also advise the responsible minister on any relevant matters.

The Birrarung Council is the centrepiece of this bill.

For the first time in Australia — and one of the first times in the world — a river, as represented by the

Birrarung Council, will be given a voice at the table where decisions are made that decide its future.

And that voice will be informed, that voice will be resourced and that voice will be independent.

The Birrarung Council will be independent of the responsible public entities that manage the river and its land — and it will scrutinise the ways in which those public entities meet their responsibilities.

That council will have a maximum of 12 members, including representation from traditional owners, environmental advocacy, agricultural industry and community groups.

And, under the bill, the Birrarung Council will be required to annually audit the implementation of the Yarra strategic plan and the health of the river — and those annual reports will be tabled in Parliament.

In short, the bill ensures the management of the Yarra will be handled with unprecedented transparency and public accountability.

I would like to draw your attention to three aspects of the reforms laid out in the bill.

One: we are treating our premier river and all of its land as the one living and integrated entity — this is a first in Australia.

Two: we are creating a framework, through the Birrarung Council, for the community to not only have a real say on the future use, protection and improvement of their river but also to scrutinise the actions of the responsible public entities — this is a first in Australia.

Three: we are holding this, and future governments, publicly accountable for the health of the river. We will monitor the implementation of the Yarra strategic plan in combination with regular audits of the environmental condition of the Yarra River and its land to ensure the desired river protection and improvement outcomes — this is a first in Australia.

As I said, this bill is a landmark in the history of our state. It is also an urgently needed reform. Let me explain why.

The Yarra is an inseparable part of our identity and crucial to Melbourne's economy, sustainability and liveability.

But it is about more than just water. Much more.

The Yarra is about the parklands and green spaces that line its banks.

The Yarra is about the traditional owners who have lived with and known the Birrarung since its beginning.

The Yarra is about the communities that live along its path.

The Yarra is about the sporting and recreational clubs that use its waters and lands.

The Yarra is about the flora and fauna to which it gives life.

The Yarra is about the port that drives our state's economy.

The Yarra is about all of us: who we are, where we come from, where we are going.

That is why the government is enacting the reforms laid out in the bill — because we believe that Melbourne needs a living river to remain a livable city.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — I move:

That the debate be adjourned for two weeks.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned until Thursday, 6 July.**

## LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 21 June; motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning).**

**Mr WATT** (Burwood) — As I was saying yesterday in my contribution on this bill, it is very interesting to hear members of the government talk about this particular bill. I heard not one member on the government side talk about what the actual purpose of the bill is. When you get a bill you get the purpose, and it tells you what the purpose is. As I said yesterday, I am not accusing anybody of lying; what I am accusing them of is not telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. What we do know is that the sole purpose of this bill, as I said yesterday, is to fatten the pig before market day.

There are significant changes that the government are putting in place when it comes to titles in this bill. Essentially the general law land system of land

ownership predates the Torrens system. When you undertake some significant changes I think the public are entitled to know what the motivation behind this is. When the government introduces changes in general, including the ownership of things, it is extremely important, because you can affect people's livelihoods, you can affect their assets and you can affect their ability to contribute to society by changing ownership rights to certain things.

I note that there is a protest on the steps of Parliament once again about taxi licence holders. They are concerned about changes that government makes. Once again in that particular argument they are concerned about the fact that the government is not telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. They are concerned about the fact that they are being short-changed and that we have a government that either does not care or does not understand what is happening.

When we talk about this bill, what we are talking about is what we know and what the government knows — and that is, that in the very near future we will see the sale of Land Victoria. I can only assume that there is going to be another bill coming through the house so we can debate whether or not the sale of Land Victoria is a good thing. But we certainly know — and everybody here knows but only some people are willing to talk about it — that the sole purpose for these changes is not about fairness or about fixing things or about efficiency. It is about dollars. It is about cold hard cash. It is about how much money the government can get when they sell Land Victoria and how much extra they are going to be able to put into the coffers when they change the system to allow Land Victoria to be sold.

I hope we will be debating the raft of changes that will be needed, but when I look at this bill I do not see anything which tells me about any of the protections that will be put in place to make sure that once Land Victoria is a private entity and the government fills its coffers, people will be protected from price gouging or anything around that. I would have liked some acknowledgement from the government of what they are actually doing here. I hope members following my contribution will acknowledge what is happening here and will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I hope members opposite will also stand up and tell me what their further plans are for Land Victoria and how they will make sure that some of the cost structures that we have currently with Land Victoria will not change exorbitantly. We have already seen changes made to the titles system here so that the government can fill their coffers. We accept that, and we understand that that is what the bill is about. We all

know that, and I know that government members know that as well.

What I hope is that those who follow on from my contribution will make sure that they acknowledge where we are going with the bill, acknowledge what the next steps are, acknowledge why the government is doing this and acknowledge what is going to have to happen. They need to tell us what we are going to have to put in place to make sure that once that government monopoly becomes a private monopoly people will not be paying exorbitant fees for transfers and the like.

We have some serious concerns about not being told everything. We are not opposed to the bill. I am not sure that people understand that I personally am not opposed to the bill; I am just opposed to the lack of information and to the conceit that is being shown. I keep saying this, but I would like members opposite to stand up and tell us what the plans are, what they really intend to do with this bill and what the next steps are. I would like to see some honesty throughout this process.

As members of Parliament we need to stand up for what we believe, and we also need to make sure that we sell it to our communities. I am reminded of a quote by Sir Robert Menzies. He said that the first duty of a member of Parliament is to do what is right and sell it to their constituents and the second duty of a member of Parliament is to accept the electoral consequences if they fail in their first duty. I refer to that because if the government believes that the sale of Land Victoria is the right policy, then they should say that and they should convince the public of the need to do it. But if they are going to go down this path, they should not try to hide or scurry away or pretend it is not happening. We know this is what it is about. We know why the government is changing the titles. We know there are going to be some significant changes for individuals, and we know that there are going to be disputes around some of these things.

We all know that some of the biggest disputes amongst our constituents — and I am sure other members have dealt with this issue and it is not just me — are around land and the ownership of that land. People can get very testy about owning a couple of centimetres here and there when a fence is involved; we all know that. That is because ownership of property is extremely important. When we mess with that or when we change the system we need to make sure that people understand why.

**Mr Richardson** interjected.

**Mr WATT** — I keep coming back to this point, and I accept that the member for Mordialloc keeps asking what is my point, but that is my point. The reason I stood to speak on this bill is because the government is making changes and the government needs to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! The member will take his seat.

**Mr Donnellan** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, in relation to the member's statements, the system of titles for the ownership of properties is not changing, so the suggestion that the system is changing is not correct. I think he needs to clarify what he is saying.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! The member for St Albans.

**Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans)** — I rise to speak on the Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. This bill simplifies and modernises the conveyancing legislation to reflect the current need of the national system. It also makes land sales and subdivisions much more effective in today's society.

Conveyancing has long been a very time-consuming and manual process. We have seen paper land titles making it very difficult to verify ownership of heritage properties and slowing down the sales process. All paper land titles were made redundant in 2016 as declared in the *Government Gazette*, and conveyancers have been taking advantage of the online system for a number of years, so this is nothing new.

The bill aligns Victoria with national standards and streamlines the conveyancing process into plain, simple English. It also provides improvements to the sale of general law land, allowing for heritage land to be placed on the current Torrens system more easily and much more effectively.

This bill provides for a number of minor changes to the Transfer of Land Act 1958, the Subdivision Act 1988 and the Valuation of Land Act 1960. Now, this is all part of making sure that we are improving the operation of these acts. These changes include: allowing greater efficiency in the conveyancing process, enabling the registrar of titles to more effectively maintain the register of land, improving the efficiency and the process of registering plans of subdivision, and also making changes to the Valuation of Land Act to enable the valuer-general to provide improved valuation information. That is very important to many landowners.

This bill shows the Andrews Labor government again is committed to modernising and making sure that information is accessible to all Victorians. The selling of heritage property or settling on the sale of your family home should be a simple, easy and stress-free process for us all. This legislation makes sure that Victorians are able to manage their land in accordance with the national standards and that technology is able to be fully embraced in the process.

Over 100 000 Victorian property transactions have been done online, and that number is growing. Victorians account for close to half of the 250 000 e-transactions in Australia, and that is testament that our state is willing to work with and embrace the technology age. This act makes it much easier to search records for land, and under the Transfer of Land Act 1958, it is supported by the state guarantee, which the Victorian government uses to guarantee Land Title by registration of estates and interests.

This makes it much easier to trace ownership and provides certainty for buyers and families, including sellers of this land, that the land title is correct. The act gives broader powers to convert general law land and to make necessary amendments in order to upgrade the title to the current system. The landowner will not lose their rights to the land — and I repeat that the landowner will not lose their rights in any way — and this conversion will alleviate cost and effort for the landowner in having to apply to have their title converted, making it an effective, efficient and much smarter way of doing business.

The general law land is a system of land ownership that precedes the current Torrens system of land title. This system applies to land which is over 150 years old, which makes it difficult for owners who are trying to sell their properties. Victoria still has many general law properties, such as family farms, old estates and land that has been passed from generation to generation. Owners of these kinds of property often find it very difficult to prove the authenticity of their land title, as it requires a lengthy process of tracing past owners and navigating a complicated history of ownership. Owners have to prove the chain of ownership all the way back to the original grant from the Crown, and it becomes extremely difficult.

Many landholders are unable to properly prove their ownership of land, which stops them from selling, subdividing or updating the title of the land. This bill allows the conversion of general law land under the Transfer of Land Act 1958. The act provides a superior way of tracking down land and better protecting sellers' interests.

In 2010 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set up delivery of a single, national e-conveyancing service for the Australian property industry. As a result the Property Exchange Australia service was created, and over 100 000 transactions have since taken place using this service in Victoria. This means that Victorians are able to complete their property transactions in a very effective, easier and quicker way online.

Now I turn to why this bill matters for my electorate in particular, in St Albans. When we look at the important improvements to the land acts, particularly the Transfer of Land Act, we see that these will have very positive impacts for the electorate of St Albans. St Albans is a growth corridor of the west. It has land values that have dramatically risen. Just recently in the centre of St Albans we saw an unrenovated property sell for \$1.8 million. We have seen a very dramatic increase in property prices, and of course the number of sales. Auction sales are up by 56 per cent compared to last year, and those numbers continue to dramatically rise in my electorate.

We have a lot of inquiries from residents in relation to assistance in dealing with housing matters, and sometimes it can be a very confusing process of sales, conveyancing and other matters that one needs to go through, whether you are selling a property or purchasing a property. Any improvements in this area will be warmly welcomed by my very diverse electorate of St Albans.

One of the great pillars of our community and our society is the opportunity to own your own home or land. That sense of ownership is an extremely valued and integral part of our community. That is why these changes will ensure that you can buy and sell land effectively. It is easy to understand, it is effective and there are online services. I am happy to support this bill.

I congratulate the Minister for Planning for bringing this bill to this house and making the necessary amendments that cater for today's growth and cater for the changes in this area when it comes to the appropriate amendments and the appropriate changes to make sure that land titles in Victoria are much more effective and are, quite frankly, within the national code as well. I think that needs to be repeated, because it is bringing the national code into place and what was agreed at COAG in 2010 as part of a national approach to making sure that the transfer of land in particular and the land titles act are much more effective in 2017. I commend this bill to the house.

**Mr GIDLEY** (Mount Waverley) — I rise this morning to make a contribution on the Land Legislation

Amendment Bill 2017. This has been a broad-ranging debate before the house dealing with matters in relation to what is proposed in this bill and general matters of land transfer ownership, and I intend to continue that broad debate in those particular areas.

Whilst there are a number of worthy aspects of this bill that the government has brought before the house, which were outlined very eloquently yesterday by other speakers, including the manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, there are some concerns which the government either does not seem to be aware of or has not adequately addressed in the bill and which a number of my residents are concerned about and I am concerned about.

Whenever there is a change to a system — in this case looking at land ownership that may have predated the Torrens system of title by registration of estates in land — there need to be proper safeguards in place to ensure the information that the land titles office has is accurate, is timely and is well within the best interests of the state of Victoria, because obviously if the information the land titles office has is incorrect as a consequence of the changes that are outlined in this bill, it may expose the taxpayers of Victoria to significant risk if titles are put forward and those titles based on the changes in this bill are inaccurate. I have not seen in this bill much attention to that detail by the government in terms of ensuring that the provisions in this bill ensure that land titles remain accurate and there are mechanisms to reduce the risk.

The second area of concern I want to address is in relation to privacy. When we are looking at sensitive information on titles which people may have privacy is of utmost importance, particularly in this day and age when we are looking at electronic conveyancing and moving things to an electronic basis. The ability for that information to be misused may well be greater than under the more traditional system; therefore with the provisions that are in this bill and looking to have further information stored electronically I think it is imperative that the government does address these significant concerns about privacy and how that information will be managed, particularly when you think about the value that organisations put on information now in being able to bring different aspects of information together. It is important that the government put in place mechanisms to protect privacy, to protect accuracy, to make sure that information is correct and to make sure that information is not abused, and there are a couple of concerns I have there on behalf of my residents.

The other thing I have not seen much of in the debate from the government is if there were going to be a

move, for example, to look to privatise the land titles office, how that would work in terms of pricing. That is of concern because a legitimate and logical question from this debate is: is this government just putting forward this bill to increase the value of the land titles office for privatisation to cover budget blowouts? For example, the budget blowout with the east–west link: the cancellation was not going to cost anything, but it has now cost around about \$1.3 billion. There have been other things. So there are these significant questions about this government's inability to manage projects and manage money, meaning that they are desperate for funds. It is putting through bills that may well be seeking at the forefront to maximise the value of any privatisation, and that is a concern to me because of the fact that the objectives of the bill should be to provide the best system possible for the people of Victoria.

The other aspect I want to touch on this morning is in relation to my concern about the more general issue of the transfer of land and the transfer of titles and what ownership of land in the state of Victoria under this government really means for the people in my district. We know that what that means very clearly is life is hard and will only get harder for the people of the Mount Waverley district in Victoria under this government in relation to owning land. We know that there has been an increase in the state tax base of 22 per cent under this government and under this budget. When I think about land and talk about land under this government, you cannot escape the very real fact that we have seen an increase in land taxes of around 35 per cent. In addition to that, we have also seen a nearly 40 per cent increase in general stamp duty.

Those things — the increase in land tax of around 35 per cent — are more than a number; they are actually hurting people. They are hurting people who have sought to have regard for themselves, their family and their own future. They might own another property in addition to their principal place of residence, and that additional investment property may well be their superannuation. It may well be something by which they have sought to ensure that they are not reliant on the state. These are not really wealthy people in many instances; they may have bought the property when it was much, much cheaper. Yet they have become a part of that massive increase in land tax under this government — that 35 per cent increase in land tax — and that has made life harder for them. It has made it harder for them to look after their families, it has made it harder for them to buy goods and services.

Of course we know that the 35 per cent or thereabouts increase in land tax has flowed into the price of goods and services in this state. We know that, whether or not

people have entered into a lease or own premises from which they are selling goods and services, they have to somehow recoup the massive increase in land tax under this government.

Money does not grow on trees, much as this government would like it to cover its financial mismanagement. It has to come from taxpayers. That 35 per cent increase in land tax has meant that life is harder, the price of goods and services is higher than it would otherwise be, and the cost of living is higher. In addition to that, we know the 40 per cent increase in stamp duty under this government, some of which is raised through the transfer of land, has meant that life is harder for Victorians when they seek to purchase property. Any discussion about a bill on land and land legislation under this government cannot avoid a discussion about the massive tax increases on those particular asset classes.

The victims of these tax increases are resident in my electorate and other electorates. These tax increases are completely inconsistent with the message that the Premier, the member for Mulgrave, looked down the camera lens and delivered to the people of Victoria — that there would be no tax increases. We know this government has broken that election commitment time and time again, with new taxes and new taxes on property.

This government is overly reliant on property taxes. That over-reliance on taxes from one particular sector puts the state at risk. In addition to that, it is hurting Victorians. It is making life harder for Victorian households, families, and small and medium-sized businesses, whether or not it is flowing through to them in the higher prices of goods and services and whether or not it is forcing them to sell an additional property that might have been their superannuation or a nest egg. In principle it is a very good idea not to be overly reliant on the state for the pension for people who are not multimillionaires in their own right. They have just sought to work hard, put money aside and provide for their families.

**Mr Angus** interjected.

**Mr GIDLEY** — Exactly right, as the member for Forest Hill said. People who have done an honest day's work, who have tried to do the right thing — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson)** — Order! The time has come to interrupt business.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and  
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Public appointments**

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, has any family member of the member for Tarneit been appointed to a water board in the term of your government?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Thank you to the Leader of the National Party and his deputy for the question and commentary. I would need to check. There are many appointments made. I would need to check with — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Members, yesterday I struggled to hear both questions and answers in question time because of the level of noise in this chamber, which makes chairing this place very difficult. I warn all members who shout across the chamber today that they will be removed from the chamber without warning. The Premier, to continue.

**Mr ANDREWS** — I would need to make inquiries in relation to the specifics of the question. I can of course advise in relation to appointments to water boards and indeed all appointments that they are made on the basis of merit —

**Mr Wakeling** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Ferntree Gully!

**Mr ANDREWS** — and it is on that basis of merit that people like Victor Perton, who has been appointed to Yarra Valley Water — —

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier will resume his seat.

**Mr Walsh** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance. This was a very narrow question. Given that all water boards are cabinet appointments, the Premier should be very well aware of who he has appointed to water boards. I ask you to bring him back to answering that question please.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier was relevant to the question, but then began to stray. I ask the Premier to remain on the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — As I said, I will need to make inquiries about the specifics of the question. I was drawing the house's attention to the fact that those

appointments are based on merit. Those appointments have been the subject of an independent process. I think, if my — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — Well, 50 per cent of those appointments have been women — not something that those opposite can boast about in any forum at all, certainly not in here. As to the specifics of the question, I will need to come back to the member.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Niddrie and the member for Ivanhoe!

*Supplementary question*

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — Premier, can you inform the house exactly how many spouses or partners of Labor MPs have been appointed to government boards under your administration?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Leader of the House!

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — As I said, Speaker, appointments are made based on merit, and if it is the — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — Well, if it is the position of those opposite that simply being a family member of a member of any political party or any member of government regardless, then that is a big change in policy, I would have thought, for those opposite. But I am very pleased to see that Victor Perton is on Yarra Valley Water, Pat McNamara is on Goulburn-Murray Water, Peter Costello is at the MCG Trust, Fran Bailey is at Eastern Health — merit-based appointments, as all our appointments are.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Ivanhoe is warned again.

**Mr Walsh** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance again. This was a very narrow question that was about Labor MPs' spouses or partners who have been appointed to government boards under this administration. It is not about who else was appointed; it is about how many Labor MPs' wives or

spouses have been appointed to government boards under this Premier.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier was relevant to the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — I do not have that information, but what I can confirm for the questioner is that all appointments are made on merit. I know that is a hard concept for the architect of the Office of Living It Up to comprehend — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — Fancy you lecturing anybody about appointments and probity!

### Ministers statements: employment

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I am delighted to update the house — —

**Mr Guy** — Bingo!

**Mr ANDREWS** — Well, they might have played bingo down at the Office of Living It Up, I do not know. But I am so very pleased to be able to inform the house and those opposite, who wasted every moment they had in government, that since the election of this government 246 000 jobs have been created in Victoria. Since November 2014 there have been 246 000 jobs created in our great state, and 151 400 of them are full time.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — They are about as interested in opposition as they were in government in creating jobs. Shame on those opposite. In 2016 we saw 118 500 more Victorians in employment, the biggest ever job increase in a calendar year. What a fantastic effort and something that all Victorians should be proud of — particularly, you would think, those who just were not up to that task when given that great honour and opportunity for four wasted years.

Why is that, though? Why are there more people in work? Well, strong economic growth and the biggest infrastructure program this state has ever seen. The biggest infrastructure program our state has ever seen delivered, coming out of the ground — real projects making a real difference and employing tens of

thousands of Victorians because of this government. Not the talk and the indolence and the waste and the incompetence of those opposite, but instead a strong agenda putting people first and making sure we are creating jobs and delivering the infrastructure that our community needs today and into the future. Projects that total billions of dollars and affect tens of thousands of livelihoods. That is what this government is about. Those opposite can chatter all they want, but they will not run from their record — one of unemployment and indolence.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I warn the member for Macedon and the member for Warrandyte about shouting across the chamber.

### CFMEU

**Ms VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, your mate John Setka has yet again gone too far, even invoking people's children in his attacks on the staff of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). Bill Shorten has called this behaviour out and Anthony Albanese says it is a disgrace and should be referred to the police. Premier, why did you fail to condemn John Setka's comments about bullying and intimidating ABCC staff and their families when you were asked to yesterday?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will come to order.

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I did not recall seeing the member for Bayswater at my press conference yesterday, and she has just confirmed that she clearly was not there, because she is completely inaccurate as per usual when it comes to these matters. I was asked about a range of comments that were made, and I made the following observation, and I will repeat it for the benefit of the always incorrect member for Bayswater. I do not believe that families should ever be drawn into — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing!

**Ms Victoria** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is incorrect and I take offence to what he said and ask him to withdraw.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Premier to withdraw.

**Mr ANDREWS** — Sorry, what am I withdrawing?

**The SPEAKER** — The member has taken offence to some comments.

**Mr ANDREWS** — For the benefit of the house, I withdraw. As I was saying, if the member has taken offence, I withdraw for the smooth running of this great chamber. What I said yesterday and what I was very serious about, as I am now —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — is that families ought never be drawn into these things. The comments were inappropriate. This debate is albeit an emotional and highly charged one, particularly when you are talking about the death of people on building sites. That does not, however, constitute an excuse for bringing families into this, nor does it excuse people from the requirement to always be appropriate and always be respectful.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Hastings

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Hastings will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Honourable member for Hastings withdrew from chamber.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

**Questions and statements resumed.**

### CFMEU

*Supplementary question*

**Ms VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. Premier, you will not call out Peter Marshall; you will not even say his name. You will not call out John Setka. Premier, is not the reason that you will not call out their bullying behaviour that you are a bully yourself?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the member for Bayswater to rephrase that question. Questions should be directed through the Chair.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Mordialloc has been warned, and the member for Eltham is warned.

**Ms VICTORIA** — My supplementary question is to the Premier through the Chair. The Premier has said the standard he walks past is the standard he accepts. He will not call out Peter Marshall; he will not say his name. He now will not call out John Setka. Is not the reason he will not do this that he is himself a bully?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Questions cannot seek an opinion, and I fail to see how this question relates to government business.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, I would have thought the issue of whether or not the Premier of this state is a bully is highly relevant to government business. It goes to the entire conduct of the government. It is asking the Premier to comment on a question that is one of fact, and he should be required to answer it.

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

### Ministers statements: employment

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — I rise yet again to bring more good news on the efforts of the Andrews government to create jobs — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Warrandyte

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Warrandyte will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and  
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Ministers statements: employment**

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — Since taking office we have created nearly a quarter of a million jobs for Victorians. We have created around 50 000 jobs in regional Victoria. That is nearly 10 times more than those opposite created. But of course we cannot compare ourselves to the mediocrity of those opposite. It is a good thing too, because if we were comparing ourselves to their efforts in job creation, we would have stopped early last year. But I do occasionally have a look at what we are up against. Of course they appear to have benched the member for Malvern, which is a good start. Much like a one-ended straw, he sucks but he never delivers.

The task of delivering some credible economic policy has been given to the member for Kew and his mates from the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA). I hear he was quite an — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

**SUSPENSION OF MEMBER**

**Member for Eltham**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Eltham will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Honourable member for Eltham withdrew from chamber.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask members to cease shouting across the chamber.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and  
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Ministers statements: employment**

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — It shows how far they have gone that they have actually had to resort to calling on the member for Kew and his IPA interns to provide policy advice to the opposition. Of course, I hear he is quite an accomplished oarsman, but pull the other one.

The Andrews government has an actual plan to support jobs growth in regional Victoria. It is delivering the lowest regional tax rate in the country, an upgrade to every single regional train line through our regional rail revival plan, and of course the largest investment in regional Victoria ever through the 2017–18 budget. But there is still more to come. We still have another year and a half of our term, and we will continue to try and exceed our own efforts, because if we compared ourselves to those opposite, we would have stopped a long time ago.

**CFMEU**

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, at Tuesday's union protest which blockaded city streets, CFMEU boss John Setka, whose union is affiliated with your party, threatened authorised officers of the Australian Building and Construction Commission and also foreshadowed illegal industrial action. Given this reprehensible conduct clearly constitutes a criminal offence under the Crimes Act 1958 — including threat to sabotage, section 247L; and sabotage, section 247K of the Crimes Act — Premier, will you refer this action to Victoria Police, or is this yet another union master that you are afraid to stand up to?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The first point I would make is that what clearly or clearly does not represent a crime in the state is not a matter for the Leader of the Opposition, and his conduct clearly demonstrates that. His conduct over a long time clearly demonstrates that. Beyond that, though, Victoria Police — he may not know this — with greater powers, more people and greater resources, are free to make those judgements themselves. They are free to make those judgements themselves. And unlike others, who tamper with police command — —

**Mr Guy** — On a point of order, Speaker, my question was very clear: will the Premier refer this matter to Victoria Police or not? It was not a question seeking a commentary; it was a question seeking a very clear answer.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier was responding to the question. The Premier, to continue.

**Mr ANDREWS** — In direct response to the question, there is simply no need for referrals. Police are better resourced than they have ever been and have more powers than they have ever had because of this government, and they are free to investigate any alleged or potential criminal conduct in any setting, whether it

be by a property developer, whether it be by a politician, whether it be by a union official or whether it be by any Victorian.

The fact that the Leader of the Opposition needs to be told these things really is a worry, is it not. It is a worry that he thinks he is the arbiter of who is guilty and not, and that the only time police ever do anything is if people like him tell them to. Honestly this level of ignorance is quite unbelievable, unless of course all you are doing is playing political games or unless of course you are someone who spent a big amount of your time interfering in police command. We remember Tristan Weston. The member for Benambra remembers Tristan Weston. We remember that and the Ombudsman's report that went with it.

**Mr Guy** — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I ask you to bring the Premier back to answering a very straightforward question, and if he will not answer it, to either take it on notice or sit down.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier has concluded his answer.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — Earlier this year Victoria Police withdrew from the combined state-federal task force, Task Force Heracles, charged with stamping out union thuggery. Premier, will you urgently meet with the chief commissioner and have Victoria Police re-join this important task force in light of the threats made by John Setka to the personal safety of federal officials and their families?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Yet again the Leader of the Opposition seems very confused about this. If he is essentially making a policy announcement that he intends to direct Victoria Police on how to organise themselves, what to investigate and when, who to investigate and how, that will be news to police command. Or then again maybe it would not be, because they know full well —

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — those who are prepared to interfere and undermine police command, because that is all they did for four long years — four long years. And they hope that people have forgotten about Tristan Weston. They hope that people have forgotten about the way chief commissioner Simon Overland was undermined. They hope that people forget about those things. Well, the Ombudsman has been very clear about it. Our recollection is very clear about it, and clearly the

approach of the Leader of the Opposition has not changed — undermine, interfere and be unfit for office.

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

**SUSPENSION OF MEMBER**

**Member for Hawthorn**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Hawthorn will leave the chamber for a period of 1 hour.

**Honourable member for Hawthorn withdrew from chamber.**

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**Ministers statements: major projects skills guarantee**

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Education) — The government is using our massive investment in schools to provide young people with the opportunity to learn a trade and acquire new skills. The Andrews Labor government's record investment in infrastructure is expected to create more than 50 000 jobs. And as we continue to support jobs across our state it is particularly important that we support apprentices, trainees and cadets. I am pleased to report to the house that more than 1300 opportunities for apprentices, trainees and cadets have been created in the months following the new major projects skills guarantee. As members of this house know, one of the major pillars of Labor's record infrastructure investment is in our schools.

I know that last week the Minister for Industry and Employment joined the tireless member for Albert Park in visiting the fantastic South Melbourne Primary School in Ferrars Street, the first government vertical school in Victoria. They saw firsthand some great young apprentices and engineering cadets who are thrilled to be given a start in the construction industry. In the Ferrars Street project alone there are 35 apprentices and two trainees.

At the new high school in Beaumaris we are building, there are up to 76 opportunities consisting of 52 apprentices, nine trainees and 15 cadets. As a result of the major projects skills guarantee, we will continue to see similar training and employment opportunities at other school projects as they are rolled out across the state. There are major upgrades and new schools like Richmond High School, Prahran High School, Kalianna School, Taylors Hill West Secondary College and South

Melbourne Park Primary School — all supporting apprentices, trainees and cadets. We build schools; we do not close them. We invest in TAFE in the training and skills of our young people; we do not gut it.

### Parole reform

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I quoted the adult parole board manual, which clearly shows the government has watered down Justice Callinan's recommendation 13. In his response the Premier claimed that all MPs, including opposition MPs, had voted to make this change. So I ask the Premier: on what occasion did this house vote to approve including a watered-down version of Justice Callinan's recommendation 13 in the adult parole board manual, or was the Premier's answer yesterday yet another complete fabrication?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Attorney-General and the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing will cease interjecting to assist the smooth operation of the house. The Leader of The Nationals!

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — That is the best you can come up with? I think we can all assume safely that I was referring to legislation in the Parliament and to suggest otherwise is I think — well, I do not know what it is, to be honest. I do not know what it is.

What I would point out to the member, the failed former Attorney-General, would be that the Auditor-General, I am advised, when looking at these matters very directly in a report tabled in this place made it very clear that the government had faithfully implemented that recommendation, indeed all recommendations, relevant to these matters. So apparently not only is the government wrong in this, the Auditor-General is wrong in this. The only one that is right is the member for Box Hill.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, my question was very specific and direct about the occasion on which the house, in accordance with the Premier's argument, had voted to support the adult parole board's watering down of Callinan recommendation 13. The Premier is not responding to that question. Discussion about what may or may not have been in the Auditor-General's report is not relevant to the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier has 2 minutes remaining to his answer.

**Mr ANDREWS** — As I was indicating, I think all honourable members except perhaps the member for

Box Hill knew and understood that when you are talking about votes, it would be motions or legislation in the Parliament, and that is my answer.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — I think any reasonable person comparing the Premier's answer yesterday with his answer today will be able to draw their own conclusion. So I ask: following the previous government's implementation of 15 of Justice Callinan's 23 recommendations, of which the Andrews government has implemented just seven, can the Premier guarantee that of the seven recommendations his government has implemented no others have been watered down like recommendation 13, further exposing Victorians to dangerous and violent criminals?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I would remind members if they could cease shouting across the chamber, particularly as members are asking questions and so we can hear the questions.

