

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

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

**Tuesday, 9 May 2017  
(Extract from book 5)**

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## **The Lieutenant-Governor**

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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(from 10 November 2016)

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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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)

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Ms Kilkenny, Ms Knight, Mr McGuire, Mr Pearson, Ms Spence, Ms Thomson and Ms Ward.

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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

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*Parliamentary Services* — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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**FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Party</b>
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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**

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**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 D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith 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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**Tuesday, 9 May 2017**

**The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.04 p.m. and read the prayer.**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

#### Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, what was the role and the cost of Simon Crean's involvement with your government and secret cabinet subcommittee in seeking to resolve the Country Fire Authority (CFA) dispute — a dispute you told Victorians that you had fixed almost 12 months ago?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I do want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Is it any wonder that after the week he has had there are no questions about the budget? This is where you get up to take a point of order. Apparently there is not one dollar for safety in the whole budget. How does \$5 billion sound for you?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Minister for Tourism and Major Events!

**Mr Guy** — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was about Simon Crean and his involvement in this Premier's secret cabinet subcommittee, which he clearly knows very little about.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier to come back to answering the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — Certainly, and I am indebted to you for your guidance, Speaker, and I am indebted to the Leader of the Opposition. It is always great to be lectured about things you might not know anything about. Of all the people in this place to be lecturing anyone about commenting on things you know nothing

about, the Leader of the Opposition is in no fear of ever being described as an expert. Mr Crean, an outstanding Victorian, someone who on his worst days made a bigger contribution than this one here — —

**Mr Guy** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier has had a minute. It is a straightforward question: what was the role and what was the cost of Simon Crean's involvement? I ask you to bring him back to answering that question.

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — Mr Crean, in his capacity as a former minister in the commonwealth government — a very senior minister, I might add — has provided advice to the government in a number of different areas, including the Latrobe Valley worker transfer scheme, the first of its kind in Australia, saving power industry jobs. In relation to fire services, we are grateful for the contribution of Mr Crean, and the terms of that engagement will be reported in the usual way.

#### *Supplementary question*

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — In a recent meeting with members of your secret Country Fire Authority cabinet task force, Premier, Simon Crean advised your government that you should 'stop trying to give the union everything they want and stop trying to usurp the role of the CFA management'. At that stage Mr Crean left the meeting and ceased any further involvement with your government on this matter. Premier, why have you not taken Simon Crean's advice?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Well, better than the advice being given to this one, asking questions like that. What a week you have had! The Leader of the Opposition is now making things up — what he does best — shooting his mouth off and making things up: 'no money for safety in the budget, no money at all; no money for safety in the budget'. And no questions on the budget either, it would seem.

**Mr Walsh** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the Premier was asked a very clear question about why he did not take Simon Crean's advice to stop interfering in CFA matters. I would ask you to bring him back to answering that question, please.

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

### Ministers statements: family violence

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I am delighted to rise to update the house on the unprecedented investment of some \$1.91 billion by our government to implement every single one of the 227 recommendations put forward by Australia's first and only royal commission into the greatest law and order challenge of our time, and that is family violence. It was a royal commission bagged by those opposite when it was announced but one that we implemented and have been faithful to.

It is \$1.91 billion, and why not? You have got one woman a week being murdered by a current or former partner; you have got 47 per cent of violent crime attributable to family violence; you have got 40 per cent of police time attributable to family violence; and you have got in every sense a national emergency and a national shame. So Victoria is doing what we do best: all of us as a state leading and showing the nation how to get things done.

There is the best part of \$2 billion so that 17 support and safety hubs can be put in place, with the first five of those rolling out in north-east Melbourne, Bayside, inner Gippsland, the Mallee and Barwon from later this year; specialist family violence courts in Ballarat, Heidelberg, Shepparton, Moorabbin and Frankston; and hundreds of homes for victims and survivors and their kids, more child protection workers, and funding to prevent family violence in the first place. Is it any wonder that Fiona McCormack — that outstanding Victorian and CEO of Domestic Violence Victoria — said, and I quote:

Today is a day to be proud.

It is a day to be proud, but despite that investment, despite that leadership position, there was one commentator out there ill-informed — clearly had not read the budget before he shot his ill-informed, ignorant mouth off — who said, 'There's no money in the budget'. Well, we have put the lie to that nonsense.

### Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Under your and Peter Marshall's plan to split the Country Fire Authority (CFA), can you guarantee that the future of each and every CFA volunteer — all 60 000 of them — will be protected and that they will continue to have a place at the fire station where they currently proudly serve?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I am delighted to have an opportunity to confirm for the Leader of the Opposition, for the rest of the frontbench and for anyone else who is interested that this government will continue to support volunteers and career firefighters, and that sits in stark contrast. How is that support delivered? Well, it is more equipment, not cutbacks — more equipment.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — You don't like to know about the history of your cutbacks for the fire service?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr Guy** — On a point of order, Speaker, I asked a very straightforward question about whether volunteers will be able to serve at the stations where they currently proudly serve. It is a straightforward question to the Premier about our volunteers. I ask you to bring him back to answer it.

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — I was asked about support for volunteers, and I will be very clear. We will continue to provide additional funding, additional equipment, more resources. We will not be cutting the budget of the CFA. We will not be going off to the tennis while the state burns. We will not be denying that there is a link between some cancers and some firefighting. We will not be doing any of that. Nor will we be taking lectures from people who denied that some firefighters suffer from cancer because of their brave service. We will not be taking lectures from people who cut the budget.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, you have allowed the Premier some time to come back to answering the question in accordance with your previous ruling. He has not yet done so. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The substantive question asked the Premier if he could guarantee that volunteers would be protected and have a place in the stations they currently serve. I rule that the Premier is being relevant to the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — Speaker, be in no doubt that the government will continue to support each and every volunteer as they make their contribution to keeping their community safe. The way we will do that is not by

cutting their budget, not by failing to invest in equipment, not by heading off to the tennis while the state burns and, most assuredly, not by listening to this lot opposite.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — Premier, it is nearly 12 months since you said, ‘This dispute has come to an end, and I ended it’, which was clearly a lie. Will you deny that your fix is now to forcibly remove CFA volunteers from 34 fire stations across Victoria, including Pakenham, Ballarat, Warrnambool, South Warrandyte and Ocean Grove?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Again, I cannot tell you how indebted I am to be lectured by those opposite about support for volunteers, and I am indebted to the member for Mordialloc for reminding me about Fiskville. You know, lift up the carpet and put it under the carpet — no action. No action on Fiskville, no action on presumptive rights, no action on budgets, no action on equipment. We will not be lectured to by those who had their chance.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I am struggling to hear the Premier’s answer over all of the shouting. I will commence to remove members from the chamber if they persist in shouting.

**Mr ANDREWS** — I will not be lectured to by those who had their chance and, instead of supporting the CFA, abandoned them with cutbacks, closures and abject failure. The government will continue to support our firefighters, both career and volunteer, and those opposite can ask as many of the fanciful questions as they want, but our determined support for CFA volunteers and career firefighters will not be shaken.

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before calling the Minister for Police on a ministers statement, I acknowledge the former member for Coburg and Brunswick, Carlo Carli, in the gallery.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and  
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**Ministers statements: police resources**

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Police) — I want to update the house today on the progress we are making with the upgrade, refurbishment and rebuilding of police stations across the state in a \$190 million investment. Of course that comes as part of the overall package: the biggest ever single investment in Victoria Police’s history of \$2 billion in last year’s budget, building on the \$1 billion over the previous two budgets as well — \$3 billion; the biggest number of police we have ever recruited; and the biggest number of police stations we have upgraded.

Unfortunately last week we heard some claims being made that there was nothing in this budget to crack down on the crime wave in Victoria. We have got \$2 billion in the community safety statement for Victoria Police. We have got almost \$2 billion in family violence. The only people who do not think family violence is the leading law and order issue in this state are those opposite, apparently — \$2 billion in family violence just wiped over. Rightly, on 4 May the *Herald Sun* commented, and I quote:

It’s not the first time in recent weeks Guy has been a bit off his game — perhaps he’s suffering midterm opposition blues.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Ms NEVILLE** — As we get on with upgrading 43 — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Ms NEVILLE** — We all know who the opposition leader likes to stand next to — and his view on women. We know his views on women; he stands next to them.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Ms NEVILLE** — As those opposite go around promising to reopen stations that they closed, we are getting on with rebuilding 43 police stations in this state, compared to their 14.

### Country Fire Authority volunteers

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, do you stand by your government's commitment, repeated in this chamber multiple times by your emergency services ministers, not to change the Country Fire Authority (CFA) boundaries: yes or no?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Again I am delighted to have yet another question not about the budget. I tell you what: you know it is a pretty good budget when they will not even ask you about it. How would you be — to be the member for Malvern when you cannot even get a question up in the week after the budget?

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before the Leader of The Nationals raises his point of order can I take this opportunity to warn the member for Macedon and the member for Ripon.

**Mr Walsh** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the Premier may have absolutely no respect for the CFA volunteers and the communities they serve, but it was a very clear question about the previous commitment not to change CFA boundaries, and I ask you to ask the Premier to come back and answer that question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I note the Premier is not even a minute into his answer, but I do ask the Premier to answer the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — Thanks very much, Speaker. I am not going to be getting into playing silly games with those opposite. What we will do, though, is provide — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — Silly games with those opposite — who have no credibility at all when it comes to supporting the CFA, either career or volunteer. All they did was cut their funding and deny the respect and support that they are entitled to.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is ignoring your ruling that he should answer the question and is proceeding to debate it. I ask you to again instruct him to come back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier will come back to answering the question.

**Mr ANDREWS** — We will continue to support the CFA in every way possible. Those opposite will need to wait to see the detail of the work that we are doing, considering ways in which we can continue to support the CFA. I am not here to make announcements about any changes today, other than to say we will continue to support the CFA, career and volunteer — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — Is it any wonder they are interjecting, because they know nothing about supporting firefighters. These silly games from those opposite simply mark them out as the hypocrites we know them to be.

**Ms Thomas** interjected.

**Questions and statements interrupted.**

### SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

#### Member for Macedon

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Macedon will leave the chamber for a period of 30 minutes.

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

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

**Questions and statements resumed.**

#### Country Fire Authority enterprise bargaining agreement

*Supplementary question*

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — My question is to the Premier. Last week CFA chairman Greg Smith said, 'I don't know what anybody has in mind when it comes to splitting up the CFA'. Premier, why have you not had the decency to tell your own hand-picked CFA chair, board and CEO about massive structural changes coming to the CFA, despite the United Firefighters Union being continually briefed for months by your government?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — I reject the assertions in the Leader of The Nationals' question. The real issue would be — I wondered — did you call them in to brief them when you cut their budget?

**Mr R. Smith** interjected.

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — Did you call them in to apologise that while they were out on the fireground, you were at the tennis?

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is again debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier, to continue with his answer.

**Mr ANDREWS** — The CFA, all of its members — career and volunteer — the board, all the staff and the communities they serve can be absolutely confident that we will continue to give them the resources they need and the respect they are owed. We will not use them as a political football or a political fundraising tool, which this lot over here did — they could not help themselves and cut their budget and then used them to raise money for their own political purposes. No integrity, none whatsoever.

#### **Ministers statements: infrastructure projects**

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — In the absence of any other inquiries, I rise to update the house on the Victorian Budget 2017–18 and the massive, massive contribution that it makes to Victoria's infrastructure. The 2017–18 budget lifts infrastructure investment to \$10.1 billion. Compare that to the long-run average infrastructure investment before we came to government of \$4.9 billion.

We have more than doubled our annual infrastructure investment. In this budget we have added to the pipeline by funding such important works as the Mordialloc bypass, a massive upgrade to the Northern Hospital and \$685 million for school capital right across Victoria. This adds to our historic investments in Melbourne Metro, the West Gate tunnel and the level crossing removal program.

Our record investment will create 50 000 Victorian jobs. But imagine what we could do if we had a little bit of help lifting the weight. We would get \$6.6 billion more from the commonwealth were they motivated to give Victorians their per capita share of infrastructure funding.

#### **Questions and statements interrupted.**

## **SUSPENSION OF MEMBER**

### **Member for Ripon**

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Ripon will leave the chamber for half an hour.

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

## **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

### **Ministers statements: infrastructure projects**

#### **Questions and statements resumed.**

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — Today we get a paltry 8.5 per cent in the federal budget arrangements. So at the very least what we want out of the commonwealth is \$1.46 billion, our just deserts from our asset recycling funding that will allow the regional rail revival program to go ahead and deliver to regional Victorians the rail system that they have been crying out for and deserve, and have been sold out far too often by those opposite. So despite the intransigence and the insipid behaviour of the previous Liberal government, the Andrews Labor government is continuing to deliver for all Victorians.

### **Land titles registry**

**Mr HIBBINS** (Pahran) — My question is to the Treasurer. Treasurer, this is regarding the privatisation of the land titles registry. Will the Treasurer rule out fattening up the land titles registry for sale by increasing fees before any sale or long-term lease?

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — Can I confirm that the government has identified that we will start the process of inquiring into how the land titles office will be leased out and, in so doing, we have already highlighted that we intend to look at what safeguards necessarily need to be put in place for this vital piece of infrastructure to the state.

We have already seen out of New South Wales the issues that concern the public. Those issues concern the integrity of land titles data, and the state will assure that through this process. We will also seek to make sure that those using the land titles system do so as efficiently and, might I say, as cost efficiently as possible. So in the context of the state's intentions, it is not our intention to disproportionately increase the charges for land titles.

What that means is that we will not fatten the asset. Our intention would be to ensure that Victorians continue to have a premium service that is protected by a system of safeguards this will ensure that land title data is available to Victorians. They can have certainty and security in the system that is provided, and they can also have confidence that it will be run cost efficiently.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr HIBBINS** (Prahran) — On a supplementary question to the Treasurer, can the Treasurer advise what the current profit margins of the land titles registry are?

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — Can I be very clear with the member that what we are seeking to do is to put some commercial rigour in the way that the land titles office operates, so that means a greater level of transparency around how it functions and funds its undertakings. It is not a business, and it has not been run as a business since its inception. It is not a business.

**Mr M. O'Brien** — You don't know the answer.

**Mr PALLAS** — The answer is there is no answer, but it is good to see the member for Malvern, who supports the land title sale. I am more than happy to make sure that the member is provided with a brief on these matters, but I can assure him there is no operating position of the land titles office. It is not run as a business at the moment, and a greater level of commercial rigour will help all Victorians.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Treasurer's time has expired.

**Ministers statements: regional rail services**

**Ms ALLAN** (Minister for Public Transport) — It gives me great pleasure to update the house on this government's ongoing record investment in regional rail. It truly is a regional rail revival. I was delighted to join the Independent member for Shepparton last Wednesday, and her community —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Hawthorn has already been warned.

**Ms ALLAN** — to talk about the \$43.5 million being delivered for infrastructure, stabling and services on the Shepparton line. Contrast that to others, like the Liberal member for Northern Victoria Region, who continued her low aspirations for her community and was calling for \$750 000 for a business case. We delivered

58 times that funding, and we are getting on with the work.

The budget delivered more VLocity carriages, taking them to 87 in total, all made in Victoria. Also, this ongoing investment is why today so many of us were at Southern Cross station with the Premier to announce another 142 extra services for regional Victoria, taking it to over 570 services that we have added — and we want to do so much more. That is what our \$1.45 billion regional rail revival is all about.

Tonight is the night for the federal government to reveal if it will work with us on this project or continue to short-change Victoria. We know their own federal Liberal members of Parliament want this to happen. In addition to the petition that is being run by the member for Corangamite with the member for Wannon, the federal member for Wannon told the *Terang Express* last week in regard to our \$1.45 billion regional rail revival:

I think it's a wonderful announcement.

It is, and it is time for Malcolm Turnbull to turn his eyes south of the Murray and give us the money we are entitled to.

Why is this important? I will leave the final observation to the mayor of Ararat, Paul Hooper, who told the *Stawell Times-News*:

We see our city as the gateway to western Victoria and the state government's announcement to increase rail services to Ararat will help open up western Victoria to population and economic growth.

**Member for Melton**

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, it was good enough that the member for Tarneit paid back every cent rorted from the taxpayer. Premier, why are you blocking the Parliament from forcing the member for Melton to do exactly the same?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Another question and no mention of the budget.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — Oh, it's about money! It's not on the budget, mate. There was a budget last week. You might have missed it; you clearly have not read it.

The terms of the arrangements that the member for Melton has entered into with the Parliament — I have no knowledge of those other than — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr ANDREWS** — If those opposite are proposing that all payment arrangements between the Parliament and its members should be the subject of briefings to me, that is a very interesting position.

I have no knowledge of the details of those arrangements, other than that the member for Melton has confirmed he will repay the money, and that is the right thing to do.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr GUY** (Leader of the Opposition) — Premier, given that you launched through the media the member for Melton's supposed repaying of rorted parliamentary moneys, of the \$98 000 you asked him to repay of the \$174 000 rorted, \$16 000 of that is to come as a balloon payment at the end of this term, when the member for Melton has said he will be resigning. What legal arrangements have you entered into with the member for Melton to guarantee that he will follow through with this \$16 000 balloon payment and not leave the taxpayers with yet another bill?

**Mr ANDREWS** (Premier) — Clearly, apart from not reading the budget last week, the Leader of the Opposition did not listen to my answer to his substantive question. The terms, the nature and the details of an arrangement that is between the Department of Parliamentary Services and the member for Melton are not known to me, nor should they be. So the assertions, which is another way of saying all the content in your question that you have just made up — this from no less an authoritative source as the one who said last week's budget had nothing for safety, so we will not be taking much of what you say any more — —

**Mr Walsh** — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance. The question was very clear about what arrangements have been put in place to guarantee that the member for Melton makes the \$16 000 balloon payment at the end of this term. The Premier actually announced that at a press conference, so for him to say he has no knowledge of it is just blatantly wrong. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The Premier to continue his answer.

**Mr ANDREWS** — I have said — and they may not like it, but it happens to be accurate — that the terms of the arrangement that the member for Melton has entered into are not known to me, other than that I say I fully support him paying back the money.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

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

**Mr ANDREWS** — Those opposite are unhappy with that apparently. The money should be paid back, and it is going to be.

**Ministers statements: education funding**

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Education) — I rise to inform the house of the impact of the Turnbull government's funding cuts on Victorian schools.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**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 half an hour.

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

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

**Ministers statements: education funding**

**Questions and statements resumed.**

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Education) — They are not interested in cuts to Victorian schools. On the very same day that the Andrews government confirmed in its budget that it will meet its obligations to the Gonski agreement in the 2018 school year, the Turnbull government announced a new school funding proposal that leaves a massive shortfall.

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Burwood has been warned.

**Mr MERLINO** — They are not interested in their own schools. A massive shortfall — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

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

**Mr MERLINO** — Perhaps they will listen when I speak about their own schools in their own electorates.

It is \$630 million. The advice from the Department of Education and Training is that in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate, Doncaster Secondary College will lose over \$900 000; in the member for Box Hill's electorate, Box Hill High School will lose over \$800 000; and in the seat of Ripon, and the member is not here, Maryborough Education Centre, over \$1 million. Grovedale College in South Barwon electorate will lose over \$700 000 and Pakenham Secondary College in the seat of Bass will lose over \$600 000. They are yelling and shouting, they are not advocating for their own schools in their own electorates. We are delivering on our obligations under the Gonski agreement to the dollar —

**Mr T. Smith** interjected.

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

**Mr MERLINO** — in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. Those opposite should speak to their colleagues in Canberra. Disgraceful!

**Mr R. Smith** — On a point of order, Speaker, could we call the Minister for Industry and Employment back into the chamber? He might want to hear this. Speaker, I refer you to question 12 183, a question on notice that I asked the Minister for Industry and Employment. On 7 March he replied with a completely inadequate answer. My view was agreed with by you in a letter to me on 22 March, where you say, and I quote:

I have reviewed the answer and agree that the answer provided by the minister to be inadequate.

It is now a month and a half since that advice came through. Not only has it not been reinstated on the Hansard website but it is also still outstanding months later. I also refer you to *Rulings from the Chair*, page 171 of the June 2015 edition, with regard to the 30-day time limit that questions must be answered in, and I quote:

The minister will be given an opportunity to explain the late response in the house immediately ...

The minister has scurried from the chamber as soon as he knew that this was going to be raised. Given that he has scurried from the chamber and is hiding from his ministerial responsibilities, *Rulings from the Chair* also says that if the minister is not in the chamber at the time, then at the next available opportunity they must come in and explain the late response in the house. The time that this minister has taken to given an adequate answer, even after your direction to him, has been too long. I request that you uphold that ruling by the roting former Speaker, the member for Tarneit.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I have just sought advice from the clerks. We will make contact with the minister, seek an urgent response from the minister and otherwise apply the standing orders that you have set out.

**Mr R. Smith** — On a further point of order, Speaker, *Rulings from the Chair* states that the minister will be given the opportunity to explain the late response in the house. Are you going to give him that opportunity as per the rulings and as per the precedent set by the former Speaker?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! That was my ruling.

**Mr R. Smith** — Will he come in and give an explanation?

**The SPEAKER** — Order! That was my ruling.

**Mr R. Smith** — I am still not clear.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! I will provide the minister with the opportunity to provide a response to the question that you have asked.

**Mr R. Smith** — Thank you very much.

## CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

### Ringwood electorate

**Ms RYALL** (Ringwood) — (12 547) My question is to the Minister for Education. What is the break-up of the line item for the Maroondah education plan in the 2016–17 budget for the schools in the Ringwood electorate? That is, which Ringwood electorate schools will receive how much funding, and for what, in this budget?

### Narre Warren South electorate

**Ms GRALEY** (Narre Warren South) — (12 548) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and concerns the upgrade of Thompsons Road, Cranbourne. I ask: when will the north bridge being built over the Thompsons Road level crossing be complete? I know that local residents are very excited by the progress already being made on this much-needed project. The duplication of Thompsons Road to three lanes in each direction and the removal of the level crossing will make a significant difference in the lives of so many local residents.

**Morwell electorate**

**Mr NORTHE** (Morwell) — (12 549) My constituency question is to the Premier. What is the latest information with respect to mental health support and services for former Hazelwood power station employees, contractors and service providers?

Having spoken regularly with many who have worked directly and indirectly with the Hazelwood power station, I am concerned about the welfare of these people and their families. The question being asked by many people is whether the government has engaged the services of any mental health service provider, such as the Mental Health Foundation of Australia, to provide support to people who, through no fault of their own, have faced enormous upheaval due to Hazelwood closing. It has been a truly traumatic time for many people within the Latrobe Valley community, and that is why we need to know what mental health services have been engaged by the government to assist local people in need.

The state government slugged Latrobe Valley generators an extra \$252 million in taxes just last year. The Premier must explain how much of this money is being spent on mental health support services for Hazelwood workers, contractors and service providers.

**Yan Yean electorate**

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — (12 550) My constituency question is to the Minister for Police. Minister, what does Victoria Police have planned leading up to the September opening of the new Mernda police station to work with existing community safety groups such as Whittlesea Neighbourhood Watch and other community organisations? The additional 45 police being provided for the Whittlesea police service area by the Andrews Labor government, along with the new police station opening in September, have been very much welcomed by my constituents. Both provide an opportunity for increased resident involvement in community safety.

**Bass electorate**

**Mr PAYNTER** (Bass) — (12 551) My question is for the Minister for Education: will you make a trip to Wonthaggi with the Treasurer and explain why a new Wonthaggi Secondary College was not funded in the latest budget?

Minister, you have continued to ignore the education needs of the Wonthaggi region. Despite repeated pleas and a desperate need for a new secondary school in

Wonthaggi you have again failed in your responsibility as a minister to provide quality education facilities for all Victorians. The slogan ‘The Education State’ is just that — a slogan. It obviously means nothing to the region of Wonthaggi where the tired, deteriorating existing college is bursting at the seams.

All the chest beating, posturing and grandstanding by you and the Labor upper house local member has counted for nothing. Forget about visits to the school, cabinet meetings in the area, funds for a planning stage — that all means nothing to the Wonthaggi people, who can smell a rat a mile away.

Stop blaming previous governments. Labor has been in government for 14 of the last 18 years. Blaming coalition governments just makes you look foolish. Show some leadership and just get on with the job.

**Sunbury electorate**

**Mr J. BULL** (Sunbury) — (12 552) My question is to the Treasurer. The 2017–18 Victorian budget includes significant funding for two fantastic schools in my electorate, Diggers Rest Primary School and Sunbury Downs College. How do these investments build on other investments in education made through the 2016–17 and 2015–16 budgets in my electorate?

**Eildon electorate**

**Ms McLEISH** (Eildon) — (12 553) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer to the installation of centre wire rope barriers on the Goulburn Valley Highway between Yea and Molesworth. I ask the minister: is it intended to extend the installation of barriers on the Goulburn Valley Highway beyond Molesworth to Cathkin or Yarck? I ask this as I have been approached by a number of constituents in the area who have heard that this is going to be the case: one, that they will be extended to Cathkin and another, that they will be extended to Yarck. The communities of Yea, Alexandra, Molesworth and beyond will certainly be very interested in the response to this question, and I look forward to hearing it.