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I do thank the member for Box Hill for his question. He points to a number of recommendations that have been implemented by our government, and that is less than the total number of recommendations because they are the ones that were left undone by the previous government. That was the work left to us despite their boasting and bragging that all had been fixed. All had been fixed: bail had been fixed, parole had been fixed, the whole corrections system had been fixed. I remember the ads — the revolving door will end. Well, all the work happens to have been done by this government.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, it was a very specific supplementary question. The Premier has not come anywhere near addressing it. In the limited time available I ask you to direct him to answer the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Premier to answer the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — Thank you, Speaker, for your guidance. I would simply point the member for Box Hill, in direct answer to his question, to the work of the Auditor-General, who makes it very clear that the government has faithfully implemented — fairly, reasonably, properly, doing what those opposite never got around to doing — all of these matters. If he finds fault with the Auditor-General, he ought to stand up and say so.

**Mr Guy** — On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Box Hill has just asked question 4. On the roster list question 4 was actually the question for the member for Melton. I ask you: given the member for Melton has not turned up for question time and the opposition has availed ourselves of that question, I wonder for all MPs if you would be able to seek an explanation from the member for Melton why he has not turned up to question time, why he has not asked a question on behalf of his constituents and why the member is not doing his base job when he is rostered on to ask that question?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that there is no point of order.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS

### Members for Niddrie and Kew

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Niddrie and the member for Kew will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Honourable members for Niddrie and Kew withdrew from chamber.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

**Questions and statements resumed.**

### Ministers statements: Metro Tunnel

**Ms ALLAN** (Minister for Public Transport) — It was great this morning to join with the Premier and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety down on the corner of St Kilda Road and Toorak Road to announce the range of activities that are going to happen over the school holiday periods and disruptions that are going to happen across our transport network as we get on with building the Metro Tunnel project.

We know that this is a project that means more trains, more often. It is a tunnel we are building in the heart of the city to get more trains in and out from the suburbs and the regions. We know that those travelling particularly from the outer suburbs want to see more train services run. They understand the urgent need for the Metro Tunnel and why we are getting on with delivering this project that is also going to create over 5000 jobs. Importantly 10 per cent of this workforce will be apprentices, trainees or engineering cadets, and

there is an Aboriginal employment target of 2.5 per cent. All these requirements exist because our government have written these specifications into the tender document in line with our major projects skills guarantee policy.

We will see the workforce really ramp up in a year's time, in 2018. That is when the big construction work gets underway on the tunnel and stations. But we are seeing through the early works packages that there are 650 people already working on this project and there are so many more job opportunities across 40 different professions that are available. We are saying to Victorians who are interested in working on one of the most exciting projects in the country to check out the jobs that are available, jump onto the Metro Tunnel's website and check out how they can come and put their skills to good use on this exciting project.

While they are doing that, they might reflect on how this was never an opportunity that was afforded to Victorians under those opposite. There was never an opportunity for them to work on our biggest public transport infrastructure project because those opposite oppose this and continue not to support the Metro Tunnel.

### Latrobe Valley employment

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Minister for Industry and Employment. Since your government stood idly by and watched Hazelwood close three months ago, and after all the boasting you and the Premier made about saving the valley, just how many jobs have been created for the 750 former Hazelwood workers?

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Industry and Employment) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. Indeed I am very pleased to report to the Leader of The Nationals that in fact in the last three months there has been an additional 5900 jobs created in the Latrobe-Gippsland region. Over the last 12 months, and these are figures to April, there has been an additional 17 000 people now in jobs compared to 12 months ago in the Latrobe-Gippsland region — 17 000. This is enormous growth.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister will resume his seat. Before calling the Leader of The Nationals on a point of order, I again remind members to cease shouting in the chamber. I struggle to hear the answers and the questions being asked.

**Mr Walsh** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was specifically about how many of the 750 workers who have lost their jobs at Hazelwood because of the closure brought on by this government's policy actually have jobs now, not how many jobs are being created around the rest of Victoria. How many of those 750 workers now have a job when most of them are in the dole queue?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The minister was being relevant to the question that was asked. The minister, to continue.

**Mr NOONAN** — The figures do not lie: 17 000 more people in work in the Latrobe-Gippsland region in the last 12 months. This is in line with the 50 000 additional jobs created in regional Victoria since we have come to government — 50 000. As I heard the Treasurer say in his ministerial statement, that is 10 times the number of jobs created under their government's four years in office.

Why is this happening in Gippsland? This is happening because of our record investment in Gippsland — \$266 million going into the Latrobe region to assist them because of decades of neglect, sadly, for this region. We are getting on with the job of creating jobs. This includes the very valuable worker transition scheme that we negotiated under our government, worker transition which was supported by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to assist those Hazelwood workers essentially get new opportunities to remain in the energy sector and of course continue their working life in the Latrobe Valley. We will not do what the previous government did and neglect the Latrobe Valley.

**Mr Northe** — On a point of order, Speaker, in terms of relevance, the question was very specific, about how many Hazelwood workers have been re-employed after losing their jobs due to decisions by this government, and the minister has failed to answer that specific question of how many of those Hazelwood workers actually have jobs.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Emergency Services! I ask the minister to come back to answering the question. The member for Gippsland South will come to order.

**Mr NOONAN** — What I can advise the Leader of The Nationals is that there are an additional 17 000 people working in the Latrobe-Gippsland region compared to 12 months ago, and as a result of our efforts and our investments there will be opportunities

created for those workers at Hazelwood — as a result of our efforts. I can inform the member —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr NOONAN** — that AGL have already —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! And the member for Lowan.

**Mr NOONAN** — employed ex-Hazelwood workers.

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Lowan

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Lowan will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

**Honourable member for Lowan withdrew from chamber.**

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

### Latrobe Valley employment

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Industry and Employment) — As a result of our efforts, both Energy Australia and Engie are seeking favourable taxation arrangements through the Australian Taxation Office, and we would expect that about 150 of those ex-Hazelwood workers would secure work through the efforts of our government.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — Minister, despite being accredited with your government, Latrobe Valley-based demolition contractors were not even considered for the state government demolition works at two former Morwell primary school sites, the Andrews government instead choosing a contractor from the other side of the state. Minister, is ignoring local contractors yet more evidence that, now the dust has settled, you and your government really could not care less about what happens in the Latrobe Valley?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing to come to order.

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Industry and Employment) — I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. What an outrageous accusation. The simple answer is: no.

### **Ministers statements: road infrastructure employment**

**Mr DONNELLAN** (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — It is very much a pleasure to update the house on the jobs bonanza — the joy of jobs on this side of the house — from the mammoth investment we are making in road infrastructure. Let us be very clear: this is a story across the whole state. This is not a story just for the centre of Melbourne; this is a story of joy across the whole state. Whether it be the M80, whether it be Thompsons Road, whether it be Princes Highway east, whether it be Princes Highway west, it is a jobs bonanza.

You only have to look at the figures, because over the two and a half years we have been in, we have seen 246 000 jobs created. Compare that to the last lot in their four years: only 97 000. What we know is that the growth rate under the last lot in 2013–14 was only 0.8 per cent. They could not even get it up to a full per cent! What a hopeless pack of nib nabs. The slow hand of death had its fingers around the throat of the Victorian economy because they just did not care about jobs. But that is very much something we have had a particular focus on because that is our main occupation.

We know that for the last lot there would not be a bob-a-job award. At the end of the day, if they came to my front door, I would have to say, ‘I couldn’t give you a job; you’re not up to it. You’re simply not up to it’ — because 0.8 per cent simply is not good enough. We know what the Victorian public thought of that. They said, ‘Go on your way. Get out of the house. You’re no good. You’re simply not up to the job’.

### **CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS**

**Mr Watt** — On a point of order, Speaker, on 25 May I asked a very direct question of the Minister for Police about when was the last time anybody could walk into the Burwood police station and speak to a police officer. While I acknowledge that the time has not elapsed, I am extremely concerned, given that the minister said yesterday in this house that she has not been asked a single question since, I think she said,

October. My concern and my point of order is that I wonder whether the minister had received or understood that I have actually asked that question and whether you could chase up whether I am actually going to get a response, since I did ask a question almost a month ago and the minister seems to believe that no question has been asked of her about police for the entirety of this year.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I thank the member for his point of order. Unfortunately I cannot follow up matters until they reach the period set out in the standing and sessional orders.

### **Caulfield electorate**

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) — (12 860) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. Balaclava is a diverse community, which makes it a unique and exciting area to visit and to work in, particularly Carlisle Street. However, Port Phillip council has a by-law permitting alcohol to be consumed in public on Carlisle Street, posing a risk to the safety of pedestrians, shoppers and businesses in the area due to the number of intoxicated people. My question is: what are you doing to fix the crimes associated with public drinking on Carlisle Street?

I understand that police feel limited in their powers to do anything and are stretched with their resources. There are numerous occasions of bashings on the street. Certainly residents do not feel safe, and shop owners really do not know what to do with this situation. I have a petition signed by 820 residents, shoppers and businesses who are scared for their safety because of intoxicated people roaming Carlisle Street, who shoplift, trespass and act indecently.

### **Yuroke electorate**

**Ms SPENCE** (Yuroke) — (12 861) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects, and I ask: what job opportunities are available on the Mernda rail extension project and the level crossing removal projects in the northern suburbs, and how can residents in the Yuroke electorate access these opportunities? As Yuroke residents have learned more about these projects, many have asked me how they can get involved and what employment opportunities might be available. I know that Yuroke residents would appreciate this advice from the minister, and I thank her for the great work she is doing to improve services and safety in the northern suburbs.

### Gippsland South electorate

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** (Gippsland South) — (12 862) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and it relates to the apparent Gippsland rail upgrade. My question to the minister is: is the Sale stabling project included in stage 2 of the Gippsland rail upgrade, which has otherwise been referred to as the Avon River bridge replacement? The government has made announcements with zero funding and sent the entire invoice for this Gippsland rail upgrade, which is vitally needed, to the commonwealth government. It is widely understood, including through a Gippsland Local Government Network report, that the cost of the Avon River bridge replacement is only about \$25 million, and yet the government has allocated some \$95 million. I am seeking to find out whether train stabling at Sale, which was referenced in the network development plan, is in fact included in any of the projects the government is proposing for the Gippsland line.

### Broadmeadows electorate

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) — (12 863) My constituency question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. The information I seek is: how much of the money from gaming raised in the City of Hume and the electorate of Broadmeadows is reinvested in these communities?

### Rowville electorate

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) — (12 864) The constituency question I wish to raise is for the Minister for Emergency Services. Minister, my electorate contains both integrated and fully volunteer stations at Rowville and Scoresby. Volunteer and paid firefighters at Scoresby and Rowville attend a large number of call-outs per year to incidents including car accidents and chemical spills on EastLink and tip fires at the nearby council tip. Minister, can you explain to these firefighters who have attended many of these jobs side by side, under the same conditions, why paid firefighters who develop cancer will have access to presumptive legislation yet volunteers will be discriminated against and have to jump through hoops to prove their medical claims for assistance before a panel?

### Dandenong electorate

**Ms WILLIAMS** (Dandenong) — (12 865) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask the minister: how will the works being completed at the connection of Frankston-Dandenong Road and Swift Way improve road safety at this busy intersection? Dandenong South

is home to the largest manufacturing precinct in Australia, and the surrounding roads are heavily used by industry transporting goods and by workers getting to and from work each day. The Frankston-Dandenong Road and Swift Way juncture is a busy intersection, and particularly so during peak periods. There have been a number of crashes and near misses at this intersection involving vehicles turning right when exiting Swift Way. A project began earlier this year to improve road safety at this intersection, and works are due to be completed this week. Would the minister please advise how these works will improve safety for road users at this intersection?

### Evelyn electorate

**Mrs FYFFE** (Evelyn) — (12 866) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. A constituent has once again brought an issue to my attention relating to the movement of traffic in and out of a school and its effect on the safety of all road users. Clegg Road is becoming increasingly congested following a steady rise in the local school population of St Mary's Catholic Primary School and the number of parents driving children to school. Traffic banks up behind vehicles turning right from Clegg Road into the school grounds. The volume of traffic on Clegg Road has also increased; this and the narrowness of the single lane and unsealed shoulders compound the problem. I ask the minister: has he received any advice from VicRoads investigating the best means of improving local traffic flows along Clegg Road to ease the school hours congestion and improve safety for road users?

### Yan Yean electorate

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — (12 867) My constituency question is to the Minister for Sport, and I ask: what support is the Andrews government providing to women's sport in the Shire of Nillumbik? In particular, what opportunities exist for financial support from the state government to council, the clubs and leagues themselves to provide for planning and ultimately construction of more female-friendly facilities? The participation of women and girls is going gangbusters across Nillumbik, so more facilities are desperately needed at venues such as Diamond Creek Force Netball Association and the Hurstbridge Football Netball Club.

### Sandringham electorate

**Mr THOMPSON** (Sandringham) — (12 868) My constituency question is to the Minister for Finance. I refer the minister to the former Gas and Fuel site in Hightett, and a proposed amendment to the Kingston

planning scheme to introduce a development plan overlay that affects the site, and I ask: will there be community consultation regarding public open space, height limits, on-site car parking and vegetation setback on the Nepean Highway side of the corridor and any other matters affecting the local community?

### Ivanhoe electorate

**Mr CARBINES** (Ivanhoe) — (12 869) My constituency question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. Families in my electorate of Ivanhoe deserve to be treated with respect and equality, and that absolutely includes school children who have autism who are on the spectrum. Following the disgraceful, hurtful and ignorant comments yesterday from Senator Pauline Hanson regarding the education of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and the tabling today by the member for Bendigo West of the Family and Community Development Committee's report on services for people with ASD, what is the Victorian government doing to provide services to and promote inclusion for people with ASD in my electorate, not just in education but in our community?

Can I also say that my mother taught for many years at the Niddrie campus of Western Autistic School. She did a very fine job there with the many families and dedicated teachers and support staff. I look forward to an answer from the minister in regard to these matters and certainly putting the lie to and striking out those disgraceful comments from Senator Hanson.

**Mr Watt** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker Spence, with regard to your constituency question. On page 150 of *Rulings from the Chair*, December 2016 — and I had not anticipated that you would be sitting in the chair but nonetheless — under 'Type of information sought' it says:

Should not seek information readily available.

You may have a different recollection of what you asked for, Acting Speaker, but my recollection of what you asked for was information about where people can go to get information about jobs on the Mernda rail extension project. I can give you that answer: on your Facebook page yesterday. You posted about it yesterday on your Facebook page, so clearly the information is readily available and your question should be ruled out of order. I would not necessarily expect you to rule your own question out of order, but I would ask you to get the Speaker to rule on this because you asked a question about a post you put up yesterday.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Spence)** — Order! You have made your point. The reasonable thing for

me to do is refer this matter to the Speaker, and I am sure he will get back to you.

## LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

### *Second reading*

#### Debate resumed.

**Mr GIDLEY** (Mount Waverley) — I was making my contribution to the bill before the house earlier, and I just make the point again that this government continues to make life harder for residents, harder for families and harder for small and medium-sized businesses with their massive increases in land tax revenue and their massive increases in stamp duty revenue in relation to land. This also flows directly through to the cost of goods and services, which increases the cost of living. I ask this government to please for once just consider when you are undertaking your massive tax grab and when you are increasing land tax revenue and stamp duty revenue the way you are, you are hurting people. You are hurting residents in my district. I have mentioned this in the house before and I have asked the government, on behalf of residents in my district who have property, to please stop the cash grab. I again restate that view to the house.

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. As previous speakers have indicated, it has been a wide-ranging debate, and there have been a number of issues encapsulated in the bill that is before the house. I was quite interested in the fact that in many ways the bill seems to point to the transition that is underway in our society, in our community and in the broader economy. I note that the bill will deliver on our commitment to transferring some of the land that was previously used for mining for the Anglesea power station into the Great Otway National Park.

I seem to recall that the Great Otway National Park was created as part of an election commitment by the Bracks government. I think it might have been in 2002, or it could possibly have been 2006. The bill transfers 6420 hectares of land that was previously mined by Alcoa to this national park. I think this symbolises the transition of the economy and the community we are living in. I think it was back in about 1955 that brown coal was discovered on this site, and mining commenced back in 1959 through an open-cut mine. That was just used I think for local consumption. It was not until 1969 that a 150-megawatt brown coal-fired power station, which was probably almost used as a peaker plant, was commissioned. That produced 40 per

cent of the power requirements for the Port Henry smelter. The mining of that site was originally carried out by the Western Mining Corporation.

A 150-megawatt power plant is relatively small in the scheme of things. If you compare that to some of the larger baseload coal-fired power stations in the valley, they are up around 1000 megawatt-hours; this was 150 megawatts. It was going through about 1.1 million tonnes per annum and churning through about 144 tonnes per hour when it was in operation, so it was not a particularly large coal-fired power station. In preparing for this debate what I looked at was the number of brown coal-fired power stations that have been decommissioned in Victoria, and the number to date is 17. This is the fourth-largest power plant to have been decommissioned, and it occurred relatively recently. Three of the four largest brown coal-fired power stations have been decommissioned in the last three years.

Clearly we are transitioning from having a heavy reliance on baseload and intermediate peaking brown coal-fired power stations to cleaner energy, and as part of that we are seeing land which would have been mined as part of an open-cut mine being transferred into a national park, to build on the work that has been previously conducted in terms of the establishment of the Great Otway National Park. You would assume that job creation would occur as part of that, as tourism and associated industries down in this community start to grow and prosper. The reality is that you are more likely to have people wanting to visit a national park than an open-cut brown coal mine.

This is about recognising that the economy is changing and that we are transitioning. Partly that is due to policy, and partly that is just due to the fact that the economy is changing. I think the Minerals Council of Australia has talked about trying to get governments to be the owner, the builder or the lender of last resort for baseload coal-fired power stations, but the reality is that the private sector and private institutions are unlikely to loan money to establish a baseload coal-fired power station because of the uncertainty of the environment and the fact that there is a high risk that you would end up having a stranded asset and that the debt could not be serviced. So a range of factors are in play, but I think in some respects when we look at a bill like this, we are looking at the transition that is underway.

The bill covers off on a range of issues. One area that I found quite interesting is that in terms of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, the appointment of the director of the botanic gardens will no longer be a Governor in

Council appointment but will be a Royal Botanic Gardens board appointment.

I was down at the gardens recently at an event representing the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The event was about public housing tenants who have pride in their gardens. We were looking at a whole range of public housing tenants who had a range of gardens that they were quite proud of. The event was in one of the old buildings, and near the buildings there is a species of plant called Wollemi pine. Its Latin name is *Wollemia nobilis*, and it is a dinosaur tree. It was discovered in 1994, I think north of Newcastle in a very tiny valley. It is one of the last surviving species of plants from the prehistoric period. When you look at it you know it is different; the leaves are different, and it is quite tall. It is extraordinary when you think that white people have been populating that area since 1788, yet it was only in 1994 that it was realised that it was there. So this species was discovered well over 200 years after European settlement.

There has been wideranging discussion too about Sir Robert Torrens and the Torrens land title system. Sir Robert Torrens was the third Premier of South Australia, and despite sustained opposition from particularly the legal fraternity, Torrens pushed through the Real Property Act 1858, which established the Torrens system of title. That is something that he subsequently encouraged the Victorian government to embark upon, and it has now had a profound impact internationally. That has been a really good outcome that I think as a nation we should be very proud of.

I note the member for Box Hill's contribution yesterday, although I was in and out for different parts of it. I did gently interject when the member was on his feet indicating that he was Alan Stockdale's handmaiden. I think that was the term I used, because he was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer at the time when the great privatisation binge was occurring.

Just in response to some of the issues canvassed by the member for Box Hill and other speakers, it is an interesting conundrum in one respect, because when you have got a public asset, you have to get the balance right in establishing whether there is a compelling reason why that should remain in public ownership — and if you reach the conclusion that it could easily be utilised by the public sector as opposed to the private sector, so there is no compelling reason why the state should be owning that asset — and you decide that you are going to embark upon the divestment of that asset, you have to work out: do you bulk it up, do you corporatise the asset to maximise its sale price so the taxpayers get a very good return on that asset or do you

turn around and just basically throw it over to the private sector without realising the value of that asset? A case in point would be, for example, if you look at CSL. It was floated at a price of \$.80 and it is now \$135 a share.

**Mr Gidley** interjected.

**Mr PEARSON** — It requires a great deal of thoughtful, measured and considered consultation, which the member for Mount Waverley is incapable of ever being able to achieve, because he is just lazy. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr McCURDY** (Ovens Valley) — I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. The member for Essendon has just comprehensively confirmed what our thoughts are, which are that this bill is about selling off the land titles office — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Spence)** — Order! I cannot hear the member for Ovens Valley.

**Mr McCURDY** — Thank you, Acting Speaker. I appreciate your cover and assistance. As I was saying, the member for Essendon has certainly confirmed our thoughts that this is clearly about trying to fatten up the pig for market day, making sure that the land titles office is being prepared for sale. We can certainly discuss the merits of why that needs to take place, some of the failings of this government as to the economic shortfalls and why they need to sell off assets where possible.

I will not go into too much detail on the bill because I know the member for Box Hill covered it extremely well and very comprehensively in his contribution. We know the main purposes are to amend the Transfer of Land Act 1958 in relation to the conversion of general law land and recordings in the register of land. The bill also amends the Subdivision Act 1988 in relation to owners corporations and the registration of plans. Finally, it amends the Valuation of Land Act 1960 in relation to the provision of releasable information from the valuation record.

This bill affects obviously land and land transfers, which goes to the very heart of the great Australian dream. Everybody who seeks or who has already purchased a house or a home certainly will have come into contact with the Transfer of Land Act and the associated issues that go with it. It is important when we debate these bills that any changes that are made are appropriate, because they affect many, many people in

the community and underpin the economic drivers of our community in the sale of land.

The bill, as I said, amends the Transfer of Land Act to amend the provisions relating to the conversion of general law land into land under the operation of the Transfer of Land Act. It will amend the Transfer of Land Act to better reflect the processes associated with registering plans under the Subdivision Act. I look at subdivisions that are going ahead in my patch, and certainly those in Yarrowonga and Wangaratta are important economic drivers.

As you would know, Acting Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition recently launched our population policy task force booklet showing why we should be moving people to the regions. One of those benefits in the regions is affordable housing. The Victorian Population Policy Taskforce interim report demonstrates that there are many, many benefits in moving people to the regions or giving them opportunities to come to the regions. Our planning and our subdivisions are all part of that.

Other changes will enable the registrar to make vesting orders when the purchaser of a property cannot provide proof of payment but the Register of Titles is otherwise satisfied there is an entitlement to a vesting order. That will amend section 52 so that a court order against land can be removed from the register of land upon application to the Register of Titles. That is another part of the bill.

The bill also amends the Subdivision Act 1998 to remove the requirement for some owners corporation information to be provided in a separate document. Again, it will clarify the definitions of limited owners corporations and unlimited owners corporations. While it provides clarity and flexibility to the provisions relating to the easements implied under the Subdivision Act, it will also make numerous miscellaneous amendments to the Valuation of Land Act to enable the provision of releasable information from the valuation record in the same way.

We do have some concerns, and they were noted by the member for Box Hill. General law land is the system of land ownership that precedes or predates the Torrens system of title by registration of estates and interests in land. In this system title to land is shown through demonstrating a chain of dealings in land from the current owner back to the original grant from the grant from the Crown. Compulsory conversion of general law land may lead to disputes over land boundaries. While conversions can take place at the moment on a voluntary basis if required, my understanding is that

about 10 000 currently undisputed land titles will change. That is an issue we need to be mindful of.

The rationale for ending general law land title is supposed to promote greater efficiency in the conveyancing process, and let us hope that is the case in this area. But from my perspective, this and other changes are also being driven by the government's desire to maximise the sale price of the land titles office, as we have heard from contributions of members on the other side. Sometimes we need to look past the legislation and understand the actual motive behind the legislation. Once we know what that motive is, we can all be clear that we are all in the same place and we can understand and agree on the eventual finishing point. As has been mentioned, we are not opposing this legislation, but we are mindful of where the legislation is heading.

Land transfer is an important part of our economy, as is our ability to borrow money to own or to change land. Obviously when we make changes to section 32s, otherwise known as vendor statements, we need to be very careful in terms of how that will affect the transfer of land because that is something that most people in the community come into contact with sometime in their life in some form or fashion. If the ultimate goal of this bill is to sell off the land titles office, we need to be sure that the costs to the consumers or the ease of the transfer will not change if the land titles office is privatised. Again I say if that is the ultimate goal, that is where we need scrutiny and transparency.

For a Premier who said there would be no need new taxes or no increases in taxes, we are also seeing a taxing on off-the-plan units, which will begin on 1 July and which is a great concern for people right throughout Victoria. Certainly it is a major impost for new entrants, people who cannot get the money together to put a deposit down on a house as such but can put a deposit down on an off-the-plan unit. That will get very expensive in terms of stamp duty from the coming financial year onwards. That is a tax all Victorians will have to absorb. I think that will effectively put up the price for first home buyers as well. I look at the smoke and mirrors, and I see on the one hand that they are handing out money for first home buyers but at the same time making it difficult by adding stamp duty to off-the-plan property.

I will conclude my comments there. As I said, we are not opposing the bill or the complete motivation of the bill. We just need to look a little deeper through it to make sure the winners and losers will understand what the situation is as we move through this legislation and

any subsequent legislation that might come as a result of this bill.

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) — I would like to make clear to the house that this bill is not about the land titles office scoping study. It is about cutting red tape, making legislation easier to understand and making information more accessible to the public. Put bluntly, this bill has nothing to do with the scoping study to consider commercialising functions of the land titles office.

This bill is about tidying up older parts of the land administrative system to align with contemporary practices. These changes are overdue and need to occur. Everyday land transactions are up-to-date with better technology and national standards. This is about cutting unnecessary red tape and keeping our economy running smoothly. Some opposite seem to think it is a bad idea to improve an outdated system, therefore it is necessary to point out that these changes were required when the coalition was in government, but ignored during two years of a do-little administration and then two years of chaos. That is what happened. That is the inconvenient truth.

**Mr Gidley** interjected.

**Mr McGUIRE** — It does not matter that the member for Mount Waverley wants to dispute that on his way out the door. That is the reality. Let us look at what is happening here. The Andrews government has announced a scoping study to consider commercialising functions of the land titles office, part of Labor's promise to Victorians to get better value for money and better money out of our public assets. Let us make sure we understand the difference between this proposition and what this bill is about.

On the conversion of general law land, the general law register of land closed in 1999. Land Use Victoria has been working with banks, councils and government agencies to convert general law land. This process involves Land Use Victoria matching ownership details held in the general law register with ownership records held by councils — the ratepayer records — or the banks, which have the mortgage details. Where the ownership details match, the land is converted. If the ownership details do not match, the land is not converted and further investigation is undertaken. I am informed that about 6500 parcels have been converted in this way and there have been no issues raised.

As the title created under this process remains provisional for 15 years, a person with a competing interest may challenge the landowner's claim to that

parcel. The conversion of general law land will give the landowner greater security of title, and that is a critical proposition. Land under the Transfer of Land Act 1958 attracts the state's guarantee of title. This will be a significant improvement to the landowner's title. Conversion will lead to efficiencies in title searching and conveyancing. Once converted there is no need to interpret general law deeds in relation to a parcel of land.

The next proposition deals with restrictive covenants. The Law Institute of Victoria is consulting with stakeholders on proposals to streamline the process for the register of titles receiving the content of a restrictive covenant, and not the law relating to restrictive covenants. The issues raised are currently being considered together with those of other stakeholders. So that is the way this is being pursued.

Just on issues raised concerning clause 25: clause 25 amends section 59 of the Transfer of Land Act 1958 to simplify the process for people who have land vested in them by statute or court order. Section 59 of the Transfer of Land Act 1958 currently requires the registered proprietor to provide a transfer to the person in whom the land is vested. This is a time-consuming process, incurs costs and seems unnecessary, as the vesting has occurred by operation of legislation or a court order.

The matter regarding rights of way and the discontinuance of roads, which was raised by the member for Box Hill, does not relate to the acts being amended in this bill. I want to put that on the record. That is the advice I have been given, to clarify that point for the opposition. The government is always looking for ways to streamline and improve processes, so these suggestions will be referred to the relevant ministers.

In summing up, what we are looking at here is a bill that promotes greater efficiency in the conveyancing process. It will enable the register of titles to more effectively maintain the register of land. It will improve the processes for registering plans of subdivisions and provisions of owners corporation information and enable greater public access to valuation data. So the bill simplifies the process for registering changes in proprietorship due to the vesting of land by legislation or court orders. It enables the register to make vesting orders in some circumstances where proof of payment cannot be provided and the limitation of action period has expired.

The bill removes the requirement to lodge caveator's consents with the registrar, inserts a new section

providing for the recording of a notice of statutory changes and inserts a new section providing for the recording of applications made under other acts. The bill allows for the removal of mortgages when proof of payment cannot be provided and the limitation of actions period has expired, and provides for the removal of warrants with a judgement creditor's consent.

The bill clarifies that where the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal — VCAT — has jurisdiction and makes an order, the order can be used to support an application relating to caveats under the Transfer of Land Act 1958. The bill permits priority notices to be extended once and clarifies provisions inconsistent with national electronic conveyancing. The bill introduces other measures to enable the registrar to maintain the register and ensure the Transfer of Land Act 1958 reflects current office practice. The bill also amends the Subdivision Act 1988 to improve the registration of subdivision plans and provision of information relating to owners corporations. The bill also clarifies various aspects of that act.

The bill amends the Valuation of Land Act 1960 to provide statewide valuation information to the public in line with government policy on information accessibility. To put it in context, Victoria's system of land administration is highly effective in ensuring dealings in land are reflected on the register, and I have hopefully provided enough detail for the opposition to conceptually understand the true meaning and proposition behind this bill.

The bill makes a number of changes to both the Transfer of Land Act 1958 and Subdivision Act 1988 that will better enable the registrar to maintain the register. The bill introduces measures that will enable the registrar to bring general law land under the Transfer of Land Act 1958. This will provide better title for landowners, facilitate electronic conveyancing and assist in better maintenance of a register that reflects the ownership of land in Victoria. That is a key proposition. The valuer-general collects valuation information under the Valuation of Land Act 1960. The bill enables provision of statewide valuation information to the public in line with government policy on information accessibility.

In closing I hope that level of detail addresses the issues, concerns and some of the misinformation that has been raised so we have clarity on the intent of the legislation. I have gone into some detail to address issues that have been raised by the opposition and they will be passed on to the minister and advisers for further consideration, particularly where there are issues

that have been raised in the public interest. I recommend the bill to the house.

**Ms SHEED** (Shepparton) — I rise to make a contribution on the Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. This bill encompasses amendments to the Transfer of Land Act 1958, the Subdivision Act 1988 and the Valuation of Land Act 1960. The bill states as its purpose that it intends to promote greater efficiency in the conveyancing process and enable the register of land to be more effectively maintained, as well as improve the efficiency of the process for registering subdivision plans and enable valuation information to be accessed by the public in the same manner as property sales information is currently made available.

Acting Speaker, you could seriously think that this was a deadly boring topic, and there would be many people out there who would have always seen conveyancing as one of the most dreary and boring areas of law to practise in, but let me tell you: property law can be fascinating. There is a lot of complexity in property law, and a lot of these changes that are being initiated in here are such that I think there will be some people sad about it. I am talking about, for instance, the transfer of all our general law land into the Torrens title system. In my very early days of practice I had the great misfortune of having a conveyance handed to me where it was general law land. I can tell you it is a young lawyer's nightmare — to have to put together that chain of title and show that every step and every document is there can be really very difficult. In reality, for many legal practitioners out there the streamlining of the remainder of all that land that is still under general law into the system of Torrens title will be very welcome.

The history of the Torrens title system is interesting. It was Robert Torrens, who was the third Premier of South Australia, who initiated this system, no doubt with considerable opposition at the time. It is a system that was revolutionary at the time, and there is no doubt that it has led to a much more efficient system of recording land. The system was adopted throughout Australia over time and also in New Zealand. Subsequently it spread across the world, so countries now using the system include England, Wales, Ireland, Malaysia, Singapore, Iran, Canada and Madagascar.

There are three fundamental principles that the Torrens title system works on. The first is an acceptance that the land titles register accurately and completely reflects the current ownership of and interests about a person's land. Secondly, because the land titles register contains all the information about a person's land, it means that ownership and other interests do not have to be proved by long and complicated documents such as title deeds.

Thirdly, the government guarantee provides for compensation to a person who suffers loss of land or a registered interest. It is my understanding that this bill in no way impacts on those three fundamental principles of the existing Torrens title system.

I would like to refer to just a few of the amendments that are being made in this bill. I have already said that the bringing of general law land under the Torrens system is important. General law land predates the Torrens system. It is complex in that you do have to show every step in the chain of title from when that land was granted to someone from the Crown, so you can go back a very long time. I think it is welcome also that the registrar of land will be undertaking much of this work. My understanding previously was that it was the owner of land that instigated that step in converting that land from general law land to Torrens title land and that it was an expensive process. My understanding of this legislation is that the registrar of titles will now engage in that process and bring about the incorporation of all of that general law land under the one system.

I think it is fair to say that it might put a few people out of jobs in that there are just a few people out there, very few I dare to say, who still know how to do a search of the general law register. They were very few and far between in my later years of practice, but it was a very specialised skill, and it was hard to find someone who could do that.

I recall feeling disappointed when I read an article in the *Age* last year that said the big four banks were destroying their paper titles. The registrar of titles declared in a notice in the *Victoria Government Gazette* that paper-based titles would be void and of no effect from 22 October 2016. That system, I understand, is up and operating. The Law Institute of Victoria was an outspoken critic of that, arguing that it would increase costs, undermine those holding titles for security against other assets and add complexity and legal uncertainty to what was once a simple, safe system. But there has been a national push towards electronic conveyancing, and it does seem to be a fact of life. Much of this legislation and the amendments around it recognise the onset of that technological change and the way things are now happening.

The old paper titles were a source of rich history. For those of you who ever saw the old title to your home before the new titles were issued just on a single sheet of paper, you could go back such a long way and identify who all the previous owners of the land had been before you, how many mortgages they had, how many caveats had been lodged and whether they were

deceased estates. It was really quite a rich and interesting history, and we will lose not only that historical context with this new system but also that expertise that existed within that area of law.

It is interesting how incredibly important home ownership is to people in Australia in particular, and there has been so much publicity around the concern about the ability to own your own home in the future. It certainly struck me today, sitting here when the Aboriginal elders were here and recognising the importance of land to our Aboriginal forebears and Aboriginal people of today too. Land is something to which we all attach ourselves very significantly, and whoever you are and whatever your background is, it has always been something that in some ways is sacrosanct, so the land titles system is a really important system to have, and its integrity must be maintained.

I think there is some anxiety associated with this current discussion around, first of all, the technology associated with electronic conveyancing and the like but also the possibility of the land titles office being sold. The land titles office is a money-making enterprise as it stands. I do not believe it is the sort of body that should be sold. I think we are getting to a position with so many of our state assets that are being sold off that we soon will wonder what we have left in the coffers. The land titles office is a government organisation that is fundamental in that it collects and maintains all information about all land in Australia, and in our case we are talking about Victoria.

To see that fall into other hands that are seriously concerned about profit making as opposed to providing a service remains a worry to me, as similarly does the sale of the Snowy — something else that is being considered at the moment in relation to providing more energy resources in Australia. Victoria owns a part of the Snowy scheme. The Snowy scheme is essential to that part of my electorate that relies so heavily on irrigation, so we will want to see a lot more detail about how that might play out as time goes on.

The bill makes many other amendments to the Transfer of Land Act 1958, and they are all designed to simplify and streamline registration requirements in relation to things like the removal of mortgages, caveats and priority notices along with many other amendments. It also amends the Subdivision Act 1988 to clarify a number of matters there, but it does not make any particular changes to the nature of our system. I have said what I wanted to say in relation to what some have accused this bill of — as having an underlying intention of fattening the calf for sale. It is not clear to me whether that is the case. I understand that this bill is

probably more technical than that. It may well improve the operations of the land titles office and make it more attractive. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr HOWARD** (Buninyong) — I am pleased to add my comments in regard to the Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 before the house. It is interesting to follow the member for Shepparton, who has dealt with this matter from the perspective of doing the conveyancing herself over the years and following through issues from that point of view. As other speakers have said, this bill clearly is aimed at simplifying a number of issues associated with the transfer of land titles and conveyancing matters, and it does so in a range of ways. I think all of the changes are highly commendable and just sensible.

With regard to the first change, it is simply a matter of aligning the way transfer of land works with other jurisdictions. When priority notices are issued in Victoria they are issued for 60 days. We are simply changing that to 90 days to work in conjunction with other states in a nationally agreed arrangement, which is always a good approach — the more we can operate with a national perspective, the better.

But the other changes really recognise that over a long period of time the titles office has recognised we are now in a digital age. All of that slow work that used to take place where people had to physically go into the titles office, had to physically find titles and undertake a whole lot of the work by carrying papers up and down the highway — as they would if they were coming from Shepparton or from Ballarat or whatever — now they can do it all simply by sitting at their laptop or at their computer. So much of this work is made so much easier. It has been fantastic to see how conveyancing has changed over the years to be so much more responsive to people's needs and so much more practical in the way it is carried out.

I myself have in the past done some of my own conveyancing when I bought my first house in Ballarat in 1983. I paid \$24 000 for my first house, and when I tell people about that — it does not seem that long ago to me — people are shocked and amazed. They say, 'How did you do it?' But that was the situation then. I was very pleased that only a few years later it seemed to double in value, and prices in Ballarat have continued to go up, which is good if you are selling but not so good if you are buying. My last house cost considerably more than \$24 000, as people would imagine.

At that time the particular house that I bought was in fact not even on privately owned land; it was still on Crown land. With that title I owned the house but not

the land below it. The titles office and the government at the time recognised that there were a lot of miners cottages that were still on Crown land, on a right-to-occupy basis, so the land was effectively rented for long periods of time. The government at that stage set in place a process of allowing the person who had the house to buy the land associated with it over a long period of time. You could buy it back over a 20-year period. I think I was paying about \$15 every half year or something to buy back my land until I decided that that was ridiculous and that I should pay it all back at once and feel I owned the land that my house was on at the same time. It meant that the transfer of land was a little complicated, but I still went down to the titles office in Melbourne and did the dealings at that end and then followed up the paperwork when I returned home. It was good to get an appreciation of what conveyancers need to do to transfer land.

More recently, though, I bought the farm that I still own out near Waubra — wind farm territory to the north of Ballarat — and that particular house, built in the 1850s or around 1860, of course was on general law title, so when I bought that land I did rely upon a lawyer to do the conveyancing for me. It was delightful after I purchased the house to have all of those documents that showed the chain of title back to the first owner in the 1860s and to see the transfers since. They are beautiful documents to hold and to look over. The style of the writing from the 19th century and so on is very special. But it is impractical, as we know, and if you lose one of those documents it causes great difficulty in demonstrating the continuation of the chain of title. It is clearly sensible to do away with those general law titles and convert them into Torrens titles.

The member for Shepparton mentioned, though, how sad it is when your titles are on only a single sheet in the new system and that you lose some of that sense of history in that documentation, which is true. However, the other benefit of the digitisation of the modern system and of finding things through the internet and so on is that this information can still be made available and in fact be made available more easily. Yes, you might not get the physical documents to see the history of the ownership of the land that you happen to own, or the house that you happen to own, but you will be able to continue enjoying looking back over the history of your home via the internet, and all of that information will in fact be more easily obtained.

There are lots of sensible changes being made here. There are changes that help to improve customer service, recognising that more things can be provided electronically, like the issue of caveator's consent so that anyone who has a caveat on a title is notified that

there is an exchange proposed on that land, and they then need to indicate that their issues have been resolved. Up until now that has to have been done on paper and signed, and therefore it takes more time for that person to be chased down and for that physical letter to be transferred back to the titles office. Now that will be able to be done electronically.

There are a whole lot of things we are recognising that can be done electronically and should be done electronically to speed up the system and to ensure that there are none of those frustrations and those hiccups that have taken place in the past when papers have been physically lost or have taken time to get through the snail mail system to the titles office and back again. These are all very sensible changes, as previous members have said. They recognise the new age and our ability to use electronic transfers and the IT world to pass information back and forward. We do not need physical paperwork; we just need to be confident that the information that is held at the titles office is correct and that conveyancers can then work effectively from that.

I clearly commend the changes that are before the house. They are all sensible changes that are user friendly and are going to benefit people who are purchasing or selling land by enabling transactions to take place quickly and efficiently. They are all designed to be sound and just respond to new opportunities in the titles office as they have identified them. Some people want to see sinister reasons for making these changes. Clearly there are no sinister reasons. The only reasons are to see that we can take advantage of opportunities, listen to feedback that we get from people who are interacting with the titles office, as they need to do on a very regular basis, and respond appropriately to streamline the system as much as possible to bring it into line with other states in Australia and to allow for flexibility where that might need to happen.

I certainly commend the bill before the house. It will make people who are working in this area and doing conveyancing happier that the system is going to work more conveniently for them, and certainly for people who are purchasing or selling land it will make for a more efficient system. I trust this bill will move through both houses quickly and be enacted, and those who are buying and selling land in the future will be the beneficiaries.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr WELLS (Rowville).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## BUDGET PAPERS 2017–18

### Debate resumed from 7 June; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport):

That this house takes note of the 2017–2018 budget papers.

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) — I rise to join the debate on the motion that the house takes note of the 2017–18 budget papers. All budgets should be based on honesty and integrity, and the budget papers should be a set of financial accounts that every single Victorian can trust and rely on. The problem is that when you make a number of claims running into an election about how you will conduct yourself, people take note, and obviously one of those issues around budget papers is that when people, whether they be industry, commerce groups, students or university lecturers, read them they expect that what is in the budget papers are commentary and numbers that we can actually trust.

What I want to do is just look at the lead-up to the election and the way the Andrews government was elected and how it impacts on this budget. I know it has been mentioned in this house a number of times, but on 28 November 2014 — so just a couple of days out from the election — Peter Mitchell from Channel 7 asked this question:

Daniel Andrews, all the polls say you will be Victoria's next Premier. If you are do you promise Victorians here tonight that you will not increase taxes or introduce any new taxes?

The Leader of the Opposition at the time, now Premier, said:

I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian.

That is, that there will be no new taxes or higher taxes.

On 19 November, when interviewed at the Sky News election forum, David Speers asked:

So, any higher taxes, levies?

The member for Mulgrave said:

Absolutely not ...

So it was not a maybe, could be, should be; 'Absolutely not' was the response.

On 6 November 2014, it was reported in the *Herald Sun*:

Opposition leader Daniel Andrews said yesterday Labor would reveal its full costings before the election, and said he had 'no plans' to increase fees and fines.

On 5 November it was reported:

Mr Andrews ruled out increasing state taxes or household fees and charges to fund Labor's promises.

That was on ABC News, under the heading 'Victoria election 2014: Labor to build new schools, change state's number plate slogan'.

So we were told, we were assured, we were promised, that there would be no new taxes or higher taxes. When you compare that to what has actually happened, the facts, and when you look at the 2017–18 budget, there are significant numbers of increased or new taxes. For example, we have the energy tax on coal royalties; the taxi and Uber tax; the land tax surcharge for absentee owners introduced at 0.5 per cent and then increased to 1.5 per cent; the stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers introduced at 3 per cent and then increased to 7 per cent; a significant increase in the fire services property levy; the increase in stamp duty on new cars; new stamp duties on off-the-plan purchases; new stamp duties on property transfers between spouses; and new annual property valuations to increase land tax. We have seen the significant impact of some of these taxes.

I know the government is very keen to say the energy tax on coal royalties was fair, but one of the reasons for having an energy tax on coal royalties obviously was the closing down of Hazelwood in the Latrobe Valley. We had a farcical situation in question time today when the Minister for Industry and Employment was asked how many of those 750 people who lost their jobs because of Hazelwood closing down now have new jobs. You would have thought the minister would have had a very quick, sharp answer. But unfortunately he did not have the answer, and of course we can only assume that the answer is 'Not many'.

Regarding the new annual property valuations to increase land tax, we still really do not understand how much it will cost to value on a yearly basis rather than every second year. We have had about \$1.4 billion over four years in new taxes and increased taxes — \$1.4 billion.

I have great respect for the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF), but there are a couple of things that are bothering me about the way that the department has actually been implementing its accounting standards and guidelines. I will make a preliminary point first, and that is the Auditor-General made comments about the previous budget, and it is relevant to the point that I am going to make in regard to the Labor Party's commitment to increase funding for regional rail. Dr Peter Frost, the Acting Auditor-General, said:

On 4 November 2015 the Treasurer transmitted the annual financial report of the state of Victoria (the AFR) to

Parliament. This was 15 days after the date required by the Financial Management Act 1994 and reflects a difficult and challenging year in financial reporting for the public sector.

I signed my audit opinion on the AFR on 30 October 2015. The AFR received a modified audit opinion, containing two audit qualification matters.

For a Treasurer to put forward any document that has to be qualified by the Auditor-General means that the Auditor-General believes the accounts are outside the accounting standard or there is a mistake. This is what the Acting Auditor-General said:

Firstly, the AFR failed to record the state's obligation at 30 June 2015 to return \$1.5 billion in commonwealth government funding relating to the cancelled East–West Link project.

...

Omitting the obligation to return the East–West Link funding from the AFR has meant the reported results and the state's liquidity ratio are overstated. Consequently, the correct accounting treatment for this transaction reduces the net result from transactions for the general government sector. This means the state has not achieved its key financial measure of generating a net surplus from transactions of at least \$100 million.

So there was a rock-solid election commitment that there would be a surplus of at least \$100 million. The Auditor-General has criticised DTF and criticised the Treasurer for not sticking to the accounting standards and for including the \$1.5 billion for the east–west project which was given to it by the commonwealth government.

The context is that the DTF should be relying on best practice and must work within the accounting standards and guidelines. When that does not happen, you are going to get a qualification from the Auditor-General. The reason I raise this is because, although I know that this is not within the DTF's remit, when the government came out and announced a \$1.5 billion upgrade of Victoria's regional rail lines to great fanfare, and I quote:

Premier Daniel Andrews promised upgrades on every regional rail line as the centrepiece of its regional package in yesterday's state budget.

It includes \$435 million for the Gippsland line, \$110 million for a new Surf Coast rail project and \$100 million for the Warrambool line —

the problem was that the amount that was being offered by the state government was different to what was being offered by the federal government. In this article from the *Weekly Times* of 3 May, from which I have been quoting, it states:

Treasurer Scott Morrison previously offered \$877.4 million under the asset recycling program for the sale of the port of Melbourne — below the 15 per cent of the sale price promised under the scheme ...

This could have been boosted to at least \$1 billion in the following week's federal budget. So we have a situation where the state had assumed there was money available for regional rail and yet the federal government had quantified that by saying, 'No, it will not be \$1.5 billion'. The government had said something that it was not actually authorised to say. This is of great concern. When you are reading the budget papers and you are looking at the press releases, there is a significant difference between what is in the budget papers and what the expectation is in the press releases that are being put out. Regional Victoria quite rightly expected \$1.5 billion to upgrade regional rail lines. It did not happen. That is incredibly disappointing. Once again it puts the figures that DTF put together in contrast to the press releases that are being put out by the government.

I am always amused when the Minister for Public Transport gets up and makes comments about what we did and did not fund — we funded this and we did not fund that — when the previous Baillieu-Napthine government was in power. It is just interesting to go back a notch and compare what the previous Liberal-Nationals government did to what is actually happening now. When the previous Liberal-National Baillieu-Napthine government came to power, state government expenditure was growing at 7.3 per cent annually compared to the average increase in revenue of just 6.9 per cent. If you think about that, if you have expenditure travelling at 7.3 per cent and compare it to annual revenue growth of just 6.9 per cent, it means you are in an unsustainable situation and you are going backwards every single year.

Then we had the global financial crisis of 2008, and the federal Rudd Labor government pumped a lot of short-term stimulus money into the Brumby government. Of course when that came to a halt, then obviously the government was in a technical deficit situation. When you are in a technical deficit situation, if you do not have additional revenue or you have your expenses running at 7.3 per cent, you are going to have a significant problem.

When we came to government we had the revenue and the annual expenses being different by 0.4 per cent. That gave us an enormous financial problem. Then of course we had the writedown of GST and stamp duty of \$8.3 billion. So all the promises the Brumby Labor government made running into 2010, whether it was about police or whether it was other commitments they

made, were wiped out by the \$8.3 billion writedown in GST and stamp duty. There was no money for Victoria Police increases. Any money that was used to fund increases in Victoria Police was a result of decisions made by the Baillieu government in the 2011–12 budget. They were funded by savings and making very, very difficult decisions.

So when the Minister for Public Transport gets up and says, ‘The money was always left behind by the previous Brumby government to pay for the increases in police’, it is not right. It is just wrong. It is just blatantly incorrect, because the \$8.3 billion writedown of the GST and stamp duty over four years wiped out all of those election promises and funding that had been put aside. In regards to all of those promises, of course we had to deal with Myki, regional rail and the like.

I will speak briefly about the electorate of Rowville. I note that although the government is so keen to push forward with public transport, this does not extend to Rowville. There was not one cent of funding for the Rowville rail link. This is so important in such a growth area. For starters we just want to be able to reserve that land that the member for Ferntree Gully and I have worked so hard on, with a feasibility study and the planning phase. We want to be able to reserve that land, and we are going to make sure that in November 2018, when hopefully the Liberal-Nationals win that election, we will be able to reserve that land so it can only be used for public transport and we can start moving forward.

I note with great interest that none of the schools in the Rowville electorate received funding. Rowville Secondary College, Scoresby Secondary College, Rowville Primary School, Karoo Primary School, Heany Park Primary School — none of those schools received any funding, which is incredibly disappointing.

With the short time I have left, I note that we will need to watch the deficit. We also need to watch the rate of expenditure that the government is committing to because whilst there is a significant increase in stamp duty the government’s expenditure at the same time is rising very quickly, with a massive increase in areas where we do not see that frontline service — and that is what Victorians are looking for. When it comes to the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, we will be looking very closely at just how much extra money is going to be pumped into that area.

**Ms THOMSON** (Footscray) — It is a pleasure to rise on the take-note motion of the budget papers 2017–18. In doing so, I want to set the record straight. Good government is about not just governing for the four years

that you are in government; it is about preparing your community for the future. It is about building the infrastructure you are going to need in 10, 15 and 20 years time. It is about building the social cohesion within a community that will last the test of time. It is about providing services for those who are most in need of those services and less able to look after themselves. Most importantly, it is about providing the education for those who are young now and who are going to become the leaders and the people who sit in this place in the future — the ones who will be the judges, the doctors and the lawyers, the ones that those communities are going to rely on in the future. On all counts this government is ticking those boxes.

We are prioritising the infrastructure that we need now. We are prioritising the schools we need right now, because for four years there were no new schools built by the previous government. Any schools that opened in those four years were remnants from the Bracks-Brumby government years that had been completed in the coalition’s term. No new schools — how outrageous! In a growing population those opposite did not provide the very tool that lifts children out of poverty and gives them a hopeful and promising future. The Liberals did not address it when they were in government.

We are playing catch-up. We are building those schools in record numbers. We are providing those facilities. While we are doing that, we are also improving the way we teach. We are respecting our teachers, we are ensuring they get the professional development they need and we are securing the way we educate our children.

And then you come to our roads and rail. I cannot be more proud of what we are doing in this space. In the western suburbs of Melbourne and in my electorate we could not be happier. The Metro Tunnel will for the first time link the western suburbs to the hospital precinct in Parkville so that people who need to go to the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre for treatment will be able to go on a train — one trip, nice and easy — and feel like they are still valued and it is not a difficult thing to do. If they have to go to Melbourne University, they will be able to get on a train and do that. It is fantastic for us in the west to know that we are going to have that extra link that we have never had before.

If you look at roads, the new West Gate tunnel project will mean that 9000 trucks come off the inner western streets a day; 9000 trucks per day will come out of the inner western streets and go into that West Gate tunnel. What that will mean for the environment and conditions

of the people who live in the inner west! It is a fantastic project, and it is futureproofing Victorians and futureproofing the port of Melbourne. This is really important infrastructure.

In my own area on schools, I could not be happier to see the announcement in the budget of \$10.6 million for the Footscray learning precinct, which for the first time will integrate lifelong learning and create seamless education for children. It will be a revolution in education, and it is one I am particularly proud of.

In the little time I have left I want to talk about Footscray Hospital. A big shout-out: I want to thank the Minister for Education for the learning precinct in Footscray and the Minister for Health for Footscray Hospital. There is \$50 million to start the process to provide a new Footscray Hospital. It is much needed and it would never have happened under the previous government. We will have a new hospital in Footscray, a state-of-the-art hospital, which will give the people of the west first-class health care that builds on the work that has been done at Sunshine Hospital with the new Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital that is being built on the Sunshine campus.

We are working in every area, whether it is the policies we have for the homeless or the policy on family violence, which I have not had a chance to talk about. We could spend hours talking about the whole-of-government commitment to minimise family violence and ensure that it is a priority for this government — another huge initiative by this government. I am very proud of this budget, I am very proud of what it means for the people of Footscray and the inner west, I am very proud of what it means for women and I am very proud of what it means for the children and the future we will be delivering for them.

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

**Mr WAKELING** (Ferntree Gully) — It gives me pleasure to rise to contribute to this debate on the take-note motion on the budget. Can I start by saying that being the member for Ferntree Gully this will be a very short contribution because in this year's budget not one cent was allocated to a project within the electorate of Ferntree Gully. This is a government that for three years in a row has sought to not provide any major capital funding for any project within my electorate. Certainly this is a government that is kicking my community in the guts and has turned its back on residents within the City of Knox.

I would like to look at the education portfolio and at the approach of this government to education. We see a

litany of examples under this government of a government that is more focused on ideology, a government whose members are more focused on educating our children about transgenderism than they are on improving the numeracy and literacy standards of our children.

One only needs to go through the way in which the government is rolling out both the Safe Schools program and the Respectful Relationships program to see what this government is focused on. We have seen a litany of examples this year. I only need to remind the house that this is a government whose members brought in guides for teachers to ensure that children examined fairytales for gender stereotypes and preschools to consider auditing toys and books for gender bias. I will tell you one thing, Acting Speaker. What they did not do is say, 'We're going to be focusing on improving the numeracy and literacy standards of our children'. No, they are more focused on auditing books to see if there is gender bias, for heaven's sake. What is the priority of this government?

I refer to the Respectful Relationships program and the guide that was released for the foundation years. Let us remember that foundation refers to children in prep, five and six-year-olds. When you look at page 49 of this guide, you see that it talks about web links where you can obtain books to provide assistance in educating a five-year-old. Is it about maths? Is it about literacy? No, it is about Jazz, who is transgender. This is a document that is linked to by the government in its own material about teaching children from kindergarten about transgenderism.

Those opposite have said that this is something that we have made up, that the opposition has just made this stuff up and that this is a government that is not focused on these issues. In fact the Minister for Education went so far as to say that as well in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearings. In PAEC he talked about foundation — five and six-year-olds — and what are the key areas of focus for this government. He said that topic 1 is emotional literacy — okay; topic 2 is about personal strengths — okay; topic 3 is about positive coping — yep; topic 4 is about problem-solving; topic 5 is about stress management; and topic 6 is about help-seeking. Okay, that is all fair enough for a five-year-old.

What did the minister go on to say is the next key area of concern of his government in education? I am quoting the Minister for Education at PAEC: 'Topic 7, gender and identity'. What did the minister say? This is for five-year-olds, mind you. He said that topic 7, the

focus of this government, is to reflect on the ‘gender identity’ of a student and to:

... develop an awareness of positive and negative gender norms, challenge negative gender norms, develop an appreciation of difference.

Then:

Topic 8, positive gender relationships.

What does all that mean? How do you deliver topic 7? You do that by making sure that children are taught about transgenderism. I mean, seriously, where are parents marching in the streets, saying, ‘Stop teaching my kids about maths. Stop teaching my kids how to read, let’s focus on transgenderism because I know my five-year-old is more interested in that than actually his or her opportunity to read and write’?

It is just crap. Let me repeat: this is just crap. Can I just say that this government is more focused on pushing its ideology on our children than it is on educating them. The minister was asked during the PAEC hearings in regards to the Safe Schools program about material that encourages students to look at changing their gender without the knowledge of their parents. Let us just repeat: this is about students changing their gender without parental knowledge. In fact material that has been released and which was located on the education department’s website has suggested students could get cosmetic surgery if they are considered to be a mature minor. As a mature minor they can do that without actually needing the advice, assistance or even the knowledge of their parents.

Did the minister rule that out? No, the minister was not prepared to rule that out. The minister provided his tacit approval, his support, for children at secondary school to go off and undertake treatments, to receive a range of hormone treatments, without the consent of their parents. This is being encouraged by the government through its own educational material. Some may say that the opposition talks about this stuff without any evidence. Well, the evidence is just there: the minister in his own words at PAEC. When he could have put the record straight and said, ‘No, this is not a government that is looking at transgenderism for five-year-olds’, in fact on record he proved that that is exactly what he is focused on.

In so many other areas this government has failed in the area of education. In the lead-up to the last election government members proudly put out their statement, and I quote, ‘No more asbestos in Victorian schools under Labor’. That was the heading on the website of the then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier. This

government stood up and said to the Victorian community, ‘If we are elected at the next election, every inch of asbestos will be removed from every government school by the year 2020’ — every inch of asbestos. They did not say ‘just the stuff you can touch’; they said all of it. Whether it was on the roof, whether it was on the ground or whether it was in the play yards, they said all of it would be gone, from 1500 schools across the state. Like so many things this Premier has said in opposition, we know he says one thing and has lied again because he is doing something different.

In fact what did the minister actually do in regard to this? In this year’s budget papers in regard to asbestos is talk about a targeted program for removing asbestos in schools that may pose a risk. There was no talk about a targeted campaign to remove asbestos just from those areas within a school that may pose a risk. No, the current Premier, in concert with his now education minister, promised Victorians that it would all be gone, every inch of it. It did not matter where it was, and it did not matter whether it posed a risk. When asked this question at a PAEC hearing the minister said the opposition had the audacity to even raise this issue. He said, ‘Well, what do you expect the government to do? Do you reckon we’re going to remove it all from every school?’ Well, yes, Minister, because you promised it. We did not ask you to say it, we did not ask you to put out a press release days before the election and make such a ridiculous commitment. But if you promise it, you know what, you should at least deliver it. It is another example of a government that says one thing in opposition and then when it comes to the Victorian community is happy to walk away from election commitments.

I want to look at the injection of capital. I just gave you the example of my own electorate of Ferntree Gully, where we have seen no capital injection by this government in my schools over a three-year period. We know this happens across a lot of metropolitan seats represented by coalition members, but we also know it happens in regional Victoria. One only needs to look at Wonthaggi Secondary College, where the government had effectively promised the school that it would be upgraded. In fact that was a commitment made by Mr Sanjay Nathan, who was the Labor candidate before the last election. At a public meeting before the election he said to the Wonthaggi community, ‘Under our education budget, schools like Wonthaggi will be rebuilt’. Well, you know what? The community just wants the Labor Party to deliver on that election commitment.

With the first year’s budget, what happened? Nothing. In the second year’s budget did they get their money?

No; there were planning works being done. The community was expecting an outcome delivered in this year's budget; what happened? Nothing; there was not one cent. No wonder the local paper called it a \$31 million disaster. No wonder the local paper had a photo of the education minister with the words 'fail' underneath. No wonder the paper had a photo of Ms Harriet Shing in the other place, who claims to be the champion for Wonthaggi. What was written under her name? It said 'Fail'. That is typical of this government, which is not willing to follow through on its election commitments.

No wonder the community said, 'We are gutted, upset, angry, agitated and even sick to the stomach'. Well, of course they are, and what has the government done since? They have said, 'We will go down and hold further discussions'. The community do not want discussions; they want the government to fix their school. So much of this government is more focused on spin than it is actually focused on improving standards for Victorians.

When you look at regional investment we know that in this year's budget paper \$61.4 million has been allocated to rural and regional projects for schools. What was the figure last year? It was \$151 million. What does that mean? That is a 60 per cent cut in capital funding for rural schools by this government. No wonder Wonthaggi Secondary College missed out, no wonder the member for Ripon missed out, no wonder Warrnambool Special Development School (SDS) missed out. At the last state election Labor put up banners outside schools on polling day which said 'only a Labor government will build the Warrnambool SDS'. Well let me ask you, where is the Warrnambool SDS at in terms of its new school? They have got a bit of dirt; the government has bought them a pile of dirt. You cannot educate children with additional needs on a pile of dirt. They just want their school built that the Labor Party promised them at the last election.