**Carrum electorate**

**Ms KILKENNY** (Carrum) — (12 554) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Minister, residents in my electorate of Carrum would like to know: what are the next steps in the process to remove the level crossings at Bonbeach, Carrum and Seaford, and how can they get involved? My local community overwhelmingly endorses and supports the removal of the level crossings in the

Carrum electorate and all along the Frankston line, having put up with these congested and dangerous level crossings for far too long. This is an extraordinary investment in the local area that will improve safety, reduce congestion and create hundreds of jobs. Minister, what are the next steps in the process to remove these terrible death traps and relics of the past?

### Polwarth electorate

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) — (12 555) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Can the minister tell the hardworking dairy farmers of my electorate what plans her government has to upgrade the three-phase power supply that is so desperately needed? This government has made much of its commitment to clean, green energy.

Across the northern plains of my electorate hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers money is being spent so international companies can build wind farms for the new energy mix here in Victoria. At the same time hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent to close up coalmines, and to reduce the reliability of power supply. It seems this government has an endless chequebook when it comes to playing with the politics of energy generation, but when it comes to generating jobs, generating confidence and generating the infrastructure needed to keep country communities working, this government has gone sadly missing.

The dairy industry, like all industries, continues to become more productive and more efficient. Like all other industries, this requires state-of-the-art equipment and technology. These industries will not work on a Third World power supply and infrastructure. When the government trumpets new, clean, green technology to its inner Melbourne seats it cannot be taken seriously when it is forcing viable dairy farms to go and buy diesel generators just to keep their farm gates open.

### Frankston electorate

**Mr EDBROOKE** (Frankston) — (12 556) My constituency question is for the Special Minister of State. I ask: could the minister answer as to how a location will be determined for the location of the Bayside Peninsula-based family violence support and safety hub announced last week in the fantastic state budget. This is more funding for the prevention of family violence than the rest of the whole nation rolled together. My community says no to violence against women, and this new court and support and safety hub will make a huge difference, not just changing lives but saving them. Of course these are but some of the

recommendations put forward by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, but I am proud to once again say we will be acting on them all.

Failure is a common theme for the opposition. As I was announcing the new special family violence court and the support and safety hub to address the biggest law and order issue in Australia and some of the highest police family violence call-out rates in metropolitan Melbourne, what were the opposition doing? Where they committing to bipartisan support to tackle the scourge of family violence? No. Where they searching in vain for any successful projects in Frankston? No.

**Mr Clark** — On a point of order, Speaker, the speaker is departing far from asking a question. It is in order for him to provide information that is relevant to his question. It is not an opportunity for him to debate issues at large. I ask you to bring back to complying with his obligation to actually ask a constituency question.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Frankston had asked his question and his time is complete on the question, so I will not deal with that point of order at this point.

## AUDIT COMMITTEE

### Review of members second residence allowance

**The SPEAKER** — Order! Before moving to introduction of bills, I just wanted to make a few remarks about the role of the Audit Committee. Last week the last of the Parliament's Audit Committee reports on the second residence allowance was tabled in both this chamber and in the Legislative Council. The President of the Legislative Council and I have discussed the role of the Audit Committee and the circumstances that led to the reports that were recently tabled. While we believe that the Audit Committee was able to perform the reviews that it was asked to, it is important that the role of the committee be clearly set out for future reference.

The President and I agreed to make some comments in our respective houses about the appropriate role of the Audit Committee. In particular we note the Audit Committee is an internal committee of the parliamentary organisation. Its role is to advise the Presiding Officers on matters of administration and risk management to better administer the parliamentary departments. It is not a committee set up by statute or standing orders. It therefore has no formal investigative powers, no parliamentary privilege, including immunities, and no reporting framework.

This means that any formal and publicly reported investigation creates potential vulnerabilities for the committee and the people it may seek to investigate and report on. It similarly creates vulnerabilities for the contracted auditors, who conduct the operational inquiries on behalf of the committee in order to create some independence of process from the Presiding Officers.

There are other committees which are set up with powers and reporting frameworks to investigate certain matters. I ask members to take these matters into consideration and in future circumstances to avoid misplacing pressure on the Audit Committee to publicly report. This will allow the committee to focus on the important audit work that it was created to undertake within parliamentary departments.

**Mr Clark** — I desire to move, by leave:

That the house take note of the Speaker's statement on the Audit Committee.

**Leave refused.**

## CORRECTIONS LEGISLATION MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENT BILL 2017

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Police) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to make miscellaneous amendments to the Corrections Act 1986, the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 and the Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009 and for other purposes.

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

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Police) — The bill will amend the Corrections Act 1986 and the Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009 and make a range of improvements to the operation of the corrections system and the serious sex offenders scheme.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Read first time.**

## CITY OF GREATER GEELONG AMENDMENT BILL 2017

### *Introduction and first reading*

**Ms HUTCHINS** (Minister for Local Government) introduced a bill for an act to amend the City of Greater Geelong Act 1993 to make amendments to the method of election of the mayor and deputy mayor of Greater Geelong City Council and the constitution of that council and for other purposes.

**Read first time.**

## PETITIONS

**Following petitions presented to house:**

### Youth justice centres

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the Box Hill University of the Third Age (U3A), 29 Strabane Avenue, Box Hill North Vic 3129, social philosophy class, in the electorate of Box Hill, which receives support from the municipality of Whitehorse from the state government of Victoria, and personally, from local and state representatives, draws to the attention of the house that for many years Victoria's approach to youth justice has been guided by the United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child which recommends a strong emphasis on rehabilitation, with the use of detention a last resort and for minimal time. This approach, also adopted in the USA and other overseas countries, has resulted in a clear decline in youth crime in Victoria until the very recent criminal activities of a small number of young offenders here.

The reasons for this appear complex. However, research and experience demonstrate that putting young offenders in high security detention without strong rehabilitation programs is counterproductive, causing increased recidivism and turning many into career criminals.

The government's proposed project for a \$228 million high-security youth detention facility 'to protect the public', when experience shows that the use of such facilities only exacerbates the problem, will be wasteful, counterproductive, and socially and morally wrong.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria abandon the proposed project for a \$228 million high-security detention centre in favour of funding strong rehabilitation programs such as diversionary and drug, alcohol and mental health programs, intensive case management, supervision and personal, family and community support designed to break the cycle of youth crime.

**By Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) (26 signatures).

### Reservoir Neighbourhood House

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria and the Reservoir Neighbourhood House draws to the attention of the house the plight of the Reservoir Neighbourhood House (RNH) which

receives only 20 hours of neighbourhood house coordination program funding from the Department of Health and Human Services.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria request your assistance in supporting an increase in core neighbourhood house coordination program funding for Reservoir Neighbourhood House to 40 hours per week. We want the Reservoir Neighbourhood House to be open and staffed Monday to Friday to better support and respond to the needs of the East Reservoir community.

We sign this petition in support of this request for an increase in NHCP funding for RNH.

**By Mr SCOTT (Preston) (453 signatures).**

**Tabled.**

## GEELONG CITIZENS JURY

### Final report

**Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government), by leave, presented report and government response.**

**Tabled.**

## SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

### *Alert Digest No. 6*

**Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) presented *Alert Digest No. 6 of 2017* on:**

**Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017  
Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Bill 2017**

**together with appendices.**

**Tabled.**

**Ordered to be published.**

## DOCUMENTS

**Tabled by Clerk:**

*Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* — Report 2016 under s 96

*Financial Management Act 1994:*

Report from the Minister for Training and Skills that she had not received the reports 2015 and 2016 of Federation Training, together with an explanation for delay

Report from the Minister for Training and Skills that she had not received the Report 2016 of Wodonga Institute of TAFE, together with an explanation for the delay

*Planning and Environment Act 1987* — Notices of approval of amendments to the following planning schemes:

Bayside — C148

Boroondara — C230

Brimbank — GC46

Frankston — C113

Greater Bendigo — C224

Greater Dandenong — C191

Hume — GC46

Knox — C145

Melbourne — C273

Moira — C84

Moorabool — C58

Port Phillip — C117

South Gippsland — C113

Stonnington — C225, C240

Whittlesea — C175

Yarra — C173 Part 2, C197 Part 2, C240

Yarra Ranges — C162

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Borrowing and Investment Powers Act 1987* — SR 25

*County Court Act 1958* — SR 21

*Dangerous Goods Act 1985* — SR 22

*Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1994* — SR 23

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* — SR 22

*Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010* — SR 24

*Subordinate Legislation Act 1994* — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Standing orders

**Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) — By leave, I move:**

That so much of standing orders be suspended so as to allow each member to speak on the motion in relation to the 2017–18 budget papers for a maximum of 15 minutes.

**Motion agreed to.**

## Program

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

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 11 May 2017:

Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017

Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Bill 2017

Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017

Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017.

In making a few observations on the motion that I have just moved in relation to the government business program, I would like to note that obviously the government has added the appropriation bill — the budget bill — to the government business program for this week, and we will devote a significant proportion of the time available to us this week to the consideration of this bill. As the house will have noted, I have just moved a motion to allow for a take-note motion for the budget, which will allow members to continue to discuss and debate the budget in this place once it has passed formally to the Legislative Council for their consideration. This is a practice that first started under the previous government, and I think it is a reasonable one because it certainly does allow time for each and every member of this place, if they choose, to speak on the budget. We should have significant time available to us to address the budget.

As members will also recall, during the last sitting week there were a number of contributions on the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017, so I would anticipate many of the members who wanted the chance to speak have already spoken on that one.

The other observation I would make is that following discussions with the opposition coalition, through the manager of opposition business, on Thursday it is our aim to have the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017 taken into consideration in detail. Notwithstanding the need to have a substantial amount of the week devoted to the budget bill, there should be the opportunity to spend time on that bill in the consideration-in-detail stage. It has been indicated to me by the opposition that this is

their priority bill and that they wish to see it taken into consideration in detail.

Given those discussions and that a substantial part of the week is being devoted to the budget bill to enable members to speak, I remain an eternal optimist that members of the chamber will support the government business program and that this motion will be supported by all members of the chamber.

**Mr CLARK** (Box Hill) — Unfortunately there is one key item that is missing from this government business program, and that is provision for this house to take action in relation to the rorting by the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker of this house. That is the elephant in the room that the government refuses to acknowledge. We had the Premier in question time failing to give any explanation or any justification to this house as to why he is repeatedly blocking the proposal for this house to take action to require the member for Melton to repay all the money that he has rorted, plus potentially a penalty plus interest, and to hold both members properly to account for their conduct — in other words, to refer this matter to a select committee or to the Privileges Committee to inquire into it and come back to this house with recommendations and findings.

That was of course exactly what was done in relation to the former member for Frankston in the previous Parliament. It was something that the then Labor opposition called for at great length, and it was delivered by the then government. But when it is their own members who need to be held to account, it is an entirely different story. They are going to any lengths to avoid any accountability or accept any responsibility, indeed to the bizarre point earlier today in question time where the Premier said that an arrangement reached with the member for Melton, which he announced at a press conference, was in fact nothing to do with him. That just strains the bounds of credibility and is yet another reason why this house should be doing the right thing, which Westminster parliaments have always done, in holding their own to account, upholding their own standards and demonstrating to the community that they are entitled to have confidence in us, rather than continuing with this long string of Labor rorts that we have experienced in recent times.

In relation to other matters, it is of course good practice, as the Leader of the House referred to, that given the timing of budgets there be a take-note motion and that 15 minutes be provided for members to speak on a motion to take note of the budget papers and on the budget itself. But I do emphasise to the Leader of the House that it is important, whether it be in debate on

the budget itself or on the take-note motion, that sufficient time is allowed over coming weeks for all members who want to make their contribution to do so.

It was a most unfortunate situation last year when insufficient time was allowed at the time of the budget for members to make their contributions. We had the bizarre position of the take-note motion being brought on too late in the calendar year to accord an opportunity for some members to make their contribution, so I do exhort the Leader of the House to ensure that that does not occur.

In relation to consideration in detail, there are a number of bills that would benefit from consideration in detail this week. Probably at the top of the list is the one that the Leader of the House referred to — the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017 — not because it is necessarily the most important of the bills before the house but because it raises a number of complex issues that need to be explored in detail.

I should say that the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017 is another bill that we would be keen to have considered in detail in this house. If it is not considered in detail in this house, I expect it will go into the committee stage in the other house, because information-sharing arrangements are very complex. It is very important to get them right, and if they are not right, then the legislation will not operate in the beneficial way that we all hope it will operate.

While we appreciate the fact that time is being set aside to deal with the mineral resources sustainable development bill, it would be preferable for time to be set aside to consider the family violence protection amendment bill as well as the Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Bill 2017, where there are aspects of the parliamentary appropriation that do particularly, this year, deserve considerable scrutiny by this house.

While some of the elements of this week's government business program are reasonable on the proviso, as I said, that over the coming weeks sufficient time is allowed for members to make their contribution on the budget in particular, it remains disgraceful that the government is refusing to face up to its responsibilities to take action to hold to account the rotting by a former Speaker and a former Deputy Speaker of this Parliament, people who are supposed to uphold the standards of this house rather than abuse them. For that reason we oppose the government business program.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the government business program for this week. It is great to be back in the chamber after last Tuesday's pretty successful budget, which has been applauded by the community across the board. Those on this side of the house have been out in their communities talking to people about the budget and what it means for them, and there is a lot to talk about, such as schools, police, hospitals, ambulances, of course, and the centrepiece: the \$1.9 billion to specifically address the 227 recommendations of Australia's first ever Royal Commission into Family Violence. Where have those opposite been? This group's 'woulda, coulda, shoulda' press conferences were all conducted within 50 metres of this building. They have not left the parliamentary precinct.

**Mr Paynter** interjected.

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

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — All of the justifications in their press conferences have happened out here. They have not been to their communities.

**Mr Paynter** interjected.

**Debate interrupted.**

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

### Member for Bass

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member for Bass will leave the chamber for half an hour.

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Program

**Debate resumed.**

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh) — In fact if we peek under the chairs here, I reckon we will find their sleeping bags. They are too scared to go out into the community. They have got nothing to say. They are camping out in the parliamentary precinct. It is another busy week on our side, and we are not going to be distracted by the carping and the complaining and the distractions of the other side. Did you see the Leader of the Opposition in question time today — the alternative leader of this state, the alternative Premier? I think not. I cannot remember an angrier, more shouty Leader of

the Opposition. In fact he is bordering on the unhinged. This man seeks to be the Premier of Victoria. He must be the angriest —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — The comment about him being off his game — I think he has been off his game since Ventnor, and in fact definitely since the commencement of this term of Parliament. In contrast, the stability this government provides — aside from the distractions the others are trying to pull us into — is a well-delivered, well-executed expenditure of \$63 billion which has a measurable impact on the lives of Victorians. That is what we are about. In fact, as the manager of government business has outlined, this is another productive week with the government business program. We will be continuing with, as has been stated, the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017, which we started last week, and had it not been for the delaying tactics of those opposite we would have proceeded further with that.

I reflect back to last week when the Treasurer, in delivering the budget — and it probably was not captured by the cameras — got to the family violence part of his speech. It speaks volumes about those opposite that they turned their backs on him and were talking and laughing. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition, through you, Speaker, to re-examine those tactics, because they looked very, very bad. To turn your backs, laugh and have private conversations during a speech on the most serious issue facing Victoria looks very bad on the TV screens of Victorians and looks bad in this chamber. It is actually quite disgusting, and I think they would be well minded to review those tactics.

Further on in the government business program, there is the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017, which will create the Latrobe Valley mine rehabilitation commissioner to oversee the rehabilitation planning of three Latrobe Valley coalmines. This continues our significant investment in regional Victoria. It is a flagship investment that was announced in the Latrobe Valley prior to the budget. It is this government, through the Minister for Industry and Employment and through the Premier, that secured — and I do not think this has existed previously — the landmark worker exchange deal for those coalmines so that workers are not left out in the cold because of decisions made in corporations around the world that we have no influence on. But what we do have an influence on is actually making sure those

workers are looked after, and that is what this government has done. The rehabilitation planning of the three coalmines was a recommendation of the inquiry into Hazelwood, as the house knows.

It is yet another busy week, and it is another week to reflect on the achievements and the continued hard work of this government and on the continued faith that the Victorian community, which elected us in November 2014, holds. I commend the program to the house.

**Mr KATOS** (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution on the government business program of this week. The member for Oakleigh was not in the 57th Parliament, but I was. If he wants to talk about an angry, shouty man who regularly turned his back on the government when they were talking about serious matters, he should take a look at his own leader, because he did that on a regular basis. The member was not in the Parliament to see that, so I will give him the benefit of the doubt, but he did that all of the time. Before the member has a go at the Leader of the Opposition, he had better have a look at his own side, because if he actually had been a member in the previous Parliament, he would have seen how low his leader stooped on many occasions in this chamber and on a regular basis.

On the government business program there is the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017, which is a very important bill for this state. Indeed I also implore the manager of government business to allow everyone to make a contribution on this in a timely manner. I had a look back through *Hansard* and we had seven or eight members make contributions in December on the budget. It is the most important bill that comes before this house, and I believe every member who wishes to should get the opportunity to rise to their feet and speak on the budget. It is the most important bill that we bring before this house, and you want to be able to do that in a timely manner.

The Liberal Party had eight members miss out on speaking on the budget, and by my calculations there would have been 15 or 16 members on the government benches who also missed out on speaking on the budget, which really is a very important bill for every community around the state. So I ask the minister to allow more debate and to have her legislative program in order so that we can have fulsome debate on the budget. It is a very critical bill, and I ask if that can be done so that we do not have a repeat of last year, when members on both sides of the house missed out on speaking on the budget.

There is also the Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Bill 2017 and the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017, which is continuing to be debated from last sitting week — if you can call it a sitting ‘week’. It was the last sitting day, with the government truncating the week in order to gag debate on the budget. It is a bizarre tactic. I do not know why the government is doing it. There should be a full week of debate on the budget in budget week, with the traditional response by the shadow Treasurer on the Thursday. Why they want to gag debate on their own budget, I have no idea. Then there is the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017, also to be debated.

As the manager of opposition business says, we would like to debate particularly the matter of having the member for Melton repay the money that he rorted from the taxpayer. That is something that is very important to the members. So far the member for Melton has had two calls in this house as an Independent — a members statement last week and a call today on a constituency question, where he should be standing up for the Melton electorate. He missed both of those calls, and opposition members have had to take the call because he is too embarrassed to stand in this chamber after his activities and his shenanigans in rorting the taxpayer. We feel that should be debated and that it is an important debate for the people of Victoria, as \$174 000 is a significant amount of money that has been rorted from the taxpayer.

As the manager of opposition business said, the coalition will be opposing the government business program.

**Mr HOWARD** (Buninyong) — I am pleased to speak in support of the government business program for this week. As we have heard from other members, it covers a number of vitally important bills, starting with the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017 — the budget bill — which I will be very pleased to speak about when I get my opportunity, as will members right through this house.

Certainly, as we know, the budget was well received, as I will be able to report when I make my speech. I do have the hope that when opposition members do speak on the bill, they will recognise the great leadership shown in the budget and will debate the bill with sincerity, and not do the whingeing, whining, carping political act that we have become used to in watching the way the opposition members speak on so many bills.

As well as that, as other members have recognised, we will be looking at the Family Violence Protection

Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017 this week, and the government has bent over backwards in regard to the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017 by allowing time on Thursday for this to be debated in committee. So again the government has been very thorough this week in presenting a range of important bills and in providing good opportunity for debate.

I note the opposition members in opposing debate on the government business program today are again arguing that this place should be turned into some sort of Star Chamber so that they can carry on in regard to the activities of the members for Melton and Tarnet. I am pleased to see that both members have been in the house again today, and that I think is a pleasing thing, because we know that these members have been members of this house for many years — more than 40 years collectively — both in this house and, in the case of the member for Melton, in the upper house. They have served in so many roles in their time in Parliament, and they deserve to be treated like respected members in this chamber, recognising that they have held high office. And even though they might be criticised for misdemeanours, there is an appropriate process to go through to investigate those.

We know that the Audit Committee looked over those matters instead of turning this house into a Star Chamber for the opposition to rant and rave and act like they have in the past, when they have been like a pack of jackals just baying for blood, not recognising that they are dealing with members of this chamber of long standing who deserve to be treated respectfully, and not recognising that they have gone through challenging life situations. Although we have the rough and tumble of politics in this place, people do need to be aware that they are dealing with humans who are vulnerable and need to be dealt with appropriately. I make that point to opposition members simply to remind that when they are dealing with matters in regard to all members in this chamber they can deal with the issues appropriately, not like baying hounds using inappropriate measures. We should allow them to follow through appropriately the processes that they need to follow.

I certainly think that the way the government has presented the government business program is appropriate and is going to allow us to get on to a number of matters that are vitally important to the people of Victoria, whether they be the budget, as we have said, the matters of family violence, which we know are so important and on which this government has shown such great leadership, and moving on with other bills like the mineral resources bill. This is a

matter of this place continuing to be one to deal with matters that are important to the people of Victoria. It is not about trying to turn it into a Star Chamber and playing political games all the time in this house, but it is about dealing appropriately with this matter and matters of serious business for the people of Victoria. I support this bill.

**Ms STALEY** (Ripon) — I also seek to speak on the government business program. In doing so I support the manager of opposition business. There are a number of things that the government has done in this program that are worthy of support. I think at last bringing the budget on for debate is worthy of support. They should have done it last week; we should have sat last week, as is the tradition of the house and the Westminster system — to not have a budget day, but a budget week. I see, though, that this week the government are giving the opposition the opportunity to debate the budget at last.

I also note that of the four bills before the house, one of them is proposed for consideration-in-detail. This is a far cry from it being the regular practice that was promised by the now government when they were in opposition. However, one bill is better than none, and to have the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Amendment (Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner) Bill 2017 proposed for the consideration-in-detail stage is to be commended.

However, we still do not have an opportunity to debate the absolutely major issue before this house and before the government at the moment, which is the rorting by the members for Melton and Tarneit. The member for Buninyong just made an extraordinary contribution. He told us that those members who have been found to have rorted on this epic scale have had more than 40 years experience in this place. Well, if they have had more than 40 years experience, then they should know better than to rort taxpayers funds. But that is what they have done.

The member for Buninyong gets up and tells us that the members deserve respect. I am sorry, member for Buninyong, but I do not think the people of Victoria think that two MPs who held the high offices of Speaker and Deputy Speaker and who then went on to rort on the hundreds-of-thousands-of-dollars scale as they did deserve respect. They deserve investigation. They deserve to be made to pay the money back. It is just completely unconscionable that this government continues to refuse to allow the motion standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition to establish a select committee into their rorting to even be debated.

We have previously said that we are open to other mechanisms for the Parliament to investigate this rorting. But the member for Buninyong seems to have forgotten what happened in the previous Parliament when people were pretty keen that the Parliament used its powers against another member, suggesting instead, 'No, there's nothing to see here. These members are longstanding and they deserve to be treated respectfully'. Well, they deserve to pay the money back, and this chamber should be forcing them to pay the money back, which it has the power to do.

The fact that the Premier continues to stand up and say that he does not have the power to force them to pay the money back is utter garbage; it is just entirely wrong. This chamber has that right. It should at least debate that right, whereas this government will not go there.

Why would that be? That would be because these are Labor members who perpetrated this fraud on the people of Victoria. So the Audit Committee report — because that was the first excuse as to why we could not have this — 'We'll wait for the Audit Committee' — has now come out. Surprise, surprise! It was only two Labor members who rorted the rules, it was only two Labor members who moved outside of their electorates to claim a second residence allowance — —

**Ms Allan** — On a point of order, Speaker, I appreciate that the manager of opposition business canvassed some of these issues in his contribution as an alternate view about what could be included in this sitting week, but the member for Ripon is straying far and wide. She has touched on this issue, we have given her the time to do that. However, she has now strayed far and wide, and I would ask you to bring her back to the motion.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The member's time has expired.

#### House divided on motion:

*Ayes, 45*

Allan, Ms	Languiller, Mr
Andrews, Mr	Lim, Mr
Blandthorn, Ms	McGuire, Mr
Bull, Mr J.	Merlino, Mr
Carbines, Mr	Nardella, Mr
Couzens, Ms	Neville, Ms
D'Ambrosio, Ms	Noonan, Mr
Dimopoulos, Mr	Pakula, Mr
Donnellan, Mr	Pallas, Mr
Edbrooke, Mr	Pearson, Mr
Edwards, Ms	Perera, Mr
Eren, Mr	Richardson, Mr

Foley, Mr  
Garrett, Ms  
Graley, Ms  
Green, Ms  
Halfpenny, Ms  
Hennessy, Ms  
Howard, Mr  
Hutchins, Ms  
Kairouz, Ms  
Kilkenny, Ms  
Knight, Ms

Richardson, Ms  
Scott, Mr  
Spence, Ms  
Staikos, Mr  
Suleyman, Ms  
Thomas, Ms  
Thomson, Ms  
Ward, Ms  
Williams, Ms  
Wynne, Mr

### *Noes, 39*

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

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

### **Motion agreed to.**

## **MEMBERS STATEMENTS**

### **Betty Amsden**

**Ms VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — On 26 February this year, Victoria lost its fairy godmother of the arts, Betty Amsden, AO. A self-made businesswoman, Betty made a difference to so many organisations and individuals by being a patron, board member, volunteer, donor and mentor. Some of her great loves included the Arts Centre Melbourne, Melbourne Theatre Company, Melbourne Recital Centre, Polyglot Theatre, Melbourne Chamber Orchestra, Victorian Opera, the Australian Ballet School, the Australian Ballet, Orchestra Victoria, the RSPCA, Guide Dogs Victoria — where I was yesterday seeing areas of the organisation named in her honour — 3MBS, the Royal Botanic Gardens and others.