But of course we know that this is a government that is unwilling to invest in regional Victoria when it comes to schools. How can you deliver on making Victoria the education state and how can you make sure that regional schools benefit when you are slashing their capital budget by upwards of 60 per cent? It simply does not make any sense, but that is case with so much that we see under this government.

Parents are wanting to see this government focused on improving numeracy and literacy standards. But what do we see; whether they are results through NAPLAN, whether it is the Programme for International Student Assessment results, we are seeing results in Victoria

going backwards or at best they are flatlining. For a government that is championing itself as providing record investment in education, the only measure for parents are results on the ground that provide the education their children need, and under this government that is not occurring. Parents are losing faith in this government and the Victorian community is losing faith in this government.

We have an education minister who is more focused on trashing our Country Fire Authority (CFA) brand, more focused on attacking 60 000 volunteers, than he is worrying about his own education department. He has to leave it to Gill Callister, the secretary of the department, to worry about education because he is too busy focused on attacking our CFA volunteers. This government is more focused on ideology. They are not focused on improving numeracy and literacy standards. It is not good enough, and Victorians deserve better than what we have got.

**Mr J. BULL** (Sunbury) — I am extremely pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the take-note motion on the 2017–18 budget, and so pleased that a number of members of the opposition have come in for my contribution this afternoon. This government was elected to get on with the job, and that is exactly what it is doing: keeping its promises and delivering on the things that really matter to Victorians. Our first state budget was a great day for the state and great for the people of the Sunbury electorate. It was a budget that delivered on those things that really matter: better schools, better hospitals, new and upgraded roads, public transport, removing level crossings, creating thousands of jobs and keeping Victorians safe. This is a budget that reinforces the Andrews Labor government's track record of strong financial management, with a surplus of \$1.2 billion, surpluses averaging \$2.4 billion over the forward estimates. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for Finance and the Parliamentary Secretary for Finance for the outstanding work that has been done in bringing this budget to the house.

The budget is a statement of the government's priorities and values. There comes a time, I believe, when those opposite need to show us where their priorities are and what their values are. There is no substitute for hard work, no substitute for a lack of policy and no substitute for a lack of good ideas. What we are hearing now is rumblings from those opposite, and one member saying that you can only blame the Premier for so long. This is a budget that serves all Victorians.

I have spoken a number of times in this house about the impact and causes of family violence. I will never forget the local forum that I held in Sunbury with the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and the tragic experiences that were shared. Our government promised to tackle this issue, the most serious law and order issue of our time, and this budget is a historic and life-changing investment to end family violence. There is an unprecedented \$1.9 billion investment to implement every recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, an investment that will save lives and help respond to the needs of victims and keep them, their families and their children safe, and those who commit crimes will be held to account.

There will be 17 support and safety hubs across the state helping tens of thousands of victims with more after-hours crisis support and creating five specialist family violence courts to make our justice system more responsive to those needs. This is an incredibly important investment in an issue that I am sure crosses party lines.

We know in this house that Victorians need and deserve to feel safe, and there is a \$2 billion investment into recruiting over 3000 more police. I am very pleased that already we are seeing the first of the 300 frontline police officers on the streets. Of these, 89 new police officers are deployed to the Fawkner division of Victoria Police, 36 of these specifically assigned to the Hume police service area covering Sunbury. We understand, though, that crime is a very complex issue, and you need complex solutions to fix complex problems. We are committed to ensuring that all Victorians are given the support they need when they need it.

This budget once again delivers on the Andrews Labor government's outstanding record in education, building the education state brick by brick. This government committed \$1.3 billion to schools, which comes on top of record funding in the last budget, including an extra \$685 million to build and upgrade schools right across Victoria. Two schools are fortunately in my electorate, Sunbury Downs College and Diggers Rest Primary School. These are terrific, outstanding and hardworking schools — two schools in fact that my mum worked at for a number of years. There is nothing more rewarding than being able to deliver good news to your schools on behalf of the government. I can see that the member for Frankston is fully supportive of that. He has certainly delivered funding to four schools in his electorate. I had the opportunity to make the announcement at Sunbury Downs College of \$3.92 million to upgrade and modernise school buildings; and there is \$151 000 for Diggers Rest Primary School, which was an

outstanding announcement to make. I was very pleased to be able to join with Rachelle Hedger, the principal of Diggers Rest Primary School and Maria Oddo, the principal of Sunbury Downs College.

There have been many wonderful highlights in my time at Parliament, but I must say that seeing the reaction of the school community when these announcements were made is something that was truly humbling. Maria Oddo, the principal of Sunbury Downs College, told me that this money will be vital in looking at upgrading kitchens and building a new science wing and a new technology wing. She is delighted that the Andrews Labor government is 'supporting the education initiatives to support 21st-century learning'.

Every Victorian deserves first-class health care when they need it the most, and we are investing \$2.9 billion in health care, with major upgrades at some of our busiest hospitals and planning for a new Footscray Hospital, in addition to the record investment in our last two budgets. The 2017–18 budget will invest over \$160 million for a vital upgrade to the Northern Hospital. My sister was a nurse at the Northern Hospital emergency department for probably the best part of 10 years, if not more, and did a fantastic job in the emergency department. I just want to take the opportunity to congratulate her and all of the wonderful nurses, doctors and medical staff that do an outstanding job to provide that high-care, high-class quality of support in the north.

This is outstanding news for the community, as I mentioned, and I was certainly very pleased to join a number of northern suburbs MPs to meet with the management and staff of the Northern Hospital prior to the budget. The funds that have been allocated will be used for a stage 2 project, which will complete a seven-storey tower and 96 new inpatient beds, three new operating theatres and more treatment rooms. That is something I fully support, and am I am very proud that this covenant has been able to get on and deliver it.

The Andrews Labor government understands the importance of our regions and our rural areas. We know how hard people in the country work, and we value this hard work. We know how important it is to provide high-class, high-care services to our regions and to our country areas, and we understand the difficulty in geography and getting to many of the services over great distances.

Victoria's population was 6.1 million at September 2016, and the population of greater Melbourne was 4.64 million in 2016. We know we are a very fast-growing state — 2.1 per cent population growth

annually, which is the highest of all states and territories. I often speak about this growth in the house, and I think for the outer suburbs it is an issue that we are experiencing. It is something that proves the investment and the level of services that are provided in these areas is absolutely vital. What is important of course is that we keep our regions thriving and we encourage people to move their — —

**Ms Staley** — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I refer to *Rulings from the Chair*, where it says that reading a prepared speech is unparliamentary. It states:

It is a well-established practice that members do not read their speeches.

I ask you to uphold previous rulings from the Chair.

**Mr Edbrooke** — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I have been listening intently to the member for Sunbury. I would say to those opposite that if they had been listening, they would know that he has not actually been reading the whole time.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Blandthorn)** — Order! Is the member for Sunbury reading his speech or referring to notes?

**Mr Watt** — On the point of order — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Blandthorn)** — Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The member has indicated that he is not reading his speech. I ask the member to return to giving his speech.

**Mr J. BULL** — Thank you very much, Acting Speaker, and I am pleased to continue my contribution on the budget. As I was discussing, the investment in the regions is something that this government is incredibly proud of. It is an investment that ensures that we get train services in and out of the regions, with a \$1.45 billion investment into regional rail. It is something that I know this government is incredibly proud of.

I want to mention the wonderful Night Network service that has been provided to my community and communities right across the state. I was incredibly pleased to hear the Minister for Public Transport recommit to the Night Network, ensuring that our trains can run through the weekend all night, so those on shift work and those that travel in and out to the CBD are able to get in and out when they previously could not. This is an outstanding announcement, and I would like to commend the Minister for Public Transport on her commitment and hard work in this space.

Whilst I am on public transport, how can I not talk about Australia's most important public transport project, Melbourne Metro? Those two 9-kilometre tunnels, five new stations and the ability to move thousands more passengers through the city loop is an outstanding announcement, and a terrific project only able to be delivered by the Andrews Labor government.

**Ms Ward** interjected.

**Mr J. BULL** — Absolutely, member for Eltham, building for the future. If we look at the level crossing removal program, that is an outstanding program creating thousands of jobs and getting on with removing those crossings, improving safety and relieving congestion.

If I look at this budget from a local perspective, what I am particularly proud of — members opposite seem very keen to hear about my local announcements given that they are all here — are outstanding projects in my area, including the \$10 million commitment for noise barriers at Gowanbrae as part of our election commitment, over \$8 million for Sunbury College and \$700 000 for Kismet Park Primary School. I can see the Minister for Local Government here, and how outstanding is it to be able to make a funding announcement from the Growing Suburbs Fund: a \$3 million commitment to the Sunbury global learning centre, an outstanding project that has only been made possible thanks to the Andrews Labor government and the hard work of Hume City Council.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the minister for her commitment to the Growing Suburbs Fund. I had the great pleasure of joining the mayor and the CEO of Hume City Council at Eric Boardman Reserve last week. It was wonderful to be able to see the work of the Growing Suburbs Fund, a \$490 000 commitment, as part of an \$800 000 project to upgrade Boardman reserve.

The Sunbury tennis club — the list goes on — \$400 000 for the tennis club from the Growing Suburbs Fund. I have mentioned the library. The Sunbury aquatic centre gets a \$2 million commitment from the Growing Suburbs Fund for a 15 metre by 12 metre warm water pool, only made possible because of the Andrews Labor government.

The commitments just keep on coming. I am so incredibly proud. I forgot to mention \$6.4 million to signalise the Gap Road and Horne Street roundabout, a project that for many, many years has needed to be done. Those opposite shake their heads, having ignored for four years in government a project that was absolutely critical to my community — a \$6.4 million

commitment. I want to thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for making that possible, and I very much look forward to seeing that delivered.

The list goes on. Members on this side of the house, the Andrews Labor government, are getting on with delivering for each and every Victorian. I am incredibly pleased to be part of a government that has been able to invest in jobs, invest in infrastructure, invest in services and continue to do the things that matter to each and every hardworking Victorian. We are getting on with the important things, we are getting on with the projects. I am incredibly pleased and incredibly proud to be able to join with my colleagues on this side of the house to ensure that infrastructure and those services are delivered to the people of my community.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those that have spoken to me about those projects that we have been able to deliver: all those community groups, those individuals who have come forward and said, 'We need this for our community'. We have been able to deliver. I commend the budget to the house.

**Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition)** — In speaking to the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017, I think it is appropriate to remind the chamber of a quote from November 2014 that says:

Daniel Andrews, all the polls say you will be Victoria's next Premier. If you are, do you promise Victorians here tonight that you will not increase taxes or introduce any new taxes?

And the reply from the now Premier of Victoria was:

I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian.

In noting that promise from the now Premier, six new taxes in just this budget alone — increased stamp duty on new cars, land tax surcharge for agency owners, new annual property valuations, new stamp duty for off-the-plan purchases, removing exemptions and transfers of property between spouses, point-of-consumption income tax — can this Premier, under any circumstance on any topic, tell the truth to anyone? Does he have any ability to tell the truth? Lying, by his own admission, to each and every single Victorian on the night before he became Premier has set the scene for his term of office: four years of lies, of half-truths, of spin, of rorting, crooks and thieves.

A Labor government that is in it just for themselves. They are not in it for Victoria. They are not in it for the Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers. This budget shows they are not in it to make our state safer. They are not in it for people who want to get across our city or our state quicker than how they are doing today.

They are not in it for good policy, they are in it for themselves: their lazy, dishonest, bullying selves.

It is a government that frankly is there just to look after its union mates first, its colleagues first and the rest of us second. In this budget I looked at my own electorate, the seat of Bulleen. I wondered: is this really a government for all Victorians or is it a government simply of nepotism, mates, favours — a government that has got a tin ear to the rest of the state? Clearly it does, because it is a government that started off with a lie and every single day it has continued with a lie — that lie: 'I make that promise, Peter, to every single Victorian'.

In my electorate of Bulleen, under this government crimes against the person have risen by 17.6 per cent, and break and enter in the seat of Bulleen is up by 91 per cent. In Doncaster robbery is up by 43 per cent and in Templestowe break and enter is up 38 per cent and theft up 36 per cent, and this is just around the corner from my own place where there were people who suffered a violent gang home invasion. I notice an upper house member for Western Victoria Region, Josh Morris, even found examples of carjackings now in Ballarat — home invasions and carjackings in Ballarat. No-one is immune. In Lower Templestowe, assault up 32 per cent, theft up 53 per cent.

What is this government doing in this budget to address those issues around sentencing, parole and bail? The answer is: nothing. And why would they do anything? They started this term of office with a lie, and every single day it has been conducted through lies and it is not going to change. There was the promise of keeping Victorians safer, a promise made again by the Premier — 'I'll keep Victorians safe', he says. Then there is every one of the Labor MPs who has come in here and used their speaking notes, because they clearly cannot invent a speech, think of a speech or come up with one — 'Crime is a very complex issue', says this government. It is so complex! When someone breaks the law, there is a punishment. It is a complex mechanism, is it not? It is cause and effect: if you break the law, you are going to get into trouble. You will get caught. You will get prosecuted. If you invade someone's home, you do not get let out three or four times. If you carjack someone, you should not be told, 'You've been a bad kid. Go to youth justice, play *Grand Theft Auto* and then be let out in three months time'.

Murder is up 19 per cent since the election of the Andrews government. Attempted murder is up 140 per cent. As the previous speaker said: 'The facts don't lie'. No, they do not. Common assault, a 34 per cent increase under the Andrews government; rape, up

14 per cent; aggravated robbery, 33 per cent; non-aggravated robbery, 59 per cent; aggravated burglary, 66 per cent — these are all increases since this government has been elected. Motor vehicle theft is up 41.5 per cent; escaping custody, 22 per cent; and resisting and hindering a police officer during arrest, 175 per cent. That is in this budget, when this Premier and the Treasurer walk in thinking they have got great lines and zingers and they can get themselves on TV. Victorians are saying ‘enough is enough’ of a government that is not listening — ‘enough is enough’ of a Premier who could not care less and who has built his premiership on lying, on misleading, on deceiving.

It is about time we did something — not just tolerating theft, fraud and rorters in this Parliament but actually getting tough on those people who are turning our city into the Johannesburg of the South Pacific. Melbourne is a magnificent city. Victoria is a wonderful state. This is not as good as it gets. This budget lacks so much when it comes to dealing with law and order. Victorians should know that the Liberals and Nationals say in relation to this budget: ‘This is not as good as it gets. Our state can be so much better than this’.

Law and order policies announced by the Liberal-Nationals coalition, which are absent in this budget, include mandatory sentencing. It is about time repeat violent offenders faced a mandatory minimum jail sentence for serious violent crimes — murder, rape, carjacking, home invasion, serious assault and recklessly causing injury. It is about time we said ‘enough is enough’ to these repeat offenders — ‘If you do this, you’re going to do time. You’re not going to be let out onto the streets’, which is the Premier’s excuse every time it is raised in question time. We are not going to make an excuse for your background, for your age, for your gender — for whatever. There is no excuse. There is one law for every single Victorian. There is one law for every single one of us, and it applies at full strength to every single one of us. It is as simple as that.

Police car ramming, minimum sentences — we believe on this side of the house, missing and absent in this budget, that it is time to get tough on people who ram police cars. It is about time we said that if you are trying to evade police and you are trying to harm the police who are trying to keep us safe, you will do time. Let me quote from a media release from the Police Association of Victoria secretary, Sergeant Wayne Gatt:

Make no mistake, the ramming of police vehicles is one of the most serious health and safety issues facing our members. We’re seeing this extremely dangerous conduct happening at least twice a week now.

It’s nothing short of a miracle that no police officer has yet been seriously injured or killed on the 221 occasions where a police vehicle has been rammed in the past two years, but it’s only a matter of time before one of our members becomes a statistic unless something is done about this now.

And he is right. He went on to say:

Ramming of police vehicles was extremely rare in the past. Now they’re happening all too frequently. There have been 117 such incidents during the current financial year, off the back of 103 incidents the year before.

He said the trend is extremely worrying, that nothing has worked to date and that there has to be ‘a circuit-breaker’, and indeed he is right.

Finally, Sergeant Gatt went on to say:

We call upon all sides of politics to support this private member’s bill —

put forward by the Liberal and National parties —

so that would-be offenders will start to think twice before putting our members in danger.

How right he is, and it is a symbol of the lawlessness in this state that police rammings — more than 200 of them in the last two years — are just part and parcel of police work in Victoria. They are having to put up with this because this budget and this government failed to listen to Victorians when they said, ‘Law and order, community safety — your first job is to keep us safe. If you can’t keep us safe, then you’re derelict in your duty as a government of Victoria’. Indeed they are, because remember they came to office on a lie and they have governed every single day by a lie.

It is about bringing back justice to the justice system, bringing respect back into our courts — no body, no parole laws, carjacking offences, making drive-by shootings an offence and abolishing cash payments for scrap metal. Deporting violent criminals who are not citizens is another important policy. It is about mandatory sentencing for those repeat offenders who are citizens; if they are not a citizen, it is time to go back and leave Australia, because you have worn out your welcome in one of the most welcoming nations in the world.

Police killer Craig Minogue should have been kept behind bars. That should have been announced long before this government was dragged kicking and screaming to make that announcement. Neighbourhood Watch funding should have been fully reinstated in this budget; it was not. In relation to bail, there should be a presumption of remand for violent offences. It should be one strike and you are out for bail breaches. The youth bail laws that Labor watered down in 2016

should be reinstated. It is about time that this state said to this government: ‘Clearly enough is enough’.

This government is a joke. It is led by a man who has frankly come to power on a lie and frankly could not care less about volunteers, about people in the suburbs, clearly thinks Melbourne stops at the tram tracks and frankly is misleading people from Gippsland, from Hazelwood and, regarding the east–west link, those in the eastern suburbs. This man could not care less about anyone in this state unless you are a sycophantic yes-person to the Premier and his weird beliefs about how he is running our state.

Let me again say to this chamber, this budget should have made it clear that the government of this state respects our Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers — every single one of them — not just for putting their lives on the line but for the time they spend away from their families, for their commitment, for their community work and engagement, for everything they do in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, in regional cities and in country towns and in all the work they are doing to make our state safer and keep all of us and our families safe. CFA volunteers do not ask for much, but they should ask for and deserve respect.

The fact that this Premier has shown anything but respect — in fact he sent his Deputy Premier in here to lie, cheat and mislead, and to bully, slam and slander people from Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria — is a reflection on those two men running this state. It is not a reflection on any of our volunteers. Our volunteers stand tall and proud today, as they should with the support of many people in this Parliament, principally the Liberal and National parties. We will never sell out volunteers. This budget should never have sold out volunteers. The volunteer charter, the emergency management volunteer statement signed by Premier Andrews, makes it clear that every single government should respect our volunteers.

What is it, ladies and gentlemen, what is it, Acting Speaker, that Premiers Baillieu, Napthine, Brumby, Bracks, Kennett, Kirner, Cain, Thompson, Hamer and Bolte have in common? All of them, Labor and Liberal, stood by our CFA volunteers; every single one of them stood by our volunteers. What has changed under the Premier? I tell you what, that must be one powerful tape; whatever Peter Marshall has on this man must be powerful. For a Premier to disrespect our volunteers in the way this Premier has, simply at the whim of one rogue unionist and his rogue leadership, is a complete disgrace. Again I say that Labor and Liberal premiers before him, every single one of them, have had the good grace and decency to stand by CFA volunteers, as

the next Premier should and will too. This budget has so many missed opportunities, the most important one being keeping us safe.

**Mr WYNNE** (Minister for Planning) — I rise to make a contribution on the take-note motion. The budget is planning for growth because Victoria is growing at the fastest rate of any state in Australia — at 2.4 per cent. In the year to September 2016, 127 500 people arrived in Victoria and around 107 000 of them arrived in Melbourne. Growth is being driven by natural increases — that is, births over deaths — at 42 000, while close to 18 000 people moved here from interstate. Victoria has an intake of around 67 000 people from overseas. We are actually carrying a disproportionate amount of interstate and overseas migration into Melbourne and Victoria more generally, which speaks to the enormous strengths of our economy, our livability and the employment opportunities that are available here in this great state.

We are forecast to have a population of around 10 million by 2050, with close to 8 million in the broader Melbourne metropolitan conurbation and another 2 million in regional Victoria. But we must ensure as we grow that we protect the things that we most value about our state, and that of course is our world-renowned livability. We know population growth brings great opportunities, but it also brings great challenges. The 2017–18 budget recognises this, and that is why we are making unprecedented investment in infrastructure.

We are committed to further transport network upgrades to ensure we cater for the needs of our growing population. We are spending more than \$11 billion to build the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, where work has already begun, as we know, in the CBD of Melbourne. We have to steel ourselves because this is going to be quite disruptive for a number of years, but this investment will completely change the shape of our city going forward and is a magnificent project. The Melbourne Metro Tunnel is Victoria’s biggest ever public transport project. It will increase the capacity and reliability of our train network. From day one of its operation 39 000 people will be transported during the morning and afternoon peaks.

We are also tackling road congestion with the West Gate tunnel project, which will give Melbourne a much-needed second major river crossing and take thousands of trucks off the roads in the inner west. Interestingly it will also provide a new 14-kilometre veloway that will make it easier and safer for cyclists to commute into the city from Melbourne’s west. But one of the great things about the Melbourne Metro is that

the first station will be located in a precinct called Arden. For those people who are unfamiliar with that part of Melbourne, it is essentially the land to the south of the headquarters of the North Melbourne Football Club, scene of many great victories for us Kangaroos supporters. The reason this land is so important is that it is essentially in the ownership of the state and in some parts in the ownership of the City of Melbourne.

If you think of the investment in Melbourne Metro — the first station at Arden, the second station at Melbourne University, the third station at the City Baths, the fourth station at St Paul's, the fifth station at Domain and then out into the metropolitan network — the Arden site is going to be a major urban renewal opportunity. To have a Melbourne Metro train station sitting underneath this parcel of land is a magnificent opportunity to ensure that we integrate public transport with what is going to be one of the most exciting urban renewal sites in Victoria. If you think about it in the context of the distance between the Arden station and Melbourne University — 2 minutes by train — it is going to be an absolutely wonderful opportunity. That is why this government is so proud to be planning this in a way that is sustainable and is going to be a hallmark of best practice planning for this state.

As members would be aware, my department is currently working through a rigorous environment effects statement (EES) process for the West Gate tunnel project. It is out on exhibition, and we know that already there has been significant uptake of interest from right across Victoria for the West Gate tunnel project. We are also improving safety and traffic congestion across the city with the removal of 50 level crossings. Again this is a magnificent project. It has been fantastic in terms of employment, but what it also has done is freed up the capacity of the train network and indeed the road network as well, because at peak times the gates at some of those crossings can be down for up to 45 to 47 minutes in the hour, and that is simply inefficient. We are really pleased with the work that has gone on.

In just over two years we have removed 10 level crossings across Melbourne — at Glen Iris, Ormond, Bentleigh, McKinnon, St Albans, Bayswater, Blackburn and Mitcham — and a further 13 are being worked on. Five more crossing removals will begin this year. Construction, as members would also be aware, kicked off last month on the brand-new rail line to Mernda that will carry train services to one of Victoria's fastest growing areas for the very first time.

I want to turn the attention of the house to the regions, because it is not just Melbourne that is experiencing

population growth. Our regions are also growing, with many developing new industries and attracting young people away from the city. Most regional population growth has occurred in the three largest municipalities — Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat.

I have got some forecast data here I would like to read into the debate. Between now and 2051 Greater Geelong will increase its population from 235 000 to 400 000, Ballarat from 104 000 to 186 000 and Greater Bendigo from 110 000 to 193 000. So people are clearly voting with their feet. They see the extraordinary opportunities there are in our regional cities because of the significant investment that our government has made not only in those cities but of course in the rail links to support those cities.

Extraordinary shifts have in fact occurred. I am advised by the planners in Bendigo that because of the investment the government has made in Bendigo, the specialisation Bendigo has got, for instance, in terms of the finance sector and the huge investment in the hospital precincts, there are in fact for the first time more people actually travelling to Bendigo in the morning than there are people leaving Bendigo to come to Melbourne for work. It is a complete shift in the way that that city is operating.

A number of other municipalities also grew rapidly — notably Baw Baw, Moorabool, Bass Coast, Surf Coast and Golden Plains — all of which had a very healthy annual population growth of around 2 per cent. This year's state budget invests in our regions, and unambiguously so, with initiatives including \$16.5 million over four years for the Victorian Planning Authority to provide targeted assistance to regional, rural and metropolitan councils; \$15 million over two years to continue the implementation of the *Revitalising Central Geelong Action Plan*, for which, as members would know, I am the responsible authority for any of the larger projects down there; and also \$435 million for the Gippsland line upgrade as part of the regional rail revival package. We will ensure appropriate planning occurs to facilitate this huge investment, which will create hundreds of jobs in the Latrobe Valley — and of course we heard today from Minister Noonan about just how significant the job growth has been in that region.

I am so proud also that the government has provided a significant amount of support in my electorate of Richmond. The budget included \$8.5 million for the redevelopment of the Collingwood basketball —

**Ms Kealy — Go Pies!**

**Mr WYNNE** — Go the Pies; thank you very much. The Collingwood All Stars — it is a basketball team. This was a wonderful event where — —

**Ms Kealy** interjected.

**Mr WYNNE** — No, no, do not do that. You are throwing me off now.

There is \$8.5 million for the construction of new basketball courts at Collingwood. This is a wonderful basketball association which has celebrated its 30-year anniversary, and what is so beautiful about it is that right across the spectrum of my electorate 1200 families are associated with the Collingwood Basketball Association, a wonderful pathway particularly for young Sudanese kids out of the Collingwood high-rise estate who are just making a superb contribution to the club. It points to the fact that this sort of investment provides an alternative pathway for young people to continue to be engaged in their education and continue to be engaged in healthy outdoor activities such as basketball, and it is an opportunity to relate to each other right across the social spectrum. It is a fantastic investment.

Of course I do not need to say too much more about the \$43 million for the new Richmond High School. That is just a fantastic investment by the government. I cannot tell you how much this means to my community to actually have this massive investment in a new high school. The community are absolutely thrilled not only with the design of the building but also about the fact we will be opening Richmond High School for the first intake of year 7 students in 2018. I am looking forward so much to that celebration.

**Ms Hutchins** — It is exciting.

**Mr WYNNE** — It is unbelievably exciting; thank you, Minister.

The government also released *Homes for Victorians* earlier this year, which supports first home owners by abolishing stamp duty on properties worth up to \$600 000, tackles affordability for renters and increases social housing, an area that has of course been a passion of mine for very many years. The state budget provides \$12.5 million over four years to deliver further actions outlined in *Plan Melbourne* and \$27.7 million to deliver a range of initiatives contained in *Homes for Victorians*.

Last year I announced \$25.5 million for the smart planning program to improve the efficient operation of the Victorian planning system and to give Victorians a quicker and simpler way to navigate it. We announced

the further expansion of VicSmart to extend the 10-day fast-track planning process, and this captures a range of straightforward approvals for residential, industrial and commercial applications, such as simple extensions to houses and single-storey homes. Smarter planning and faster approvals are a win-win for developers and home owners alike.

Finally to heritage, which of course is a passion of many people in this house: we have got a magnificent \$30 million in the 2016–17 budget over four years for the Living Heritage program to safeguard the state's key heritage resources, and that program has funded conservation programs across our state like the *Polly Woodside* in Melbourne. We recently granted \$700 000 to Reid's Guest House in Ballarat, which offers low-income housing to those most in need, and the program has proved so popular that the 2017–18 budget provides an additional \$5 million. Indeed, Acting Speaker Pearson, you and I were out at the former Moonee Ponds courthouse only a couple of weeks back where we gave a significant grant for the restoration of that magnificent building. That is where this sort of money goes, and I certainly know the passion that you, as the member for Essendon, have for heritage. That was very, very clearly indicated to me by the community that we had the opportunity to meet out at the Moonee Ponds courthouse.

This is a good budget. It is a budget that actually shares the resources right across the state. Ultimately the challenge for government is to keep up with infrastructure investment because we know that by 2050 we are going to have a population of 10 million people here. It is likely that within the next 10 to 15 years we will outstrip Sydney as the largest capital, and that is why this government is steadfast in ensuring that we invest but that we invest in a way that is sustainable and well planned for the future of Victorians. I commend the budget.

**Ms KEALY** (Lowan) — I rise today to add my contribution in response to the 2017–18 budget. Again, unfortunately we say it is an exceptionally disappointing and hollow budget for the people of western Victoria and my electorate of Lowan. We see more and more new taxes being introduced, we see a government that brags about a surplus, and we see a region that has not been given any investment at all. I will go through the details of that further along in my contribution.

Most importantly, the element that really annoys the people of my electorate when they do not receive any funding is to hear the Treasurer bragging about the billions of dollars being poured into Melbourne, but

more taxes imposed on country people, with that money being either put into the people of Melbourne or into a surplus. They do not even count — that is how people are feeling at the moment in the Lowan electorate.

It does not matter which portfolio area you look at, we have been underdone and certainly have not got our fair share. When we look at health, education, roads and police, and when we look at some of the wider initiatives of the government, whether it be around family violence or the *Ice Action Plan*, we are not getting our fair share in far-western Victoria. We are not getting our fair share in country Victoria, and rural and regional Victoria. The people I represent are sending a clear message to me, which I pass on to the government: it is simply not good enough. We are sick of this city-centric government refusing to understand that you need to invest in country Victoria to ensure the whole state can grow and thrive and, in some cases, survive.

I would like to go through the different elements of the budget. However, there is not a lot to be said because there simply were not a lot of announcements in relation to the Lowan electorate. When we look at health, there was absolutely nothing for the Lowan electorate. I note that we have 17 hospitals and three bush nursing centres in Lowan. Our staff do a fantastic job, whether they are the paramedics, clinical staff, nurses, allied health professionals, doctors, support staff, cleaners or the people who are in environmental services and cook delicious meals out our way for our patients. They are doing a fabulous job, but we did not see any money for these facilities in this budget.

Most disappointing was that there was not a line item in the budget for the Wimmera cancer centre. Our community desperately needed an additional \$1 million for the Wimmera cancer centre, and people were in tears in my office when that money was not announced in the budget. It took a concerted public campaign and extensive lobbying of the health minister, who had made the promise to dying cancer patients that if the money could not be raised the government would find it. Then for it not to be delivered was a bitter blow to many people.

I am very, very pleased though that after extensive lobbying, after a big petition that was supported by the community, after fantastic work by the Wimmera Health Care Group Foundation, we did finally see the funding announced. I am pleased that finally the government saw sense, that the minister saw sense and delivered that money.

I would like to make special mention of Don Johns. Don was chair of the foundation for a long time. He

really was a big push behind raising money to ensure that the local community had access to the cancer care that they deserved. Unfortunately Don passed away a week ago; he was diagnosed with cancer only a week beforehand. Knowing that the Wimmera cancer centre will now be built, given his short battle with cancer, knowing the enormous amount of work he did for that cause, we will make sure that it makes a big difference to the people in our community. I commend Don for all the work that he did. I made mention of his efforts yesterday in Parliament, and I look forward to paying tribute to Don's incredible contribution to the Wimmera region at his memorial service tomorrow.

When we look at education, there were some announcements for primary school funding, but it was limited to just maintenance funding that was expected to flow anyway. We did not see the significant investment that we needed to see in Warracknabeal Secondary College. They are \$2 million short of the necessary funding to move their whole campus from their current site to be co-located at the new education precinct with the primary school and special development school (SDS).

Before the last election The Nationals committed to an \$8 million project. Unfortunately we have only seen this government put in \$4 million for the secondary college and \$2 million for the SDS. It is simply not enough, and this school community is really concerned that they will not be able to create an education precinct on the one site. We need to see that additional funding flow, and I urge the education minister to reconsider.

Baimbridge College has undertaken some master planning and there is a desperate need for key investment in that school in Hamilton. In regard to the Dimboola Memorial Secondary College — to which, again, a pre-election commitment was made by The Nationals before the last election — we still have not seen any money flow for that school, and it desperately needs an investment and an upgrade so that the students in Dimboola can have access to the educational facilities they deserve and so that the school can best support the local teachers, who do a fabulous job.

We got nothing in regard to new announcements for police. The Horsham court precinct desperately needs to have a master plan. We need a linkage into the police station. We need to have more mediation rooms. It is simply unacceptable that a family violence victim has to sit basically next to their assailant before their court hearing. We need to have private areas in that facility, and again to see that overlooked is extremely disappointing.

On roads, I hear over and over again how damaged our roads are, and today a Victorian Auditor-General's Office report was tabled around maintaining our state-controlled roadways. There are absolutely no surprises in there: our roads are getting worse and worse. Primarily the reason pointed to is funding, and the Auditor-General actually outlines that.

When you look at roads in our region, they are absolutely falling apart. They are key points of transport for people to get to work, go to the local footy and netball, go and visit their friends, do their shopping, go to hospital or go to school. You cannot possibly expect people to have to go through tyres throughout the year, the cost of which they cannot claim through any VicRoads insurance scheme.

I hear time and time again, 'I have blown out two tyres', 'I have damaged my rims' and 'I cannot make a claim because it is under \$1500'. This is for people who can least afford it, people who might be on their P-plates, people who are unemployed or have a low-paying job. These are the people who usually do not have the flash rims on their cars. When they blow out a tyre or two and damage rims they cannot afford to go and replace them. They are then without a vehicle. There is limited public transport in our region, and so they do not have any alternative.

Unless we see a significant investment in our roads, things will not change for these people, who are doing it tough simply because our roads are not up to scratch and we have seen hundreds of millions of dollars cut out of the VicRoads budget over successive years.

We also, disappointingly, have not seen the return of the country roads and bridges program. Recently there was a survey of local government areas and the key concern amongst all councils across the state was the condition of the local roads. This is absolutely no surprise, given that the government has scrapped the country roads and bridges program, a vital program that provided \$160 million over four years, so \$1 million a year to every council to ensure they could keep their local roads up to scratch and to ensure that they could also prioritise investment in their local bridges, something that is very important in my electorate. We have the most extensive road network in the state and we also have the most bridges in the state, so cutting that funding hurt our region more than any other area of Victoria.

I would like to just point out that this is not something new. We have seen minimal investment in regional Victoria year on year under the Andrews government. We heard the Treasurer today even pointing out and skiting about how great the jobs growth is in regional

Victoria. Unfortunately it is not the case in my part of the state. The further away you are from Melbourne the less you get from this city-centric government.

We have lost in excess of 2000 full-time jobs in north-west Victoria. Some of this is due to a simple lack of investment and a lack of business confidence to grow and thrive, to put on an additional person, to take that punt of being able to attract professionals to the region and to grow their business by opening up another store, by adding on another function or by putting in more mechanisation so they can manufacture more perhaps.

As a case in point, today we had the very sad announcement that the Hamilton mineral sands separation plant is closing as of October this year. There are estimated to be 120 jobs lost in Hamilton. If you look at an outer Melbourne area, that is equivalent to about 1400 jobs in a community. There was a precursor to this announcement back in March, almost three months ago, when there was an announcement that there would be a suspension of this plant. It has now gone into caretaker mode until 2021. In terms of support, since that suspension was announced, you would think there would be something in the budget to show some sort of investment to create new jobs, to look at perhaps some additional road crews coming out to fix our roads, to invest in our hospital and our fantastic educational facilities in Hamilton, but all we saw in this year's budget was a boat for the Hamilton State Emergency Service (SES) unit. That boat is very important to the Hamilton SES. It will support our vital SES volunteers, including Craig Munro, who does a great job with the Hamilton SES, but it will not create one new job in that community. Hamilton is crying out for support.

We have seen job losses in the Latrobe Valley. We have seen job losses in Heyfield. We have now got job losses in Hamilton. It is time for this government to step up and provide the opportunity for jobs growth in these country communities but also to invest in infrastructure so we can exhibit to the business community that this is an area worth investing in, that this is an area that we believe in and that we believe there will be a future.

Of course all of this comes back to how we manage our population going forward. I think I have a bigger interest in population growth evening out across the state than anyone else, given I have got the biggest electorate, which is about 40 000 square kilometres, one-sixth of the state. The challenge is, as population grows in Melbourne — and we know it is increasing by about 92 000 people a year — only 8000 people go to

rural and regional Victoria. As Melbourne gets bigger my electorate is going to get bigger too. There could be a time when you have one electorate which represents a quarter of the state and you have only got one voice behind it.

If we do not see balanced population growth in this state and a recognition of the contribution our country communities make, whether it be through agriculture and the enormous amount of gross domestic product that our regional communities contribute to the state, whether it be the fantastic supports we have in relation to providing good educational opportunities and making sure that people can get the health care that they need at the time that they need it, we will not close the gap on some of the differentials. In my part of the state unfortunately we are top of the list when it comes to obesity, when it comes to diabetes and when it comes to cardiac health and poor cardiac outcomes. It is because we are not getting that investment. My concern is that if we do not reverse this population trend of everything focusing on Melbourne, then we are only going to fall further behind in country Victoria. This city-centric government is absolutely killing country Victoria.

I would like to make quick mention of the family violence support and safety hubs. There is only one hub for the western Victoria region of the Department of Health and Human Services to cover about a quarter of the state. It is unacceptable for someone who is escaping a violent family situation to have to travel hundreds of kilometres to get support. If I can move across to my shadow portfolio of mental health, in this budget we saw a cut in acute mental health beds. This is something that we simply do not need. We have gone from 192 000 acute mental health beds when we were in government to 153 574 this year. That is a huge cut. The Australian Medical Association put out a media release that day and came out with a scathing statement, saying:

Today's budget does not go far enough, the funding for mental health will not make the difference that is desperately needed.

...

Too many Victorians are unable to access the health care that they need. AMA Victoria was hopeful that today's budget would address these widespread inadequacies; it does not ...

In terms of access to drug rehabilitation, we have seen cuts in access to the number of residential rehab beds. We have seen cuts to the number of commenced courses of treatment expected, whether it is community treatment or residential drug treatment. It is simply not good enough. This is why the drug crime rate is escalating. People who are hitting rock bottom should

be supported to get the assistance they need to break their addiction. This government's *Ice Action Plan* is an absolute dud and needs to be revised, because it is not working at the moment. It is clear that only a Liberal-Nationals government will bring Victoria back to the whole state it needs to be.

**Ms HUTCHINS** (Minister for Local Government) — I rise to speak on the motion to take note of the budget papers. I am very, very pleased that this budget really delivers on the Andrews government's commitments in focusing on the things that matter to all Victorians: better schools for our kids, better health and hospital outcomes and more trains to get us home sooner. We are getting rid of those dangerous level crossings that not only clog up our streets but also put lives at risk. We are building better roads, and our commitment to the West Gate tunnel as a second river crossing is a much-needed asset to those in the west and in the Geelong region. We are giving police the resources and the power they need to keep Victorians safe.

One of the proudest elements of this budget for me has been the unprecedented commitment of \$1.9 billion to tackle family violence and to end the scourge of family violence across this state. There is the investment in 17 safety hubs and the rollout of new technology and new systems to ensure the safety in particular of women and children across our state so we are able to protect them and ensure that police are working together with agencies to support those victims to get out of those situations. I know for a fact that that has been very much welcomed by many residents in my electorate of Sydenham.

In this budget we are also slashing payroll tax for Victorian businesses and we are making it easier for people to buy their first homes. We have kickstarted the Metro Tunnel after the former Liberal government abandoned it. We are fixing our TAFE system after it was gutted by those opposite. We are getting Victorians back to work. We have created more than 100 000 new jobs in the last year alone, more than the rest of the country combined. That is why we are focused on getting on with the job. In my electorate of Sydenham in particular I want to acknowledge some commitments that were made in the budget that will change the face of my electorate and really deliver for the huge unprecedented growth that we are experiencing across both local government areas of Brimbank and Melton.

We saw a commitment in the budget for some further upgrades to the Calder Freeway between the M80 and Diggers Rest, and some planning money around that. There is some additional planning money to improve

the Calder Park Drive–Calder Freeway interchange, a blackspot in our community about which residents have been in contact with me. In fact the Calder Action Group have done a power of work in this area, and I know that they welcome the planning money to look at how we fix this blackspot in our community and make it a safer place to be using to get to and from work.

I also commend the commitment to the M80 ring-road upgrade, something that I spoke in detail about yesterday in the house, and of course the amazing new commitment of \$23 million for the Taylors Hill Secondary College — that is its interim name — a college I know was lobbied hard for and won by our local community. At a time when more and more children are moving into or being born in the area without a secondary school to go to within their local area, this funding will provide much-needed resources to local families. I look forward to that school opening its doors in the new year, 2018, to welcome year 7s and year 10s. Already we have many parents contacting my electorate office indicating their interest in having their kids attend that school.

I also acknowledge funding of \$5.4 million over the next four years for a crisis centre in the Melton region, one that is going to be run by Hope Street Youth and Family Services. It is a service for homeless young people. Unfortunately when I drive through Melton on a regular basis, particularly at night to visit my mum, who lives there, I see a lot of homeless young people sleeping at bus stops. There is a real need out there to have some sort of youth crisis accommodation, and the Andrews government is getting on with delivering that facility.

Of course there is the ongoing investment in the Melbourne Metro Tunnel. We know that in time that investment will deliver an increased capacity on the Sunbury line of up to 70 per cent. It will also give us the capacity to have new high-capacity Metro trains to be used on the Sunbury–Pakenham line once the tunnel is completed. When talking to some residents just last week in my electorate to explain the Metro Tunnel, they referred to it as the Tunnel of Love, because they love it so much — love it, love the Melbourne Metro Tunnel, the Love Tunnel — because they know that it is going to deliver more train services to our local area.

We have also committed \$50 million to plan the new Footscray Hospital development and service the growing population in Melbourne's inner west and the urgent need that is there. There are plenty of people in the outer west too that rely on the services at that hospital. So that is also welcome. We also welcome the \$319 million invested in the health portfolio to reduce waiting lists for

elective surgery and to deliver 600 new elective surgery procedures in 2017–18, a major step forward.

There is \$1.3 billion to meet hospital demands for an additional 41 000 admissions. Much of that money will go into servicing emergency treatment and giving the backup that is much needed to our emergency departments. I acknowledge the great work done by Sunshine Hospital emergency department, which treats so many of our families in the west on a daily basis. I am extremely excited to have the cranes in the sky and construction underway on the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital at Sunshine. I know our community is waiting with bated breath for that facility to open.

In terms of my portfolio responsibilities, I also want to acknowledge and welcome the whole-of-government commitment to Aboriginal affairs in this budget. The 2017–18 budget reflects the government's commitment to Aboriginal Victorians and self-determination. Overall, \$140 million has been allocated through the state budget to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Within my own portfolio of Aboriginal affairs a total of \$68.2 million has been allocated with a focus on a number of areas: on improving self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians and supporting the process of treaty; and looking at ways within government we can embed self-determination for decision-making and access for Aboriginal Victorians.

At this point it is appropriate to mention the national approach that is currently underway, including the conversations that have been had at a national level around constitutional recognition — there was a conference at Uluru only a few weeks ago — but here in Victoria we are leading the way, and we are proud to be supporting those moves on a national level.

To ensure Aboriginal Victorians continue to be at the centre of our family violence reforms we have also committed \$33.6 million over the next four years to be allocated to address family violence against Aboriginal Victorians, who are way overrepresented in the statistics of family violence. This has been allocated to support social and emotional wellbeing, mental health, education and to target our early years as well.

Within my portfolio we are allocating \$28.5 million towards supporting self-determination and treaty, including interim governance and representative arrangements and initiatives to embed self-determination and to look at ways to give more autonomy to community infrastructure and community organisations within the Aboriginal community by establishing the Community Infrastructure Fund not only to invest in a strategic approach with community

infrastructure investment in Aboriginal communities but to also run the removal of first mortgages initiative, which is to allow and support Aboriginal organisations into the future to have repairs and maintenance done so they can have the mortgages removed from their properties. That fund also provides funds for legal fees in preparation for that and to make sure that Aboriginal organisations are ready to move into that phase. This is really a true initiative of self-determination. There are currently 53 properties owned by 25 Aboriginal organisations which will be eligible to benefit from this removal of first mortgages initiative.

Within the budget of Aboriginal affairs \$17.9 million has been allocated to invest in leadership, governance and strong culture. Two particular organisations that demonstrate great integrity, strength and ability to deliver and connect Aboriginal communities are being invested in. They are the Koorie Youth Council, which is at the forefront of delivering governance skills and policy advice in the area of Koori youth, and also the Local Aboriginal Networks, the lands groups. Those lands groups that operate across Victoria provide an inclusive structure for Aboriginal people and their partners to work together on a local level. That has been a really successful model. There are 17 Aboriginal community brokers that support those land networks, and I am really proud to say that the local Aboriginal networks are the largest government-enabled network of Aboriginal people across Australia. Here in Victoria we have over 2200 Aboriginal Victorians participating in the 39 lands that exist across this state, and we will continue to support them through our budget initiatives and the support of Aboriginal Victoria.

In addition to that, this budget again puts the needs of local growing communities first and again supports rural and regional communities through our commitments made in the local government area.

There is ongoing funding for the Growing Suburbs Fund, which supports interface councils on Melbourne's urban fringes that are experiencing massive population growth, as outlined by the planning minister earlier. This is about making sure that we have got infrastructure in place, in time and ready to support those communities as new communities develop.

Since this fund was established in the 2015–16 budget, we have been able to commit \$150 million in total to this program. To date it has enabled the delivery of 76 projects, representing a total infrastructure investment of over \$235 million, and in the process this has created 2700 local jobs in the building process and the upgrading process of these facilities. Long term, once these facilities are finalised, it will deliver around

200 ongoing jobs. It is absolutely unquestionable that the fund has made a huge difference to the lives of local people on Melbourne's fringes, and I am pleased that this budget continues to deliver on that.

In terms of our commitment to rural and regional councils, the Andrews government is making sure our regional cities and towns and rural communities have the infrastructure and services that they need to thrive. This current budget provides \$1 million to collaboratively develop a rural and regional council sustainability program. In particular, the funding will be used to look at options to assist rural and regional councils with the many challenges they face in maintaining large infrastructure bases, smaller populations and sometimes multiple town centres and the challenges of agricultural structures that are constantly changing. The budget also delivers \$5.4 million over the next two years to continue the roadside weeds and pests program, one that I know is welcomed by many councils across the state. And of course this budget builds upon our ongoing support for libraries, in particular rural libraries, by us continuing to have the Living Libraries Infrastructure Program rolled out.

In addition to this, through the 2017–18 budget the government has also invested a total of \$29 million for priority projects in our regional communities. Regional communities have told us what is important to them through the structures of the regional partnerships, which have been a huge success. As part of that regional partnerships process, \$200 000 has been allocated to the development of a business case for the Munarra Centre of Regional Excellence in Shepparton, which is something that I fully support. I know that this sort of centre, once it is purpose built, will into the future deliver an education, sporting, cultural and community centre for the region's Aboriginal community.

This budget has delivered so much for working Victorians, not only in jobs investment but also in standing up for workers rights across the state. I am very pleased that we have been able to support the establishment of an Equal Workplaces Advisory Council to look at, oversee and support gender equity in our workplaces in Victoria. I very much commend the bill to the house.

**Mr DIXON (Nepean)** — It is important to make comment on the budget in this take-note motion, and I am glad to contribute to it. It is always vital, I think, to establish the context of a budget. No single year's budget actually stands on its own; each is built on previous budgets, including those of previous

governments. This budget, like any other Victorian budget, is no exception to that rule.

I want to go back to 2010 and lay the foundation of my contribution there. In 2010, when the coalition came into government, the state was actually in structural deficit. That is not a bit of spin; that is what the Auditor-General said. There was a massively bloated public service that had been increasing far beyond the growth rate of the state, let alone the growth rate of the state's economy.

We also inherited in 2010 from the last years of the Brumby government an incredibly bungled pokies option. People might say, 'Well, that's old history'. That was a pokies option that was intended, on conservative estimates, to reap \$2 billion, \$3 billion or even \$4 billion for the state.

**Mr T. Bull** interjected.

**Mr DIXON** — Yes. As the member for Gippsland East says, it went very well — and it bottomed out at \$800 million. You might think that that is a sizable amount, but when you were banking on billions more than that it was a massive blow to the state's economy. Might I add that the gaming minister at that time was the now Premier. At the same time as this perfect storm, we also had to have massive writedowns of billions of dollars over the forward estimates as our share of GST was cut. Obviously that really did cut into our state budget. Also at the same time we had quite stagnant growth, not only in population but also economic growth here in the state. So when we came to government in 2010, that was the context of what we inherited.

It so often happens that coalition governments come in and have to do the hard work. Sometimes it is unpopular work, but it is work that has to be done to get the budget back on track. As I said, this is not just me saying that we inherited a crook budget. The Auditor-General said that we were in structural deficit. So what did we do? We did the hard work. We turned the economy around, we injected confidence back into the state and we laid the foundation for the budgets that the Labor Party have delivered since they came into government.

**Ms Thomas** — How come you lost?

**Mr DIXON** — The member for Macedon says, 'Why did you lose?'. As I said, when you inherit structural deficit you cannot just continue that way. Sometimes you have to do the hard things and not the easy things. Government is about the hard things. It is not all about glossy brochures; it is about doing the hard things for all people, for the state — not only for your government but for future governments at the same

time. It is not just about the next election and the next political cycle or media cycle. It is about doing the hard work, and that is what we did.

Despite all that, we kept the budget in surplus and we increased our spending in all service areas. We so often hear from those opposite — and they are still saying it — 'Oh, but you cut funding here and you cut funding there'. We did not. Every single budget increased. As the then Minister for Education, a major portfolio, I had the responsibility to make savings. The bottom line is that, yes, some programs did not continue forever. What you do is pick the ones that work. We actually increased education spending year by year by year. So during the four years of the coalition government, in education — let alone in health and police and emergency services — despite what we inherited in 2010 we actually increased spending in every single one of those important service delivery areas for the community. So it can be done. You can do the hard things and you can also deliver good government at the same time. It is amazing that we hear, 'You cut spending here; you cut spending there'. We get it all the time.

When you challenge someone, including a minister, to show where that cut actually is in the budget — that was passed by the Auditor-General — there is no cut. It is just not there, because it did not happen. I suppose the more you say it, the more people believe it, so I think it is very important that the record is set straight on a number of occasions by those who lived through that.

I will refer specifically to a few of the lowlights of the budget before I talk about my electorate. Some things do rise in budgets. What we have found in this year's budget is that the only thing that has risen faster and at a higher rate than the crime rate, which was 20 per cent, is the tax rate, which has increased, according to the budget, by 22 per cent — hardly something to write home about. The cost of living relief that I think so many people look forward to and want — and I will talk about my electorate in a moment — just was not there. It was a very, very hard budget for those people who are on fixed incomes and for pensioners, those on low incomes. On the things that affect their everyday weekly budgets, despite the surpluses, despite the solid growth and the solid bank account that was inherited by this government, the budget just did not deliver in an area that is very, very important to the everyday budgets of everyday Victorians.

As the Leader of the Opposition said today, this government actually started on a lie. On the eve of the election, the now Premier promised that if he was Premier there would be no tax increases at all and no new taxes. As we know, that was a lie, and that lie has

been perpetuated over the three budgets of this government. In fact we have seen 10 new taxes or increased charges introduced by this government over its three budgets.

One of the things that people find very hard to come to grips with is how debt can be increasing by \$10 billion when there is a \$4 billion tax increase, when \$10 billion has been reaped from the port of Melbourne lease sale and when there is an extra \$13 billion in GST receipts over the forward estimates. They are massive amounts of money, and yet at the same time the government is spending like a drunken sailor and debt is increasing by \$10 billion. It is very, very important that when you have good economic conditions, when you have these sorts of taxes coming in, when you have the growth you have, when you finally get a break in GST payments and when you have a major sale like the port of Melbourne lease you put some of that money in the bank, you make some of the hard decisions and you actually save for the future and invest in the future. What do we see? We see the state debt increasing by \$10 billion.

I have just a couple of infrastructure projects which I think deserve mention, beginning with the north-east link. Having been a child of the north-eastern suburbs, I know that area very well and I have family and friends there. That is a road project which I think has bipartisan agreement; we agree that it is very important. But from what we actually saw from the announcements, from the media releases and from the headlines in the newspapers, it was almost like the road was starting construction. All it is at this stage is a thought bubble. There is a minute amount of money for planning and to look at a feasibility study.

A very interesting aspect of that north-east road link is that a sky road right through the beautiful outer north-eastern suburbs has not been ruled out. My good friend the member for Ivanhoe will be the next speaker, and I am sure he is going to be as vocal about that as he has been about the West Heidelberg police station when we were in government for a number of years. That would be an absolute travesty, a cut-price road like that through those beautiful north-eastern suburbs. That project has a long, long way to go, but if you read the glossy brochures, if you read the media releases, you would think the road was almost constructed and ready to go. That is far from the case, and I call on all members out that way and the Premier to actually rule out a sky road through those beautiful areas.

The regional rail upgrade is interesting. We got a whole splash in the Sunday papers before the budget about it; supposedly there was this massive amount, hundreds of

millions of dollars, being spent on it. I thought, 'Gee that is good, that is a lot of money, I wonder where they found that'. When you read the fine print there was no state government money, it was all federal government money. It was like the federal government putting out a media release and saying, 'We're going to spend \$35 billion on a new fighter jet and the state can take credit for it'.

You just do not do those sorts of things. You do not announce the money and the projects of another level of government and call them your own. But I hand it to them, they got away with it. I do not know what they fed the journalists who reported on it; I know it was an exclusive but, goodness me, how you can make such a big issue about something you are not spending any money on is quite incredible. For example, I could boast that I have provided the member for East Gippsland with his great house and say, 'Aren't I a wonderful person because I have provided it for him?'. I have not — he did, he paid for it. It is the same sort of thing and it is a ridiculous thing to say.

The Melbourne Metro project — work has started on that. The various concepts of Melbourne Metro have got bipartisan support, but where that might go, we have a difference of opinion on that, and its capacity. The one that we had planned was of a higher capacity than the one that is going ahead now, but we cannot turn this one back. We will not do so when we come into government — we will not be filling it in and paying it out, but allow that project to continue. Unfortunately — and it will probably be our lot when we come into government in 2018 — it is not fully funded, and that is another thing that we will have to find money for.

When you have been around here for a while you see some of these cycles going around. When we came into government we inherited something called the regional rail project — except the project did not have any bridges, it did not have any crossings, it did not have any trains and it did not have any signals. You knew it was out there and it was a great project, but it was totally underdone. So that was another thing on top of all the other major issues that I talked about earlier that we inherited that we had to fix up and go ahead with. I fear that Melbourne Metro will be another one of those.

The cost of living, especially the cost of power, is a massive issue in my electorate of Nepean. I have the oldest electorate profile: 28 per cent of the people in my electorate are aged more than 65 years old, and that is by far the largest in Melbourne. A massive amount of the constituents in my electorate are on a fixed income: they are either pensioners or superannuants, and that is

reflected in the fact that it is the fifth poorest electorate in the state. So it is the oldest and the fifth poorest, therefore the majority of people are on fixed incomes. When you see these cost-of-living increases, they are the things that really affect the everyday budgets of the people that live in my electorate. As I said earlier there was absolutely no relief in terms of cost-of-living pressures for the many, many people in my electorate.

Another issue that is going to affect people in my area, and right throughout the south and south-east of Melbourne, is the slug for this wonderful road that CityLink are going to build out in the west, a road that will probably be used by 0.1 per cent of people in my area. We now have to pay tolls for an extra 10 years for a road that we will never use. That is grossly unfair and we will not see any benefit at all from that road. I do not mind user-pays, but this is not user-pays; we will not be users but we will still be paying. I think it is an absolute aberration in terms of what toll roads are and how they should work.

There have been no increases in public transport in my area. Again Nepean is a poor area with very low levels of car ownership and very low levels of people with licences. We have only got one direction to go and that is to Frankston for services, including medical services, and our bus route is just not coping with the demand. We also have the highest rated or worst rated freeway noise on an established freeway. There are absolutely no sound barriers on the Nepean section of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway.

Not one school received capital works funding in Nepean, including the Red Hill Consolidated School, which I have mentioned on numerous occasions here, and which the minister has said he will visit. It is in dire need, it is past the maintenance need because they have been paying for all their own maintenance for years and years, and have not been able to actually spend any money on the educational functions of their school. It is their turn for funding. They have had no capital works since the school was built back in the 1950s.

Law and order is also a massive issue in Nepean. When you have got an elderly population, a home-bound population, they are very, very worried about law and order. They are worried about the fact that the police capacity of our full-time police station at Rosebud is well down on the number of police it is entitled to have. That is reflected in the lack of quick responses and the lack of police presence out there in the community.

Finally, the volunteers of the Rosebud Country Fire Authority (CFA), which is an integrated station, are very, very worried about their future. They want to

serve the community of Rosebud where they actually live, but they have absolutely no confidence that everything will be exactly the same if the changes that this government wants to make to the CFA are going to happen. These are some of the issues in my electorate. It was a very, very poor budget for the Nepean district.

**Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe)** — I am pleased to make a contribution in relation to the take-note motion on the budget. In representing the Ivanhoe electorate I know that the key aspects of concern to people in my electorate are that they want to see their taxpayer dollars invested in a return on the contributions they make in their community. They are particularly interested in those inner suburban issues of their services, where they send their kids to school, where they get their health services, how they get to and from work on our road network and our public transport network, and all of those investments by government that leverage private investment and generate value in their biggest investment, which is where they live.

In the budget this year in particular we have continued to invest in what are the critical points for people in my community. In particular there is a \$1 million investment for master planning at Banyule Primary School, a school that has over 650 students and that is in significant need of upgrading and modernising. To put together \$1 million for that master planning work to be done before Christmas is critical for the families and the students at that school. I am very pleased that we will have the opportunity to do that master planning work over the rest of the year, and I look forward to working with the school community to deliver that work. Then we can argue our case for next year's budget to fund the capital development of that Banyule Primary School project.

I also congratulate the Heidelberg West community in my electorate. We have been able to secure \$500 000 for master planning for the Olympic Village campus, the P-6 campus of the Charles La Trobe College. That \$500 000 investment is for a school that has less than 100 students, but it is a school that is absolutely iconic and critical to the local community. It goes back to the 1956 Olympics, and a lot of the Olympic Village area is up for renewal and needs investment and work. Securing \$500 000 for the master planning work at Olympic Village sends a very clear message that the Andrews government is committed to investing in the future of young people and families in Heidelberg West. We will work together, and we have already had several meetings with the school community, with the principal and with the school council to discuss the work that needs to be done by the school through the rest of this year to ensure we have a design for the

redevelopment of the Olympic Village campus. We want to design something that caters for 180 to 200 students on that site, which will secure the future of the Olympic Village and the Heidelberg West education options well into the future.

I am very thankful for the opportunity to work with those two schools across my electorate out of this year's budget. It builds on education investments under the Andrews government across my electorate, including the \$11.5 million investment at Viewbank College, my old high school in Viewbank, for a new double-storey performing arts centre and upgraded administration facilities as well as maths, science and engineering facilities and classrooms. That work is already underway and will be concluded by the end of next year.

When you go across to Ivanhoe Primary School, where my mother taught for very many years, you see a school that has around 600 students. It is a school that has secured \$2 million under our government for new classrooms and modernisation of the school. At this stage we have already seen the architect's designs. The \$2 million worth of works will be concluded later next year.

Then I go across to Rosanna Golf Links Primary School, which is under the great leadership of Kelly Morrow, the principal, and the school council and their community. This school is also the regional deaf facility in my electorate, and it provides schooling for over 500 students. It is also in the midst of a significant redevelopment and has secured further funding. It is a project that is a now well over \$6 million investment. This will bring the facilities at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School up to an appropriate and modern standard to match the 21st century teaching that is provided by the staff, the support networks and the school community.

You cannot do these things overnight. You are trying to work through the stages of that redevelopment during the school year so you can move students around and work through that redevelopment project. We have already opened one of the stages of that redevelopment, and a further stage will be concluded this year and into next year. We will have that project and that significant school at Rosanna Golf Links redeveloped later next year through an over \$6 million investment from the Victorian government. That is a very significant project.

Education has been a very clear priority for our government in my electorate. We have seen investments in schools like we have never seen before. I also touch on St Martin of Tours Primary School,

which caters for over 500 students in my electorate. It is a Catholic school that provides great opportunities for learning and for the understanding of social justice and faith in our community. It is a very significant school. It has received \$1.5 million of a \$3 million commitment, also from Catholic Education Melbourne. That redevelopment work is also underway to modernise classrooms at the school. I am working very closely with the school on the project, which is at the point now where the results of tenders have been received, and we will be progressing that work very soon.