In 2009 Betty established the Betty Amsden Arts Education Endowment for Children with a \$5 million gift — one of the largest ever donations to Australian performing arts. She provided another \$1 million in 2013 for major public events and funded a scholarship for leadership in arts management. Proudly, one of the first events I was at in my capacity as Minister for

Women's Affairs was the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2013, where I inducted Betty onto the roll. Other recognition was not far behind, and in 2014 she was declared an Officer of the Order of Australia.

I miss those phone calls where I would say, 'Hello, Miss Betty', or she would call me and I would know she was on the funding trail for something when I heard her say, 'Now, Heidi dear ...'. In decades to come people will see the Betty Amsden name all over Melbourne and wonder who she was. I can proudly say we were very special friends, and I will continue to shed a tear whenever I see parts of her legacy. Some tears are for the sadness I continue to feel; others are for the happiness she brought to so many. Thank you for everything, Betty.

### **Budget**

**Mr EREN** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — Congratulations to the Premier, the Treasurer and my fellow government colleagues on yet another fantastic budget for the state of Victoria. We were honoured to have the Treasurer visit Geelong last Friday and meet with local community groups, stakeholders and business leaders to outline this budget in further detail. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the response to the budget was very supportive.

Yet again my electorate was a big winner in relation to education. Congratulations to Hamlyn Banks Primary School, which received \$1.55 million for the modernisation of existing school buildings. Lara Lake Primary School received \$1.8 million for modernisation and upgrades. Importantly, the Corio SES has received \$1.6 million for the relocation of the Corio SES.

The wider Geelong community will also benefit from some massive investments thanks to this budget. It includes \$15 million for the Future Industries Manufacturing Program, \$15 million for the *Revitalising Central Geelong Action Plan*, \$3.9 million to kickstart the planning and design for stage 5 of Kardinia Park, a share in \$9.7 million to acquire land in the Barwon region to build a new residential drug rehabilitation facility, \$21.1 million for 15 school upgrades across Geelong, \$50 million to double the first home owner grant to \$20 000 for new homes in regional areas, a payroll tax cut of 25 per cent for all businesses operating substantially in regional Victoria and \$448.1 million to establish support and safety hubs. It is a great budget with great outcomes for Geelong.

### Wild dogs

**Mr T. BULL** (Gippsland East) — Here we are approaching two and a half years since the 2014 election, and Labor's much-touted wild dog management advisory committee has not even been formed, let alone had a meeting. It did not take the minister long to sack the previous effective wild dog committee, which included several landholders from East Gippsland. Unfortunately her new committee, announced with much fanfare, had the farmer representation cut to one for the entire state, with her explanation being that this new committee would be 'higher level'. When you are talking wild dogs, I am not sure you want a higher level bureaucratic committee. You want people from the land who have to deal with this problem on a day-to-day basis. To make matters worse, one of the landholder positions has been taken by a person involved in the welfare of the dogs.

In yet another complete botching, the minister announced the new committee would be chaired by upper house MP Harriet Shing, who I doubt would have ever seen a wild dog. Not surprisingly, this rushed announcement resulted in her realising this was something she knew nothing about, and she resigned before the committee even met.

So here we are in May with winter arriving, the time of the year when the dogs come down from the high country because of the cold and start to impact on sheep and farmers more consistently, and we do not even have a wild dog committee in place at all. It is a disgrace, and this minister should be ashamed of her complete botching of this and her disregard for the farmers of East Gippsland.

### Warrnambool May Racing Carnival

**Mr T. BULL** — It was a pleasure to attend the three-day racing carnival at Warrnambool last week. I give great credit to Peter Downs and his team from the club for putting on another great week with some great racing. It is a great carnival and very important to the town. Long may it live.

### Michael Gurr

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — Recently Michael Gurr, a prominent playwright and speechwriter, passed away, far too young at the age of just 55. I did not work closely with Michael, but I remember him coming to the opposition rooms in the late 1990s when he was writing speeches for John Brumby and Steve Bracks. Those were turbulent days — days when it felt like climbing Mount Everest just because you went out and

publicly opposed the direction former Premier Jeff Kennett was taking Victoria, days when you felt like you were an apologist for believing in the labour movement and believing in a progressive government.

All oppositions have it tough — there is no doubt about it — but what we experienced in Victoria was something no opposition had ever experienced and, frankly, I hope no opposition ever experiences again. But it was into this environment that Michael entered, and offered his talents and his services to the cause and to the broader labour movement, at a time when many felt it was all too hard and at a time when Victorian Labor was seen as a spent force — people used to suggest that the next Victorian Premier was not in Parliament and was not even born. It was at that moment that Michael came forward, and he helped offer an alternative vision and articulated an alternative vision for Victoria.

There is a famous story that Michael wrote Steve Bracks three speeches for the night of the 1999 state election. The first was suitable for a status quo result. The second would address Labor's gains, still short of government. And the third was just one word on a blank piece of paper that Michael pulled from his pocket at Labor headquarters early in the evening. Michael had a wonderful quote, which was, 'Everyone should — —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny)** — Time!

### Berwick College

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) — I rise on behalf of Berwick College, formerly Berwick Secondary College, where Kerri Bolch is the principal. We have had a very good relationship in relation to the school and while trying to grow the school. Kerri has had many challenges in her time at the school, which are also faced throughout the whole community and by other schools in the local community. One of those issues is around youth suicide.

As we all know, it affects so many people when someone so young takes their life. As a community we need to bond together, work together and ensure that we have the best practices going forward to work towards prevention for these young people. Some of the issues that happen around youth suicide can be anything from family violence to financial pressures to other issues at school, including bullying. I think most of us know some of the circumstances that can lead to a young person getting to a position in their life that

where they think it is better to take their life than trying to work their way through those issues.

I was very disappointed this year when we looked through the state budget after there was a phone call to the school to basically tell them to keep quiet in relation to the facility they wanted to put prevention programs in place at Berwick College, particularly around a health and wellbeing centre. They had calls from the local Labor member who said to them, 'We'll be looking at this. We'll make sure we can get it through for you', only to find that it was not in the budget.

Kerri is exceptionally disappointed, and so is the school and the whole community. We have faced this issue in Berwick and through the surrounding areas in the south-east for too long, and I am calling on the government, specifically the Minister for Education, to get the funding for this program because we need to protect every young person's life.

### **Anzac Day**

**Ms SPENCE** (Yuroke) — This year I had the honour of attending our local Anzac Day ceremony, held for the first time at the new war memorial in Craigieburn, Craigieburn Anzac Park. Around 2000 local residents turned out for this year's ceremony, from hundreds of schoolchildren to representatives from a range of cultures and religions. In particular I wish to note the many local veterans who were in attendance and thank them for their service, including World War II veterans Bert Foster and Robert Stokes, and Vietnam veteran Alec Mead, who read the uniform resolution.

The new memorial is truly striking, measuring 4 metres tall, and it is surrounded by gardens as an accessible, permanent and public space for reflection and remembrance. The completion of this project is the product of years of dedication and hard work by the Craigieburn War Memorial and Remembrance Committee, led by Kevin O'Callaghan. Kevin works tirelessly to encourage public awareness of the sacrifices made by our servicemen and women. Our community owes him a debt of gratitude for his initiative, leadership and dedication in seeing this project through. I would also like to thank John Lynch, a member of the war memorial committee, for sharing with our community the story of his service with the Royal Australian Navy in my Anzac Day 2017 tribute notice.

The Andrews Labor government supported this new memorial with a \$25 000 grant through the Victoria Remembers Grant program. I am also pleased that this year's budget included a \$2.8 million boost over four

years to educate younger generations about Australia's wartime history and to commemorate the sacrifices made by our veterans.

### **Crime prevention**

**Mr WELLS** (Rowville) — This statement condemns the Andrews government's reckless failure to fund any responsible measure to address Victoria's crime wave in its recent budget. Crime has skyrocketed 20 per cent in less than two and a half years under this Labor government, yet there is no funding in the budget for new police stations or to reopen the stations that have been shut or had their opening hours cut. After two years of neglecting to fund more police there is now a full-blown crisis in frontline police numbers at police stations right across the state. Since November 2014 crime has blown out, with home invasions happening every other day and carjackings now commonplace in suburban streets. In that time, Victoria's population has increased by an extra 300 000 people but frontline police numbers have only increased by 374. The Minister for Police and the Premier have made grand announcements about new police, but the reality is those new police will not be deployed until March next year.

Sadly, this is no accident. Victoria's crime wave is a problem this government has left unchecked and has turned away from with cold and deliberate calculation. Victoria's Attorney-General, days before the budget, said the cost of introducing mandatory sentencing to keep criminals who repeatedly offend off the streets was too high for this government. The Premier should be ashamed to look any Victorian in the eye if he is not prepared to do what is an essential task of any government — that is, to keep people safe.

### **Sunbury Downs College**

**Mr J. BULL** (Sunbury) — We promised to make Victoria the Education State, and we are getting on with the job. I was absolutely delighted to join principal Maria Oddo, senior staff and students last Wednesday at Sunbury Downs College to announce a massive \$3.92 million to upgrade and modernise the school. There have been many wonderful highlights for me in my time as the member for Sunbury, but I must say seeing the reaction of the school community both in person and online was truly humbling.

On Wednesday Ms Oddo told me that the money will be vital for upgrading kitchens, the science wing and the technology wing, and that she was delighted the Andrews Labor government is supporting education initiatives to support 21st-century learning. This is a

vital upgrade and will ensure that the college has the facilities and classrooms it needs to provide a first-class education. Some online comments included:

Love it! Cannot wait!

On behalf of my two kids who go to this Sunbury Downs, thank you ...

Another constituent said the funding was amazing news, and thanked us for supporting their great school and that it's great to see a local member aiding a school and seeing it gets the proper funding. I want to once again thank the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Education for continuing to deliver on the education state.

### Diggers Rest Primary School

**Mr J. BULL** — In further great news, the community of Diggers Rest was thrilled to learn that the primary school will be receiving \$151 000 to modernise the school. On Saturday I had the great opportunity to share this news, doorknocking a number of streets and talking to local residents about this vital upgrade. They know how important it is that this government supports them in the great work that they do.

### Police numbers

**Mr J. BULL** — I am also very pleased that we will begin to see the first of 300 frontline police officers on our streets. Of these, 89 new police officers will be deployed in the Fawknor division of Victoria Police. Thirty-six of these officers will be assigned to the Hume police service area, covering Sunbury. Outstanding news!

### Sunraysia Multicultural Festival

**Mr CRISP** (Mildura) — Congratulations to the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council for staging a great Sunraysia Multicultural Festival at the weekend. Our communities need to be strong to be resilient. Our communities also need to be inclusive to be resilient, and festivals like this one run in Mildura last weekend enhance inclusiveness because food, dance and music are common passions, passion is a conversation starter and conversations make for understanding amongst the communities. Well done to all those who make this a fantastic event.

### Mildura electorate roads

**Mr CRISP** — The Hattah-Robinvale and Robinvale-Sea Lake roads again have missed out on funding in the 2017–18 budget. These roads are of economic significance as they transport large

quantities of almonds, citrus, wine grapes, olives, table grapes and grain. These roads are also used in part by school buses. The community and I have been advocating for the widening of the bitumen seal on the shoulders of these roads for some time to provide adequate room for vehicles to pass and preserve the shoulders from wear and tear. Sooner or later this work will have to be done and the sooner it is done the less money will need to be spent.

### Mildura Airport

**Mr CRISP** — I thank those people at the Mildura Airport for a tour of the works that are underway to upgrade and extend the Mildura runway. This is a project that I identified and fought for as a priority and it is now becoming a reality. The Mildura Airport is Victoria's second busiest airport and the runway upgrade comes after the rebuilding of the terminal that occurred some years ago. With the extended runway, Mildura can safely cater for larger aircraft in all weather conditions and allow for the growing number of passengers that use the airport.

### Budget

**Mr McGUIRE** (Broadmeadows) — Nurses in the intensive care unit of Northern Hospital had tears of gratitude and relief in their eyes when they heard the Andrews Labor government would invest \$163 million to help them save lives. This investment is critical to the care of families and individuals in Broadmeadows and defines why Labor matters, because the coalition failed to deliver. This is a great result and supports my advocacy for increased hospital and health care outlined in last year's strategy *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope*.

The commitment in this year's budget adds to the Labor government's investment of almost \$20 million for a surgery in Broadmeadows, which is expected to open within weeks. The major boost to health services was a highlight of the 2016–17 Victorian budget, along with record funding for frontline police to improve public safety, more money for schools to increase opportunity, and a commitment to the missing link in the road system for Melbourne's north that will create more than 5000 new jobs. These investments are designed to improve health and education, increase public safety and deliver more jobs. The northern suburbs will receive a significant allocation from Victoria's 300 new frontline police officers funded in this year's budget. The removal of the level crossing at Camp Road, Broadmeadows, is expected to begin this year and will provide an estimated 300 to 400 jobs, which I am trying to maximise for local people. The

budget also provides the first \$100 million for the north-east link, the money needed to complete critical design, planning and preconstruction works before contracts are signed in 2019.

### **Anzac Day**

**Ms SHEED** (Shepparton) — I was pleased to attend three Anzac commemorations in my electorate. I commend Goulburn Valley Grammar School for the tremendous work which went into the Anzac Day eve presentation at their school, particularly honouring Indigenous Australians' contribution to the war effort. I also attended the Anzac Day service at Mooroopna. There are growing numbers each year at these services.

One of our local RSL veterans, Mr Robert Mathieson, was a guest at the state Anzac Day luncheon held in Melbourne. A Vietnam veteran, Mr Mathieson was integral in fundraising and gaining grants for the erection of the Robert Mactier, VC, memorial statue and the surrounding garden upgrades in Tatura where I also attended the Anzac Day memorial service. Mr Mathieson was named a life member of the RSL last year. I congratulate him on his continued dedication to the returned services.

### **Shepparton electorate schools**

**Ms SHEED** — Education remains high on my agenda, and I was pleased with the million-dollar prebudget announcement for a Shepparton education plan and funding for six of our schools. The announcement, as part of the Minister for Education's visit to my electorate, has sparked discussion around a transformational change in the space of secondary education in the Shepparton district, and then later following through to primary and to early education services. Our community is truly ready for this change. It must happen, and happen quickly, to ensure significant improvement in the education outcomes for the children in our district.

### **Oakleigh electorate schools**

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh) — Last Monday I was back at Hughesdale Primary School in the electorate of Oakleigh. It is always a special thing to visit my old school. It was even better to be able to announce \$3.52 million, funded in this year's Labor budget, for an upgrade with a new two-storey building, eight classrooms and an elevator. I think the elevator was the most exciting thing for the kids when I announced it. Last year we provided money for planning and a year later funding. That is progress. It is a 93-year-old school, and I recall under the Liberal government in the 1990s it

was threatened with closure. It now has over 500 students. There was not a lot of forward thinking with those school sites being sold off for development in the 1990s. I thank principal Craig Tanner, president Rozelle Azad, Sara-Jane, Angus and all members of the school council, the teachers, parents and kids for working with us closely over the last two years to get a fantastic result for the Hughesdale community.

Last week I also visited the Carnegie Primary School, another school that was threatened with closure by a Liberal government. It was only just saved and now it is almost at capacity. I was back there to announce an extra \$1.5 million in capital funding to make their planned upgrade even better. In last year's budget we provided Carnegie Primary School with \$4 million, so that is now \$5.5 million for this fantastic school. It will mean a new gymnasium, a performing arts centre and renovations to make a modern building for the prep students. Well done to Linda Jones, Michael McCarthy, school president Susan Harper, the school council, parents and students. I am thrilled for the school. It will continue to thrive with state-of-the-art facilities. I also thank the Minister for Education and the Treasurer.

### **Point Nepean National Park**

**Mr DIXON** (Nepean) — The proposed new master plan for the former quarantine station at Point Nepean has been through the public consultation process. Residents, prospective users and activists are all now asking when will the final master plan be released and opened to expressions of interest. The delay is causing a loss of confidence in the process, as a lot of the community's time and effort has gone into the consultation and expectations are quite high, and rightly so.

### **Balnarring traffic management**

**Mr DIXON** — On another matter, the community of Balnarring and its surrounds have long been concerned about traffic management issues at the busy and dangerous five-way junction in the township. Increased population, more day visitors and unclear road markings are worsening what is already a dangerous situation. As well as road user confusion and danger, pedestrian safety is highly compromised too. A childcare centre, preschool, primary school, church and regional shopping centre all feed pedestrian traffic through the intersection. A short-term and urgent solution would be improved line marking and temporary traffic islands and refuges. Land has been set aside for a roundabout and this really is the best long-term option. I urge the Minister for Roads and

Road Safety to address this matter before more injuries, damage and accidents occur.

### Family violence

**Mr PERERA** (Cranbourne) — Family violence is the greatest challenge we are facing when it comes to community safety. It is certainly a matter that has escalated in a big way, unfortunately, in the electorate of Cranbourne. Dealing with family violence is a matter of interest to my constituents in Cranbourne.

It is pleasing to see that the Andrews government is at the forefront in tackling this grave challenge. Three years ago Victorian Labor announced plans to examine our failing system from the ground up and to recommend the changes that would save innocent lives. Now the Andrews government has given a firm commitment to implement all the 227 recommendations that the Royal Commission into Family Violence produced.

Last year's budget got on with the urgent changes — \$572 million for more counsellors, more prevention programs, more support for children and more support for emergency housing. Building upon that, this year's budget provides a further unprecedented \$1.91 billion investment by Labor. Labor will establish 17 support and safety hubs across the state — places where victims can go to protect their family and start their recovery. Labor will also extend after-hours crisis support, counselling and therapy for tens of thousands of women and children. We are building more crisis houses.

### Vaisakhi festival

**Ms RYALL** (Ringwood) — Congratulations to the Victorian Sikh Gurduaras Council on the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi, Khalsa Day, held at Federation Square on 30 April. Australia has the world's seventh largest Sikh population, and in Victoria we have a very large proportion of the Sikh community. It was very good indeed to see the Blackburn Gurduara represented on the day, serving my community of Ringwood. The day was filled with colour, fabulous food, cultural activities, demonstrations and musical performances for the massive crowd. Thank you for a wonderful day of culture and significance.

### Crime prevention

**Ms RYALL** — In April my local community came together for a crime, law and order forum to discuss their concerns and talk about what is needed to deal with the crime engulfing our state and streets. I would

like to thank the Whitehorse, Forest Hill and Maroondah Neighbourhood Watch teams for their attendance as well as the victims of crime who were present. They shared their tragedies that have engulfed their lives and why they see it as vital that the erosion and lack of confidence in law and order in Victoria be restored. Justice must be strengthened — including bail, sentencing and resourcing our police force — and control of the streets regained.

### Ringwood Secondary College

**Ms RYALL** — It was fabulous to visit Ringwood Secondary College, meet with principal Michael Phillips and see the excellent work being done on our new year 7 and 8 education centre. We are delivering on 21st century learning spaces to ensure that Ringwood Secondary College students and their teachers are afforded the best possible facilities to deliver the outcomes our students are seeking to achieve in these crucial early years of their secondary education.

### Ethical clothing production

**Ms GARRETT** (Brunswick) — I rise today to acknowledge the commitment this Labor government has shown to ensuring an ethically driven labour market which supports local businesses and decent jobs. On 30 March this year I was privileged to join the Minister for Industry and Employment, Wade Noonan, and Michelle O'Neill, the national secretary of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA), to announce the launch of a \$3 million grant for Ethical Clothing Australia (ECA) at the Otto & Spike/LMB Knitwear factory in Brunswick.

Ethical Clothing Australia works with businesses and manufacturers to ensure their supply chains and operations are transparent, ethical and compliant with the homeworkers code of practice. Otto & Spike is a proud local Brunswick business — a family company — that has been operating in the area for over 40 years to produce quality scarves and knitwear. ECA supports Otto & Spike to run an ethical business model, creating safe, secure and decent working conditions for factory workers.

As a former lawyer who used to act for the TCFUA and outworkers, I know just how important the work of ECA is. To announce that \$3 million grant that will allow ECA to continue their critical work to ensure ethical clothing production for workers and consumers rights — to launch that in the heart of Brunswick, which has such a proud history of textile

manufacturing — it was a great day for Brunswick and a great day for those workers.

### **Phillip Island Golf Club fundraising event**

**Mr PAYNTER** (Bass) — Playing golf and the work of the Red Cross are not commonly mentioned in the same sentence, but on a beautiful, sunny April morning at Phillip Island Golf Club, golfers and the Red Cross joined forces to raise much-needed funds for local and overseas causes. My thanks go to the Phillip Island Red Cross unit and the Phillip Island Golf Club, in particular to Mrs Mary Whelan, for the invitation to play and for conducting such a wonderful community event.

### **Lakeside residents group**

**Mr PAYNTER** — When it comes to local community events, there is no more committed residents group than the Lakeside residents. Ably led by Wendy Andrews and the hardworking committee, this group continues to hold fun events for local residents. Easter was no exception. The Easter egg hunt, egg-and-spoon races and loads of other entertainment were enjoyed by hundreds of children and parents in the local park. Congratulations to the Lakeside residents group committee for their ongoing dedication to the area. It is always easy to sit back and wait for others to organise events, but this group consistently dedicates their valuable time and energy for others to enjoy. Their contribution to keeping our community together should not be understated.

### **Yakkerboo Festival**

**Mr PAYNTER** — The Yakkerboo Festival in Pakenham continued its longstanding tradition of bringing enjoyment to thousands of locals, with a parade down Main Street followed by a market and carnival in Bourke Park. This festival has taken pride of place in Pakenham since 1976, and I congratulate the hardworking and committed committee for keeping it alive.

### **Michael Gurr**

**Ms THOMSON** (Footscray) — I was both shocked and saddened to hear of the passing of Michael Gurr, an extraordinary playwright, a very passionate and committed human being and a constituent of mine in the seat of Footscray. Michael, as we have heard already, was a very active part of the community, and he was certainly very active in my community. I did not actually realise that he was a constituent until he walked in to talk to me about Newells Paddock and the

need to protect the native birdlife and ensure that we create a proper wetland down there. He used to drop into the office on and off. I have not seen Michael for a couple of years now, and I certainly appreciated his visits to the office. I only wish now that we had had more time together and that we had seen him more in the office.

He was a renowned playwright and an extraordinary man. He won both the Victorian and the New South Wales Premier's literary awards for *Sex Diaries of an Infidel*. He was a talented speechwriter for both Steve Bracks and John Brumby. He was a man committed to his community. I do want to pass on my commiserations and condolences to his long-time partner, Brandon Jones, to his siblings, Mary-Anne, Susan, Belinda and Christopher, and as well to the many friends who have supported him and were there for him at the end. I know that he will be sadly missed by a whole range of people and very sadly missed in Footscray.

### **Brother Kevin Tuck**

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) — I wish to honour a man who will be remembered today in Colac at a community memorial service, Brother Kevin Tuck. Brother Tuck was a relatively young man when in the mid-1960s he was given the task of starting a new Catholic boys school in Colac, Trinity College Colac. Starting a Catholic boys secondary school in the 1960s was not like it would be today. It was founded by a small band of men supported by a community keen to have that choice available to their sons. It involved large classes, next to no state or federal support and the hard work and fundraising endeavours of parents groups — and in the country it also usually involved a bit of cattle trading to make ends meet.

Amongst his many achievements, Brother Tuck's school in only 50 years has managed to produce three past and present members of this Parliament, including my predecessor, Terry Mulder, and a member of the other place, Bernie Finn. Brother Tuck would go on to give service across western Victoria, devoting his whole life to educating and supporting young people. He decided to move back to Colac when he retired, where he continued for many years in his retirement to support the students of Colac and district and the school he helped to create. A man not born of the electronic age, it was remarkable to read the Facebook posts upon the community learning of his death. He spoke to so many people in so many ways and in many cases had an effect on multiple generations of one family.

Brother Tuck was a wonderful example of the good that was done by so many men and women who chose

a monastic life, and in these sometimes doubtful times it is good to recognise these people and their actions, as the increasingly secular world we now live in is often ready to forget the contributions that people like Brother Tuck make.

### Seaford community rally

**Mr EDBROOKE** (Frankston) — Two weeks ago my daughter, Charli, and I joined the member for Carrum, Emmaline Jones, Lana Nicholson, Frankston city councillors and a united Seaford community in a march to say that enough is enough and to show a shattered young woman she is not alone. The rally was prompted by the shocking sexual assault of a 19-year-old as she walked home from Seaford railway station on 1 April. Thank you to this resilient community for sending a strong message that this behaviour is not acceptable, and thank you to the member for Carrum for her important words on the night and her continuing strong representation of her community.