We have already seen some further commitments to the Chandler Highway bridge duplication work. It is a \$110 million project. They said it could not be done, but it will be duplicated. That work is starting now. We will be back out there on site in the coming couple of weeks, but the duplication of the Chandler Highway bridge, one of only really two very significant crossings of the Yarra River in my electorate, will be concluded by the middle of next year.

In the meantime we now see well underway, as outlined in the budget papers, the \$140 million duplication of the Hurstbridge line between Heidelberg and Rosanna. It is a rail line that has been in place there for over a century. Everyone said it could not be done. As a Rosanna resident, with my electorate office at Rosanna station, I have been stuck at either one side or the other of Rosanna or Heidelberg in order to get through that single section of track — a pinch point. If anyone wants to go down to the Hurstbridge line now, they will see that duplication work is underway. That is part of the upgrade of the line to ensure we can provide more peak services. It is part of the removal of the level crossing at Rosanna on Lower Plenty Road. Those boom gates will be gone by about Christmas this year. We will have the duplication of the track completed by the end of this year just about, and then following on the redeveloped and modernised Rosanna train station will be developed into 2018.

These are very significant projects. They are part also of the removal of the Grange Road level crossing on the Hurstbridge line in my colleague's electorate of Northcote. We are investing some \$390 million of Victorians' money on the Hurstbridge line between Fairfield/Alphington and Rosanna in removing those level crossings and duplicating the track and then investing further funds of \$5 million in working out how we can duplicate the track between Greensborough and Eltham, particularly getting through to Montmorency. Those planning works in the budget are underway. They will provide the opportunity to run more peak-hour services and more frequent services from Eltham in my colleague's electorate.

I commend both you, Speaker, in Bundoora, and the member for Eltham for your lobbying work. We have been with the member for Yan Yean and the member for Northcote along that Hurstbridge line. We are a formidable team delivering unprecedented investment in upgrading the Hurstbridge line for those many, many citizens in our electorates who want to be able to get around the city. This is all adding value to their properties, and it is adding value to the communities in which they live. It is putting on unprecedented pressure, of course, because more people want to live in the great suburbs of the Ivanhoe electorate.

We have also seen funding allocated in this budget for the north-east link. This is about the final works that are required for planning the link. We have set up the North East Link Authority and allocated \$100 million in the budget to do some detailed planning work. We will be back out there in July or August, I suspect, to talk through the options that are available, get some community feedback on that, get into the real detail of which options are feasible and what is possible and then of course do further detailed work based on that community feedback.

But that \$100 million is to secure a route for the north-east link. As a government, unlike those opposite, we have committed to making sure that we will take to the next election a north-east link, a freeway link in the north-east. We will take to the election a costed-up proposal, a fully designed proposal, and Victorian people can make a decision on whether they want that link and whether they support our government, and we will sign contracts after the election if we are re-elected — unlike those opposite, who with an unelected Premier and a project that did not have a mandate sought to ram that through and then punish Victorians by signing side deals before the election. They were punished by the Victorian electorate for that behaviour. That is not the way in which the Labor government operates. We have made it very clear that we will ensure that we invest in this work. We will do the hard yards and we will let the Victorian people decide at the next election whether it is a project they think is of value to them.

In relation to the investment in education in my electorate, the investment in public transport on the Hurstbridge line, the investment in our road network in my electorate and the ongoing commitment to health services at both the Austin and Mercy hospitals, this is a budget that continues to deliver on what is important to Victorians, which is to make sure that they can get to and from work on public transport and roads in my electorate, that they can send their kids to the best schools, that they can get the best health care that they

need and that the value of their properties and their significant investments in their electorate and their community are valued by the government and that the taxes they pay are reinvested into the hard work in the communities that they serve as volunteers and as citizens in my electorate. I commend the budget papers, and I commend the people of my electorate for the work they are doing to contribute to a better Victoria.

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — It gives me some pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on the motion to take note of the budget papers. Speaker, with your indulgence and a little bit of digressing, I would also like to congratulate Ray Purdey, our Clerk. I wish all the very best to you, Ray, and your family in your retirement. It is very sad to see you go, but thank you very much for your professional and personal assistance over many years. Thank you, and well done.

Back to the budget papers, it was interesting to note some of comments of the member for Ivanhoe. He seems to have completely forgotten about the West Heidelberg police station, which he spoke so passionately about in the last term of Parliament. I still do not see it in the budget, so that is very interesting. But, nonetheless, on this side of the house many people have spoken about the number of promises broken by this government and particularly the Premier. The interview that the Premier had with Peter Mitchell just prior to the election, when he promised no new taxes and no increases in taxes, has been well covered.

When you have a look at the latest budget you see that in just over two years we have seen an increase in taxation of \$4 billion — not \$4 million but \$4 billion — an increase in taxation revenue of some 22 per cent, which is quite extraordinary in just over two years. When you average that out, it is an extra \$2000 for every Victorian household. If you are collecting that much additional revenue in taxation, you have got to then have a look at what are you doing with it. As the member for South Barwon said when he spoke about the east–west link, that is where some of that money has gone — \$1.2 billion to not build a road is absolutely extraordinary.

The thing that concerns me is that with all that additional revenue coming into government coffers there appears to be no relief at all for householders and businesses, whether it comes to taxation itself, electricity and gas bills, water costs rising all over the place or transport fares going up. There is absolutely no relief for individuals, householders or businesses with respect to all that additional revenue. In terms of the broken promise of no additional new taxes, it is extraordinary

when you go through the list of new taxes that have been introduced by this Premier and this government.

We now have the annual property valuations, and they will increase land tax rates and council rates. We have new stamp duties on property transfers between spouses, new stamp duties on off-the-plan purchases, increased stamp duty on new cars, and I will come back to that particular point in a moment. We have got increases to the fire services property levy. Imagine what it is going to be like if this government gets through its fire services reforms that it is trying to implement. It will just be extraordinary for householders and businesses. Then we have got stamp duty surcharge increases, we have got land tax surcharge increases, we have now got the debate in the Parliament this week around taxis, Uber and a new tax being imposed on commuters, and from a local perspective we have got the additional \$252 million increase in taxes on some of the Latrobe Valley's largest employers. It is just absolutely extraordinary when you go through that list.

I referred earlier to some of the concerns being expressed about the increase in stamp duty on new cars. This is an issue that has been raised with me by a number of local car dealers, who are very concerned. But it is probably all encapsulated in an advertisement that the VACC, the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, put out in a newspaper not long after the budget. It was under the heading, 'Why drive new car deals out of Victoria? Not happy Dan!'. The article underneath that, about the government's budget announcement to increase stamp duty on new cars from 1 July 2017 and addressed 'Dear Premier', said this had absolutely:

... disappointed Victorian new car dealers and will impact the hip pocket of consumers purchasing that much-sought-after new car.

They go on to talk about the lack of consultation — no consultation — with the car industry and the impact upon not only the businesses but consumers as well.

I have heard from quite a few car dealers within the Morwell electorate, and like the VACC they are absolutely filthy and angry that this stamp duty increase has occurred without any consultation. They are really fearful, and the figures and statistics back up that sentiment. We have had a significant decrease in new car sales within the Latrobe Valley community, and they fear that this further impost will only make the situation worse. In my community, where you have got rising unemployment — where unemployment has increased by 50 per cent under this government in two years — people simply do not have the money to spend on new

vehicles. Now it will be made incredibly harder because of the increase in stamp duty on new vehicles. This is a massive concern for car dealers within my electorate.

At a time when you have the loss of Hazelwood and the future loss of Carter Holt Harvey jobs, you have probably got \$100 million annually in expenditure coming out of our community that will not be there in the future. This decision around the increase in stamp duty on new cars is not welcomed, and it is not welcomed by car dealers and consumers.

In the budget itself the government has spruiked a government hub that it is looking to place down in the Latrobe Valley. In budget paper 2, 'Strategy and outlook', in chapter 1 at page 15 it talks about the notion that these government hubs will support jobs and growth in the regions. It says:

... building on the 2016–17 budget's investment in a government hub in the Latrobe Valley, expected to bring 150 government jobs to the region.

There is no reference at all in the 2016–17 budget to a government hub in the Latrobe Valley and in the budget papers themselves there is no funding allocated to a government hub in the Latrobe Valley. From the community's point of view, yes, any notion of the creation of new jobs or the relocation of government departments or agencies is welcome, but the fact is, as I said, there is no reference in the 2016–17 budget to this government hub and there is no funding in the current year's budget. The government is talking about constructing this in mid-2020; it does not help us right here and now in the Latrobe Valley, when we need those jobs.

To confuse the matter even further, we have had three different quotes on the number of jobs that the government hub would bring to the valley. In the budget papers it talks about 150 jobs. There are quotes from ministers saying it will be 100 and then 170, so again we wait with bated breath to see what might happen with the government hub. I make the point that whilst it has been announced by the government as a key initiative for the Latrobe Valley, the reality is it is not going to happen until 2020. The government has not allocated any funding and certainly has no idea about how many jobs it will actually create.

The budget papers also talk about the Gippsland rail upgrade. People are well aware of those matters. The reality is the mantra put out by the state government with respect to these upgrades is absolutely disgraceful. There is no funding at all allocated by the state government towards the Gippsland rail upgrade. This is money they are trying to extract out of the federal

government. But I make the point that the state government has had an opportunity for two and a half years now to make vast improvements to Gippsland rail services by adopting coalition policies. It has done very little towards adopting those policies, and now it is calling on the federal government to fund these projects. It is just outrageous. When you look back in history it has been the state government's responsibility to fund these projects. To simply throw your hands in the air or shrug your shoulders and say, 'Oh well, if the federal government doesn't contribute to this, then we're not going to build it', I think is absolutely disgraceful, particularly when I say it is the state government's responsibility to fund those programs.

Further in the budget papers there is a page dedicated to assistance for the Latrobe Valley, and it talks about \$266 million that has been allocated for a Latrobe Valley assistance package. It says \$266 million, and it provides a little bit of a breakdown about where that money will be spent. People in my community know that \$252 million of that \$266 million assistance package has been ripped out of Latrobe Valley employers, because just last year this government imposed an extra \$252 million in taxes on Latrobe Valley employers. Here they are now saying they are saviours with a \$266 million package. I am sorry, but that has been funded by employers from within our own region, and we know of the demise of one, which has already closed its doors. People in our community are acutely aware of that.

Another matter I would like to address in terms of assistance to the Latrobe Valley is the talk about cutting red tape to lower the cost and time required to do business in the Latrobe Valley. I am sorry, but these are just hollow words. I have a number of developers who have come to me in recent months who have projects ready to go — and even today I was on the phone with one. They do not necessarily want the state government to provide financial assistance to them, but they need assistance with state government departments and agencies, whether it be water authorities, whether it be road authorities or whether it be local councils, and they are just sitting idle and are getting nowhere. You can say those words all you like, but it is just not happening in reality at the moment.

If you are really going to provide assistance for the Latrobe Valley, I will tell you what you should not do — and it was stated in question time today. Surely when there is an opportunity for the state government to work within the community, particularly after you have lost hundreds of jobs and are about to lose hundreds more jobs, it should try, if it can, to give the community at least a possibility to do that work. We have a situation in

Morwell at the moment where we have seen the demolition of two primary schools. Nothing against the particular contractor on site, but — heavens above! — they are from the other side of the state. I have spoken to two of my local demolition contractors who know nothing about this. There was no tender process, and it is just a real kick in the guts for local businesses when they have not even been given the opportunity. If they lose out because they are not qualified or the costs are too high, I would accept that, I could appreciate that, but they were not given the opportunity. Again they are just hollow words in the budget.

When I look at the rural and regional part of the budget and the heading 'Creating and protecting jobs in the regions', I think I will just fold that part away, because that is not what is happening in our region. When you have got Hazelwood power station that has just closed and the state government has done nothing to even try to extend its life, and more importantly the jobs of those employees, and you have got Carter Holt Harvey employees at a timber mill that is about to close down, with jobs being lost next month and the month after that, I do not call that creating and protecting jobs in the regions. It is far from it, and unfortunately the statistics do not lie — that is, in two years under this government unemployment in Latrobe city has increased by 50 per cent.

What the budget did not deliver for my community was desperately needed upgrades to Yallourn North Primary School and Latrobe Special Developmental School. An election commitment that we made in 2014 was for the redevelopment of Newborough Country Fire Authority, which is also desperately needed. Unfortunately that was not in the budget. Funding for our mental health support group, Barrier Breakers, and also the Gippsland Carers Association — something that the coalition government funded when in office — was unfortunately cut by the current government, and we have not seen funding reinstated for those important organisations.

I must say that there were a number of election commitments made in 2014 right across our communities, and a number of those unfortunately still have not been taken up by the current government. In summary, it is a disappointing budget for all Victorians because there is no relief in costs for businesses or households, but we look forward to hopefully more being done in the Morwell electorate in the future.

**Ms WARD (Eltham)** — It is quite amazing to listen to those opposite saying that this is a disappointing budget, because I do not really think that they have paid too much attention to the budget whatsoever. If they had, they would see the terrific picture that is painted

for Victoria's future thanks to the investments that the Andrews Labor government is putting into this state.

We have put substantial investments into this state since we were elected. One of the first things we invested in was the Hurstbridge line, which I know is important to you, Speaker, I know it is important to the member for Yan Yean and I know it is important to the member for Ivanhoe. Indeed I see the member for Yuroke in the chamber and I know that she also has an interest in the Hurstbridge line having, like me, spent a great deal of her youth travelling along that train line. She is, like me, amazed that the timetable has barely changed since she and I were teens. I am happy to say that this government, another Labor government, is doing something about it.

We stand on the shoulders of the previous Labor government which invested well in excess of \$100 million in the Hurstbridge line to upgrade the line between Clifton Hill and Westgarth, the first time that duplication had occurred. It also invested in upgrading signalling and invested in stabling to help modernise this train line, which had been treated pretty much as a country line for some time when it is only 25 kilometres from the city to Eltham. In this budget we are investing \$5 million for a business plan to duplicate the line between Greensborough and Eltham. This is tremendous and builds on the \$141 million that we have already invested to duplicate the line between Rosanna and Heidelberg and remove the level crossing, which is on its way out. This is a substantial investment. A new station will be built at Rosanna. The Hurstbridge line is on the way to being transformed, and that is brilliant. The timetabling benefits that are going to flow from this substantial investment in the train line are going to transform public transport in this state.

While I am talking about public transport, I will mention a new bus route. The member for Yan Yean and I jumped on a bus with our lollies and cupcakes only a few days ago. As I have said before in this place, we are bringing the sexy back when it comes to buses, and the route 343 Hurstbridge to Greensborough bus is one sexy bus. It is a great bus. It is a bus which, as the investment in the Hurstbridge line is doing — —

**Mr Katos** interjected.

**Ms WARD** — I do have a bus named after me; thank you for recognising that. And do you know what? Stop bagging the Vicky truck. It is a good truck!

We jumped on the bus and we met people from across our community who were saving a substantial amount of time by getting on this new bus that the Andrews

government has invested in. The member for Yan Yean and I met someone who is going to save half an hour of travel time from school to home because of this bus. The member for Yan Yean and I saw a problem. We went to the Minister for Public Transport, worked through the problem with her, and we have a solution. That is exactly what the Andrews Labor government does. We see problems, we work through to find solutions, and we get things done. We get outcomes that are for the long-lasting benefit of our community members.

There is so much more happening in my community. In fact this government has invested in new Myki readers for Montmorency railway station. We have created a new shelter at Montmorency station. We have invested \$500 000 in improving parking and amenity at and access to Montmorency station. There is so much going on when it comes to public transport in my seat of Eltham.

We are investing \$3 million in this budget in the Austin Hospital, and we have invested \$1.5 million in Eltham High School, which will help to transform the sporting facilities at that school. I hope the Minister for Education is listening, because I also want to tap into the Shared Facilities Fund and I hope he looks kindly on my school.

We have \$670 million for an upgrade on the M80 Ring Road. This will help not only people in your electorate, Speaker, in Bundoora, but it will also help residents in the electorate of the member for Yan Yean and in my electorate. We have \$100 million for planning the north-east link, the first government that has ever put substantial money into recognising the traffic challenges that occur in the north-east and actually wants to do something about it. There is so much going on.

We have \$8.3 million for Montmorency Primary School, a terrific school with a fantastic principal and amazing community. This school is going to be physically transformed. Its facilities will match the excellence of its students, staff and community. It is a fantastic investment in our community. We have got works happening right now at the Eltham Leisure Centre, and we have the Eltham Community and Reception Centre, which is almost finished thanks to the amazing, as the member for Sunbury said earlier, Growing Suburbs Fund, which I absolutely love for the transformation that it helps make to outer suburban communities. It is a terrific investment. There is the Montmorency Secondary College building that we announced in previous budgets. That \$40 million project is already underway.

There are so many wonderful things happening in my electorate. To those opposite who say this is a disappointing budget, I say they just need to work harder. They need to get out there, work out what their community needs and fight hard for it instead of damaging, dividing and hurting communities, which is all they are currently spending their time on. They are spending their time trying to make communities scared. They are not interested in positive outcomes. They are not interested in good things for their communities. They are only interested in bellyaching, grandstanding and hurting people because they think that is the key to their electoral success. They do not think that hard work, good policy and recognising the investments the community needs is the way to go forward and to win elections. They think that it is only through hurting people, through causing pain and making people fearful and creating division that they can get ahead.

They could not be more wrong because the parties of austerity are not the parties that win elections. The parties that cut budgets and the parties that want to hurt people are not the parties that people vote for. They are not the parties that people realise their ambitions through. They are not the parties that people think will help look after their children. They are the parties that people know will hurt them. They are the parties that people know will damage communities and will not invest in infrastructure, including community infrastructure. That is what parties of austerity do and that is exactly what those opposite are. They are parties of austerity. They only know how to cut, they only know how to slash and they only know how to abolish. They do not know how to build. Labor is the party that builds. Labor is the party that wants to get things done and that invests in communities.

We have heard a couple of speakers talk about Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley. I think they need a little bit of a wake-up call in terms of what is going on in employment in that area. Employment in that region has increased by 1800 people compared with three months ago, and has increased by 16 600, a 14.6 per cent increase compared with the same time last year. The unemployment rate is now down to 6 per cent from 6.3 per cent in the last quarter. These are important numbers. These are facts. These are not Trump truths like those opposite like to throw around. These are real facts and these are numbers that affect people, because the more jobs we create the more jobs will be created. It is the ripple effect. It is about talking up confidence and talking up the good things that are happening in Gippsland instead of talking Gippsland down, rubbishing Gippsland and the people who are there. We are talking them up. We want to invest in them. We want jobs to grow and it is only through investing in

people and being positive about people, talking about their successes and talking about the good things they are doing, that that is going to happen.

On the Hazelwood power station, we have focused on the whole. We have focused on the things that we can create. We are focused on the whole region. We know that it is disadvantaged. We know that region has struggled, but we are not standing still. Nor are we trying to hurt or divide communities or trying to pit communities against each other. We want communities to stand together, to stand proud and to create a better community. We do not want to use their disadvantage for our own electoral successes. Under this Andrews government we want to build thriving, growing communities and that is exactly what this budget does and that is exactly what this government is doing. That is what is happening in Gippsland. That is what is happening across the state. This is a terrific budget. I commend the budget to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr KATOS (South Barwon).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## RETIREMENT OF CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENTS

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) (*By leave*) — With the courtesy extended to me by the house, it is with great pleasure that I rise to make some brief comments about Mr Ray Purdey, who has served the Parliament, this chamber, our state and the central tenets of democracy with such distinction for 43 years in this Parliament and for 48 years as a public servant. He is someone who in a small ceremony just a few hours ago I was proud to describe as a person of integrity and a person of excellence. When I say that I mean of course an encyclopedic knowledge of parliamentary procedure and the work ethic and strength of character to apply that knowledge to solve problems, drive reform and be innovative, with a strong appreciation of the traditions and the forms of this place but with that pursuit of improvement. That is what true excellence is about.

He has very high standards personally, as we see with his cool and calm demeanour — unflappable — which together with that knowledge, as I said, is such a rich asset for this chamber and this Parliament and all the values and all the strengths in our system that the Parliament so properly represents. I talk about integrity. To perform this function you have got to have the respect and the confidence of a very broad range of people — people of different political views, people of

different world views, people who share many things in common but who equally have divergent opinions on lots of different things. To win the confidence of everybody across that spectrum — to win the confidence and the trust and the respect of such a wide range of people over so many years — is testament to the character of the Clerk, Mr Purdey.

What an amazing combination: an encyclopedic wisdom with a strength of character to apply it and the integrity to win the trust of all those who need your counsel and advice. That is a special contribution. That is a profound contribution over such a long period of time.

Of course, Mr Purdey's training is in accounting, so I thought I would just look at the numbers here and try to look at this from a quantitative point of view. I am reliably informed he has had 11 200 work days — I am sure it feels like only 11 000 or so. He has had around 2000 question times. Mr Clerk, I am not quite sure what that feels like — I think the term you are looking for when told you have participated in around 2000 question times would be 'enough'. That would be the term; you would shout that, would you not? Anyway, 2000 question times, I do not know how many points of order that would be or how many rulings, how many questions and how many debates and discussions.

Ray, understand and know this: we are in awe of your understanding and your wisdom and we are in your debt as parliamentarians, as politicians and as servants of the Victorian community. We wish you and your family — to Kaye and to Prue and to Trent — all the very best. You leave this place with I think a pretty rare combination: the respect, the trust, the confidence and the best wishes of every member in this place. Thank you so very much.

*Honourable members applauded.*

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) (*By leave*) — I am still recovering from the 2000 question times. Clerk, I cannot fathom 2000 question times, whether it is that side or this side, let alone being in between them. What you must sit there and think of us — I assure you we do not always go home and behave like this.

Echoing the Premier's words about the Clerk — Mr Purdey, Ray — he has been an institution in our Parliament, and it is not often that you come across an institution who has been here for this length of time and with the depth of experience and the level of advice that we have in our Clerk. When you think of the premiers he has seen since joining the staff of the Parliament —

from Hamer, Thompson, Cain, Kirner, Kennett, Bracks, Brumby, Baillieu, Napthine, Andrews — they have all had different temperaments, I am sure, and there are opposition leaders who have probably had different temperaments as well. You have seen so much, and that experience is obviously experience that you just cannot replace. We will miss you in this Parliament, and I am sure, Speaker, that you and the acting speakers as well will miss that advice.

We have been in many ways fortunate to have such experience, noting of course that you are the 15th Clerk of this Assembly but the second-longest serving Assembly Clerk of all time and the second-longest serving Clerk currently in the Australia-New Zealand region after, as I said before, having worked with so many different speakers and premiers and opposition leaders and leaders of government in the house and so many others in this chamber.

I am sure the Premier and I and the Speaker and the President in the upper house, Mr Atkinson, found it difficult to find material to roast Ray with before he departed. When lawn bowls comes out, I am sure it will be on the *Hansard* record forever that Mr Purdey is a pennant bowler, which I am advised is an exceptionally good lawn bowler, and no doubt with much greater time he will have the ability to hone those skills. I still cannot fathom the link between lawn bowls and piloting light aeroplanes. One is safe, grounded, calm and measured — that is the plane compared to how some lawn bowlers are! I had a quick chat to your wife, who also expressed to me, with my fear of flying, the shock of going up in these light planes. So, Ray, while I wish you all the best in retirement and all the best with your greater time and flexibility with your family, I always worry about light planes. If you are as good a pilot as you are a Clerk and a lawn bowler, I am sure you will be exceptional and will remain exceptional.

Can I just put on record again to our Clerk: thank you for the work you have done for this Parliament. Thank you for the service you have given us and the advice you have given no doubt to the Speaker and the government but also to my side here in opposition — to all of us. That kind of experience no-one can replicate. It comes with so much time, so much observation and so much learning, thought and contemplation. You have had so much of it, and we will miss it immensely. So all the best, and good luck.

**Mr WALSH** (Leader of The Nationals) (*By leave*) — It is a pleasure to join this debate, and not because you are going, Ray, but because I want to say a few words of appreciation. On behalf of The Nationals, particularly myself but also previous leaders, which

include Peter Ross-Edwards, Pat McNamara and Peter Ryan, thank you very much for all the assistance that you have given us as leaders and as a party over your time in this particular place.

I note some of the committees that you actually served on before you took on the current role. When I looked at that I noted particularly the Salinity Committee. As someone who comes from Tongala, and as I understand it Kaye comes from Lockington, no doubt you would have had a personal interest in the work of that committee because at that particular time salinity was the scourge of the north. Through some timely government intervention, and I think some substantial changes in farming practices and technologies, salinity is not the issue it was when that committee was working. I am sure through that and through your time on the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee you would have seen a lot of things happen in this Parliament and had a hand in actually producing those reports that led to positive change. I know you cannot talk about your time on the Privileges Committee, as none of us can, but I am sure you would have found that a fascinating process as well. So thank you for all that.

On the issue of 2000 question times, I may be reporting it wrongly but it has been said that you have told someone jokingly that you developed the habit of being able to sleep with your eyes open through question time. Now, I may be being unfair in quoting that, but I am reliably informed you have said that. It is effectively 2000 editions of probably one of the worst reality TV shows you would ever see. You have been a tower of strength and a source of unbiased advice to all of us through that time.

A lot of people have already talked about the fact that they cannot understand the connection between flying a light aircraft and bowls. I think there are a lot of similarities. I know from my time with one of my older friends in Boort that committee selection for the pennant team of the Boort Bowls Club was the most brutal experience that anyone could ever have. With that pennant team, who got in it and who got dropped was more dangerous than flying a light plane and was the talk of the town for a long time. So if you are planning on playing pennant, you will just need to toughen up for that whole selection process.

When I first came here one of the jobs I got was working on what offices the MPs got, as we always do after an election. Being a Johnny-come-lately, I said, 'Well, that area up there near the National Party room would make a great spot to put all the National Party members and keep us all together'. Judy Maddigan, as

the then Speaker, pointed out to me, 'You guys come into Parliament about 20 weeks of the year. The Clerks are there all year. You've got absolutely no hope of moving any of those people out of those offices'. I did ring Peter Lochert about something else this week, and he said, 'Ah, you're here to talk about Ray's office, are you — you're ready to move?'. But I am sure Bridget, as the Acting Clerk, has already packed her boxes to move into that particular office.

Thank you very much. One last thing to finish on: looking at the photos as we went to the afternoon tea, with the wigs on the Presiding Officers, my advice to whoever is applying for the job is that if they say they are all in favour of bringing back the wigs, I think that would be a real winner in the interview process! So whoever wants to take that on board, they can. Ray, on behalf of all of us, but particularly on behalf of the National Party and all our predecessors in this place, thank you very much for your assistance and advice over what has been a very sustained effort for the Parliament. Thank you.

**Ms ALLAN** (Minister for Public Transport) (*By leave*) — As we saw earlier this afternoon, Ray, you managed to do something which is rarely achieved in this place, as was remarked upon: you united the Parliament. The Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the President of the Legislative Council were all as one in their praise of your outstanding years of service to the Parliament.

I think what should also be recognised is that not only are you serving the Victorian Parliament but by extension you are serving the Victorian community and upholding those precious principles of democracy and the strength of the democratic institution that all of us are so lucky and fortunate to serve in. I think what is also abundantly clear from the warmth in the room this afternoon is that you have the great respect and friendship of so many people in this place. I am sure that many of us have had the chance to reach out to former colleagues and that they also have that same opinion of you.

That steady and stable presence you have provided the house over your time as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly has seen some interesting times and has seen some change in this place as well. One of the things that our side of the chamber often remarks on is the significant rewrite of the standing orders undertaken by the former Leader of the House, Peter Batchelor, and what significant changes to the standing orders that brought in, some that we still continue to enjoy using to this day.

You have seen two minority governments, which in the history of the Victorian Parliament is something to remark upon. But also you have seen the composition of this place change. You have seen more women than ever before come into the Assembly and serve in the Victorian Parliament. You served the first woman Speaker in this place as well, and I think that shows how our Parliament is changing and modernising. On that point, I know, and we reflected on this earlier today, that you were very pleased to see the change to the sitting hours that was brought in at the start of this parliamentary term because you have such deep care and concern for your staff. As members of Parliament we do get a bit myopic, and we should know that we are not just changing these standing orders for us, we are changing them also for the staff of the Parliament who work with us and support our work. Being the very early riser and late finisher you are, you know the toll that being in the Parliament exerts on your staff.

I mentioned the role of our democracy. I think your service — and the President of the Legislative Council mentioned this — to strengthening and nourishing democracy in our region is something we should also again remark upon and recognise. Our democracy is precious, but it does need to be nurtured, tended to and cared for, and your leadership in our region is important.

On a personal note, I want to thank you for your guidance during the time that I have held the positions of manager of opposition business and now Leader of the House. I must confess that before the 2010 election I was not seeking the position of manager of opposition business. It was not a position in the Parliament that I particularly was looking forward to. But I must say, Ray, you were endlessly patient during that period of time in answering question after question, and I must say it was a wonderful exercise. I think the now manager of opposition business knows what wonderful exercise it is running up and down those marble stairs to your office to get the latest procedural advice from you, and we have certainly done that.

In opposition we had lots of thoughts about how the Parliament should be run during that period of time, and I certainly thank you, Ray, both in that role and in this role now, for your patience, your thoughtfulness and your deep understanding of our Parliament and processes and also for the fact that you gave your advice quite frankly and fearlessly. As you know, we are working you until the very end of your day. Today is an interesting day, and when it ends we will certainly have extracted from you every last ounce of advice that we can over the course of the day.

The bowls club's gain is Parliament's loss, but I know also that your family are very pleased and looking forward to the next set of life adventures with you. As we remarked earlier, I know you have a connection to our region and to Bendigo. Feel free to drop by for a cup of tea anytime when you and the family are in Bendigo. You should be so very deeply proud of your personal achievements, because certainly Parliament is deeply thankful for your contribution to our democracy.

**Honourable members** — Hear, hear!

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) (*By leave*) — I am honoured to be able to join in saying a few words in paying tribute to you, Ray Purdey, as our Clerk, and to express my personal thanks and appreciation for all the support and advice you have given to me along with many other members over the years of your service. Thinking about today, it occurred to me that there are not all that many members who have actually served with a Clerk other than yourself. I think the member for Rowville, the member for Nepean, the member for Clarinda and I are the only members of this chamber who have seen a Clerk other than Ray. It is a mark of the longevity and the standards that you have set that we have all lived, experienced and worked in this place for so many years under your supervision.

Members of course see many facets of the duties of a clerk that are public: the rulings on points of order, other advice given to the Speaker while in the chair, the advice and the often very demanding needs to provide advice to Acting Speakers from time to time to steer them through some of the formalities of the house. But there is also a huge amount that any clerk does, and that you have done, that many members would not see. There is an enormous amount of paperwork involved in the operation of this house. The fact that it all runs like clockwork and we all just take it for granted is a tribute to the huge amount of effort that you put into making sure, along with your team, that it does happen. I know you also place a great emphasis on staff development, and that is a very important part of any institution. One of the marks of the good hands in which you leave this Parliament is the effort you have given to foster, develop and encourage the many fine staff who have served with you over the years.

You have also fulfilled the duties of the Clerk of the Parliaments, which is a very obscure office to many members. It date backs, so the learned source *Wikipedia* tells me, to at least 1315. In the Palace of Westminster the Clerk of the Parliaments serves the House of Lords. Here we are more egalitarian, so the Clerk of the Parliaments is the more senior of the clerks between the Assembly and the Council. In some respects it is a

ceremonial office, and its title, Clerk of the Parliaments, plural, is a reflection of the old usage that each Parliamentary period between elections is regarded as a separate Parliament. You are Clerk of the Parliaments because you, or whoever is the holder of that office, hold it for the duration of your term as clerk, and that is of course reflected in the Parliamentary Administration Act 2005. It is a very important symbolic office as the more senior of the two clerks within our Parliaments.

Perhaps to me the most striking and impressive of all the services you provide to this house is the one that the Leader of the House also touched on, which is your capacity to provide dispassionate advice to whichever members come to you seeking advice. It must have been a very difficult task and require a great deal of discipline to be able to segment your advice so that when different sides and perspectives of the house are each coming to you seeking procedural advice, and in the course of that revealing what their intentions might be, you have been utterly upright, dispassionate, unflappable and impeccable in not inadvertently signalling what you might have heard from others but giving to each and every one of us the best advice you can give to serve what we are trying to achieve even though you may have given a completely different set of advice to the other side of the argument as to how they could achieve what they wanted to achieve. It is a remarkable skill, and the fact that you have conducted it with such integrity and such success is an enormous tribute to your service.

As others have remarked, you have contributed an enormous amount to democracy in the state of Victoria over your period in this house. You have provided great solidity and continuity to an often turbulent chamber. I wish you every enjoyment in your hobbies when you take up a life after Parliament. I was struck to hear you remark earlier during afternoon tea that you intend to still watch us in action remotely. I think that is above and beyond the call of duty, so I do hope you are able to give suitable priority to lawn bowls, light plane flying and other recreations, and I do wish you every happiness in your future life. You can be very confident and derive great satisfaction in the legacy you leave to this Parliament and the community.

*Honourable members applauded.*

**Mr HIBBINS** (Pahran) (*By leave*) — I would like to say a few words on behalf of myself and the member for Melbourne. It is safe to say, Ray, that you have been here a lot longer than we have, and in fact a lot longer than most members. One of our first questions to you was: ‘How does one actually become the Clerk, and how does one get their head around these particular and

peculiar rules, procedures and precedents while at the same time carrying out your duties of providing advice to us and ensuring the orderly running of the house and the Parliament?’ . Having been here just a short time, I can say that not only have you done that but you have done it incredibly well. I think yours is a really great story of commitment to the public service, because whilst members are in the limelight and seeking the limelight, it is you and your team who are really the unsung heroes of this Parliament in making sure that our Parliament and our democracy work.

I say thank you for your assistance and advice in navigating this place, not just as a new member but as a new party in this place. The member for Melbourne, who is on maternity leave, has asked me to personally pass on her thanks and congratulations on a wonderful career and her appreciation of your clear-headed and fair-minded advice and your welcoming and open manner when we arrived in Parliament as the first Greens in the lower house. You will be missed, and we both wish you well in your retirement and in your future endeavours.

*Honourable members applauded.*

**Ms SHEED** (Shepparton) (*By leave*) — As the Clerk of this Parliament for the past 19 years, Ray Purdey has been an ever-reliable source of information and guidance for many, not the least for myself and the other members who came before me. For the purpose of speaking today I sought the views of other Independent members who have gone before me during the last two decades. Without exception they described Ray as the voice of reason who calmly guided this place through often tumultuous times. Russell Savage, the former member for Mildura, shared his recollections of Ray as ‘a first-class gentleman and a first-class Clerk’, who treated everyone without fear or favour. Craig Ingram, the former member for Gippsland East, said Ray’s advice was invaluable and his knowledge of parliamentary procedure unrivalled. Both of them were very pleased that I had contacted them, Ray, and asked me to pass on to you their very best wishes in your future retirement.

For my part, your generous counsel on the processes and protocols of this place has been outstanding and greatly appreciated. I always walked away from discussions with you entirely confident that I had been steered in the right direction. Ray, I thank you for your service to this place and by extension to the people of Victoria. I have to say that while you may anticipate that your retirement will be a quieter period than your time here at Parliament, you may find a new phase of recruitment commences. I have no doubt you will be in

high demand. I wish you and your family all the best in the next chapter of your life and can say with great confidence that you will be very much missed.

*Honourable members applauded.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Can I just add very briefly to the eloquent comments that have been made by members already. Ray, on behalf of all members, thank you for your service to this Parliament and, as has been said, to the Victorian community. Your integrity, professionalism, respect, diligence and leadership have meant that this Parliament is much stronger. On behalf of all members and previous Speakers you have assisted, I thank you.

*Honourable members applauded.*

## BUDGET PAPERS 2017–18

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

That this house takes note of the 2017–2018 budget papers.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** (Caulfield) — I rise to make a contribution on the take-note motion. Let me say that in the budget this government has brought down we see nothing for my electorate of Caulfield. The constituents of Caulfield have missed out greatly in this budget.

There were many opportunities for this government to stump up some cash and fix some problems. The key area is law and order. I have said on numerous occasions that when it comes to resourcing police, this government has been missing in action in my electorate in particular. We have a situation where both the local police and the police association have called many a time for increased resources. The fact that we only have one police vehicle patrolling the streets for 150 000 residents of Caulfield, Bentleigh and Oakleigh is a shameful act by this government and shows its lack of focus in funding.

Another missed opportunity has been the lack of funding for Caulfield Hospital, which recently had its centenary celebration. In fact I think the hospital's breezeway has not changed since it was built 100 years ago. There is no funding to improve that in the budget.

The Glenhuntly level crossing is one of those level crossings that did not make it to the top 50 on the government's list, but according to a VicRoads study it is one of the most dangerous level crossings in Victoria and one of Melbourne's 19 most congested level crossings. For 82 per cent of the time in the morning peak period between 7.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. the level

crossing gates are down. Traffic and public transport is congested at that level crossing, but there is no funding in the budget for that.

In the area of energy and resources — and I note the energy minister is sitting here today — what we have seen is a lack of funding in the budget to assist in this much-needed area. More than another missed opportunity, this is unfortunately leaving many Victorians struggling with affordability issues when paying for their power bills and escalating energy costs.

We have seen this government announce a Victorian gas program, which is estimated to cost \$42.4 million over four years. This program has been identified to assist the lead scientist look at potential opportunities for conventional gas. On a couple of points here, we have a situation where a lot of that funding does not come to fruition until the last few years of the budget. Certainly the money has not been front-ended. If there is any time when the money should be spent, it is now and not in four years time so we can ensure gas supply and start to look at exploring for conventional gas. Now is the time for that opportunity.

What we have seen here is this government's ideology over good policy. If they were serious about affordability and reducing energy prices and energy costs for consumers, they would invest that money now and not have it run out, quite conveniently, when the 2020 moratorium runs out. Quite conveniently, by 2020, the lead scientist could then come up and say, 'Yes, we have gas; yes, we can start exploring' or 'No, we can't'.

Unfortunately what this government has done on gas is just kick the can down the road. It cannot make a decision. Every single one of us in our electorates would have stories of consumers and businesses that are struggling to pay their power bills right now, and gas is one of those key areas. No wonder we are seeing regions turn their backs on this government and say that it is unelectable, because this government has turned its back on the regions. They have completely neglected the regions and here is a classic case; when it comes to energy and gas supplies they are missing in action.

The same can be applied to electricity costs. This government actually said when they were in opposition that there would be no new taxes. When the Premier went to the polls, a Channel 7 reporter asked him if he would promise not to introduce any new taxes, and the Premier said he made that promise to every Victorian.

In amongst the 10 new taxes that we have in this budget is the royalties tax for coal. That royalty tax for coal is an important part of where we have now ended up in

terms of the energy crisis. What happened has put more pressure on the coal generators down in the valley, and Engie just basically said, 'Do you know what? If this government is not interested in us, we are not interested in them', and they effectively gave notice and off they went. Off they went with five months notice, and 20 per cent of supply was taken out of the market.

What has that done? It has pushed power prices through the roof and meant that at times we are importing energy from New South Wales and Tasmania. Now we are told through Australian Energy Market Operator reports that over the next two years we have 72 days of power shortages coming up — all bad news for consumers, all bad news for Victorians.

But what did the minister say when she was asked about all of this? What did the minister say at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing when asked about the issues of power prices? Her answer was that it was all a supply issue, that power price rises are all a supply issue.

**Ms D'Ambrosio** interjected.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** — The minister is interjecting now and says the more energy you put in the market, the lower the prices.

**Ms D'Ambrosio** — You do not understand economics 101.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** — The minister interjects now and says that I do not understand economics 101. It is a supply issue; the more energy you get, the more supply, the lower the prices. Well, Minister, I agree with you. We do not agree on many things, but on this matter I do agree with you — it is a supply issue. But what you do not get is that you have taken 20 per cent of supply out of the market — that being Hazelwood — and up go the prices. That is your economics 101. That is the disgraceful act that you have done here — this shameful act.

**Ms D'Ambrosio** interjected.

**Mr SOUTHWICK** — Now you say, 'Blame Jeff Kennett'. I will tell you what: the only person we can blame right now is you, Minister. You are a disgrace. You are a disgraceful minister, and what you have done is ensured that every single Victorian is paying more for their power bills.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! As the time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, I am required to interrupt

business. The member may continue his remarks whenever the motion is next before the house.

## WORKSAFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 21 June; motion of  
Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance).**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Circulated amendments*

**Circulated government amendments as follows  
agreed to:**

1. Clause 22, line 25, after "for an" insert "indictable".
2. Clause 22, line 26, omit "or the regulations".
3. Clause 22, line 34, after "that an" insert "indictable".
4. Clause 22, page 16, lines 1 to 2, omit "or the regulations".

**Bill agreed to with amendments.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

## JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICERS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2017

*Second reading*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

All those in favour say aye.

**Honourable members** — Aye.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! All those against say no.

**Mr Hibbins** — No.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I think the ayes have it.

**Ms Allan** — The ayes have it.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Is a division required?

**Mr Hibbins** — Yes.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! A division is required. I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

**Bells rung.**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house will divide on the question that this bill be read a second time and a third time. I ask members to take their allocated seats in the house, and I ask the Clerk to record the votes.

**The Clerk** — The member for Melton.

**Mr Nardella** — Yes.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I ask the Clerk to pause. We have just spoken about the respect that is deserved by the clerks. While they are proceeding with the counting of the votes, I ask members to not shout across the chamber.

**The Clerk** — The member for Shepparton.

**Ms Sheed** — One yes.

**The Clerk** — The Greens representative.

**Mr Hibbins** — One no.

**The Clerk** — The Nationals Whip.

**Mr Crisp** — Eight yes.

**The Clerk** — The Liberal Party Whip.

**Mr Katos** — Twenty-nine yes.

**The Clerk** — The Government Whip.

**Ms Spence** — Forty-three yes.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! As there is only one vote for the noes, the division cannot proceed. I ask the member for Prahran if he wishes to have his dissent recorded.

**Mr Hibbins** — I would like my dissent recorded; thank you.

**Question agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(COURT SECURITY, JURIES AND OTHER  
MATTERS) BILL 2017**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 20 June; motion of  
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! As the required statement of intention has been made under section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act 1975, the third reading of the bill must be passed by an absolute majority.

**Motion agreed to by absolute majority.**

**Read third time.**

**LAND LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
BILL 2017**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of  
Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning).**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read second time.**

*Third reading*

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read third time.**

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

**Sitting continued on motion of Ms ALLAN  
(Minister for Public Transport).**

**BUDGET PAPERS 2017–18**

**Debate resumed.**

**Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield)** — As I was saying, this budget does nothing when it comes to affordability and energy prices for all Victorians. We have seen that from this government, in terms of lack of policy and lack of vision. When the energy minister was questioned about the lack of policy and the lack of vision in the energy space, she clearly was out of her depth. Not only

did she have no idea that when it comes to the issue of price rises it is a supply issue, but she also had no idea what the result would be of the closure of Hazelwood power station in terms of its impact on prices.

At the time when Hazelwood closed we heard from both the minister and the Premier that it would have a minimal impact on power prices. In fact the figure that was thrown about was 85 cents a week — that the closure of Hazelwood would lead to a net increase of about 85 cents a week. We have seen already the drastic impact that the closure of Hazelwood has had on all Victorians. St Vincent de Paul has released a report saying that the average cost to Victorian households is \$300 a year. Well, \$300 a year is not 85 cents a week. We have seen a doubling of power bills of businesses. A number of government enterprises and charities have seen a huge spike in power bills right across the board thanks to this taxing government. It is a government with no vision, no policy and no direction when it comes to energy, and of course we are all paying the price.

We saw in an article published a few days ago in the *Australian* that even Monash University is struggling to pay its power bills. What we have seen is a forecast increase in the university's power charges of \$13 million from 2016 to 2018. That is a 113 per cent increase. Not a 4 per cent increase, not even the 20 per cent increase that we forecast, but a 113 per cent increase on their power bills. What we are seeing is bad policy from a bad government, which has led to a cost-of-living issue for all Victorians, and there is nothing in this budget to fix it. There is nothing in this budget to give any relief to Victorians. It is a bad budget when it comes to energy and resources.

The Minister for Resources could have done a lot more to kick-start the gas industry in Victoria, but has done nothing to get the industry going. All we are seeing from the energy and resources ministers and the Premier is a focus — or a bet — on the renewables scene coming into play. Renewables are an important part of the mix, but this is not an all-or-nothing game. When the sun does not shine and the wind does not blow, we cannot be hoping that the lights are going to stay on and that our homes are going to be warm and cool when they need to be. This is a problem that were are all experiencing; this is where we have got to.

The Finkel report has just been released. It talks about a clean energy target, it talks about closing down power stations in a timely manner, not within five months but in a timely manner. These are all things that this government has not done. The Finkel report also talks about not having state renewable energy targets. It will be interesting to see what this government does with Victoria's renewable energy target, which is a 40 per

cent renewable energy target. I know that the government was keen to bring legislation on this to the Parliament, but we have seen nothing of that legislation. We have seen nothing on the coal policy, we have seen nothing when it comes to energy policy and we have seen nothing on the retail review. There was a retail review that was meant to be released this month, but that has been extended for two months.

What we see here is a whole lot of uncertainty when it comes to energy policy by this government because they do not know what to do. They are hoping for the magic pudding. They are hoping that we do not have a really hot summer coming up. But let me say this: the forecast blackouts and brownouts and the situations we have seen in South Australia should be enough for this government to understand that we are in an energy crisis. That is thanks largely to the inaction of this government and thanks to them forcing the closure of the Hazelwood power station.

We are all in for some tough times ahead. I hate to be the person that said, 'I told you so'. I was that person who sat here and said that prices would go up 20 per cent when this government said they were only going to go up by 4 per cent. I hope that I am not right again, that we do not have a hot summer and face blackouts thanks to this government.

This is a poor budget, a shocking budget with no vision and no plan for energy security. Hopefully this government takes something out of the Finkel review and works with the federal government to ensure that we get security and reliability in our energy sector. It is a very important issue. It is an important issue for all Victorians, and something needs to be done. There has been nothing in this budget on it. There has been nothing in this budget for my electorate. It is a poor budget, and unfortunately I have nothing more to say, because I am disgusted with the way this government has brought this budget down for all Victorians.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 8 August 2017.

**Motion agreed to.**

## STATE TAXATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2017

### *Council's amendments*

#### Returned from Council with message relating to following amendments:

1. Clause 1, page 3, line 33, omit "information; and" insert "information."
2. Clause 1, page 4, lines 1 to 10, omit all words and expressions on these lines.
3. Clause 2, page 4, line 13, omit "7, 8 and 9" and insert "7 and 8".
4. Clause 2, page 4, line 24, omit all words and expressions on this line.
5. Part heading preceding clause 98, omit this heading.
6. Division heading preceding clause 98, omit this heading.
7. Clauses 98 to 136, omit these clauses.
8. Division heading preceding clause 137, omit this heading.
9. Clauses 137 to 141, omit these clauses.
10. Long title, omit "1997, the **Unclaimed Money Act 2008**, the **Valuation of Land Act 1960** and certain other Acts as a consequence of the amendments made to the **Valuation of Land Act 1960**" and insert "1997 and the **Unclaimed Money Act 2008**".

#### **Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — I move:

That the amendments be agreed to.

In so moving I will provide some clarity to the house. The house amendments that have been made by the Legislative Council, 10 in number, achieve the collective effect of removing all aspects of the bill relating to property valuations, primarily those in part 9 of the bill.

Following consultation with the local government sector and the crossbench in the upper house, the government has decided to defer consideration of the changes to property valuations until the spring sitting. Of course that will require the alterations to be reflected in differing, new legislation. We will continue to work with the local government sector and crossbench on implementing these reforms, particularly on the implementation of the centralisation of valuations. As a government we remain confident that the centralising processes under the management of the valuer-general will improve the efficiency, consistency and transparency of property valuations in Victoria.

I note that a majority of the crossbench are confident and assure us that they support this reform but that they want more time to consult with the sector on the nature of the reform and its impact. We respect those concerns and have taken action to support the alterations accordingly. The collective house amendments have no impact on other parts of the bill. The State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2017 provides a range of important reforms, including, of course, cutting payroll tax in regional Victoria, cutting stamp duty for first home buyers and doubling the first home owner's grant for regional Victoria. I commend the bill, as amended by the Legislative Council, to this house.

**Mr M. O'BRIEN** (Malvern) — The Treasurer has got nothing to be proud of in the number of increased taxes contained in this bill. This is another bill which simply breaks promises — promises clearly made by the Premier on the day before the election. When he was asked by Peter Mitchell on Channel 7 news if he would commit to not increasing taxes or introducing any new taxes, the Premier looked down the barrel of the camera with all the sincerity he could muster and said, 'Peter, I make that promise to every single Victorian'. What garbage. As the Leader of the Opposition said in a contribution today, it is a government that started with a lie and has descended ever since.

This bill now contains only four new taxes, and shame on the Labor Party, on the Greens party, on the Australian Sex Party and on Vote 1 Local Jobs that they all voted to increase taxes on Victorians. They voted to introduce new taxes. They voted to break the promise that the Premier made. They are enablers and facilitators of broken promises to Victorians, and Victorians will pay a very heavy price.

It was only 12 months ago, when we were debating the 2016 incarnation of the state taxation bill, that other members on this side and I stood up and said, 'This tripling of the coal royalty is going to lead to the closure of power stations in the Latrobe Valley'. The Treasurer said, 'What do you know? No, tripling taxes on coal is not going to have any effect at all. How ridiculous!'. Well, less than 12 months later we are standing here and Hazelwood has closed, 750 Hazelwood workers are out of a job and that town is under huge pressure. Pubs are closing and businesses are closing, all because of a grubby, greedy tax grab from a Treasurer who simply cannot manage the budget. He is the original boy who cannot say no. Whenever the Premier comes calling and asking for new money and new spending, he says yes. Whenever a public sector union bowls up and asks for more spending and more money, he says yes. He just keeps taxing Victorians to pay for it, breaking the

promises that were made before the election and, as we saw last year, driving Hazelwood out of business.

The question is: which businesses are going to be driven out of business by the new taxes in this budget and in these new broken promises in this State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill? We have seen hits to the car industry — \$400 million worth of new taxes on motor vehicle retailers and on motor vehicle purchasers. This is a government that talks about its Towards Zero road safety strategy, a government that pretends to care about reducing the road toll. The Transport Accident Commission says there is an absolute correlation between the age of cars and the incidence of serious injury and death on the roads. If you want to save lives on the roads, one way you can do it is to get people into newer, safer cars. What does this government do? They make it harder for people to get into newer, safer cars. They make it more expensive for people to get into newer, safer cars through a \$100 million a year tax grab. Who voted for it? Labor voted for the new taxes. The Greens voted for the new taxes. The Sex Party voted for the new taxes. And Vote 1 Local Jobs member, James Purcell, voted for new taxes.

What else have we got? We have got a new vacant residential land tax — a new tax that says that the Premier knows how people should use their properties better than they do. It is a new tax that says that if you dare to own a residential property in Melbourne and you do not use it in the way the Premier thinks you should, he is going to hit you with an extra tax. You could be a farmer down in Gippsland, Mildura, the Mallee or the Wimmera, and you might have a unit in Melbourne. You might have worked hard and put some money into that unit in Melbourne so that if you need to come down to Melbourne, you have got somewhere you can stay. You might need to come down from time to time for medical treatment. You might need to come to Melbourne from time to time for business. You might need to come to Melbourne from time to time to perhaps see a footy match or a play, or maybe you want to see your grandkids in a school play. Maybe you want to come down for Christmas to spend some time with your family.

But under this grubby little bill, this grubby new tax, if you do not spend six months of the year in your own unit in Melbourne, you get hit with a punitive new tax. You have to pay an extra 1 per cent land tax on your own property because you do not stay in it as often as the Premier and the Treasurer think you should. What a socialist-minded tax this is. This is the government saying that they know how people should use their own property better than the owners of that property. It is a

disgraceful tax, and it is going to hit people from country Victoria harder than anyone else.

You could be some Labor or Greens-voting hipster from Fitzroy, and you could own properties throughout rural and regional Victoria. You will not have to pay any extra land tax. You will not have to rent your properties out to anybody; you will be able to do with them what you like. But if you are a farmer or somebody from a rural or regional part of Victoria and if you dare to own a property in Melbourne and you do not use it in the way that the Premier, the Treasurer or the Greens think you should, you will pay extra taxes. Who would vote for a bill that so discriminates against people from country Victoria? The Vote 1 Local Jobs member, one of the members from country Victoria would, and the Labor MPs in the other place who claim to represent country Victoria.

What a disgrace, what an absolute disgrace. It is another broken promise, one that discriminates against country Victorians worse than others, and one which is socialist in its nature. What an appalling new tax. I can say clearly for the record the Liberals and The Nationals do not support this new tax. We do not support it.

We see another attack on families and on small business in the imposition of a restriction on partners and spouses transferring property between each other. At the moment partners and spouses can transfer property between each other for love and affection, and no stamp duty is payable. There might be people entering into marriage with different levels of wealth and with different levels of property holdings. For example, if there was a husband who might be a bit older and a bit wealthier, he might have more property. He might want to transfer that property into a half-share with his wife so that she feels she has economic security and that it is a genuine partnership between them. Previously, up until now, that has been something that husband and wife could do for each other and with each other, and no stamp duty was payable.

But now the Treasurer and the Premier say, 'We think that it is a tax rort for a husband and a wife to share their property together'. That is how anti-family this government is: they think it is a tax rort for husband and wife to share property. So if you are perhaps somebody younger coming into a marriage and you do not have a lot of property behind you, the Treasurer — this Labor Treasurer — this Labor Premier and this Labor Deputy Premier have just given the wealthier party an excuse to say, 'Sorry, I'm not going to transfer you a half-share of the holiday house. I'm not going to

transfer you a half-share of the investment flat. No, that will stay in my name now because if I were to transfer it into your name or our joint names, we would have to pay all this stamp duty to this Labor government'. What a grubby little anti-family new tax this is.

Tradies get caught up as well. Many people who go and set up their own business have been working for someone else for years and they want to have a go in the great Australian ethos of having a go — maybe working for yourself, being your own boss, taking a bit of a risk, working hard and seeing what you can make of it. Well, that is an anathema to this government because they have just made it that much harder for any tradie to go and set up their own business without exposing to risk every single asset they have ever worked for all their lives. Because, under this bill, no longer could a tradie who was setting up their own business transfer their holiday house or investment flat into the name of their spouse to protect that asset in a new venture. No, now they have to keep it in their own name and put it all at risk because to do so, to transfer that property into the name of a spouse, would incur a huge amount of stamp duty.

It is an anti-family move, it is an anti-small-business move and it is an anti-entrepreneur move. It is nothing that you would be surprised at from this government, but it does not make it any less appalling. Just for the record, the Liberals and The Nationals do not support this restriction on partners and spouses being able to transfer property between each other.

We have also seen the abolition of the off-the-plan stamp duty concession for everyone except for owner-occupiers. Again another increase in tax, another stupidly thought out, poorly thought out, ill-designed new tax from a Labor government which will have the opposite effect to that which is intended. The government says this is about housing affordability, that this is making it easier for first home buyers to get into the market because they will not be competing with investors for off-the-duty projects anymore.

What the Treasurer does not understand or chooses not to understand is that off-the-plan projects need a huge amount of pre-purchases before banks will lend developers the money to let them happen. Banks usually require 60, 70 or 80 per cent of projects to be presold before they will finance them. If you take investors out of the pool for off-the-plan projects, which is the intended effect of this tax increase, you will simply see fewer projects get the go-ahead. Fewer projects will be financed, and it will take longer to get them done.

Now, what happens when you reduce housing supply in a market where there is demand? Prices go up. It is not economics 101 — it is even easier than that — but Labor does not get it. Labor, by introducing this new tax, will put higher pressure on housing prices, will reduce supply to the market and will have the opposite effect, not just for investors, but for first home buyers too. This is a dumb move, a dumb move by a government that does not understand the market and has just got dollar signs in its eyes regardless of the consequences.

For the Greens to vote for it, for the Sex Party to vote for it, for the Vote 1 Local Jobs member in the other place to vote for it: what a disgrace. Again, they are facilitating broken promises from a discredited Premier and a discredited Treasurer inflicting financial distress and harm on Victorians, and they do not care. They just do not care. So keen to pass Labor's agenda are these minor parties that they will vote for any tax increase that Labor cares to put up, and what a disgrace that is.

We have also got of course the one change that we were successful in achieving in the other place. The Treasurer can talk about it as being about centralisation of valuation, but it is really just another tax grab. It is really just a fifth new tax that he attempted to get through. He has got four new taxes through with this bill, shamefully. But the one that he has been forced to drop temporarily is a fifth new tax. All he wants to do is to have land valuation centralised in the valuer-general's office for the purpose of increasing the government's land tax take. That is what it all comes down to.

Of course he wants to make sure that instead of biennial valuations — that is, valuations of property every two years for land tax purposes — they will take place every year. There is only one reason you do that. There is only one reason you would move to a less accurate form of valuation, and that is simply because you want to increase your tax take. If you have two years worth of data, which is what two-yearly, or biennial, valuations give you, you have got two years worth of data points. You have got two years worth of sale data that can give you a far more accurate reflection of what the movements in the market have been, and that is what can give you a valuation that everyone can have confidence in. But, no, this government would rather move to a situation where you have only one year's worth of data.

In some areas, particularly in rural Victoria, there are not going to be that many property transactions in 12 months, so how is a valuer supposed to determine what has really been the trend movement in property

valuation in a rural area where there might have been half a dozen transactions? How is that supposed to give you an accurate indication of what the movements have been? The answer is that the government does not care. It does not care if we get inaccurate valuations, just as long as it gets more money out of it, which is the only thing that motivates this government — the only thing.

If that measure had gone through, we would also see valuers who currently work for councils being sacked — losing their jobs. Councils that have entered into contracts with third-party valuers would be forced to break those contracts, but again since when has a Labor government ever cared about sanctity of contract? We know how they treated the east–west link contract. We know what the compensation was there. This government just do not care.

The Treasurer has made it quite clear in his contribution on this matter today that this is only a temporary reprieve for councils because he is so intent on grabbing that extra money, that extra land tax, that he does not care. He is going to try to bowl this up again. He is going to see who he can buy off to generate support for it. I will be very interested to see if any regional members vote for this position when it is brought back, because it is the rural and regional councils that have been the ones that have got the most to lose from the centralisation of valuation with the valuer-general and from the move to annual valuations from biennial valuations.

For those members in the other place who proclaim that they represent rural and regional Victoria, the acid will be on. Are they going to be lapdogs for the Labor government, or are they going to stand up for their constituencies? The closer we get to the next election, I can assure the house the heat will be on — the focus will be on. People will be looking at how people vote in this chamber and in the other chamber. Are they going to vote for higher taxes? Are they going to vote to take away independence from councils? Are they going to vote to impose more costs on rural and regional councils? They are going to be the questions that will be asked.

Given the amendment moved in the other place and proposed by the Treasurer in the Assembly today was effectively a motion of the coalition, we clearly do not oppose that amendment. The coalition does not support the increased taxes contained in this bill. This is a bill which will bring financial hardship to many sectors of Victoria through the new taxes that are being imposed. It is a disgrace that this government has broken its promises yet again to Victorians: a more than 20 per cent increase in taxes since the election; nearly

\$4 billion in extra taxes on an annual basis since the election. It is a government that cannot control its budget and that thinks Victorians are a bottomless pit of money, effectively just an ATM. So shame on Labor for bringing this into Parliament, and shame on the Greens, the Sex Party and Vote 1 Local Jobs in the other place for supporting it.

With those remarks, and on a happier note, I place on the record my thanks to the outgoing Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Ray Purdey, who is somebody I have nothing but respect for professionally and with whom I have had very illuminating discussions. Every time I have had an opportunity to have a chat with the Clerk about a procedural matter I always come away a little bit better informed. Some might suggest on that basis I should have more chats with him, but he is a fountain of great wisdom for us. He is somebody who has the respect of all members in this place. In what I suspect will be my last contribution before we rise for the end of the autumn session, I wish Ray and his family the very best for the future.

**Ms BRITNELL** (South-West Coast) — This bill is absolutely nothing to be proud of. It is a bill that once again writes into law raised taxes, when the Premier promised the people of Victoria, before he was elected, that he would not — I repeat, he would not — raise taxes. Yet what we see in this bill are four new taxes that will hurt Victorians. This is a money-grabbing exercise.