### Government achievements

**Mr EDBROOKE** — It is certainly a productive 2017–18 budget for Frankston. In many ways after four years of literally nothing in Frankston we have been working hard in the past two and a half years to ensure that we are catching up and that Frankston is on the move again. Over 10 schools have been funded in two and a half years of Labor. That is around a 90 per cent increase on the previous government's performance. Aldercourt Primary School received \$352 000 for modernisation and upgrades. It was great to visit that school the other day. Frankston High School is also in the budget. It was great to turn a sod on the \$8 million redevelopment there with school captains Lizette and Jack last week. Mount Erin Secondary College is also included in the budget, and so are planning funds for the Frankston North education precinct, which is a very, very important project for that area of the world.

It was also great to be at the \$4 million Monterey Secondary College project, funded by the Labor government. It was certainly a pleasure to join principal Stuart Jones, assistant principal Skye Columbine and students to turn a sod to mark the start of construction. There is a great learning culture at Monterey Secondary College, and this is an exciting day for the Frankston North community.

## STATE TAXATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2017

### *Statement of compatibility*

#### **Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:**

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (charter), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2017.

In my opinion, the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2017 (bill), as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights as set out in the charter. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

#### Overview

Part 2 of the bill makes various amendments to the Duties Act 2000 (Duties Act). In relation to sub-sales, a new division is inserted into the Duties Act to bring to duty option arrangements where additional consideration is given to acquire a transfer right, and various technical amendments are made to the existing provisions to ensure original policy intent is achieved and the correct amount of duty can be charged.

The bill also amends three summary offences in the Duties Act targeting the provision of false or misleading information, or the omission of relevant information, to increase the statutory maximum penalties and provide a defence of reasonable excuse. Similar amendments are made to the equivalent false and misleading offence provisions in the Taxation Administration Act 1997 (Taxation Administration Act), to ensure that the same penalties and defences apply across the taxation laws.

The Duties Act is further amended to restrict the duty concession provided for off-the-plan transactions so that it applies only to properties acquired by owner-occupiers who are eligible for the principal place of residence or first home buyer concession. Similarly, amendments are made to the exemption currently provided for the transfers of dutiable property between spouses or domestic partners, so that this exemption is only available for transfers of the parties' principal place of residence, and not for transfers of commercial or investment properties.

The bill amends the Land Tax Act 2005 (the Land Tax Act) to provide for a new form of land tax, the vacant residential land tax (the vacancy tax). The vacancy tax has been introduced to encourage residential property owners currently withholding their vacant residential properties from the market to make them available for rent or sale. A new division is inserted into part 2 of the Land Tax Act to set the key parameters of the scheme, including the rate, the meaning of the terms 'residential' and 'vacant', and the geographical area in which the vacancy tax shall be imposed. A new division is inserted into part 4 into the Land Tax Act to provide various exemptions.

The bill makes consequential amendments to the Taxation Administration Act to enable the new vacancy tax to be administered under the same administrative framework as other land taxes. The Taxation Administration Act is also

amended to remove the current qualification on the permitted use of information provided in relation to livestock duty imposed under part 6 of the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994.

The bill further amends the Taxation Administration Act to authorise the collection and disclosure of certain 'reportable information' to the federal Commissioner of Taxation, and to authorise disclosure to other Victorian public sector bodies for data verification purposes.

The bill amends the Unclaimed Money Act 2008 (Unclaimed Money Act) to insert a new offence targeting the false or misleading information or omission of relevant information in claims with the same defences and penalties as the comparable provisions in the Duties Act and the Taxation Administration Act. The existing false and misleading offence relating to information supplied in lodgements of unclaimed money is also being amended for consistency.

### **Human rights issues**

The amendments outlined above arguably engage the following charter rights: the right to property (section 20), recognition and equality before the law (section 8), the right to privacy (section 13), the right to a fair hearing (section 24), certain rights in criminal proceedings, namely the presumption of innocence and protection against self-incrimination (section 25), freedom of movement (section 12), and the protection afforded families and children (section 17).

For the reasons outlined below, in my opinion, the bill is compatible with each of these rights.

#### **Right to property: section 20**

Section 20 of the charter provides that a person must not be deprived of his or her property other than in accordance with law. This right is not limited where there is a law that 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.

#### **Duties Act amendments**

Limiting the operation of the spousal exemption on land transfers will bring to duty transactions that would have previously been exempt, such as the transfer of investment properties or interests in landholder entities. To the extent that a natural person will thus be liable for duty on such transfers, the amendment engages the right to property.

However, the amendment is not an arbitrary deprivation of a natural person's property; it is precisely formulated to ensure that the spousal exemption operates in accordance with public policy relating to the protection of the 'family home', and is aligned with provisions adopted in other Australian jurisdictions.

Similarly, the sub-sale amendments, which bring to duty option arrangements where additional consideration is given to acquire a transfer right and close potential gaps in the current provisions, engage the right to property to the extent that a natural person may thereby become liable for duty that was not previously charged.

Limiting the off-the-plan duty concession to properties acquired by a person eligible for a principal place of

residence or first home buyer duty concession also engages the right to property to the extent that some acquirers who are natural persons will no longer be entitled to that exemption. The amendment is a housing affordability initiative designed to provide the exemption to those who are purchasing a residential property as their home.

Each of these amendments will be administered under the Taxation Administration Act, which establishes the commissioner's powers and obligations, taxpayers rights of objection, review, appeal and recovery, and provides a framework to protect the confidentiality of tax-related information. Therefore affected taxpayers will not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with the law. To the extent that there is any limitation on the right to property with respect to these amendments, that limitation is reasonable and justified.

#### ***The vacancy tax***

The introduction of the vacancy tax makes the owner of such a vacant property liable for tax in circumstances when previously no tax was payable. To the extent that the introduction of vacancy tax is payable by a natural person, the right to property is engaged.

However, the imposition of the vacancy tax is not arbitrary because it is precisely formulated and will be administered in accordance with the Land Tax Act, which is a taxation law that is adequately accessible, clear and certain, and sufficiently precise to enable affected taxpayers to inform themselves of their legal obligations and to regulate their conduct accordingly. Furthermore, taxpayers will have the protections provided by the Taxation Administration Act including rights of objection, review, appeal and recovery.

As the vacancy tax will be administered under the Taxation Administration Act, the powers of entry and search provided in part 9 of that act may be exercised. The right in section 20 of the charter is relevant to powers authorising tax officers to enter certain premises and to seize or take items. To the extent that a natural person's property may be entered and certain items seized or taken in the investigation or enforcement of the vacancy tax, the right to property is again engaged.

The powers of an authorised officer include, under section 76 of the Taxation Administration Act, the power to seize a document or thing where the officer has reason to believe or suspect it is necessary to do so in order to prevent its concealment, loss, destruction or alteration. Similarly, section 83 of the Taxation Administration Act provides that an authorised officer may seize a storage device and the equipment necessary to access information on the device if the officer believes, on reasonable grounds, that the storage device contains information relevant to the administration of a taxation law and it is not otherwise practicable to access the information on the device.

However, the circumstances in which inspectors or authorised persons are permitted to seize or take items or documents are provided for by clear legislative provisions, and the powers are strictly confined. The items that may be taken or seized are relevant to and connected with enforcing compliance with the vacancy tax. For instance, a magistrate may only issue a search warrant if satisfied by evidence on oath or affidavit that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is, or may be within the next 72 hours, a particular thing on the

premises that may be relevant to the administration or execution of a taxation law. Further, under section 77 of the Taxation Administration Act, a document or thing may only be searched for, seized or secured against interference if it is described in the warrant issued by a magistrate.

In my opinion, sections 76 and 83 of the Taxation Administration Act, which will apply to the vacancy tax, do not limit the right in section 20 of the charter because they are sufficiently confined and structured, accessible and formulated precisely such that any deprivation occurs in accordance with the law.

Further, these provisions guard against any permanent interference with property where no offence has been committed. For example, the Taxation Administration Act provides that reasonable steps must be taken to return a document or thing that is seized if the reason for its seizure no longer exists (section 84), and the document or thing seized must be returned within the retention period of 60 days, unless the retention period is extended by an order of the Magistrates Court (section 85).

For the above reasons, in my opinion the provisions of the bill are compatible with the right to property in section 20 of the charter.

#### Recognition and equality before the law — section 8(3)

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, under section 6 of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, includes discrimination on the basis of race, which is defined to include differentiation based on a person's nationality or national origin.

#### *Collection of 'reportable information' and disclosure to federal Commissioner of Taxation*

Division 3 of part 6 of the bill amends the Taxation Administration Act to authorise the commissioner of state revenue to collect details relating to real property transfers (i.e. 'reportable information') for the purpose of reporting that information to the federal Commissioner of Taxation under section 396-55 of the Taxation Administration Act 1953 (cth). 'Reportable information' includes personal details relating to foreign natural persons who are transferees or transferors. The federal commissioner requires this information — some of which is not currently collected for the purposes of the Victorian taxation laws — for the administration of commonwealth tax and foreign acquisitions laws.

The bill may therefore engage rights under section 8(3) to the extent that the collection of reportable information pertains specifically to foreign natural persons.

This information is sought for the administration and enforcement of commonwealth taxes and laws relating to foreign acquisitions. It is also relevant for the administration and enforcement of existing Victorian taxes, namely the foreign purchaser additional duty (imposed under the Duties Act on foreign persons acquiring residential property). Such differential treatment is therefore central to the purpose of collecting reportable information specific to foreign persons.

In my view, there are no less restrictive means reasonably available to achieve the purpose of the proposed

amendments, the limitation of a foreign natural person's rights under section 8(3) is reasonable and justified in accordance with section 7(2) of the charter. In my opinion, the bill is compatible with the right to equality provided in section 8(3) of the charter.

#### Right to privacy: section 13(a)

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.

This bill contains four initiatives that engage the right to privacy to the extent that information being collected and/or disclosed will include personal information.

The amendments to the Land Tax Act imposing the new vacancy tax include an obligation, enforceable under section 10 of the Taxation Administration Act, to notify the commissioner of details needed for a proper assessment of their liability (proposed new section 34G). The commissioner and authorised tax officers will also be able to utilise existing powers under part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act to compel a person to provide information and/or produce documents or records (including personal information) for the purposes of an investigation into a known or suspected tax default.

The bill amends section 4(1) and (2) of the Taxation Administration Act to enable part 6 of the Livestock Diseases Control Act 1994 to become a taxation law without qualification. Information on livestock duty returns may thereby be used for the administration of other taxation laws, thus permitting a taxpayer's last known contact details, for example, to be used for other taxes payable by that person.

As noted above, a new division inserted in part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act will enable the collection and disclosure of 'reportable information' — which includes details relating to foreign natural persons — relating to real property transactions to the federal Commissioner of Taxation pursuant to section 396-55 of the Taxation Administration Act 1953 (cth).

A further amendment to part 9 authorises disclosures to Victorian public sector bodies for the SRO's own data-verification purposes. The purpose of such a disclosure will be to verify the accuracy or completeness of the information held by the SRO.

While these measures provide for the collection and/or disclosure of personal information, the collection, use, retention and disclosure of such personal information will be subject to and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the relevant taxation laws and part 9 as amended of the Taxation Administration Act. The existing secrecy provisions in part 9 will apply to prohibit disclosure except for the purposes and to the recipients expressly authorised in section 92, which include for example a police officer, various commonwealth, state and territory tax or law enforcement agencies. Section 94 of the Taxation Administration Act prohibits 'secondary disclosure', that is, disclosure of any information provided under section 92, unless it is for the purpose of enforcing a law or protecting public revenue and the commissioner's written consent is provided. Further, section 95 provides that an authorised

officer is not required to disclose or produce in court any such information unless it is necessary for the purposes of the administration of a taxation law, or to enable a person to exercise a function imposed on the person by law.

Accordingly, to the extent that these investigation powers could interfere with a person's privacy, any interference would not constitute an unlawful or arbitrary interference. For these reasons, I am satisfied that the bill does not limit the right to privacy under section 13.

#### Fair hearing — section 24(1)

Section 24 provides that a person charged with a criminal offence or a party to a civil proceeding has the right to have the charge or proceeding decided by a competent, independent and impartial court or tribunal after a fair and public hearing.

As noted above, the vacancy tax will be a form of land tax under the Land Tax Act, and will thereby be administered under the Taxation Administration Act.

The right to a fair hearing under section 24 is engaged to the extent that the Taxation Administration Act limits the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal from entertaining proceedings involving a natural person in relation to the vacancy tax.

Clause 92 of the bill amends section 135 of the Taxation Administration Act to provide that the bill intends sections 5, 12(4), 18(1), 96(2) and 100(4) of the Taxation Administration Act to operate to alter or vary section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975 in relation to the vacancy tax. These existing provisions in the Taxation Administration Act limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, and it is the intention of this bill that similar limitations should apply for the administration of the vacancy tax.

To the extent that these provisions are used in vacancy tax matters involving a natural person, the right to a fair hearing under section 24(1) is engaged.

Sections 12(4) and 100(4) of the Taxation Administration Act provide for non-reviewable decisions, defined in section 5 to mean that no court has the jurisdiction or power to entertain questions as to their validity or correctness. The reason for limiting the jurisdiction of the courts in relation to a compromise assessment under section 12(4) is that the assessment has been issued by agreement between the commissioner and the taxpayer as to the taxpayer's liability. The purpose of the section — to enable an assessment to be made by agreement with the taxpayer rather than by the commissioner alone — would not be achieved if the compromise assessment 'decision' were reviewable. Section 100 of the Taxation Administration Act provides the commissioner with discretion to allow an objection to be lodged out of time. This decision is non-reviewable to provide finality in the administration of objections, so that outstanding issues relating to assessments and decisions referred to in section 96(1) can be concluded expeditiously.

Sections 96(2) and 18(1) of the Taxation Administration Act combine to establish an exclusive code for the conduct of objections, reviews, appeals and proceedings for recovery of overpayments. Division 1 of part 10 of the Taxation Administration Act establishes an exclusive code for dealing with objections, and this division will also apply to the

vacancy tax. The exclusive code establishes the rights of objectors in a statutory framework and precludes any collateral actions for judicial review of the commissioner's assessment or decision of a type referred to in section 96(1) of the Taxation Administration Act. The objections and appeals provisions of part 10 of the Taxation Administration Act establish that review of matters amenable to objection under section 96(1) is only to be undertaken in accordance with an exclusive code identified in that part. The purpose of these provisions would not be achieved if any question concerning an assessment or decision referred to in section 96(1) was subject to judicial review except such judicial review as provided by division 2 of part 10 of the Taxation Administration Act.

Similarly, section 18 of the Taxation Administration Act provides that no proceedings may be taken in relation to a claimed overpayment except as provided under part 4 of that act. The purpose of the provisions is to give the commissioner the opportunity to consider a refund application before any collateral legal action can be taken. The purpose of these provisions would not be achieved if the process established under part 4 could be bypassed and proceedings commenced outside the ambit of the Taxation Administration Act.

In this context, I am satisfied that, to the extent that limiting the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court may limit a person's fair hearing rights as protected under section 24(1) of the charter, any such limit would be demonstrably justified. The classification of certain decisions under the Taxation Administration Act as 'non-reviewable' is directly related to the particular statutory purpose and context of those particular decisions, and the exclusive code provided in the Taxation Administration Act provides for objections, reviews and appeals and proceedings relating to alleged overpayments, is necessary for the efficient discharge of the commissioner's functions under the Taxation Administration Act, which will now include the administration of the vacancy tax.

#### Presumption of innocence — section 25(1)

Section 25(1) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law. The right in section 25(1) is engaged where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof onto 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.

The presumption of innocence in section 25(1) is engaged firstly, because the administration of the new vacancy tax may involve the prosecution for offences in the Taxation Act that shift the burden of proof onto the accused and secondly, because the bill amends various offences prohibiting the provision of false or misleading information to increase the statutory maximum penalty and provide a defence of reasonable excuse.

#### *Application of existing offence provisions to the 'vacancy tax' and collection of 'reportable information'*

The right to be presumed innocent may also be considered relevant to a number of existing offences under the Taxation Administration Act that place an evidential burden on the defendant, and that will apply to the vacancy tax and the collection of 'reportable information' under the proposed new division inserted in part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act on enactment.

As outlined above, section 73 of the Taxation Administration Act empowers the commissioner to issue a written notice requiring a person to provide information, produce a document or thing, or give evidence. Section 73A provides that the commissioner may certify to the Supreme Court that a person has failed to comply with a requirement of a notice issued under section 73. The Supreme Court may inquire into the case and may order the person to comply with the requirement in the notice. Section 73A(4) provides that a person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with an order of the Supreme Court under s 73A(2), is guilty of an offence.

Section 88 of the Taxation Administration Act makes it an offence for a person, without reasonable excuse, to refuse or fail to comply with a requirement made or to answer a question of an authorised officer asked in accordance with sections 81 or 86 of the Taxation Administration Act.

Section 92 establishes a defence of reasonable compliance for offences relating to the investigation powers of authorised tax officers under part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act. It provides that a person is not guilty of an offence if the court hearing the charge is satisfied that the person could not, by the exercise of reasonable diligence, have complied with the requirement to which the charge relates, or that the person complied with the requirement to the extent that he or she was able to do so.

Although these provisions require a defendant to raise evidence of a matter in order to rely on a defence, I am satisfied that the provisions impose an evidential, rather than legal burden. The defences and excuses provided relate to matters within the knowledge of the defendant, which is appropriate in circumstances where placing the onus on the prosecution would involve the proof of a negative which would be very difficult.

The right to be presumed innocent is also relevant to section 130C of the Taxation Administration Act, which establishes the criminal liability of an officer of a body corporate for the failure to exercise due diligence in certain circumstances. That section provides that if a body corporate commits a specified offence, namely giving false or misleading information to tax officers contrary to section 57(1) or tax evasion contrary to section 61 of the Taxation Administration Act, an officer of the body corporate is also deemed to have committed the offence. Section 130C(3) provides that it is a defence to a charge for an officer of a body corporate to prove that he or she exercised due diligence to prevent the commission of the offence by the body corporate.

The defence in section 130C(3) of the Taxation Administration Act imposes a legal burden on the defendant. However, I am of the view that the imposition of a legal burden to rely on the defence of due diligence is compatible with the right to presumption of innocence in section 25(1) of the charter, as any limit on the right will be reasonably justified under section 7(2) of the charter. The provision applies only to a narrow range of offences of dishonesty, and only to officers of a body corporate as persons who carry on a specific role and possess significant authority and influence over the body corporate.

Further, a defence is available for the benefit of an accused to escape liability where they have taken reasonable steps to ensure compliance, in respect of what could otherwise be an absolute or strict liability offence. Courts in other jurisdictions

have held that the presumption of innocence may be subject to limits particularly where, as here, the offence is of a regulatory nature. Further, a defence is available for the benefit of an accused to escape liability where they have taken reasonable steps to ensure compliance, in respect of what could otherwise be an absolute or strict liability offence.

The purpose of these provisions is to ensure compliance with the taxation laws by deterring intentional acts of dishonesty. A person who elects to undertake a position as officer of a body corporate accepts that they will be subject to certain requirements under the Taxation Administration Act, and will be expected to be able to demonstrate their compliance with these requirements. This includes the expectation that an officer of a body corporate can demonstrate compliance with a requirement to exercise due diligence to prevent the commission of dishonesty offences by the body corporate.

Moreover, whether an officer of a body corporate has exercised due diligence is a matter peculiarly within the knowledge of that person. Such persons are best placed to prove whether they exercised due diligence. Conversely, it would be very difficult for the prosecution to prove the matter in the negative.

Accordingly, I am of the view that section 130C(3) of the Taxation Administration Act, as it will apply to the vacancy tax or to the collection of reportable information, is compatible with the charter's right to the presumption of innocence.

For the above reasons, I am satisfied that these provisions of the Taxation Administration Act that will apply to the vacancy tax and to the collection of reportable information, do not limit the right to be presumed innocent in section 25(1) of the charter.

#### *Amendments to 'false and misleading' offence provisions*

The bill amends the existing summary offences in the Duties Act, the Taxation Administration Act and the Unclaimed Money Act prohibiting the provision of false or misleading information (or the omission of relevant information). A new offence is also inserted in the Unclaimed Money Act to address the provision of false or misleading information or the omission of relevant information in claims made to the registrar for amounts of unclaimed money. The provisions in all three acts are standardised: current statutory maximum penalties for individuals and bodies corporate are increased, a defence of reasonable excuse is expressly provided and, where a body corporate commits such an offence, an officer of the body corporate may raise a defence of due diligence.

The false and misleading information offences in sections 24, 69D and 89O of the Duties Act and sections 52 and 57 of the Taxation Administration Act support the proper use of an online lodgement facility by which parties to real property transfer may submit the required details to the SRO.

The insertion of the defence of 'reasonable excuse' does not transfer the legal burden of proof from the prosecution to the accused. Once the accused has adduced or pointed to some evidence that would establish the excuse, the burden is on the prosecution to prove — on the balance of probabilities — the absence of the excuse raised, as well as each element(s) of the offence (beyond reasonable doubt).

The matters that may form the basis of the defence of reasonable excuse will be peculiarly within the accused's

knowledge. Furthermore, the burdens do not relate to essential elements of the offences and are only imposed on the accused to raise facts that support the existence of an exception, defence or excuse.

These amendments will ensure that an accused person who has a 'reasonable excuse' will escape liability for what would otherwise be unlawful conduct. The provision of a reasonable excuse defence operates as a protection against the strict operation of these offence provisions. Therefore, the amendments made by the bill to these provisions will not limit the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.

To standardise the offences governing the criminal liability of officers of a body corporate that commits a false or misleading information offence, the bill removes a reverse onus provision that currently applies to two such offences in the Duties Act and provides instead a defence of due diligence under section 130B of the Taxation Administration Act. Section 130B of the Taxation Administration Act provides that officers of a body corporate will be liable if the body corporate commits an offence and they have failed to exercise due diligence. Section 130B does not reverse the onus of proof such that the accused must prove the defence (that they exercised due diligence) on the balance of probabilities.

#### Protection against self-incrimination — section 25(2)(k)

Section 25(2)(k) of the charter provides that a person charged with a criminal offence is entitled not to be compelled to testify against himself or herself or to confess guilt. The Supreme Court has held that this right, as protected by the charter, is at least as broad as the common law privilege against self-incrimination. It applies to protect a charged person against the admission in subsequent criminal proceedings of incriminatory material obtained under compulsion, regardless of whether the information was obtained prior to or subsequent to the charge being laid. The common law privilege includes an immunity against direct and derivative use of compelled testimony.

The bill engages the privilege against self-incrimination to the extent that the Taxation Administration Act, under which the vacancy tax will be administered, contains investigative powers (sections 73 and 86) that operate to limit the right of a natural person to protection against self-incrimination. This right is also engaged in respect of reportable information, since the same investigative powers will apply to the proposed new division inserted in part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act.

Section 73 of the Taxation Administration Act provides the commissioner and authorised tax officers with the power, under a written notice, to compel a person, including a natural person, to provide information, attend and give evidence and/or the produce of specified documents and things in that person's custody or possession. Section 72 of the Taxation Administration Act confines the powers under section 72 by providing that it may be exercised 'only for the purposes of a taxation law', which in the case of the vacancy tax, is the Land Tax Act. In relation to reportable information, the applicable taxation law is the Taxation Administration Act.

Failure to comply with a 'section 73' notice is a criminal offence; additionally, where a person is convicted of an offence under section 73, the court may order the person to comply

with the notice and any other requirements necessary to ensure compliance. As an alternative to prosecution, if the commissioner is satisfied that a person failed to comply with a section 73 requirement without reasonable excuse, the commissioner may, under section 73A, certify that failure to the Supreme Court. The court may inquire and order the person to comply with the requirement within a specified period.

Section 86 of the Taxation Administration Act similarly provides that an authorised taxation officer may, in the exercise a power of entry, require a person to give information, produce or provide documents and things, and give reasonable assistance, to the authorised officer. It is an offence to fail to comply with a requirement made or to answer a question under this section.

Section 87(1) limits the right to protection against self-incrimination by providing that a person is not excused from answering a question, providing information or producing a document or thing on the ground that to do so might tend to incriminate the person or make the person liable to a penalty. Section 87(2) provides that, if a person objects to answering a question, providing information or producing a document or thing, the answer, information, document or thing is not admissible in any criminal proceeding other than proceedings for an offence against a taxation law, or proceedings for an offence in the nature of perjury.

Given the commissioner's reliance on information in the possession or custody of the taxpayer for the correct assessment of tax, I am satisfied that there are no less restrictive means available to achieve the purpose of enabling the administration of the vacancy tax. Similarly, given the commissioner's reliance on the taxpayer to provide reportable information, I am satisfied that there are no less restrictive means available to achieve the purpose of administering the proposed new division inserted in part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act.