Already we have seen the sale of the lease of the port of Melbourne, which gave us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to change Victoria and make sure we got infrastructure investments so there was money for the government to make changes. But, no, the opportunity was just too good to see how the government could hurt Victorians, particularly people from South-West Coast — country Victorians. That is why I am most disappointed. I cannot understand the upper house people who could have turned this down — the Sex Party, the Labor Party and the Greens, but mostly my disappointment sits with the Independent member from Western Victoria Region, James Purcell from Vote 1 Local Jobs. I cannot believe what he has done to country Victorians, but he has done it before. We have seen it before. Last year when he knew full well how dependent on energy the dairy industry in particular is — the largest economic contributor to South-West Coast — he knew that energy-intensive industry needed good, reliable, cheap, affordable power. Yet with that on board he helped put a \$250 000 tax on Engie.

You can tell me all you like that Engie was making the decision, but if you give somebody a whopping great tax bill like that, you are sending them a clear message

that they are not welcome to do business in this state. That is what that vote from James Purcell, Vote 1 Local Jobs, did. When Engie left, it was because it had got a clear message from this state that it was not welcome. So how many jobs has that created? I do not think it has created any. In fact I think it has lost a lot of jobs, and they are not just in Hazelwood and Gippsland. That reverberates right through the state and particularly in South-West Coast. The dairy industry is one of the biggest contributors out of the port of Melbourne. It is actually the largest exporter out of the port of Melbourne. I know Mr Purcell knows the value of that to south-western Victorians. The cost of power is up 300 per cent for some of the dairy farmers who are renegotiating their power contracts as we speak. That is a direct result of that tax imposed on Engie.

This tax is also going to affect people in the country who want to buy a new car. We will see the cost of that increase from this tax. It will be harder to transfer from an older car because the cost will be greater, and we know that will result in more accidents because older cars are not as safe. We already have a situation in South-West Coast where the roads are the worst in the state by VicRoads's own admission. So not only are we going to have a situation where safety is compromised because our roads are not getting the investment that this government promised prior to being elected. It promised \$1 billion towards our roads in country Victoria, yet we are still waiting to see that investment.

What we are seeing instead is a government that cannot show us that what it is investing in is actually getting a return. It has no accountability system in place, and that is what the Auditor-General showed us with the report tabled today. We saw that not only was there no accountability system, there was no system to know whether a standard was able to be achieved. I see examples of that all the time in my electorate, where my constituents tell me about potholes that have been fixed over and over again, often in a matter of days. The road in Heathmere that I went to see the other day has been fixed four times — I repeat, four times — in the last three months. Is this good use of the taxation dollar that Victorians are getting slugged, higher and higher — four times in this particular bill? Is it a good example of that money? I do not think so. It is just throwing good money after bad.

I fail to understand why it is reasonable to tax people for the property that they have chosen to buy but not live in for however long they choose to. If they leave it vacant for six months, they will be taxed. In a country where you are free to purchase your own assets if you have worked hard and you can afford to, who has the right to tell you how often you can live in them and to

tax you if you do not? It is the most socialist approach I have ever come across. There are plenty of them we could use as examples, are there not? It is just one of many, many socialist behaviours that we are seeing. But I cannot get over this one. You work hard, you make choices and then you are told how your choice is to be determined by the government. What part of the world are we in? I see this as just another broken promise, another discrimination against country Victorians.

Some people work very hard — farmers who get up at the break of day, seven days a week, to care for the landscape and do their duty to make sure that the responsibility entrusted in them is done well — and so well that they find they can afford a property in Melbourne, and then they are taxed. I do not understand that, but we see so much of it. Why would I understand it?

Then we get to the point about transferring property between spouses and the stamp duty imposed on those transfers. Again we are told that we do not have to be equal anymore. Our husbands can take the asset and not share it equally if we come into the marriage later in life. It is just a grubby way of saying, 'No. We're not going to support families, yet we talk the talk'. We are not seeing the walk here; we are seeing examples of absolute discrimination against families, particularly in the business world.

My colleague talked about tradies, but there are other businesses as well. When you set up a business — and I know this firsthand — it is a very, very risky thing to do. Not all businesses succeed. I can tell you now that I get so many people in business saying, 'Do you know what? It's too hard to do business in this state'. I concur. I know exactly how hard it is to do business here. When you have worked so very, very hard to buy a house or get some assets behind you and you decide to start up a business and take that risk, good on you for having a go and contributing to the state of Victoria by being independent, by not relying on the community to support you. You get in there and you have a go. That is an incentive for people to have a go. But should you really have to risk everything you have previously worked for? That detracts from that incentive, and I think that is where this government is going wrong. They made promises for a start not to raise taxes and not to impose new taxes, and then what did they do? They disincentivised instead of encouraged.

Again I am just so bitterly disappointed in the member from south-west Victoria who represents Vote 1 Local Jobs in the Legislative Council. I cannot understand this man who I know comes from the country. He

comes from Bessiebelle, which is a strong dairying area. He does not reflect today a man who understands the importance of jobs at all, because I am not seeing any incentives here, I am seeing taxes — and they are vastly different.

On that note, whilst I support the motion because the coalition do not oppose it, I do not support the four new taxes. I think they are a disgrace. I think they are a reflection of a broken promise that now will get written into law. It is a damned shame.

**Mr HIBBINS (Pahran)** — I rise to speak on the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2017 and the amendments that have come from the Legislative Council. The Greens welcome the removal of the property valuations part of this bill because a number of councils contacted me and my Greens colleagues expressing their concern with this section of the bill, which changes the revaluation cycle from every two years to every year and transfers that responsibility from municipalities to the valuer-general. Their main concerns around this particular aspect are that there was no consultation at all with the local government sector over these changes, that it would cost councils more having to contribute to the cost of the revaluations taking place every year instead of every two years and that by transferring the revaluations to the valuer-general from councils it will have serious staffing and industrial relations implications and may result in the retrenchment of some council staff. We welcome it being taken out of this bill.

The opportunity is now given to the government to actually go out there and consult with the local government sector and with local councils and, if they are determined to get this particular change through, to make sure that they do so in a way that local councils are happy with and are across what is actually occurring in that area. We will be supporting that amendment.

In addition, the member for Malvern made a couple of pointed remarks in regard to the Greens and wanted to lecture us on taxes. I will just respond to the member for Malvern by saying that if he or his party is concerned about dealing with population growth, as they purport to be, and if they are fair dinkum about infrastructure, as they purport to be, they actually need to have the revenue to pay for that infrastructure. We know what the alternative is.

I am reminded of another broken promise, and that is the broken promise to not cut public sector jobs. That was the promise the previous government made when they were in opposition, yet when they came into government they cut public sector jobs. That is exactly

how, I imagine, they would intend to pay for any of their promises, to just cut public sector jobs.

It is funny that they will talk up moving public sector jobs to regional areas, which of course is good for their economies, and then not deal with the effect of cutting the public sector in other areas. That is a real contradiction and hypocrisy on their part. I say to the member for Malvern that if he is not going to have a revenue base to deliver infrastructure or deal with population growth, the only alternative the Liberals have is to cut public sector jobs again. On that note, we will be supporting these amendments.

**Motion agreed to.**

## BUDGET PAPERS 2017–18

**Debate resumed.**

**Mr KATOS (South Barwon)** — It is my pleasure to rise to make a contribution on the take-note motion on the 2017–18 budget papers — it is a bit of a mouthful, is it not, member for Hawthorn? From the outset it was a fairly lacklustre budget for the South Barwon area in particular. There were very few things in the budget for South Barwon. I will touch on them more fulsomely and then contrast the difference between what this government is spending in the South Barwon electorate and what the previous coalition government spent in the South Barwon electorate. When you look at this year's state budget you see there are really only four projects that were funded in the electorate. There was some funding of \$754 000 for Bellbrae Primary School, \$2.2 million for Mt Duneed Primary School and \$653 000 for Ceres Primary School. After a very strong community campaign by the Jan Juc Surf Life Saving Club, they finally received \$2 million from this government — finally.

**Mr Merlino** interjected.

**Mr KATOS** — The minister asks what I have delivered. If he could just wait, I have a list here of what I delivered for the South Barwon electorate when we were in government that I will be going through in a very fulsome manner. Even for the schools that have been funded, a lot of it is back-ended, so a lot of the school works will not be completed until 2019–20 — it is not like there are going to be any works commencing from 1 July. That is the case for Bellbrae Primary School, it is the case for Ceres Primary School and it is in fact quarter 2 for Mount Duneed Regional Primary School — that one is even further back.

In education there is a broken promise — building the Armstrong Creek West primary school was a

commitment of the government. As far as I am aware the land is yet to be acquired for that school. That is a broken promise to the community of Armstrong Creek and the South Barwon electorate, and the Minister for Education, who is at the table, should be ashamed of that broken promise to the people of the South Barwon electorate.

It is interesting that the only projects underway in South Barwon electorate were all funded and initiated by the previous coalition government. There is not a project presently under construction that was not funded or initiated by the previous Liberal-Nationals government. The Pioneer Road upgrade is taking place — that was funded from 1 July 2014 but the works only started two or three months ago, so that is a delay of almost two and a half years by this government in the duplication of the bridge on Pioneer Road over the Waurn Ponds Creek.

There is the removal of the roundabout at Meadowvale Drive and the installation of a signalised intersection there — a set of lights. That is a very congested intersection in the morning, and that is why in the 2014–15 budget the coalition funded \$12 million for that purpose. The other projects that are going at the moment in South Barwon are three schools under construction, for which the land is all purchased. They were funded by the previous Liberal government. They are the Armstrong Creek primary school, the Armstrong Creek special school and the Torquay North Primary School, and they were all initiated and funded by the previous government. The Torquay North children's services hub received a \$1.5 million contribution, and I thank the previous minister, Ms Lovell in the other place, who was very kind to give that \$1.5 million grant to the Surf Coast shire to construct that facility, which is presently under construction at Merrijig Drive in Torquay North. That is basically it. There are no other projects on the ground that are actually under construction in the South Barwon electorate.

There are a number of road projects which have received funding. There is one in particular I want to highlight, which is the Barwon Heads Road duplication. There is a planning study — and I say that with inverted commas — being undertaken at the moment by VicRoads. I went along to an information session which was held at the South Barwon Cricket Club, and quite frankly I was shocked by the lack of detail in what was presented to the local community. Basically you have a map with a red line on it. There is no information. I was expecting to go and see, for example, the nature of the duplication of the road, where indicative intersections would be, the indicative alignment of the road — to actually see something in

the road. It was a blank piece of paper. It reminded me of a scene from the *Blackadder* series where — —

**Mr R. Smith** interjected.

**Mr KATOS** — Yes, I know the member for Warrandyte will appreciate this analogy. Lord Blackadder was competing for the Queen's affections and had become an explorer. Sir Walter Raleigh had come back, and Lord Melchett passes him a map and says, 'It has been done by the foremost cartographers of the day, and we would like you to fill it out', and he unrolls the map and it is a blank piece of paper, very much like the Barwon Heads Road study. There was no detail there whatsoever, which is quite amazing considering it has been there for a while. That is the Barwon Heads Road duplication, a much-needed project for the growing community of the South Barwon electorate.

When you look at growth areas in the state outside of metropolitan Melbourne, Armstrong Creek is the largest growth area in this state, and it has received virtually no funding for infrastructure from this government.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr KATOS** — I am not used to being heckled by my own side actually, but anyway.

**Mr Walsh** interjected.

**Mr KATOS** — I have got another seven and a half minutes, member for Murray Plains, that I have got to fill in. I think what I need to contrast is the difference between this government and its lack of investment in South Barwon with the previous Liberal-Nationals government. When you look at the infrastructure that was constructed in the four years, there was the Waurn Ponds railway station, which cost almost \$25 million and is a very well-patronised station. There was the first stage of the Pioneer Road upgrade, which cost \$5 million. There were the noise barriers on the Geelong Ring Road at Wandana Heights, which was an area that was abandoned by the previous Labor government and was left with the freeway noise.

There was \$37.5 million for the Surf Coast Secondary College, the Grovedale early learning hub got \$2 million, the Torquay kindergarten was extended for \$500 000 and the Waurn Ponds police station and State Emergency Service received \$15.6 million. In the matter of public importance debate yesterday the Minister for Police stated on the record that we did not fund a single police station in our term, so there is one

there. That has been very well received by the local community.

There are more funding items on the list: the Torquay Bowls Club got \$1.5 million for their redevelopment, and the Torquay Football Club, South Barwon Football Club, Grovedale Football Netball Club, Highton Tennis Club and Barwon Soccer Club all received funding for upgrades to their facilities.

I was very pleased only last week to meet with principal Andrew Dalgleish and visit Montpellier Primary School in Highton. I remember going there with Premier Napthine and announcing an allocation in the 2014–15 budget of \$4.8 million. That has a new building which is now operational — it has been finished — with two storeys and 16 new classrooms. That school was very much neglected by the previous Labor government. It sat in Geelong electorate and the former member for Geelong was not really interested in that part of his electorate — Highton. That school's numbers grew to over 600, and it had a very significant lack of facilities and classrooms. I was very proud to go and have a look at that school only last week with the principal and two of the people from the school, and it has come up very well and been very well received by the local community.

I mentioned that the schools that are under construction were funded and initiated by the previous government: in Armstrong Creek, the primary and special schools; and Torquay North Primary School. The Jan Juc kindergarten was extended by the previous government. The Surf Coast Highway received an upgrade worth almost \$4 million. There was a new State Emergency Service station built in Torquay, and a brand new Country Fire Authority (CFA) station. The Bellbrae CFA station is a completely new station. The Modewarre Football Club received funding for brand-new clubrooms.

The other thing of note is that a couple of the schools that we made election commitments to were not funded this year either. Belair Primary School in Highton, to which we made a commitment of almost \$4 million, had no funding whatsoever in this budget. That is a school that is growing, with numbers currently over 600. Highton Primary School, for which we had made a commitment of \$1.1 million, had no funding. That is a school that is on quite a restrained site. It has a heritage building on it too, so it has leaking roof problems as well. It is in desperate need of some funding, but there is nothing forthcoming from this government.

I think I have just highlighted the complete and utter contrast between the coalition and this Labor

government, which is completely ignoring the electorate of South Barwon. Try to spot a minister or anyone coming down to that neck of the woods. There is no-one to be seen. They have completely abandoned the electorate financially, with very minimal funding. With that, Speaker, I think I have very clearly highlighted the difference between Labor and the coalition when it comes to my electorate. I commend the motion to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

**Remaining business postponed on motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

### Quambee Reserve

**Mr HODGETT** (Croydon) — (12 870) I wish to raise a matter with the Minister for Sport, and the action I seek is that he urgently fund an upgrade of overhead ground lighting at Quambee Reserve in my electorate of Croydon. Quambee Reserve is the home ground for the North Ringwood Football Club, which is one of the strongest clubs in the Eastern Football League (EFL). This year North Ringwood Football Club fielded three teams in the Eastern Football League division 1 — seniors, reserves and under 19s — as well as a team in the EFL veterans division.

The existing lights at Quambee Reserve were installed over 25 years ago and are in desperate need of upgrade. The poor lighting only partially covers the field, meaning night matches are impossible and training is restricted to a small portion of the ground. This problem is exacerbated in winter when lack of natural light requires artificial lighting in late afternoon and early evening. The reduction of the available playing field to a smaller area also results in increased general wear and tear in that specific area of the ground.

The club has received advice that a 5-metre light extension on each of the five existing towers would cost approximately \$25 000. The club has indicated it has the capacity to raise \$15 000 through local fundraising appeals like raffles and donations. Already senior players and coaches have donated \$5000, which is to be commended. The club is serious about this upgrade and

wants to see it done. A grant in the order of \$10 000 would allow an upgrade to proceed.

The North Ringwood Football Club has a proud history of sporting excellence since 1962 and its 400 playing members, 150-plus social members and numerous supporters are an integral part of the local community. An upgrade of the lights at Quambee Reserve would greatly benefit the club as well as the wider local community of Ringwood and Croydon in my electorate. I again call on the minister to urgently fund the upgrade of ground lighting at Quambee Reserve for the North Ringwood Football Club.

### **Essendon Baseball Club**

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — (12 871) I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Sport, and the action I seek is for the minister's office and his department to meet with the Essendon Baseball Club and me to discuss the creation of the Chris Lane memorial field at Boeing Reserve, Strathmore Heights.

### **Back to Work scheme**

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — (12 872) My adjournment matter is directed to the Treasurer. It relates to the government's Back to Work scheme, and the action I seek is for the Treasurer to extend the program for Latrobe Valley-based unemployed persons and retrenched Hazelwood workers from a current cut-off date of 30 June 2017 to 30 June 2018, in addition to including the soon-to-be-retrenched Carter Holt Harvey workers in this same scheme.

There is some conjecture about the success or otherwise of the Back to Work scheme, but it is my view that there are many anomalies in the scheme at the moment, including the fact that Latrobe Valley workers and the unemployed in my region are being duded through the program. An example of this is that if you are a retrenched automotive worker or dairy industry worker the scheme is open for employers until 30 June 2018, but if you are a retrenched Hazelwood worker or unemployed person in the Latrobe Valley the scheme will be terminated on 30 June 2017. So we are seeking that extension for another 12 months. In addition to that, the subsidy for a retrenched automotive worker sits at \$7000, but if you are a retrenched Hazelwood worker that subsidy is \$5000, so there is a \$2000 difference.

We have this ridiculous situation at the moment where we know Hazelwood power station closed on 31 March this year and so for those retrenched workers who left at that time the scheme has only been open to them for

three months, but the reality is far different from that. On the ground there are many workers who are still actually employed at Hazelwood power station; some of them are only just losing their jobs right now, and others will be terminated in the coming months, which means that those particular Hazelwood workers will not be eligible for support as the scheme sits at the moment.

Then we have these poor Carter Holt Harvey workers — 160 of them — who will start to lose their jobs in July and August, but again under the rules that currently exist with this scheme, prospective employers for these workers will not be eligible to access the scheme, and that is simply not fair and equitable. I cannot understand why energy and timber workers in the Latrobe Valley are not as important as automotive workers or dairy industry workers. There are different rules and different categories. Bringing them into alignment would make sense to me, particularly for the Latrobe Valley region at the moment, where we have seen unemployment rise by more than 50 per cent in the last two years.

### **Breast Cancer Network Australia**

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — (12 873) It is my pleasure to participate in the adjournment debate tonight on a matter that is very dear to my heart. My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Health, and it concerns Breast Cancer Network Australia's 20th anniversary. The action I seek is that the minister provide financial support to ensure that an event can be held to mark this wonderful organisation's anniversary and to acknowledge their founder, Lyn Swinburne, AM. This outstanding organisation began in 1998 as a dream of Lyn's. Lyn envisaged an organisation that would encourage all of those affected to talk openly about their experiences and provide better support for all those affected by breast cancer, including their families. Lyn dreamed of planting pink lady silhouettes on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra to represent women who were affected by breast cancer each and every year. Lyn and like-minded women made this dream a reality and launched their organisation with the inaugural Field of Women. Each year we now see fields of women right across the country, from school ovals to the home of AFL, the MCG.

It is time to acknowledge and celebrate the important work of Breast Cancer Network Australia. Today they reach over 80 per cent of women newly diagnosed with breast cancer and have around 130 000 members. They are doing incredible work assisting and supporting those who most need a helping hand. They have changed lives and helped those who are in desperate need of assistance, and it is only fitting that we ensure

their fine work is recognised and celebrated. We are all immensely proud of and grateful for the wonderful work they do in our communities. As we celebrate Breast Cancer Network Australia's 20th anniversary next year I hope to join with the minister and all the MPs here in all our pink glory as we march onto the MCG. Let us acknowledge and celebrate the life-enhancing and life-changing work of Breast Cancer Network Australia in May next year.

### **Box Hill High School**

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — (12 874) I raise with the Minister for Education the instruction recently given to Box Hill High School that they must cut their enrolment for 2018 from around 1350 students to 1200 students, and I ask the minister to reverse that instruction. Box Hill High School is one of the most successful government schools in Victoria. Its students excel in a wide range of fields, including maths, science and the visual and performing arts. Not only does it have outstanding Australian tertiary admission rank results, it also achieves massive improvements in NAPLAN results for its students between years 7 and 9.

For many years Box Hill High School has provided a gifted student program that is recognised around Australia for its success in fostering gifted students, who have often suffered in their previous school environment due to being isolated, out of place or having special needs. The program's benefits have also been recognised in the bipartisan parliamentary Education and Training Committee report on gifted and talented students tabled in the previous Parliament.

As one family has written to me about their daughter's involvement in Box Hill High School's gifted student program, and I quote:

It has been a lifesaver. She was academically unchallenged at primary school and deeply unhappy because other kids just didn't get her sense of humour or understand what she was saying. She had to 'play dumb' to fit in. In the SEAL program she can be herself. She has found both academic stimulation and friends who understand her there because there are three classes of kids who are just like her.

The school's outstanding record, its gifted student program and the rapidly growing population in and around Box Hill due to high and medium-density developments have all led to a steady growth in student numbers from around 750 a decade or so ago to around 1350 projected for 2018. Despite limited facilities the school has been able to accommodate these extra students due to careful budgeting, careful classroom planning and the double-storey relocatable classrooms provided under the previous government. Yet instead of the school being championed and supported in what it is

achieving, the school has now been directed it must act immediately to cut its enrolments for 2018 by around 150 students. This means an end to out-of-zone gifted student intakes and infill overseas student placements. It may also require an end to out-of-zone siblings coming to the school and may even require some students who live in the school zone to be refused enrolment.

This is an appalling kick in the teeth for an outstanding government school. It is a huge blow to the gifted students who are being denied the opportunity of a lifetime. It is devastating news for local families who have made conscious decisions to buy and live in the Box Hill High School zone and who may now be excluded from the school of their choice. Instead of being ordered to cut its enrolments the school should be given the facilities it needs to continue to serve both the local community and gifted students from across Melbourne.

Without new facilities, which in 2014 the then Labor opposition promised it would provide, the school will inevitably face growing pressures in future years from rising population alone. However, there is absolutely no good reason for the school being ordered to cut its 2018 enrolments below the level for which the school has planned and budgeted, and I ask the minister to act urgently to allow the school's 2018 enrolment to proceed as planned.

### **Broadmeadows Health Service**

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) — (12 875) My adjournment request is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me in an inspection tour of the Broadmeadows Health Service and examine progress on the new surgery centre, funded with a \$17.3 million investment in last year's state budget. There are great expectations in Broadmeadows and in Melbourne's north for this development and a great appreciation of the investment by the Andrews government, not only for the surgery centre in Broadmeadows but also for the commitment of almost \$163 million to upgrade the Northern Hospital.

This investment is critical because the Northern Hospital was neglected by successive coalition governments after it opened in 1998. The last Liberal government allocated \$29 million for stage 1 of the expansion, a figure dwarfed by the Andrews Labor government's commitment of almost \$163 million. The Northern Hospital services more than 365 000 people, with an expected growth rate of 51 per cent up to 2031, which is set to push the population past 550 000. Building works are expected to start late next year on

that project, which is due to be completed in 2021. Meantime the extra operating theatres and beds in Broadmeadows will allow more patients to be treated each year in collaboration with the Northern Hospital.

When I visited the Broadmeadows Health Service site last year, construction works were just beginning. I understand that the centre will double the number of operating theatres at the Broadmeadows Health Service and allow more than 2500 additional procedures to be performed. I think this will be a great tribute to Labor's commitment to its heartland and will be a wonderful legacy of the Andrews government.

### **St Kilda Road tram services**

**Mr HIBBINS** (Prahran) — (12 876) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is for new E-class trams to be rolled out on tramlines that use St Kilda Road on routes 3, 5, 6, 58, 64 and 67. These tram routes are experiencing overcrowding and are operating over capacity, particularly between 8 and 9 in the morning, according to the latest data. One of the first campaigns that I ran when newly elected was to lobby the government to manufacture 50 new high-capacity trams to reduce overcrowding and create jobs. Whilst the government has subsequently ordered 30 new trams as part of its rolling stock strategy, it only maintains the existing 10 trams a year production when this could be doubled for 20 trams a year. The remaining 70 new trams in the rolling stock strategy are so far unfunded and are not all due to be on the track until 2021.

Along with new trams on the St Kilda Road routes need to come improved frequencies. The merger of routes 8 and 55 to route 55 has been problematic because of the very reason I stated when the idea was floated: that merging two overcrowded lines together and requiring passengers travelling to Swanston Street to go from one overcrowded service to another would simply result in continued overcrowding when new trams and more services are required. Services on the new route 58 have increased slightly; however, Stonnington council were advised that in merging and redirecting this service the service frequency would increase to 5 minutes during the a.m. peak and 6 minutes during the p.m. peak, but tram frequencies on the new route 58 do not meet these standards. Similarly they were also told that weekend frequencies would rise to every 10 minutes, but they are still running at every 12 minutes on weekends.

The new route should have also resulted in increased services along St Kilda Road routes. Public Transport

Victoria's own information sheet when the merged line proposal was first floated said:

Customers who travel along St Kilda Road could benefit from more frequent trams thanks to the joining of routes 8 and 55 ...

The original plan was that routes 5, 6 and 72, as advised to Stonnington, if all the recommendations were implemented, would see a 10-minute minimum frequency across weekdays, but this has not occurred. No new trams have been scheduled despite the freed-up capacity on St Kilda Road. So I would urge the government to roll out new high-capacity trams along the St Kilda Road tram routes, to increase the production of these new trams — new high-capacity, low-floor trams are needed particularly on route 72, which serves the Alfred hospital — and to increase frequencies along all these routes along St Kilda Road.

### **Frankston electorate graffiti**

**Mr EDBROOKE** (Frankston) — (12 877) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Police. The action I am requesting of the minister is to visit my electorate of Frankston so I can show her some of the challenges in my electorate that require attention. I believe there are issues in my electorate that, with the correct approach and the correct funding, we can make some gains on the progress we have already had.

One issue that has recently been discussed widely in my community is the impact of graffiti in the area. There are many issues that surround illegal graffiti in my community, as with many others, including cost to the community; impacts on residents and visitors, including the impact on perceptions of safety; impact on businesses; and the consequences of engaging in illegal graffiti and the offences and penalties that apply to that. The minister is a frequent and welcome visitor to Frankston, and I look forward to her response.

### **Barwon Valley School**

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — (12 878) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to provide funding for new secure fencing upgrades at Barwon Valley School.

I have been contacted by and met with Vlado Baban and Tracey Lowday, whose 12-year-old autistic son, Josh, attends the school. They have informed me that Josh has been at the school for over three years, and they have been pleased with the school. I have been informed that in recent times, as he has physically grown, Josh has started jumping the internal school fencing structures and has been reaching the outer

perimeter fencing structures, which in sections are poorly maintained, enabling him to abscond and putting him at grave risk of serious injury given his low cognitive capabilities.

I have also been informed that recently Josh has been absconding from school on a daily basis, running onto and across roadways and into nearby buildings and private dwellings. Again this puts him at grave risk due to the fact that he has no road awareness and no ability to self-protect. The school is certainly making an effort to fix the problem, obtaining three quotes to upgrade and fix the problem fencing areas. In fact the teachers and staff do a fine job at that school in educating students with special needs.

This week Mr Baban met with representatives from the education department, who confirmed that the school had indeed received three quotes for replacement fencing; however, they were unable to advise him how the funding required will be obtained. It is critical that the school receives funding not only to keep Josh safe but indeed to keep all of the students safe and secure inside the school perimeter. Obviously there are a lot of students there with very special needs, so it is important that the fencing is secure. I ask the minister as a matter of urgency to make funding available to Barwon Valley School for this urgent repair work to take place on the school's fencing.

### Specialist needs programs

**Mr RICHARDSON** (Mordialloc) — (12 879) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to detail to my community how we are supporting students with autism in specialist and mainstream schools.

I subscribe, and I am sure every member of this Parliament subscribes, to the notion that every child, no matter what their circumstances, deserves a quality education. That notion has been tested this week with the comments of Queensland senator Pauline Hanson, who said that we need to get rid of autistic children from mainstream classrooms. It was ill informed, it was deeply hurtful, it was offensive and it rehashes the challenges that parents face on a day-to-day basis about ensuring that their children are supported in our education system, are protected and get the best quality education and care that they deserve, as any other Victorian child should.

The comments were described by Autism Awareness Australia as 'appalling, archaic and cruel'. Children and Young People with Disability Australia described it as 'ill informed and deeply offensive'. Amaze, Victoria's

autism body, said that this was advocating for a move to segregation in the school environment rather than being inclusive. Senator Hanson's comments go directly against the Andrews Labor government's support for children with special needs.

Of course Yarrabah School in my community has been rebuilt, with a \$20.5 million investment. It has been a long time coming and is wonderful for that community. Chelsea Heights Primary School had an Inclusive Schools Fund grant, which is supporting children with special needs.

We need to be talking about extra support in the classroom, but mainly about children and their parents having choice so that they can choose whether they go to a specialist school or are educated in the mainstream system. Of course autism occurs across a spectrum, so we need to acknowledge that every child with autism is different. They are individuals, and we need to respect their needs on a case-by-case basis. This is summed up perfectly by a mother, Carly Lord, who emailed me about her experiences. She wrote:

I believe ALL kids of ALL abilities deserve the support they need to thrive, to develop their strengths and overcome barriers and challenges, both inside and outside the classroom. I believe that the government has a critical role to play in providing opportunities for every child in our schools ... An integrated approach is required where schools, teachers and parents have the support required to provide those opportunities, and forcefully removing and marginalising children on the spectrum from their peers isn't the answer.

Carly, I could not agree with you more, and I am sure every member of the Victorian Parliament is with you on that. It is not about segregation. It is about supporting children with special needs, and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government will do and continue to do. I am sure every member of Parliament supports this. I ask the minister to detail to my community how we are supporting children with special needs in specialist and mainstream schools.

### Responses

**Mr PAKULA** (Attorney-General) — The member for Croydon raised a matter for the Minister for Sport regarding the Quambee Reserve. The member for Essendon raised a matter for the Minister for Sport regarding a meeting with the Essendon Baseball Club. The member for Morwell raised a matter for the Treasurer regarding extension to the Back to Work scheme.

The member for Narre Warren South raised a matter for the Minister for Health regarding support for an event

to celebrate the work of Breast Cancer Network Australia. The member for Box Hill raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding potential cuts in enrolment at Box Hill High School. The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the Minister for Health regarding inspections of the Broadmeadows Health Service.

The member for Prahran raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport regarding new E-class trams on St Kilda Road. The member for Frankston raised a matter for the Minister for Police regarding a visit to Frankston to inspect that electorate. The member for South Barwon raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding the Barwon Valley School. The member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding support for students with autism. I could not have agreed with his contribution more. I will pass all of those matters on.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am sure the Clerk will be having mixed emotions to know that the house now stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 6.27 p.m. until Tuesday, 8 August.**