In my view, section 87 of the Taxation Administration Act is a reasonable limit on the right to protection against self-incrimination under section 7(2) of the charter. The ability of an authorised officer to require a person to give information or answer questions is necessary for the proper administration of the vacancy tax, and for the collection of reportable information under the proposed new division inserted in part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act. To this end, I note that the information, answers or documents obtained are only admissible in proceedings for an offence relating to the proper administration of the vacancy tax or the collection of reportable information, and section 87(2) of the Taxation Administration Act otherwise preserves both the direct use immunity and derivative use immunity.

With respect to the power of an authorised officer to require the production of documents, I note that at common law, the protection accorded to the compelled production of pre-existing documents is considerably weaker than the protection accorded to oral testimony or to documents brought into existence to comply with a request for information. This is particularly so in the context of tax administration, where the commissioner relies on the production of information contained in records or documents in order to ensure the correct tax is imposed, and those documents or records exist for the dominant purpose of recording or evidencing facts relevant for taxation purposes. In the context of tax administration, it is reasonable to expect

persons to be subject to a duty to provide tax officers with information, documents or records required for the purposes of an investigation.

Further, it is desirable for there to be consistency in the administration of the various laws that are subject to the Taxation Administration Act, including, where applicable, the exercise of powers under sections 73 and 86, and the consequential limitations to the protection against self-incrimination provided under section 87.

I therefore consider sections 73 and 87(2) of the Taxation Administration Act are a reasonable limit on the right to protection against self-incrimination, pursuant to section 7(2) of the charter.

Accordingly, I consider that part 4 and division 3 of part 6 of the bill are compatible with the right to protection against self-incrimination in section 25(2)(k) of the charter.

#### Freedom of movement (section 12)

Section 12 of the charter provides that every person lawfully within Victoria has the right to move freely within Victoria.

#### *Vacancy tax — collection of reportable information — exercise of investigative powers*

As the vacancy tax will be administered under the Taxation Administration Act, the administration of the vacancy tax may involve the exercise of the investigative powers provided in section 73 of the Taxation Administration Act. These investigative powers may also be exercised in relation to the collection of reportable information under the proposed new division inserted in part 9 of the Taxation Administration Act.

Under section 73(5) the commissioner or an authorised tax officer exercises their power to direct a natural person to attend and give evidence in relation to that matter, a person's right to move freely within Victoria may be engaged. Section 73(8) makes it an offence to refuse to comply with a direction made under section 73(5). However, a person required to attend and give evidence orally is to be paid expenses in accordance with prescribed scale.

It is arguable that a person's right to move freely within Victoria may be engaged when the commissioner or an authorised tax officer exercises their power under section 73(5).

However, although the power to compel a person to attend a particular place at a particular time technically limits that person's freedom to choose to be elsewhere at that time, this differs qualitatively from the types of measures that Victorian courts have regarded as engaging the right to freedom of movement, such as restrictions placed on a person's place of residence, or ability to leave their residence, and police powers to conduct a traffic stop.

To the extent that section 73 of the Taxation Administration Act is capable of being considered to limit the right of freedom of movement, I consider that any such limit is demonstrably justified under section 7(2) of the charter, as the commissioner's power to compel a person's attendance to give evidence will in certain circumstances be essential to obtain the information needed for the proper administration of the vacancy tax, and for the collection of reportable information.

#### *Marriage and domestic relationships exemption — Duties Act*

To the extent that the spousal exemption currently available under section 43 of the Duties Act will only be applied to the parties' principal place of residence, it may be argued that a person's freedom of movement is engaged.

To the extent that the right is limited, I consider that any such limitation is reasonable and justified because the amended exemption will still apply to transfers involving the family home, and will therefore not affect or inhibit a family's freedom to live in their chosen place of residence.

#### Protection of families and children — section 17

#### *Marriage and domestic relationships exemption — Duties Act*

Under section 17 of the charter, families are recognised as a fundamental group unit of society and are therefore entitled to the state's protection.

To the extent that this amendment will limit the spousal exemption currently available under section 43 to the principal place of residence of the parties only, it engages, and arguably limits, section 17 of the charter.

The amendment ensures that the provision better reflects the underlying public policy of the exemption, which is to exempt the transfer of the family home between spouses and domestic partners. The effect of the amendment is that the exemption will no longer apply in relation to direct and indirect transfers between spouses and domestic partners' investment and commercial properties. The amended provision will therefore continue operating as a safeguard in respect of the family group unit. In my view, any limitation placed on this right by amending the scope of the spousal exemption is therefore reasonable and justifiable.

Tim Pallas, MP  
Treasurer

#### *Second reading*

**Mr PALLAS** (Treasurer) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

#### **Speech as follows, except for statement under section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975, incorporated into *Hansard* under standing orders:**

I am pleased to introduce this bill which amends Victoria's taxation and valuation laws including the Duties Act 2000, First Home Owner Grant Act 2000, Land Tax Act 2005, Payroll Tax Act 2007, Taxation Administration Act 1997, Unclaimed Money Act 2008, Planning and Environment Act 1987 and the Valuation of Land Act 1960.

This is an important bill for Victorians as it implements various measures that will make buying a home in Victoria easier by giving effect to vital elements of the government's 'Homes for Victorians' strategy. The bill also delivers on a range of budget initiatives guaranteeing that Victoria's strong economic position is maintained and it also makes minor amendments to support the continuous improvement of Victoria's revenue laws.

Homes for Victorians

We all know how difficult it is to purchase a home, particularly for young Victorians, who are faced with ever increasing house prices and the upfront costs associated with buying a home, especially stamp duty. We also know that first home buyers have to compete against investors, which is made even more difficult by the Turnbull government's tax policies around negative gearing and capital gains tax, which favour investors over home buyers. That is why this government is committed to tackling housing affordability to give every Victorian an opportunity to find a home. The government's 'Homes for Victorians' strategy takes a coordinated approach that will make a difference by shifting the balance back towards first home buyers and enabling Victorians to enter the housing market.

This bill will abolish stamp duty for first-time buyers on homes up to \$600 000 and will provide stamp duty cuts on homes valued up to \$750 000. This measure alone will help more than 25 000 people every year to purchase their first home. At the same time, the First Home Owners Grant will be doubled to \$20 000 in regional Victoria, making it easier for people to build a home and continue to live in their communities. The government is committed to ensuring that people in regional Victoria have the same opportunities as everywhere else and these measures will deliver on that.

As part of the government's strategy to re-balance the housing market towards first home buyers, from 1 July 2017 the off-the-plan stamp duty concession will only be available to home buyers who intend to make the property their principal place of residence, or to those that qualify for the first home buyer stamp duty concession, which is also being introduced by this bill. This measure will provide owner-occupiers and genuine first home buyers a competitive advantage when seeking to buy a home relative to investors, thus giving them every opportunity to enter the housing market.

This bill will make necessary amendments to introduce a vacant residential property tax to address the number of properties being left empty across inner and middle suburbs of Melbourne. Under the changes, owners who unreasonably leave these properties vacant will instead be encouraged to make them available for either purchase or rent.

Where a property has been left vacant for more than six months in a calendar year, a rate of 1 per cent will be charged on the property's capital improved value. The vacant residential property tax will target inner and middle areas of Melbourne as these are the locations where issues of housing affordability are most acute. Similar to land tax, liabilities will be triggered on a calendar year basis beginning from 1 January 2018. By incentivising Melbourne's current housing stock to be put to its most efficient use, it will reduce the pressure on house prices and rents and add to the government's overall housing affordability strategy.

The government recognises there are legitimate reasons why some properties have been left unoccupied and sought valuable input from industry stakeholders on the nature and extent of the exemptions that will be required. Accordingly, the bill provides a number of exemptions from the vacant residential property tax, which includes exemptions for holiday homes, city properties being occupied regularly for work purposes, an exemption where a residence is being renovated or rebuilt or where there has been a transfer of a property. In addition, where a residential property qualifies

for an exemption from general land tax, then the property will not be liable to the vacant residential property tax.

I draw the members' attention specifically to clause 92 of the bill. This clause of the bill proposes to limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to ensure that the legislative regime under the Taxation Administration Act 1997 applies to the vacant residential property tax in the same way as it does in relation to any other form of land tax. Accordingly, I will provide a statement under section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975 of the reasons for altering or varying that section by this bill.

Budget initiatives

This bill includes a number of measures that are part of the Andrews Labor government's third budget. These measures will support Victorian businesses, better align some Victorian taxing arrangements to create a fairer and more equitable tax system in Victoria.

The Victorian government recognises the importance of allowing businesses to grow and have a positive impact on employment, especially in regional Victoria. As part of the 2016 state budget the Andrews government introduced a plan to reduce the burden of regulation on small business, by progressively raising the \$550 000 payroll tax threshold by \$25 000 per year over four financial years to \$650 000 in 2019–20. The Victorian government is bringing forward these changes such that the threshold would reach \$625 000 in 2017–18 and \$650 000 in 2018–19.

Accordingly, in both 2017–18 and 2018–19, all businesses with a payroll tax liability will benefit by these measures. This initiative will support the development of new businesses and the growth of existing ones by reducing the financial and administrative burden of taxation for Victorian businesses. For example, up to 1600 grouped businesses will cease to be liable for payroll tax one year earlier. It also reduces the number of small businesses that would otherwise be required to register and pay payroll tax. By easing the payroll tax burden on Victorian businesses, these measures acknowledge the valuable role they play in the Victorian economy by providing jobs and vital goods and services to the community.

Regional Victorian businesses will now pay the lowest payroll tax in the country. In an Australian first this bill will also reduce the payroll tax rate paid by predominantly regional Victorian businesses by 25 per cent to a rate of 3.65 per cent. This applies where at least 85 per cent of their payroll goes to regional employees. This will encourage regional employment opportunities building on the strong regional employment growth already seen under the Andrews Labor government. These payroll tax measures will apply from 1 July 2017.

The government continues to be a strong supporter of the Victorian agricultural sector and through this bill will deliver even more benefits to regional Victoria by supporting our farming communities through an exemption from insurance duty on agricultural products. This will include insurance covering different types of crops, livestock and for various assets used as part of primary production activity. This exemption from duty should reduce the disincentives to insure against damage to crops, livestock and farming equipment and provide financial savings to farmers through reduced insurance premiums.

This bill will also remove the stamp duty exemption for certain transfers of property between spouses, closing a loophole that is currently used for tax minimisation by investors.

This will limit the existing land transfer duty exemption for transfers between spouses or domestic partners to a transfer of the principal place of residence. Accordingly, the exemption will no longer apply to transfers of interests involving commercial and/or investment properties. The duty exemption for transfers of property following a relationship breakdown will continue to apply to all properties, including investment and commercial properties.

This bill also means that new passenger vehicles will start being charged the same duty rates as used passenger vehicles from 1 July 2017. A small difference between the two duties currently exists to encourage Victorians to buy new locally-made cars. But despite the best efforts of state and federal Labor governments to keep building cars in Victoria, the federal Liberal government chased car manufacturers out of the country, leaving no new cars being made in Victoria. The realignment of the rates is consistent with the treatment of new and used cars in other jurisdictions.

Through this bill, the Victorian government will centralise Victoria's valuation function with the valuer-general Victoria and provide for valuations to be undertaken annually. This decision will enhance Victoria's valuation and rating system and improve the efficiency, robustness and cost effectiveness of rating authority valuations in Victoria. This bill makes the necessary amendments to make the Valuer-General the sole valuation authority that will conduct general valuations of all lands.

General valuations are currently conducted biennially by local councils or the Valuer-General and establish the value of properties as at 1 January every second year. Supplementary valuations are also completed during each cycle to account for new properties and changes in the use of existing properties. These valuations are used for the purposes of assessing council rates, land tax and the fire services property levy. Undertaking annual valuations will have the added benefit of smoothing out the existing biennial increases in land tax for land owners. The first annual revaluation under the new system will be undertaken from 2019.

This bill also makes an important amendment to the First Home Owner Grant by introducing an exemption for Australian Defence Force personnel from the residency requirement. Due to the nature of employment of defence force personnel, there are instances where they may be unable to fulfil the varied residency requirement due to a work assignment. I would like to thank the member for Keysborough and his constituent Mr Jonathan Ersch who brought this matter to my attention. This is yet another example of Labor listening, and getting on with the job.

#### General taxation amendments

This bill also makes a number of amendments aimed at improving the general operation of Victoria's revenue laws by correcting technical or drafting defects, removing anomalies and inconsistencies and addressing unintended outcomes.

The State Revenue Office is moving towards a fully digital environment which will require the conversion of numerous paper forms used to collect property transfer information into one online electronic form. This bill makes important

amendments to the Duties Act 2000 to ensure this new electronic form can be utilised for all property transactions. It also updates provisions around providing false and misleading information.

This bill also makes a number of other amendments to the Duties Act 2000, including to the sub-sale provisions that confirms their current operation and better aligns the provisions with their underlying policy objective.

The amendments in this bill will confirm the existing policy and practice that where a subsequent purchaser acquires only a partial transfer right, duty will be payable on the respective partial interests that are ultimately acquired. For example, if a subsequent purchaser obtains a 25 per cent transfer right, duty will be payable on that 25 per cent interest and on the first purchaser's remaining 75 per cent interest, thereby resulting in a total of 100 per cent duty being payable.

The amendments in this bill also ensure that option arrangements where additional consideration is given to acquire a transfer right are also subject to duty. The bill also makes other amendments to the sub-sale provisions to ensure that a transfer cannot obtain multiple exemptions that result in less than 100 per cent in duty being payable on the transfer. These amendments will remove opportunities for manipulation or avoidance of duty.

Currently any company or trust listed on an exchange of the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) gets the benefit of a concessional rate of duty under the Victorian landholder provisions when a relevant acquisition occurs. Recently, two of the largest and most reputable exchanges in the world, being the London Stock Exchange and New York Stock Exchange, chose to cease their membership of the WFE. The Victorian government acknowledges the importance of providing certainty to businesses when making investment decisions in Victoria. Accordingly, this bill makes amendments that will recognise entities listed on the London Stock Exchange and New York Stock Exchange as 'listed entities' for the purposes of the landholder provisions. Further, this bill will provide the ability for the commissioner of state revenue to treat a company or trust as a public landholder for the purposes of applying the concessional rate if they are listed on an exchange that was previously a member of the WFE and it is appropriate in the circumstances to do so.

The bill also makes a number of important amendments to the Taxation Administration Act 1997 (Taxation Administration Act). In 2015, the commonwealth legislated to require states and territories to provide data on all real property transfers to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) from July 2017. Accordingly, this bill will amend the Taxation Administration Act to enable the commissioner of state revenue to collect the relevant additional information which can then be provided to the federal Commissioner of Taxation. The bill will provide express authority to the State Revenue Office to be able to disclose bulk information for the SRO's own data-matching purposes. Recipients will be prohibited from secondary disclosure of that data. The bill also amends the Taxation Administration Act to enable the commissioner of state revenue to use information obtained in livestock duty returns for cross-matching with information obtained through other revenue lines such as payroll tax and land tax.

The metropolitan planning levy is a levy imposed when making a leviable planning permit application, where the estimated cost of the development exceeds the 'threshold

amount'. The threshold amount was set at \$1 million for the 2015–16 financial year and is indexed by CPI each subsequent financial year. In order to simplify administration of the levy this bill includes an amendment to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to enable rounding of the indexed threshold amount to the nearest \$1000. For example, an adjusted threshold amount of \$1 033 966.03 would be rounded to \$1 034 000.

The passage of this bill will enable more Victorians to purchase their first home by ensuring they get a competitive advantage relative to property investors. Moreover, it is a bill that gives effect to this government's 2017 budget measures including important payroll tax cuts that will support Victorian businesses and Victorian jobs. Finally, this bill ensures that Victoria's tax system is modern, fair and equitable.

### Section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975

**Mr PALLAS** — I wish to make a statement under section 85(5) of the Constitution Act 1975 of the reasons for altering or varying that section by this bill. Section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975 vests the judicial power of Victoria in the Supreme Court and requires a statement to be made when legislation that directly or indirectly repeals, alters or varies the court's jurisdiction is introduced.

Clause 92 of the bill inserts a new subsection (7) into section 135 of the Taxation Administration Act to provide that it is the intention of sections 5, 12(4), 18(1), 96(2) and 100(4) of the Taxation Administration Act, as those sections apply after the commencement of clause 92, to alter or vary section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975.

Part 4 of the State Taxation Acts Amendment Bill 2017 amends the Land Tax Act 2005 to provide for a new form of land tax, vacant residential land tax. Division 5 of part 7 of the bill makes consequential amendments to the Taxation Administration Act to enable vacant residential land tax, consistent with other forms of land tax, to be administered under the Taxation Administration Act and any regulations made under it.

The Supreme Court's jurisdiction is altered to the extent that the Taxation Administration Act provides for certain non-reviewable decisions and establishes an exclusive code that prevents proceedings concerning an assessment or refund or recovery of tax being commenced except as provided by it. It is desirable that the legislative regime under the Taxation Administration Act applies to vacant residential land tax in the same way as it does in relation to any other form of land tax. Accordingly, in order to ensure that the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is limited in relation to vacant residential land tax in the same way as it is in relation to other forms of land tax, it is necessary to provide that it is the intention of this bill

for the relevant provisions of the Taxation Administration Act to apply in the administration of the proposed tax, and for the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court to be altered accordingly.

Section 5 of the Taxation Administration Act defines the meaning of non-reviewable decision in relation to that act, which will also apply to vacant residential land tax. No court, including the Supreme Court, has jurisdiction or power to entertain any question as to the validity or correctness of a non-reviewable decision. Section 12(4) of the Taxation Administration Act provides that the making of a compromise assessment is a non-reviewable decision. Similarly, section 100(4) provides that a decision by the commissioner not to permit an objection to be lodged out of time is a non-reviewable decision. Decisions may be made under section 12(4) or section 100(4) in relation to the collection of vacant residential land tax.

Section 18(1) of the Taxation Administration Act prevents proceedings being commenced in the Supreme Court for the refund or recovery of a tax except as provided in part 4 of that act. As vacant residential land tax is a form of land tax for the purposes of section 18(1), proceedings for its refund or recovery would be similarly limited.

Section 96(2) of the Taxation Administration Act prevents a court (including the Supreme Court) considering any question concerning an assessment of a tax except as provided by part 10 of that act. As vacant residential land tax is a form of land tax for the purposes of section 96(2), proceedings in relation to an assessment of vacant residential land tax would be similarly limited.

Accordingly, in order to ensure that the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is limited in relation to vacant residential land tax in the same way as it is in relation to other forms of land tax, it is necessary to provide that it is the intention of sections 5, 12(4), 18(1), 96(2) and 100(4) of the Taxation Administration Act to alter or vary section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern).**

**Debate adjourned until Tuesday, 23 May.**

**APPROPRIATION (2017–2018) BILL 2017**

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 2 May; motion of Mr PALLAS (Treasurer).**

**Mr M. O'BRIEN** (Malvern) — You have to ask yourself, 'Why are we responding to this budget today, a week after it was handed down, on federal budget day?'. The Treasurer may have brought down a budget with a red stripe across the front, but it should have been brought down with a yellow streak down the spine because this is a cowardly budget from a cowardly Treasurer in a cowardly government. What other government would think fit to deny the opposition, to deny the Greens and to deny the Independents the opportunity to respond to the budget in budget week?

This is a weak budget from a weak government too afraid of scrutiny. It decided to deny us the opportunity to debate this budget last week, to respond to this budget last week and to ask questions. We heard the Treasurer in question time today desperately saying, 'Where are the questions to me?'. As soon as the member for Prahran actually asked him one question about the budget, he went to water — he had no idea. He was a robot that had the wrong program put in place. There was a meltdown. There was smoke coming out of his head.

This is a cowardly budget from a government which has got a lot to hide. It is anti-democratic. It does not respect this chamber. It does not respect the people of Victoria — and that is not just in the way it has dealt with this budget but what it has put inside this budget. This budget provides no cost-of-living relief for ordinary Victorian families whatsoever. We have a Treasurer who is boasting about the size of his surplus — which, I should say, is less than what he inherited — while he is jacking up taxes and charges and making life harder for Victorians.

This government came to office with a very clear promise, about the only thing it was very clear about promising before the election. The now Premier of Victoria was out there on the steps of Parliament the night before the election, being interviewed by Peter Mitchell from Channel 7 news, and it was very, very clear. Mitchell asked him, and I quote:

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 man who is now the Premier of this state looked down the barrel of that camera, he looked Victorians in the eye, and he said:

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

What an absolute lie. What an absolute fraud that has proven to be on the people of this state, because this Premier and this Treasurer have not increased or introduced new taxes once or twice or three or four or five times — they have done it 10 times. There are 10 new taxes and charges under this government, with an eleventh to come. We have gone through the detail and there, buried away in the fine print of budget paper 5, is another new tax on the way, a point of consumption wagering tax, so they will get to 11.

Before I return to taxes let me just address a matter, because it is pressing to this side of the house and indeed to some of the minor parties and crossbenchers. The budget is supposed to be where a government is accountable to the public for where the public's money is being spent. But when it comes to the member for Melton, there is no accountability by this government. Instead we get a grubby, secret backroom deal between this Premier and the disgraced Labor member for Melton: he gets to keep over \$75 000 of rorted money — or should I say, the public's money that he rorted.

You have to ask yourself why this man, the Labor member for Melton, is such a protected species. I think I have an answer. This deal is all about protecting the Premier from his own Labor MPs. Here is the deal: let me off all that money from when I was living in Wendouree but pretending to live in my electorate, or I will quit and force a by-election. That is the threat, because when Labor loses that by-election in a heartland seat because of the disgust that the public will show for the rorting and the neglect of the Labor Party for that area, we all know what happens then. If Labor loses a by-election in Melton or Tarneit, the Premier will not last the week. He will be cut down faster than you can say 'special caucus meeting'. He will be gone.

Premier, it is time to stop putting your interests before those of the public you swore to serve. It is time to stop treating the member for Melton like he is a protected species. Stop covering up for the rorting member for Melton like he is the golden child. To paraphrase the famous words of Monty Python, the member for Melton is not the Messiah, he is a very rorty boy.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr M. OBRIEN** — I appreciate the support from my colleagues for that. Come for the economic analysis, stay for the comedy. We have seen state taxes

go up by over 22 per cent since Labor has occupied the Treasury benches. That is \$4 billion of extra tax burden that Victorian families, Victorian households and Victorian businesses are now facing. We have seen land tax up 35 per cent, or \$615 million, since the election. Stamp duty is up \$1.7 billion, or 39.4 per cent. We have seen the fire services property levy up 11 per cent, the growth areas infrastructure contribution up 127 per cent and the duty on vehicle registrations and transfers up \$210 million, or nearly 30 per cent, since the election.

We often hear a lot of moral posturing from members opposite, particularly from this Premier and this Treasurer. The increased tax on new cars is not only a clear broken promise and one that will hurt Victorian families and hurt Victorian businesses — and the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce (VACC) came out and attacked the Premier and the government for breaking that promise, and I credit the VACC for doing this in the papers last weekend — but this is something which could potentially cost lives. This is a government that talks about its commitment to its Towards Zero road safety strategy, something that should be a bipartisan issue, but we know that the Transport Accident Commission has said there is a direct link between the age of cars and the incidence of serious injuries and deaths in road accidents.

So if you make it harder and you make it more expensive for people to upgrade to a new car, and if people are then forced to hold onto their older car for that much longer, they are putting themselves at much greater risk on the road. This is a government decision that is not just a broken promise, not just hurting families and hurting businesses, but a broken promise which could put Victorians at serious risk of injury or death. You can go to the Australasian New Car Assessment Program figures, and again they will tell you that there is a clear link between the age of vehicles and vehicles involved in fatal crashes. Fatal crashes will have a much older vehicle profile than other vehicles on the road; they are more dangerous. By singling out new cars for an extra tax slug in this budget Labor is not just breaking a promise and making life harder, but they are putting lives at risk, and they should be absolutely condemned for that.

There are a few other little rorts in this budget. We see that the government has moved to go to annual valuation of land for land tax purposes. This was a surprise to many people. It was a surprise to the City of Greater Bendigo, which said in the Bendigo *Advertiser*, that the valuation plan was a ‘surprise’. Councils are very worried about what this means for them. But more importantly people who pay land tax and people who

pay council rates and people who pay the fire services property levy, which is basically all of us, should all be concerned about what this means. It means that Victorians who pay land tax or rates or the fire services property levy will be paying higher levels every single year. It used to be that you would have a revaluation year — rates would go up — and then you would get a year’s breathing space. You do not get breathing space anymore under Labor. You pay higher taxes every single year with these annual revaluations. This is just another sneaky little tax rort to increase the level of tax that Victorians have to pay so that the government can spend it on its own projects.

When you look at some of these infrastructure projects that the government claims to be spending this money on, you do have to ask some serious questions. I have got here an old document, which Labor members might forget but were very keen to wave around at the time, called *Project 10 000*. Remember that? *Project 10 000* had all their programs for government and all their costings. They had a project for the Melbourne Metro rail, which was going to cost \$9 billion according to this plan. Now we see an article in the *Herald Sun* of 8 May headed ‘Metro tunnel costs surge’ saying:

The cost of Melbourne’s Metro rail tunnel has surged to \$11.03 billion.

To actually miss your target not just by a few per cent, not just by a few million dollars but by over \$2 billion, to get the numbers so wrong that you have had a cost blowout of over \$2 billion is just extraordinary. This is a Labor Party government that cannot manage major projects, that cannot manage money, and despite having blown out that cost there is no guarantee it will not get even worse.

The other part of *Project 10 000* which I will refer to today is of course the level crossing removal program. Labor said, ‘This is going to be fully funded by the proceeds from the lease of the port of Melbourne’, and they said the estimated cost was \$5 billion to \$6 billion. Parking to one side the fact that it is going to blow out beyond that, thanks to the former government and the structure it had set up the Labor government actually had a significant windfall of \$9.7 billion on the lease of the port of Melbourne. So that more than pays for all the level crossing removals. Yet when the government was trying to explain to Victorians why it has put debt up by so much in this budget — and I will come to the amounts in a minute — all the government could say is, ‘Look, we’re really bringing forward a lot of infrastructure. We’re bringing forward infrastructure that wouldn’t have otherwise been done’.

What was the main item of infrastructure the government relied on to say, 'This is why we're jacking up debt'? It was level crossing removals. The government having said, 'Level crossings — the whole lot will cost \$5 billion to \$6 billion', having secured over \$9 billion, closer to \$10 billion from the lease of the port of Melbourne, then said, 'We can't afford to actually pay for those out of the port of Melbourne proceeds. We have to rack up debt'. What is this government actually spending money on? With the north-east link they tried \$35 million in planning money last year. They upped it to \$100 million in planning money this year. Where is the money to actually build it? It is absolutely nowhere to be seen.

We have got the regional rail port, where the Premier said, 'There's \$1.45 billion of shiny new railway for regional Victoria. What a great promise. It's a very important thing. I'm committed to this, except I'm not going to pay for it'. His idea is to say, 'I've got a wish list and I'm going to send the bill to Malcolm, and if Malcolm doesn't pay for it, then that's Malcolm fault'. That is not a promise. That is not a commitment. How that even got into the budget papers is beyond me. I have got to ask: has Treasury completely given up trying to hold the government accountable? Have they absolutely given up? We know that Treasury were caught out and embarrassed when this Treasurer tried to claim the east-west link money and put it in the surplus, and the Auditor-General blew the whistle and said, 'Sorry Sunshine, you put Victoria into deficit'. So we know that Treasury has been bullied by this government in the past, and as somebody who used to be the relevant minister, I am very sorry to see that again Treasury looks like it is allowing the Labor Party's political commitments to be put into budget papers rather than anything where accounting standards should allow it to be. So regional Victoria gets nothing because \$1.45 billion for regional rail is all dependent on Malcolm Turnbull paying for it.

**Mr Hodgett** — Next thing he'll be saying he's going to build a wall.

**Mr M. O'BRIEN** — Indeed, member for Croydon. In fact I got into trouble the other day because at a press conference I said that the Premier was channelling Donald Trump when he said that he was going to build a beautiful railway line and Canberra was going to pay for it. I did get an email that night when that appeared on the TV, and it was from Prahran, so I thought, 'Marginal seat. I better have a read of this'. Somebody was very upset. Writing on behalf of their wife, they said they thought I was very unfair comparing the Premier to Donald Trump — Donald Trump actually gets things done — and how dare I attack the President

of the United States! I was admonished, and I wrote back apologising for daring to compare Donald Trump to the Premier.

This is really a budget where you have to say taxes are up massively on top of the surpluses Labor inherited from us. They have also had the wind blowing at their backs. GST receipts are up \$13 billion over the four years compared to what we had in our term of government, so they have got all this extra GST money. You have put taxes up by \$4 billion. You have had \$9.7 billion for the lease of the port of Melbourne. You would think that is going to have to come down, would you not? Would not debt have to fall? But no, debt is blowing out by \$10 billion. This is making the Cain and Kirner governments look like responsible managers.

**Mr Walsh** — It's a big call.

**Mr M. O'BRIEN** — It is a big call, Leader of The Nationals, but I am just about prepared to make it because this is just extraordinary.

How you could actually have so much money with so little to show for it is beyond me, but that is what Victorians know from this budget and from this government. They know they are paying more than ever but they are getting less and less. There is less and less to show for it. Even when this Treasurer is offered a free kick he will not even take the opportunity.

The federal Treasurer recently came out and said that he wanted to undertake an inquiry into the GST. There have been some issues with the GST that Victorians have had legitimate concerns about for many years. One example is that we have a much higher proportion of non-English-speaking migrants coming to Victoria than other states. To me, that is a positive thing for us and it has been part of our multicultural mix, but there is also no doubt that having that larger proportion does put greater pressure on government services to service that element of the community. We have been arguing for years that the GST distribution formula should account for that and should give us a little bit extra on that basis. Here was the perfect chance for the Treasurer to argue that case. Instead, as soon as the federal Treasurer announced this inquiry he came out and bagged it. The headline read: 'Victoria, SA suspicious of GST inquiry'.

I have never seen a Treasurer who is more interested in scoring a point at the expense of achieving a goal. He is more interested in the day-to-day politics and having a whack at the federal government than actually achieving outcomes for Victoria. This is a budget that has really let

Victorians down badly. Look at law and order: I am happy to say that we support significant investment in preventing family violence, but for all of the government's rhetoric about wanting to make it a bipartisan issue, every time the government raises it, it is to attack us. If the government was serious about it being a bipartisan issue, it would treat it as a bipartisan issue.

The shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Georgie Crozier, has rightly asked questions about whether some of the money that is being allocated in the budget could not be better used to more directly help victims of family violence. That is something which people of good conscience should be able to discuss, question and debate — but no. This government wants to shut down any discussion of where the investments in family violence are going. I think that is the wrong way to go. This government does itself and it does those who care about the issue — which is all Victorians, as far as I am concerned — no favours by trying to politicise the issue and shut down debate on it.

This is a budget which is, as I said, the denouement of Labor's broken tax promises. We got up to 10 and have another one on the way. Let us go through them so that they are on the parliamentary record. Having promised no new taxes and no tax increases, let us look at what the Premier did. There was the energy tax on brown coal, where he tripled the royalties on brown coal. He did it in the budget last year, and we warned him at the time. We said, 'This will send generators to the wall' — but no, the Premier knows better. Does he not? The Premier knows better. Well, lo and behold, what happened? Hazelwood in just the last 12 months has closed down. Hundreds of workers are out of a job. The local pub is now closing down as a direct result of that as well. It is having ripple effects right throughout the community, and Labor says, 'We'll put some money back into the valley'.

**Mr Northe** — It's not their money; it's the generators' money.

**Mr M. O'BRIEN** — Correct. Labor has caused the problem, taxed Hazelwood out of business, taxed those workers out of a job and now wants to come up with the ambulance and say, 'We'll fix your problems', but all they have done is employ highly paid Labor Party bureaucrats. Unless you are the former president of the local Labor Party branch in the Latrobe Valley, they are not interested in finding a job for you — only for Labor mates. So that is number one: the tripling of the brown coal royalty.

They have got the new \$2 tax on every taxi and Uber fare. Imagine people who might want to get out and about — again, people who maybe do not want to drive because they want to have a drink. 'Let's make it harder for them. Let's discourage them from doing the safe thing. Let's whack a \$2 tax on them each way'. What about the pensioner who needs to go down to the doctor? You have effectively introduced a \$4 co-payment for a visit to a GP. That is what Labor has done. This \$2 tax each way — \$2 extra to go down to the doctor and \$2 extra to get home — is a \$4 co-payment, thanks to Labor. There is the new land tax surcharge for absentee owners, which was introduced in their first budget and then increased in their second budget. There is the stamp duty surcharge for foreign property purchases introduced in their first budget and then increased in their second budget. The fire services property levy has been hiked under this government. There is the new 1 per cent increase in stamp duty on new cars.

There is also a new stamp duty for off-the-plan purchases. If you are wanting to buy an apartment off the plan and you are not planning to live in it yourself straightaway, all of a sudden you now cop a huge stamp duty impost. Speaking to people in the property market, they say that this will mean that fewer developments will get off the ground because a lot of property developments need to be presold before the banks will finance them. You need 60 to 70 per cent or more of the potential apartments sold before the banks will lend. By saying to everyone except owner-occupiers, 'You miss out; you have got to pay extra stamp duty', what the government is doing is reducing the number of people willing to buy early. That means that these projects will not get off the ground. That means fewer jobs and less supply, and just in case Labor does not understand this: when you reduce supply in an area of high demand, prices go up. So this will actually have the opposite effect to what the government intends.

There is a new stamp duty on property transfers between spouses. Labor would have you believe that this is about clamping down on some sort of tax dodge. I tell you: I have spoken to accountants. They say that the people who most use this current exemption are small business people or people wanting to establish a small business. It might be a tradie like a plumber who has been working for someone else and wants to strike out on their own and set up their own plumbing business. They might have a holiday unit or they might have one investment unit, and in order to try and protect that investment or protect that holiday apartment they say, 'I'll transfer that to my partner so that it's in his or her name instead of my name because

I'm setting up this new business, otherwise all of my assets will be exposed'. What the government is saying now is: 'Sorry, you can't do that without paying a huge amount of stamp duty'. Basically, if you have ever thought about setting up your own business, forget about it, because Labor is not interested in small business people. Labor is not interested in people wanting to have a go. No, it is more important for the Treasurer to clip the ticket and get more stamp duty out of you than it is to let you have a go, set up your own business and help grow this state.

I have already mentioned the new annual property valuations to increase land tax. Then of course there is the new vacant home tax. I look forward to seeing the detail in this particular bill about what this vacant home tax is. Labor wants to have us believe that it is all about rich foreign investors who leave properties empty. I think this is probably going to affect farmers who might have a unit in Melbourne, because if you do not occupy it every six months, all of a sudden you have got to pay a huge annual levy on it. You might be a farmer up in Mildura or somewhere like that and you might have a small unit down here that you get to occasionally, maybe to come down to see a footy match or to see the grandkids in a school play or to come down to get some specialist medical treatment. However, Labor knows how you should use your property better than you do, so if you are not in that property every six months, they are going to hit you with a huge new tax — a huge new tax because you dare to own a bit of property and are not using it in the way the Premier wants you to use it.

That is 10 new taxes, and there is another one on the way with the so-called point-of-consumption wagering tax, so we will see another hit, another way of getting money out of Victorians.

With talk about law and order and the crisis we have got in this state — the crime tsunami that we are experiencing here in Victoria — you would have thought that the government would have done a bit more in the budget. They announced too late, too little, some new police late last year. You would have thought there would have been something extra in this budget to actually deal with the crisis they have created, but no, there is not. Having let the Parkville detention centre get absolutely trashed — apparently they could not get enough pizzas, ice cream and soft drink to keep them happy so they trashed the place — we are now getting a new detention centre, but apart from that is there any money to reopen any of the police stations that closed on Labor's watch? No, not at all.

**Mr Thompson** — What about West Heidelberg police station?

**Mr M. O'BRIEN** — As the member for Sandringham points out, we heard a lot about the West Heidelberg police station. Speaker, I see that little smile across your lips; you know we heard a lot about the West Heidelberg police station, but it has gone very quiet over the last two and a half years, has it not? It has gone very quiet now.

There have been a lot of promises in this budget but so little delivery. Not only has this government increased taxes and charges, but we are seeing the effects of what Labor has done. In just the last quarter — the March 2017 quarter — gas and electricity bills are up nearly 8 per cent in Melbourne. St Vincent de Paul says the forced closure of Hazelwood will increase energy power bills by \$300 this year. This is what we see time and time again from this government.

Labor does not just sit by and watch while bad things happen to Victorians. Labor makes it happen. Labor did not have to tax Hazelwood out of business, but it did, and now power bills are going up as a result and there is no cost-of-living relief in this budget. When it comes to crime waves, this was not a government that sat back and did nothing. They came to office promising no new police, and that is what they have delivered so far. They weakened bail laws — they weakened juvenile bail laws. They stripped police of public order powers. Again this is not a government that just watches while bad things happen; it contributes to it. They make it happen, and that is why this has been such an appalling budget from this government.

We are seeing a blowout in taxes, a blowout in debt. How a government could have so much money rolling in with so little infrastructure to show for it and still blow out debt by \$10 billion is just extraordinary.

In conclusion let me make this point. A third budget is the equivalent of the premiership quarter in football; it is supposed to be where the team on the field really steps up and really demonstrates that it is serious about taking control of the game. This was the one chance this government had to reset the clock from its two years of failures, to show that it was going to actually not just talk about infrastructure but deliver it, not just talk about cost-of-living relief for families but deliver it, not just talk about tackling the crime wave it helped bring about but actually do something about it, and in all that we have seen nothing. This has been an empty budget from a hollow treasurer. This has been a budget in which the government has not just blown its promises but has blown its chance to re-establish faith with Victorians as a result.

The only positive thing you can say about this budget is that Victorians only have to endure one more of them before the next election when they have the chance to return Victoria back to good management under a Guy-Walsh coalition government.

**Mr MERLINO** (Minister for Education) — I am proud to speak on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017. In following the shadow Treasurer, he is a shadow Treasurer who in the week following the budget cannot get a question up in question time. There has not been one question on the budget from the shadow Treasurer.

He made a contribution on infrastructure and on debt. On infrastructure, in this budget in 2017–18, there is \$10.1 billion in infrastructure — \$9.6 billion over the forward estimates. In terms of debt, debt levels are less than those that we inherited from the Liberal-Nationals coalition government, less as a percentage of gross state product than that which we inherited from those opposite. These are very strong budget fundamentals — a strong budget surplus, debt less than that which we inherited and an infrastructure program that is the largest this state has ever seen.

In my contribution I would like to focus on my portfolio areas of education and emergency services. In schools we are continuing to invest in bricks and mortar, as well as in our teachers and our students. This budget includes \$685 million for school infrastructure. We know that a great education starts with a great school, and that is why we are building and upgrading even more schools to give our Victorian students the best start in life.

I was listening carefully and I note that not once did the shadow Treasurer mention the words education or schools, and that is no surprise because when they are in government they cut funding to education and when they are out of government they do not talk about it at all. Under our budget a funding boost of \$685 million in this year's budget means a further 13 new schools, three new early childhood centres and scores of schools getting upgrades and new buildings. This year's continued funding in the bricks and mortar of the education state follows the unprecedented investment of \$1.8 billion in school infrastructure announced in our last two budgets. With Victoria's population continuing to boom, this year we are investing a further \$265 million to plan, acquire land for and build new schools.

It will also be easier for families to send their kids to kinder because we are putting \$10 million towards planning and building three new early childhood centres across Victoria. The \$195 million to upgrade

and modernise means that students at 59 rural and regional schools and 49 metropolitan schools will have the facilities that they deserve, and that continues our investment and focus on ensuring that rural and regional kids get as much if not more out of the education funding pie than students in metropolitan Melbourne, and they need that.

Students at six special schools will benefit from upgrades thanks to a further \$44.4 million investment. Schools with increasing enrolments will be able to meet immediate demand thanks to \$75 million for new relocatable classrooms. This huge investment in our schools and kids brings the state government's investment in school infrastructure to \$2.5 billion and means 56 new schools are now in the pipeline. We have already opened 10 of those 56 new schools.

**Mr Walsh** interjected.

**Mr MERLINO** — I will come to that. I have seen a lot of commentary from members opposite over recent days about why some schools did not receive funding. Let us be very clear about this. The coalition left us with an unprecedented backlog of schools in poor condition. The average funding for school infrastructure under those opposite was a dismal \$203 million in their first three budgets. Compare that to our first three budgets — an investment of \$843 million; \$843 million on average is a hell of a lot bigger than \$200 million.

When we were elected, there were more than 400 schools across the state in poor condition. Our government is methodically working through this backlog. But it is not just this backlog of schools that are in need of urgent upgrades; it is also meeting and addressing the demand. I have said many times: we need to accommodate 90 000 additional students over the next five years. When you look at our total capital program — looking at the last three budgets and what we inherited — there is capacity now for 70 000 additional students. We are meeting the enrolment pressures and we are addressing the backlog of schools in poor condition.

When you have well over 1500 government schools across Victoria there will be some schools that will be disappointed that they are not in this year's budget, but I promise those schools — I promise schools right across Victoria — that we are methodically working through every single need for schools across Victoria. You cannot do it all in one budget; you need sustained, significant investment budget after budget after budget, and that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government is delivering.

But schools are far more than bricks and mortar, as you would know, Acting Speaker Kilkenney. The true spirit of a school is in its teachers, its students and its school community. That is why in this budget the Andrews Labor government has invested over \$450 million in additional funding to our schools, maintaining our track record of significant and continued investment in building the education state, and ensuring that each and every student, no matter what their postcode, is supported.

Again, as I mentioned earlier in question time, we are meeting in full our obligations under the original Gonski national agreement. Each and every year of this government — 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 — we are meeting our obligations for that needs-based funding. We made this commitment on the same day the Turnbull government announced that they were delivering for Victorian students — Victorian schools, government schools, Catholic schools, independent schools — a massive shortfall of \$630 million.

This is not just a line item in a budget; it makes a huge difference in the classroom. This needs-based funding would deliver additional teachers, literacy support for kids falling behind, numeracy experts, psychologists and speech pathologists. This funding is an investment in the future of our children. The Liberal Party — those opposite and their mates in Canberra — should be ashamed of themselves. I mentioned that it is all about the kids.

It is not just government schools that those opposite care little about; it is also the local Catholic parish primary school. Every parish primary school under Malcolm Turnbull's plan will be forced to increase fees for those parents who choose to send their children to local Catholic primary schools or regional Catholic secondary schools. So I would say to the shadow Treasurer and to members opposite that they should speak with their Catholic schools. They should speak with their government schools. They should talk to them about the funding that has been cut courtesy of the Turnbull government.

In addition to this we have invested in a broad range of initiatives aimed at supporting students. There is \$9.2 million to support swimming in schools as part of the Victorian curriculum. We made it a compulsory part of the curriculum. We have listened to government and Catholic schools in this budget. We are providing funding to those schools so they can support and fund their swimming programs. There is \$7.8 million to extend the successful navigator student re-engagement pilot to an additional 1700 students who are risk of dropping out of education. There is \$1.7 million to

expand student mentoring to a further 800 students. There is \$5.7 million more for schools to better enable them to accept late student enrolments. Again, we are looking at ways that we can keep kids engaged in education, because it makes a difference for their entire lives. If we can keep them at school right through year 12 it makes a difference socially, financially and in terms of their health for the rest of their lives.

In terms of IT, there is a great focus on providing IT support, internet access and bandwidth, with almost \$68 million for better IT support for schools and students. Importantly for rural and regional schools, there is \$16.4 million to increase bandwidth and digital connectivity, lifting them up to the same speeds as their metropolitan counterparts. This is a good investment.

On the rare occasion those opposite talk about education they exclaim about the need to invest in the basics. But what did they do when they were in government? They ripped \$1 billion out of the education system. We are doing the very opposite. We are working with our teachers, reaching an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) settlement for the first time in 20 years without industrial action. The EBA means not only a fair outcome in terms of wages and entitlements, but 3000 additional learning specialists across the system. These are leaders who do not want to go down the path of assistant principal to principal; they want to be leaders and stay in the classroom, coaching their colleagues — 3000 across the system. There are 2500 contract teachers and 5000 support staff who will move from uncertain employment to ongoing permanent positions, making a massive difference in their lives and the lives of their families.

Principals are rewarded for their leadership, as are support staff, who are so often the heart and soul of our schools, allowing teachers time out of the classroom to focus on professional development and planning, collaboration, peer review and working with each other. We know the single most important thing we can do to improve student outcomes is to improve the quality of teaching. We have turnaround teams, executive principals and two leading teachers working with more than 300 struggling schools coaching and embedding practice to improve student outcomes. We have highly capable executive principals working in hard-to-staff schools. The list goes on, but time does not allow me to talk any further about education.

In emergency services there is \$112 million to upgrade facilities and invest in new equipment and training for emergency services across the state. This is a significant investment in our state emergency services, a service that has been neglected for far too long.

Victoria State Emergency Service has not received any additional capital funding for five years, but this year we are investing \$34.3 million for new trucks, boats and trailers; and modernising buildings, including \$2.8 million for the Chelsea and Broadmeadows depots. We are building new units at Caroline Springs-Plumpton, Clyde, Craigieburn North, Cranbourne, Officer and Point Cook.

What is important in government, what is important in politics, is not what you promise, not what you say you will do, but what you deliver when you have the privilege of serving on the government benches. Those opposite delivered nothing for Emerald State Emergency Service (SES) when they were in government for four years. This is one of the busiest SES units in the state. They delivered nothing —

**Mr T. Bull** — Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr MERLINO** — We will rebuild Emerald SES. Those opposite did nothing in the four years they were on the government benches. Then they made promises. But what is important for the volunteers at Emerald — who service my electorate and the broader community in the Yarra Ranges, one of the busiest in the state — is what you deliver when you have the opportunity.

In the 20 seconds remaining to me, as a local member, I will mention Monbulk College, Upwey High, a fantastic park at Olinda, new playgrounds and a second oval for the hilltop communities and our local sporting clubs. This is a great outcome locally and a wonderful budget for education and emergency services.

**Mr WALSH** (Murray Plains) — I rise to make my contribution on the budget. Before the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education leaves, I might actually remind him to have a look budget paper 3, page 59, where he talks about his record investment in education. If you actually look at it, there has been an \$87 million reduction in rural and regional school upgrades. So despite what the minister was just saying, there is actually an \$87 million cut in rural and regional school upgrades.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WALSH** — It is not wrong; it is there in black and white. That is why he did not come back to answer where the money is for Echuca Specialist School, or where the money is for the Kyabram P-12, or where the money is for the Swan Hill secondary school, because it has actually been cut out of the budget —

\$87 million cut out of the rural and regional schools upgrade program.

So this budget taxes Victorians more than ever, but they are actually getting less than ever. Particularly if you are a country Victorian, you are getting less than less. I think in some ways the Labor Party — the Andrews government — have stopped even trying to pretend that they are going to govern for all of Victoria. They are actually not doing that at all. They are only governing for their union mates.

Like the Treasurer, can I bring the members of the house back to election eve on 28 November 2014. The then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, stood in front of the television cameras and was asked the question:

Daniel Andrews, 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?

As we know, that was a blatant lie. It was a blatant lie to all Victorians that they would not increase taxes and would not introduce new taxes. As has already been said, we have had the coal tax — \$253 million in extra taxes on the coal industry. The coal tax has tripled. What has that done to Victorians? It has forced up household power bills. It has increased cost-of-living pressures on all Victorians. It has forced up power prices for businesses. There are many food processing businesses I have spoken to who have power prices increasing by something like 25 per cent — a 25 per cent increase in their power prices.

We have got the Uber tax — \$2 on every taxi ride whether you live in Melbourne or whether you live in the country. So every pensioner, every person in a country town that has not got public transport, that needs to go to the doctor or the supermarket to go shopping is going to pay \$4 more. When I talk to the taxi operators in my electorate, they say the miserable, mean compensation they will get out of this program will be raised in less than 12 months. So after that we will actually be raising \$2 a trip, or \$4 a round trip, tax to send money to Melbourne to pay for this government's stuff-ups around that particular issue.

Particularly for river towns, where there are taxis on both sides of the river, with New South Wales licences on one side and Victorian licences on the other side, who pays and who does not pay? Do you pay on a New South Wales trip or do you not pay on a New South Wales trip? All those things have not been resolved, and the taxi operators are not happy about that at all. It is just a straight tax on country Victorians, and

particularly a tax on those who can least afford it, to pay for the Premier's policy here in Melbourne.

We have the fire services levy up again just to pay for the United Firefighters Union (UFU) demands in this state. If you talk about the UFU or you talk about the Country Fire Authority, which is funded out of that fire services levy, we have a government that has absolutely trashed one of the best volunteer firefighter services anywhere in the world. It has been trashed by this government.

There are increased taxes on buying a new car. Country Victorians rely on their cars, they rely on their utes, they rely on their vehicles, and we have increased taxes on them. There has been something like \$4 billion in extra taxes since we had the Premier promise he would not increase taxes over the life of this government. The only thing rising faster than the crime rate here in Victoria is the tax rate. Crime in this state is up 20.2 per cent since the election. The tax take is up 22.2 per cent. If I go to the community of Kyabram, one of the communities in my electorate, the crime rate is up 55 per cent over the last two years. The people in Kyabram are paying the 20.2 per cent increase in taxes, but they are not actually getting any additional police into that community. They are paying the extra 22.2 per cent increase in taxes, but there is not any money in the state budget for investment in capital for the Kyabram P-12 building that was pulled down because it was riddled with white ants. Even though the Minister for Education says there has been investment, if you look at the budget papers, there has been an \$87 million reduction in investment in schools in country Victoria. If you go to the budget papers, there is proof that the government cannot manage major projects.

The Murray Basin rail project, an upgrade and standardisation of the freight lines in northern Victoria to the ports of Portland, Geelong and Melbourne was actually funded in the May 2014 budget. Work to standardise those lines has still not started. That was a game changing project for that part of Victoria. It has been three years since it was funded, and we are still waiting for something to happen on that.

If you go to that same budget, the 2014–15 budget, there was the port rail shuttle project. It included \$58 million to build a rail shuttle into the port. It has still not started. That project was there to get trucks off suburban roads and increase the freight efficiency for containers into the port. That project has still not started. If you go to the current budget papers, all you see in the forward estimates is 'TBC'. That project is not going anywhere at all. For a key project that would

improve freight efficiency here there is \$58 million sitting in the budget.

The doozy of all the capital projects is the Echuca bridge — \$51 million of federal money has just disappeared out of the budget. A total of \$51 million of federal money has just gone — poof! — out of the budget. In 2014 \$96 million was in there from the then Victorian government, and \$97 million was put into the budget by the commonwealth earlier this year. When you look at the budget papers, \$51 million of that money has disappeared. It is in Victoria's bank. It is sitting in consolidated revenue. It is propping up the surplus here in Victoria.

It is no wonder the commonwealth government does not trust the Andrews government when it comes to funding infrastructure projects here in Victoria. Let us remember that it was this Premier who spent \$1.3 billion not to build a road. A thing that was not going to cost \$1 ended up costing \$1.3 billion. We have the \$1.45 billion Santa wish list for the regional rail rorts in the budget. That could have actually been funded by the \$1.3 billion that was spent tearing up a contract.

From the commonwealth's point of view, they actually need a government-to-government discussion. They actually need business cases. They need to know how that money is going to be spent. You do not communicate to get \$1.45 billion out of the commonwealth by putting it on the front page of a weekend paper. That is not how you do business. That is not how you show courtesy. That is not how you show decency. Stamping your feet and saying 'It's our money' is not actually right. It is actually taxpayers money, and it is important that the commonwealth ensures that money is spent properly and responsibly, not like the \$1.3 billion not to build a road. What we do not want is a sweetheart wages deal with the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union like there was for the white elephant desalination plant project — and we know what a great project that has been over time.

Many country communities have got less out of this budget than the member for Melton. The member for Melton has effectively been gifted \$76 000 by the Premier. A lot of country communities — a lot of community groups in country towns — would love to have the \$76 000 to spend in their community that the member for Melton has been gifted. I just do not know; you shake your head at that.

The Andrews government does not care about the issues that affect country Victorians. If you think about the wild dog control program, there is no advisory

committee there because the department could not be bothered to set up a panel to assess the applicants. The chair of that committee, Harriet Shing in the other place, resigned before it was even set up, saying she was too busy — just too busy to actually help the people who are in her electorate.

But I suppose the doozy of all is that we have actually had a recent announcement from the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change saying that the African wild dogs at the Melbourne Zoo are the beneficiary of a \$9 million investment in a new enclosure for them to share out there. There is \$9 million to spend on the African wild dogs at Melbourne Zoo but no extra money for a wild dog control program here in Victoria — no extra money for a wild dog program to actually save our small marsupials and to save our native fauna, no money for a wild dog program around the fact that — —

**Mr Richardson** — The DL is ready to go.

**Mr WALSH** — The DL is not going. It is just a straight-out fact that you care more about the African wild dogs at the zoo than you actually do about the wild dog program in the high country. When it comes to rural Victoria there is very little in this, and there is a very — —

**Ms Neville** interjected.

**Mr WALSH** — The minister interjects. Perhaps she should talk to Rob Gersch, who is the chair of Rural Councils Victoria. Rural Councils Victoria said in its media release:

... the state government has overlooked the needs of rural communities in its 2017–18 budget ...

Rob Gersch is quoted as saying:

Increased support from the state government is vital to continuing service delivery, to keeping libraries open, to maintaining safety at school crossings, managing environmental weeds and pests, and building and maintaining roads and bridges.

The minister at the table needs to actually talk to Rural Councils Victoria. She would find out the truth. What she is saying is not believed by country Victorians at all.

There is \$87 million in cuts to country school programs. That is why there is no money in this budget for Echuca Specialist School. That school is all portables and has significant issues with drainage around the site — and we know how much rain we have had in recent times. It has significant issues where the sewerage services actually do not work appropriately for that school. That school is desperately

in need of funding so it can become part of the school regeneration project in Echuca West. There is no money for that, and there is \$87 million in cuts to country schools.

The people of Kyabram are paying that 22.2 per cent increase in taxes but not getting anything for their P–12. There is no money there for Swan Hill College. There was money for Kerang Technical High School in 2014; this year they are finally spending it after the Department of Education and Training argued and argued about whether it should raid that money to do the asbestos program. After the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Education, said, ‘That’s all funded’, the department came back and tried to raid a previous commitment for that to make them do that, so this is very much a hollow promise.

There is nothing in it for jobs. The 750 people at Hazelwood are no better off. The 260 people at Heyfield are running the risk of losing their jobs. The 7000 people downstream of the timber mill, who are reliant on the timber to have their jobs, have nothing in this budget for that. There is a small amount to set up a plantation industry, but I remind the government it takes decades to grow plantation trees, if they are ever grown, for sawlogs.

I suppose the biggest thing of all is that you have the government and the minister talking about the importance of agriculture. We have them talking about the importance of food and fibre exports out of the state, and we have the government talking about how important the agriculture industry is for regional jobs.

So what do we find with the agriculture budget? If you read the budget papers, you will see there is actually a \$32 million cut in the agriculture budget. One of the fears that everyone had when the agriculture super department was set up was that it would lose its way — the government would lose focus on it and it would be worse off over time. What you see with this budget, with a \$32 million cut in the agriculture budget, is that unfortunately that has come true. This government just does not care about regional and rural Victoria and this budget proves that. They are paying more and getting less.

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Police) — I am very pleased today to join the discussion on this year’s state budget. It is a budget that delivers record investment in community safety, it is a budget that continues record investment in water security in Victoria — and I notice that the shadow Minister for Water did not mention water, other than his pet topic — and of course it is a budget that continues to deliver for regional Victoria. In

fact it makes the biggest ever investment in the history of regional Victoria. Similarly, it makes the biggest ever investment in the history of Victoria Police.

I want to start by focusing a little bit on my region — on my communities of Geelong and Bellarine. On the morning after the budget, the *Geelong Advertiser* really summed it up with the headline ‘We mean business’. This is a budget that is about luring businesses and jobs with new tax cuts, an injection in our CBD and money for local primary schools. It is a critical budget that is about building for Geelong’s future. The *Bellarine Times* ran the headline ‘Bellarine gets a boost in budget’. School investments, for example, in Bellarine continue, so on top of Ocean Grove, Barwon Heads, Portarlington, St Ignatius, Drysdale and Bellarine Secondary College, we have got funding for Leopold Primary School and Queenscliff Primary School.

In road investment, on top of the money we have announced for the Drysdale bypass, there is planning for the duplication of Barwon Heads Road and also planning for the continuation of the ring-road. There is money for a new roundabout at Barwon Heads and Black Rock roads and also for improvements along Lower Duneed Road between the Surf Coast Highway and Barwon Heads Road. We have got an upgrade to the Bellarine bus network, again particularly focused on enhancing the bus services for the Portarlington community.

We have also announced a new ambulance station for Bellarine, servicing the Queenscliff, St Leonards, Indented Head and Portarlington communities. We have got money for the Point Lonsdale Surf Life Saving Club — \$1.5 million, a long-awaited boost. As the president said, that is a fantastic boost for the club. This is of course on top of the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club and the footy and netball upgrades in Drysdale, Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove and Queenscliff.

Importantly, we have made a really significant investment in tax cuts for our community, both for our first home buyers and for businesses in the region. These cuts will bring us down to the lowest taxes in the country. There are also stamp duty grants for new homes. These are really important to drive population growth and also to ensure we can grow businesses and jobs in our region.

There is money of course for planning the next stage of Kardinia Park. We started this project. We have funded every single stage of this project at Kardinia Park and now we have the money to design the final stage.

We have got money for the revitalisation of Geelong. If you have been to Geelong recently and looked down Little Malop Street, we are really revitalising those laneways. There are new businesses and renovated businesses. We have got the Green Spine, Johnstone Park, the Geelong Performing Arts Centre — all critical investments.

I will now move on to the water portfolio. Again there are record investments in water in this budget, which have continued over two years — in this budget and the last budget — with \$584 million invested in water security for Victoria. It is about the expansion of the water grid and new irrigation infrastructure. The previous speaker talked about there being nothing for agriculture. Water is absolutely critical to our agriculture industry and for our regional communities. Whether it is extending the water pipeline to Wedderburn, whether it is the connections project that this government has got back on track, whether it is the Macalister irrigation district or whether it is Werribee and Bacchus Marsh, we are getting on with ensuring that we have a modern system that supports irrigators right across the state and secures many of those regional communities that we know will struggle with climate change over time.

In this particular budget there is an additional allocation of \$116 million. For example, there is a further \$13 million, almost \$14 million, to realise the potential of the water grid and markets to enhance and share the benefits of water security; over \$12 million to ensure our cities are resilient and able to deal with climate change and drought conditions; and \$7 million to protect the iconic Cranbourne and Melbourne botanic gardens from drought, with an upgrade of their irrigation using recycled water — again, just to touch on what we are doing in the water space.

On community safety, again we have heard today as we heard last week the ridiculous notion that there is no money for community safety. Let me put very clearly on the record that there is \$2 billion in this budget, which is delivering the biggest increase in the budget of Victoria Police since they were established. It is the biggest ever budget, with a 30 per cent increase in one go. What does that mean? What that means is record police numbers. What that means is new equipment, modernising the Victorian police force. From those opposite we heard that there is nothing for community safety. That may be how they operated, and I remember there was a budget — I think it was the 2012–13 budget — they brought down in which they had a whole \$700 000 for Victoria Police, which was for new lockers. That did not put another police officer on the street — it was \$700 000 for lockers.

This is a record boost in funding. Over the three budgets that we have brought down we have delivered almost \$3 billion, we have funded 4200 police personnel — new frontline police and police custody officers, which are freeing up over 50 000 shifts of police officers now, before we have even completed the full rollout of new personnel. We have also delivered new forensic staff and new specialist staff — our public order staff, our counterterrorism staff and our gang team — all of that delivered over the last three budgets.

When those opposite say, 'Let's get more police out there more quickly', I would love to do that. But what we cannot do is make up for the fact that there was not one new police officer funded in their term of government. The 2010–11 budget — the last budget of the Brumby government — was the last budget that funded 1966 police. Then you can look through the later budgets and what you will see is that by the time the 2014–15 budget was brought down we were seeing the lowest number of police going through the academy in over a decade. Not only were those opposite not recruiting new police, they were not even maintaining the attrition rate. The attrition rate was over 3 per cent and they were recruiting at below 3 per cent. Not only were we not putting new police through the academy, we were not even keeping up with the police who were leaving the police force at that time.

We have reached a historic deal with Police Association Victoria and Victoria Police to fund police according to an allocation model. What that will mean, certainly while we are in government — I am not sure about those opposite because they seem to question the allocation model — is that never will we have a situation where there is a bust and boom in police numbers. Never will we have a situation where over two or three years no new police are coming out and we then have to catch up. Despite the claims by the Leader of the Opposition that somehow they would do it quicker, it takes a year from start to finish to get a police officer out there.

The Chief Commissioner of Police has been absolutely clear about this. He will not accept a downgrade of the training to put people out quicker. If you are downgrading, you may as well just have protective services officers (PSOs). We are not going to downgrade the training. It is absolutely critical in this day and age, with the counterterrorism issues that we face, with security issues and with the complexity of some of the crimes and the intelligence work that needs to happen, that we ensure we have the best people recruited and we have the best training that we can deliver for our police officers.

When the Premier, the chief commissioner and I recently announced 300 of the first lot of police officers we funded in last year's budget — the 300 that are going out to communities in Hume, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Maribyrnong, Wyndham, Melton, Brimbank, Whittlesea, Geelong, Casey and Dandenong, for example — we heard some interesting comments from those opposite, comments that seemed to suggest that what they are wanting is for us to intervene in and make determinations of where police officers should go. So when in Geelong, it is 'Oh, we need more than 10'. Well, you either accept an allocation model — —

**Mr Katos** interjected.

**Ms NEVILLE** — If the member for South Barwon would care to listen, then he would know that the police association completely supported the allocation of the 300 police officers and where they were going, because it is based on a model of need, not just population growth but crime rates — it takes account of 27 different crimes across the state — traffic accidents and a whole range of data that is fed in to provide the most sophisticated method to determine not only how many police we need in future but also where they are allocated. So either those opposite are going to support this allocation model that the police association, the government and the chief commissioner have signed up to, or they are not and they are going to determine it based on the politics rather than on community safety needs and the needs of the community.

But of course the \$2 billion community safety investment is not just about police numbers. We have got over 3000 police coming on board, but it is more than that. There are 100 new PSOs to provide hotspot support in our transport system. There is a dedicated 24-hour police assistance line and online reporting. We have got money for community engagement programs and local community safety networks. We are rolling out automatic numberplate recognition technology to all our highway patrol officers. We have got \$2 million to improve mental health literacy among police. We have got funding for a new training facility for the special operations group. Of course we are rolling out and modernising all the technology — the iPads, the smart technology — to all our police officers as well.

We have got money for youth crime prevention grants and expanding the Victoria Police Kokoda youth engagement program. We have got money to modernise and expand the air wing, a new helicopter and a new fixed-wing aircraft. We are replacing 10 police stations. We have got another 33 that we are doing as well, so we are doing 43 with replacement and

major upgrades of police stations across the state, compared to 14 by the previous government. I think the new police station that the previous government tried to build, the so-called 24-hour Waurn Ponds police station, never actually quite made it to 24 hours. That was their example of them delivering a new station, unlike us with the delivery of the Mernda police station, which has already got an allocation of an additional 45 police to make sure it can operate fully in that local and growing community.

We have got money for youth resource workers. We have got money for streamlining of DNA testing. We have got trials for new technology around numberplate theft. We have got other promises and commitments we have made through the community safety statement to bring in new laws around cash for scrap metal, DNA testing, firearm laws and youth control orders. We have put in place a record investment in Victoria Police.

In addition to that, we have also invested the biggest amount of money ever into tackling family violence. I know that those opposite continued to say last week that there was no investment in community safety. Well, that investment goes to the heart of the biggest law and order issue in this state, and that is the crime of violence against women and children in their homes that results in huge harm and injury and unfortunately too many deaths of women and children. So we are putting in place the biggest ever investment, not just a large amount of money but money targeted to those things that we know that the Royal Commission into Family Violence has identified as things that will make a massive difference.

I know from talking to police officers right around the state that family violence still has the biggest impact on their workload: 40 to 60 per cent of their workload is family violence issues. I was recently at the Dandenong multidisciplinary centre, where the police indicate that they can have anywhere from 30 to 40 calls about family violence overnight. That indicates the extent and the seriousness of this issue. So the combination of more police, a community safety statement with new laws and new obligations on government and police, combined with a significant and the biggest investment in family violence prevention that this state — this country — has seen, is about ensuring that our community is safe, that we have the right measures in place to not just bring down the crime rate but to actually bring down the harm that is inflicted against the community. So whether you are at home or on the street, these are packages that are about improving community safety for all Victorians. I commend the budget.

**Mr HIBBINS (Pahran)** — I rise to speak on the budget on behalf of the Victorian Greens. It is unfortunate that this budget has been handed down under a cloud — over this government and over this Parliament — because of this government's failure to do what is necessary and what is right about the roting of the second home allowance by the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

There was a clear course of action available before them to refer those members to the Privileges Committee — just as there was with the former member for Frankston in a former government — and for that committee to investigate the matter further, to propose any sanction and for this house to vote on it. They have chosen not to do this in their attempt to avoid further scrutiny and further sanction, which is unfortunate particularly when a budget is being handed down. It is clear that the government's actions in regard to this matter are driven purely by politics, and that makes the need for an independent parliamentary standards commissioner all the more necessary. The government's proposed reforms still leave enforcement in the hands of MPs, and it simply is not good enough. This is a clear pattern of behaviour from this government, whose actions are not the actions of a government with integrity.

We have seen it with the rorts for votes allegations of using electorate office staff to campaign during the election — the staff members, who supposedly never met the MP they were supposed to be working for, donning red shirts and campaigning for the Labor Party, funded by the taxpayer. The government are going to every length to delay and to obstruct or stop the investigations in the Supreme Court and the High Court — losing both times — and now they are resorting to moving motions in this house to protect their MPs.

We have seen it with their cosy deals with Crown Casino, which make it clear that in this state what Crown Casino wants in Victoria, Crown Casino gets from this Labor government, without a whimper from this Liberal opposition. First it was with Crown's licence extension that would put the state at risk of paying compensation should the government dare act in the public interest that would affect Crown's profits. This time we have the Minister for Planning — the member for Richmond, who is out of his seat — changing the planning scheme to allow Crown to build Melbourne's tallest building while dudding the taxpayer out of millions of dollars in public contributions that it should be paying. It is dudding the state out of millions of dollars.

We see it in the government's failure to act on political donations by still accepting donations from property developers and lobbyists, still refusing to lower the disclosure amount, and still refusing to implement a real-time donations register. This Premier has said that he believes the current arrangements are adequate. Premier, the current system is not adequate. It needs to change.

We have seen it with the government's cosy deals with Transurban, which they are putting in charge of transport planning for the state, and putting Transurban's profits before people. This state needs a real plan to keep Victoria livable in the face of population growth. This government puts Transurban, Crown Casino and property developers first. It has got its priorities wrong.

This budget means overcrowding on public transport is going to get worse, not better. Train patronage will grow by 2 per cent but services by just 1 per cent. Tram patronage will grow by 4 per cent but services by just 1 per cent. V/Line patronage will grow by 4 per cent but services by just 0.5 per cent. If your train or tram is overcrowded now, it is more than likely that it will get worse, just as it has every year under this government — all while the government is spending billions on new toll roads.

The West Gate tunnel is just another dodgy multibillion-dollar toll road that does not stack up, just like the east–west link, this time to be paid for by extending tolls for well over a decade. What a sweetheart deal. Transurban gets to continue making profits off Victorians, Victoria gets a road we do not need, and \$1 billion is spent that could have been used to actually reduce congestion. There is increased traffic pouring into the CBD and the urban renewal area E-gate is ruined.

This is not the project that Melbourne needs. It is not even the project that Labor took to the last election. If they really wanted to get trucks off the streets and trucks off the West Gate, they would have built the original West Gate off-ramps. That project could actually be built now for half a billion dollars, not \$5.5 billion. The truck ban on residential streets could be in place now. The port rail shuttle costing \$58 million to shift freight to rail could be built now. The completion of the Federation bike trail could be done now.

We do not need another multibillion-dollar tollway creating more traffic and diverting funding away from the projects we really need — and what hypocrisy to want to sign the contracts before the next election. We

have the north-east link, which is going to go through some of our most environmentally sensitive areas. We have got the Minister for Roads and Road Safety spruiking this project, saying that you will be able to travel from Frankston to Altona without stopping at any traffic lights. I lived in Frankston, and you would be lucky to get anywhere without stopping at any traffic lights. My sister lived in Altona, and I can tell you that you would not travel from Frankston to Altona by travelling through Greensborough. The only vehicle that is going to make that trip is the orbital SmartBus.

This government is calling it the missing link. The real missing link is airport rail. The real missing link is Doncaster rail. The real missing link is Rowville rail. Communities around Australia have stood up against expensive toll roads — east–west link here in Melbourne, the Perth freight link and WestConnex in Sydney. We know the Liberals want to waste \$22 billion on the east–west link and destroy the inner city. No party that has the east–west link as a policy can have any credibility on public transport, as is the case with the Liberals.

The government does like to point to its public transport projects: 'Look over there, you can't criticise us'. They get very offended: 'Look at what we're doing, we're doing more than the Liberals' which, to be fair, is true, but to be honest, is not that hard.

It is worth looking back at the Liberal record on public transport. After promises on feasibility studies for new rail lines they finalised the alignment of Melbourne Metro — without a South Yarra connection, I might add. Then nothing. They devoted all our money to the east–west link and put the airport, Doncaster and Rowville rail in the too-hard basket. No new trams were ordered and barely any trains were built. Only a cent was given to Melbourne Metro before it was scrapped, to be replaced by the back-of-a-napkin plan — the Melbourne rail link — just months out from the state election which, whilst it did stop at South Yarra, did not connect to Flinders Street, did not connect to Melbourne's busiest train lines and did not include high-capacity trains. So it is no wonder that Victorians have so little trust in the Liberals when it comes to public transport.

This government is building Melbourne Metro, but it is not going to be built until 2026. This is not the silver bullet that is going to solve all our public transport problems. It is supposed to free up capacity for new train lines and new services. The planning and construction needs to start now or else we will end up with a situation like we had following the completion of the regional rail link, where this government did not

increase peak-hour services despite the extra capacity on the network. We have been promised a new timetable every year since this government came to office but they still have not delivered.

In terms of new trains and trams the new E-class trams only continue the existing production levels of 10 trams per year when production could double to 20 trams per year. The new high-capacity trains are only being built for Melbourne Metro. According to the government's rolling stock strategy, high-capacity trains will not be on any other line until two elections away, and whilst the trial for high-capacity signalling continues, this government has no plan to roll that out across the entire network and no plan to fill in the missing links on our tram network.

In Prahran we have a number of pressing needs on our public transport network, which is overcrowded. South Yarra station has been neglected again. This government is following on from previous Liberal and Labor governments by not spending a cent to upgrade South Yarra station. It is a station that is bursting at the seams. High-rises are going up next door —

**Mr Pearson** interjected.

**Mr HIBBINS** — I want to just get on the record that the member for Essendon is saying that it is a perfectly good station. Please jump on the train and head down to South Yarra station and tell the commuters at South Yarra station that, and tell the residents who are living in Forest Hill that is the case.

My recent survey found that commuters overwhelmingly want the connection with Melbourne Metro rail, a second entrance with a platform overpass, a safer Yarra Street crossing, and of course the heritage character maintained. I urge the government to actually start listening to South Yarra commuters and upgrade South Yarra station and, if they are so determined not to connect to the Melbourne Metro rail project, at least follow through and ensure that it can be built at some point in the future.

I see the Liberals are keen to adopt the Greens policy of including South Yarra in Melbourne Metro and now, having done absolutely nothing to build it or to fix the station during their term in government, they are trying to convince people that they can just conjure up a station using the planning scheme. It is not a planning motion that connects South Yarra to Melbourne Metro; it takes a government to build it. It is something the Liberals failed to do during their term in office.

Passengers at Hawksburn, Toorak and Armadale stations are still waiting over 10 minutes during

peak-hour services with trains too full to get on, and with express services passing the station. It is time this government increased peak-hour services at those stations. Commuters on the Sandringham line are not faring any better. One-fifth of all services are overcrowded. No new peak-hour service has been added for many years and there are waits of 15 to 20 minutes during off-peak and at weekends.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr HIBBINS** — Again I take up that interjection. Sandringham runs on its own line. This guy does not know what he is talking about. Sandringham does not run through the city loop. It is very simple to run trains every 10 minutes during the weekend at off-peak; it is actually catered for in Public Transport Victoria's network development plan. It was supposed to be implemented years ago. This government has not done anything.

Once again it is very disappointing to see that there is nothing for bikes. The government promised \$100 million for bikes and pedestrians at the last election, but we have seen nothing. We are still waiting for the St Kilda Road separated bike lanes to be announced, and this government has rejected a 1-metre minimum passing distance despite all other states accepting it. It is unfortunate that this government is going all out on toll roads when we need to get cars off our roads with public transport and cycling.

**Mr Pearson** interjected.

**Mr HIBBINS** — I note that as per usual the member for Essendon was silent during the shadow Treasurer's contribution, yet he interjects when the Greens are speaking. I will just give him a word of advice: do not worry about interjecting when I am speaking. Interject when your best mate in here, the member for Melton, is roting the taxpayer. Will we ever hear that yes-man speak up against his best mate in here, the member for Melton? You will not hear him ever say that.

No plan for action on climate change can have any credibility if it does not plan for the end of coal. This budget is a lost opportunity to put in place an orderly transition away from coal and a plan to phase out coal-fired power stations and transition their workforce and communities. After a long campaign our most polluting coal-fired power station, Hazelwood, has closed, and front and centre of this campaign has always been a just transition for workers and the community. Everyone saw this closure coming. Coal is

on the way out. Companies are divesting themselves of coal-fired power. It is a bad bet.

But just like with Anglesea, this government did not have a plan in place — and what hypocrisy! After spending the best part of two years criticising the Greens, including my colleague the member for Melbourne for urging the government to act on Hazelwood and transition its workforce — I think the Attorney-General once said we could not shut Hazelwood because the TV would stop working and he could not watch the footy — they changed their tune once it closed. Now they have had to belatedly put a transition plan in place that is still being put together months after Hazelwood shut, leaving workers in the lurch.

This government does not want to take the political heat or take responsibility for the closure of Hazelwood and other coal-fired power stations, but it wants to swoop in as the saviour at the last minute. This government has a choice: put in place an orderly transition plan for workers in the phase-out of coal-fired power stations or simply leave it up to the market, which is getting out of coal, and leave workers in the lurch.

You could not find a more reckless energy policy than that of the opposition and the Liberals. It goes like this: scrap the Victorian renewable energy target and spend untold millions on propping up polluting coal-fired power stations. Having privatised the power stations in the 1990s, the Liberals now want to go to them with a blank cheque and pay them whatever it takes to keep their ageing plants open. The Leader of the Opposition has said he wants to have a conversation with the owners of brown coal plants about what kind of support they need to stay open. I thought Tony Abbott's 'pay the polluters' policy was bad, where the government would pay polluters to pollute less instead of having a price on carbon pollution, but this policy is even worse. It pays polluters to keep polluting. This cash-for-coal policy makes it clear what a future Liberal government would mean: no action on climate change, paying polluters to pollute more, a dangerous climate, no transition plan for workers and standing in the way of jobs in renewable energy and other clean industries.

The Greens have a clear plan for 90 per cent renewables by 2030: a strong Victorian renewable energy target; investment in solar and wind battery storage that can deliver clean, reliable, affordable energy; a one-for-one feed-in tariff so people with household solar can get a fair price for the energy they produce instead of getting ripped off by power companies; and a plan to phase out coal-fired power

stations and transition workers and their communities at a time when the nation's energy market is broken. It is now time for a plan that works. We know coal-fired power stations are going to close. The question is when and what is in place for those workers and those communities.

This budget is also a missed opportunity for our environment. The failure of Labor and the coalition to transition the logging industry away from native forests to plantations is destroying our native forests and costing jobs. As usual, the lies and misinformation is spread by the native logging proponents, who are now lobbying to scrap the protections for the Leadbeater's possum. It is mismanagement by VicForests that has caused job losses, not the protection of the Leadbeater's possum, and again this government is scrambling at the last minute with the announcement that it is going to buy the Heyfield plant.

In this budget we finally have an admission that plantations are the way to go, with \$110 million to establish a timber plantation in Gippsland. Where was this decades ago? Labor went to the last election without an environment policy. The Liberals and The Nationals went to the last election with a 'no new national parks' policy. The Premier has set up a native logging task force, which to date has just resulted in business as usual — logging our native forests.

The Greens have a clear policy to transition away from native forest logging to plantations; to create the great forest national park on Melbourne's doorstep, which will create jobs in regional communities, tourism, conservation and science; to create resilient forests that reduce the risk of bushfires; to protect our water catchments; and to protect the Leadbeater's possum and other endangered species. Two years ago the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water said she hoped the great forest national park would become a reality in this term of government. Time is running out. Now is the time to create the great forest national park.

Plastic pollution is choking our waterways and killing our sea life. The Greens and communities across Victoria are calling for a ban on plastic bags and microbeads to stop plastic ending up in our oceans and waterways. This government is opposed to that ban, and all it is doing is sticking up for the supermarket's bottom line. Local communities in other states are all getting on board with this change. The Greens have legislation before this Parliament. It is time for this government to get on board too and ban plastic bags and microbeads.

**Mr Dimopoulos** interjected.

**Mr HIBBINS** — I would simply urge the government, including the member for Oakleigh, if he is not familiar with the Greens' bill to ban plastic bags, to familiarise themselves with that. Perhaps the member can urge his colleagues to support that particular bill.

In regard to education, the Prahran community absolutely welcomes the extra funding for Prahran High School — an extra \$37 million — to take that school's funding to a total of \$62 million. This is a big win for local families, who can be confident that they can access high-quality public education. I love living in the inner city and raising my family there. More and more families are deciding to stay in the inner city, sending their kids to the local primary schools and then on to the local secondary schools. It was incredibly short-sighted of the Kennett government to close down and sell off inner-city schools. Local primary schools are experiencing a massive growth in enrolments. We now need transparency around future enrolment data so communities can have confidence that their schools will be upgraded and that new schools will be built as their populations grow. This information is held by the Department of Education and Training. The Greens have called for its release, and that is also supported by Infrastructure Victoria.

It is time for transparency in funding for vocational education and training as well. The TAFE reforms that were put in place by the former Brumby government and continued by the previous Liberal government turned our training system into a get-rich-quick scheme for shonks and profiteers. We need to know how much money is going to these for-profit private providers and what return we as Victorians are getting for our investment in terms of quality and course completion. Yes, there are extra funds for TAFE, and yes, there are tighter rules for private providers, but we need a long-term plan that delivers the vast majority of our vocational education budget for recurrent funding to go towards our trusted, high-quality TAFEs.

In regard to community safety neither this government nor the opposition have a plan to prevent crime. The government sees the need for a political fix. The opposition sees a political opportunity. We are serious about crime prevention, reducing reoffending rates and investing in communities.

Let us be clear: the coalition's plan for crime will result in more crime. Their changes to sentencing just shut the gate after the horse has bolted. This will simply lead to increased reoffending and more money spent on

prisons with a revolving door. The Labor Party has followed them down the rabbit hole, implementing the opposition's policies. Where has that got us? We were told creating new offences for acts that were already illegal was going to reduce crime. It did not. We were told that having mandatory minimums would help. It has not. If the coalition's approach to crime worked, it would already be working now because the government keeps implementing their policies.

The government's handling of youth justice has been shameful. This is a crisis that could have been avoided had this government taken the right action. Both this government and the previous government ignored warnings that our youth justice facilities were like tinderboxes. Decisions made have led to an increase in children being remanded in custody, not enough staff to cope and the increase in the use of lockdowns and solitary confinement.

The government's response was to illegally transfer children to adult jails. We had this so-called progressive Premier out there telling everyone that adult prison was where these children deserved to be — children who were Indigenous, part of the child protection system, suffering mental illness and with disabilities — and the government's response was to act unlawfully. We know there is a small cohort of young violent offenders, and this issue needs to be dealt with. But these measures — locking kids up in a prison-style institution — are going to make this problem worse, and it will not make our community safer.

The government's response has been to transfer responsibility of youth justice to the corrections department. It is clear where this is heading; it is heading to another Don Dale situation. This government needs to change course. It needs to invest in justice diversionary programs and intensive therapeutic programs for those young people who need it, and it needs to address the systemic issues in our communities and our state.

In my portfolio area of LGBTI, I certainly welcome the funding for health and wellbeing for LGBTI Victorians, even though there is little detail as to what that actually is. It has been incredibly disappointing over this term in Parliament to see the path that the Liberal Party has taken in opposing laws that were so critical to the transgender community and its proposal to scrap the Safe Schools program.

We still need further legislative reform in this term of Parliament to protect workers, students and service users from the discrimination that is still allowed under

our Equal Opportunity Act 2010. Both the government and the opposition opposed the Greens equality for students bill, and I would urge them to rethink their opposition to changes to the Equal Opportunity Act. There is still so much more to be done, particularly in the area of LGBTI homelessness, where there is a far too great over-representation. There are issues facing the intersex community and with gay conversion therapy and the ex-gay movement, which still occur.

In terms of revenue, this government is continuing its sell-off agenda, flogging every asset that is not nailed down, handing control of key public assets to the private sector and driving up costs for Victorians. Following the sell-off of the port of Melbourne, which Labor railed against in the 1990s when Kennett started asset sales, we now see the land titles office up for grabs. The result is simple: a short-term hit of cash, the state loses regular income from dividends of the asset and we hand over control of that asset to the private sector. The private owners try to squeeze more water from the rock, driving up costs for users while service levels drop.

The government is wanting to raise taxes but is doing so at a time when local councils are being hit by a rate cap. For some councils that is essentially a million dollars out of services and infrastructure — what hypocrisy. This policy of course will hit rural councils most of all, and the coalition just rolled over and let it happen. This is when the government is spending billions on new toll roads, a billion dollars for the Melbourne grand prix, promoting duck shooting and propping up VicForests.

To conclude, this budget is a missed opportunity to keep Victoria livable. We need to invest more in public transport to reduce overcrowding and traffic congestion. We need to plan to phase out coal and replace it with clean energy and new jobs. We need to create a great forest national park and ban plastic bags to prevent plastic pollution. We need to stand up to One Nation Islamophobia, not pander to it like the opposition. We need to change the Equal Opportunity Act so that all LGBTI Victorians are protected by the law from discrimination. We need to make sure that health and school funding goes to where it is needed most. We need to be investing in communities to reform our youth justice system and child protection system. We need to ensure that transparency, integrity and accountability are at the heart of all our decisions. With this budget the government has shown it is incapable of doing this. The Greens have a plan to make it happen.

**Ms KILKENNY** (Carrum) — I am extremely proud to be able to speak on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017, a very important bill for all Victorians. As a member of the Andrews Labor government, I am extremely proud to be delivering this budget — a budget, as I said, for all Victorians. I sat here and listened to the member for Malvern, and all I could think was how those opposite would love to be delivering this kind of budget. They can complain, they can criticise, they can shout it down, but they know in their heart of hearts that this is a budget for all Victorians. It is a truly great budget. It recognises the true potential of this state and delivers on what is important for all Victorians.

We know this is a fiscally responsible budget. It is good for business, it is good for business confidence and it creates thousands of jobs. This budget is about strengthening our communities and making them safe, particularly for women and children. This budget is about giving our kids, through education and schools, all of the opportunities that they so rightfully deserve. This is what fair, responsible and smart budgets look like, and only Labor governments can deliver these types of budgets.

I would like to congratulate the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance and their respective teams, as well as the Premier, on an outstanding budget. It is a budget that builds on the extraordinary amount of work that we have already done over the past two budgets, and a budget that is going to position Victoria for a future full of opportunities. This budget says to Victorian communities that we are about making Victoria stronger, safer, healthier and prouder. We know that our prosperity in Victoria depends upon all of us prospering, and this budget does just that; it does not leave anyone behind. It charts a clear path forward and it makes sure everyone is on board. This budget continues the Andrews Labor government's impeccable and undeniable track record of strong financial management. There can be no doubt about it. It is this Andrews Labor government that is growing the economy and creating thousands of jobs for our future.

We have maintained our AAA credit rating. We will have an estimated surplus this year of \$1.2 billion, with operating surpluses totalling \$8.3 billion over four years. This is an extraordinary position to be in. It is a very strong financial position, and we are continuing on the back of that position to create jobs. More than 250 jobs every day are being created. We are the envy of all the states and territories, and frankly, who would not want to move to this great state of ours?

With this budget we are seeing record investment in infrastructure, health, education, and police and community safety. Of course the centrepiece of this year's state budget, the very heart of this year's budget, is the historic and life-changing investment to end family violence. I must say I am so immensely proud to see this level of unprecedented investment in family violence — more than \$1.9 billion. This investment will help implement every single recommendation put forward by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, all 227 of them.

We can never underestimate the devastation, the fallout, the financial impact, the shame and the disgrace that comes from family violence. When we talk about law and order, we have to remember that this is our number one issue. Family violence is a national emergency; it is a national shame. The more we talk about it, the more reports there are. It is everywhere. The Andrews Labor government promised to do everything in its power to stop it. That is exactly what we are doing, and this budget is delivering on that. We are a government committed to ending family violence.

With this investment we are going to save lives, and we are going to give back dignity. We are showing the rest of Australia what needs to be done to address this shame: how to respond to victims and survivors, how to keep them and their children safe, how to hold perpetrators to account and ultimately how to end the insidious gender inequality which is the driver of family violence throughout Australia.

We have heard that as part of the investment we are going to build 17 support and safety hubs across the state, costing more than \$448 million. We are also going to create five specialist family violence courts to make our justice system more responsive to victims' needs. I am very proud to see that one of these courts will be located in Frankston. This is an area of immense need, and we have a lot of work to do there to tackle family violence. We are extending after-hours crisis support, counselling and therapy for many women and children, and we are building much more crisis housing. We will also be helping authorities to share information so that perpetrators can be tracked. Ultimately in leading the way to stopping family violence we will be building one of the world's first family violence prevention agencies. More than \$50 million has been allocated to establish Victoria's new prevention agency.

The Andrews Labor government does not just want to reduce family violence; it ultimately wants to stop it before it starts. We must prevent it, so our prevention will continue to be grounded in the knowledge that

family violence is and remains a deeply gendered issue. Our investment will go towards challenging and breaking down the gender norms, stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours that underpin gender inequality. After last week's historic budget announcement of the investment to end family violence, I posted on social media and received a response from a woman in my electorate. I will read what she wrote:

This leaves me so happy, so contented, to know this will help victims still caught in this demeaning, lonely life of isolation. Victims need to know help, hope and more outlets are out there. It is wonderful to see everyone is seeing domestic violence as it is — a crime — and funding is important. Today is a good day, a start of hope. As a survivor I'm humbled to see this crime is becoming noticeable, as it should be.

It truly makes me so proud and honoured to realise that our investments, through this budget, are actually having an impact and making a real difference to people in our communities. Obviously this is just the start, and we have got a lot of work to do, but this budget, with this extraordinary investment of \$1.9 billion, is clear evidence of our steadfast and unwavering commitment to end family violence for all Victorians.

Further on community safety, no other government in the history of Victoria can point to the level of investment we are making in police and community safety. This is meaningful, genuine and tangible investment. We are providing police with funding of more than \$2 billion. This money will deliver more than 2700 new sworn police officers, 100 new protective services officers and upgrades at police stations across the state.

The former Liberal government did not fund one additional police officer during their four-year term. The opposition has no credibility on police and community safety. They can never be trusted to properly fund our police or programs that will address and prevent crime to keep our communities safe. We have heard them whinge and complain about inadequate investment in law and order and crime prevention. They can continue making all the misleading claims they like, but those opposite are the problem. The recidivism rate reached a record high under their watch in 2014. Years of inadequate funding for police and justice services and no clear plan on how to prevent crime and create a safer Victoria have put us in this position.

Locking up individual offenders does not prevent crime. Unless steps are taken to address the causes of crime and reduce reoffending, every time you lock up one offender, another one will step forward to take his

or her place. We owe it to our community to take a much smarter approach and give a better response to crime and law and order issues than that peddled by those opposite, and frankly, we need to listen to all of the experts, and that includes Victoria Police. When Victoria Police say to us which resources and powers they need, we will deliver them. Only Labor can be trusted to properly resource our police to lead the charge and to deliver results in community safety.

I would also like to briefly talk about jobs, because it has always been my personal view that jobs are one of the greatest forms of social justice and the greatest way that we can grow and strengthen our economy. This budget continues the Andrews Labor government's sustained, unrelenting focus on jobs growth and jobs creation. Our massive infrastructure investments will grow our economy, create jobs and benefit our communities for generations to come. When we think about jobs and when we think about infrastructure and investments in infrastructure and capital works, we will think about the Andrews Labor government.

We have heard that this budget includes projects such as the north-east link, a project that will be the missing link in Victoria's road network. It will finally complete the Metropolitan Ring Road and will significantly relieve congestion in our north-eastern suburbs. We are also going to see a \$300 million investment for the construction of the Mordialloc bypass, finally linking the end of the Mornington Peninsula Freeway with the Dingley bypass. I know that this is going to have a real and significant effect for so many residents in the south-eastern suburbs and in my electorate and the neighbouring electorate of Mordialloc.

The budget continues to build on our major investments in public transport, including the building of the Metro Tunnel and the removal of 50 of our most dangerous level crossings. Last year's budget included \$12.8 billion to build our public transport infrastructure, and this year's budget will grow that investment. At a local level we are going to be delivering additional bus service extensions to improve bus network coverage and help people in my electorate get to connecting train services at Carrum station. Expressions of interest for the removal of the level crossings at Seaford Road and at Carrum were released last week. This budget includes more than \$180 million to relocate the current train stables at Carrum and to build new train stables at Kananook on the Frankston line. This is a massive project that will not only help meet future community needs and expectations around train reliability and performance on our network but create hundreds of jobs down in the south-east.

We have also heard how we are going to continue our investment in the network to provide 24-hour public transport on weekends. I have so much still to talk about in this budget, but I would like to finish with education because to me education is one of the most important things we can do in government — that is, to provide our children with every opportunity through education and educational facilities.

This budget builds on our commitment towards education and our commitment to build the education state in Victoria. We have \$1.3 billion allocated in the budget towards this, and I note that more than \$58 million has been allocated to support students with disabilities to attend schools and more than \$680 million has been put towards improving school infrastructure. Schools in my electorate are going to proudly share in this funding. Seaford North Primary School will receive more than \$5 million towards a new gym and hall. Carrum Downs Secondary College will receive more than \$3 million for a new gym and community space. Seaford Primary School will receive funding for master planning, and Rowellyn Park Primary School will receive \$275 000 to cover its basketball courts so that whole-of-school assemblies can take place under cover anytime of the year.

This is a defining budget, and it clearly sets out our priorities — that is, about safe, healthy and prosperous communities. We should be very proud of this budget. We have committed to ending family violence and gender inequality. We have committed to giving every child the best start in life, and we have committed to building the infrastructure that this state needs now and into the future. I again want to congratulate the Treasurer, the finance minister and the Premier on delivering this budget — a superb and outstanding budget — for all Victorians. I commend the bill.

**Mr PESUTTO** (Hawthorn) — I am pleased to be able to speak on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017 this afternoon. You can make all the promises you like, but sooner or later political reality catches up with you and the verdicts start rolling in. I am going to speak a little bit about the justice side of this budget. Then I will talk about my own electorate of Hawthorn, which has been completely ignored in this budget.

Back in 2015–16 this government allocated around \$5.5 billion across the justice portfolio, and since that time we come to this year's budget and the government is projecting to spend \$6.8 billion on justice across the entire portfolio. That would be good if you could look back on the last two and a half years and say for that extra \$1.5 billion or thereabouts there have been results, that the government has delivered a safer community,

more secure streets and Victorian communities that feel safer. You would think that, with such an amount of money, those would be the results that would start rolling in. It will be even more than \$1.5 billion by the time you receive the expected full financial results for this next year, so call it \$2 billion, maybe even more than \$2 billion since this government's first budget.

Let us look at the results. Have Victorians actually seen the results of the extra money that the government has allocated across the justice portfolio? Let us look at the crime statistics. They are developed independently, collated by the crime stats agency. In the two years of this government common assaults are up by 31 per cent. That is not a good start. Armed robbery, equally a 31 per cent increase in the two years of this government. Aggravated burglary — wait for this one — in the two years of this government is up by 65 per cent. And car thefts are up by 44 per cent. Not only are these among the worst results for any government across the country, these are the worst increases our state has ever seen. On crime statistics, an independently collated system of data, it is a damning indictment of this government's performance. We have not got value for that extra \$2 billion on the issue of crime stats.

Next let us look at the key indicator of reoffending. Let us look at community correction orders. These are orders given to people who avoid jail and are given non-custodial sentences. In the 2013–14 year — the last full year of the Napthine government — do you know what the reoffending rate was? That is, the rate of return to corrective services of somebody who is discharged from a community correction order within two years? The reoffending rate was 20 per cent in 2013–14. Let us come to 2016–17 — this year. Do you know what the reoffending rate is for non-custodial sentences in this state, Acting Speaker? It is 33 per cent. That is a 60 per cent increase in the rate of reoffending by people who are given non-custodial orders, so we have a real problem. Those people on community correction orders are increasingly breaching those orders and returning to corrective services, but let us look also at those who are given custodial sentences — those who go to jail.

In the 2013–14 year do you know what the rate of return to prison was? In the budget papers for the 2013–14 year it was 39.5 per cent. Do you know what that rate has gone up to in the 2016–17 year? That rate has gone up to 43 per cent, a nearly 5 per cent increase in the rate of reoffending in this state. That is not a good start, so I am not getting a lot of confidence that the government's extra \$2 billion on top of what it first budgeted for in the 2015–16 budget is delivering results

for the Victorian people. Victorians are less safe, and these reoffending rates ought to be an alarm bell for this government that things are not working in this state.

Let us look at some of the anecdotal evidence on whether the extra investments this government has made in justice are delivering results. Why is it that people in areas like the amazing growth corridor of Pakenham and people out in Caroline Springs have had their communities featured in the media in recent weeks? Do you know why, Acting Speaker? They have been featured in the media because they are fortifying their homes, they are strengthening their communities, and sadly they feel compelled to buy weapons to defend themselves from home invaders, carjackers, armed robbers and burglars. They should not be doing that and they should not have to do it. Nobody should have to buy weapons to protect themselves and their families or to fortify their homes. That is the first job of any government — to protect the community.

When we see Victorians with so little confidence in the law and order abilities of this government to keep them safe, we have a third measure which is indicating that the government's management of law and order is falling apart — and also the perceptions. We saw recently some polling by Galaxy that showed that an overwhelming majority of Victorians feel less safe two years into this government than they did two years ago. They feel less safe, and that was taken some months ago. You can only imagine just how much it has deteriorated in the time since.

What is it about this budget that we can talk about? Has it dealt with the crisis of confidence, the outbreak in crime vindicated by the crime stats? Does this budget address those problems? Sadly, no, it does not address those problems. Just yesterday we had a report from a former Director of Public Prosecutions and former Supreme Court judge, Paul Coghlan, on bail. It is a lengthy report which the government has said it will implement to change our bail laws. Is there anything in the budget papers that demonstrates the government is planning for what the results of some tougher measures in bail might be? We have made the criticism — and I stand by our criticisms — that the government is not going to go far enough. Its statements so far indicate it will not implement the full length and breadth of the bail changes that our community needs. While the report is to be welcomed given it is by a fairly well-respected figure in Paul Coghlan, sadly the report is rather modest.

We have been calling for a change in the law and culture around bail. This report is incremental. It is building on a system which we maintain is broken. The

government in the budget papers released last week makes no mention of what it is going to do in anticipation of implementing this report — none whatsoever. It got the first report from Coghlan some time ago — many weeks ago. The budget papers have nothing by way of financial projections. When asked yesterday the Attorney-General just said, ‘Well, we’ll make provision in future budgets’. There is nothing in the budget papers that foreshadows the effect on numbers of people on remand as a result of any changes to bail. The budget fails to plan for the impact of any changes to bail, one of the most pressing and urgent issues our community faces.

On sentencing, the government has said that in a number of weeks time it will bring in changes to sentencing. We understand it will be a standard sentencing scheme off the back of a Sentencing Advisory Council report. Is there anything in the budget about the cost of those sentencing changes? Is there anything about forecasting extra numbers? There is nothing, because all the government is about in this area is spin. It wants to make announcements. There is no genuine planning around what is going to happen if and when any of these changes are made. We anticipate that whatever changes the government makes will be modest and superficial — just enough to quell community anger and dismay at what is happening around our state — but that is not going to protect the government ultimately. They are going to have to face up to this fact. We have nothing on those matters.

There is nothing in the budget papers that addresses the reoffending crisis that I just spoke of a few minutes ago. These are alarming increases in the rates of reoffending, not just for people coming out of prison but for people who are on community correction orders — non-custodial orders — who are going back into the system. There is nothing in the budget papers that demonstrates that the government has any purchase on this issue, any understanding of this issue or any commitment to address this issue. So on the key crises facing our community the budget falls flat and we end up with an increase in justice spending across the portfolio in the order of about \$2 billion over three budgets. Do we have something to show for it? No. We have gone backwards. On all independent measures we are going backwards as a state.

We have said as an opposition preparing hopefully for government that we will change our system in profound ways. We have said that on bail we will reverse the government’s reckless change to legalise the breaching of bail for people under 18. We will introduce a ‘one strike, you’re out’ policy. If you breach bail, you will not get it again. Yesterday’s report

does not commit to that. It makes some very small and minor steps towards it, but it does not embrace it. We will have a genuine presumption of remand for violence offences, which will clearly result in more people who are charged with serious violence offences facing remand and not bail.

A couple of weeks ago, when the Leader of the Opposition and I announced the mandatory sentencing policy, which will profoundly change our system and make Victorians far safer than they are now, it was interesting to hear the Attorney-General come out and say: ‘It is not costed. There is no provision for it. There is no impact on numbers. There is nothing in this announcement’. Yet he went out yesterday and committed to the Coghlan report. When asked about budgeting and forecasting for the impact on numbers, he had nothing more to say than that the government will make provision in their future budgets. What hypocrisy from the government! But true to form they have done that before — on the north-east link. They committed to that without any kind of budgeting or funding. I am sad to say that in terms of justice issues and the law and order crisis that Victorians know exists, this budget fails them completely. That is very sad.

I just want to turn to my electorate of Hawthorn. I was very proud when I stood as a candidate in 2014 and made the commitment that a re-elected Napthine government would commit around \$18 million of funding for local schools and sporting facilities. Sadly, we did not win the election and I was not in a position to fulfil those commitments, but I had hoped that the government would show some spirit of generosity to the people of my electorate. However, in all the budgets that they have delivered they have only made one commitment. They have not allocated one new dollar — at all — to the people of my electorate. Schools like Auburn High School, Hawthorn West Primary School, Camberwell High School, which has done reasonably well so far, Camberwell Primary School, Auburn South Primary School, Canterbury Primary School and Glenferrie Primary School desperately need capital support and recurrent support.

There are community and sporting groups in my electorate that desperately need support. We are an area that is facing the full brunt of population growth — as much as any other area — as higher density housing goes up, thanks to this government winding back the protections that the previous coalition government had put in place to protect the character and amenity of our area. Did they get one new dollar from this government this year? Not one. I cannot believe that this government has duded the people of the Hawthorn

electorate, who I am very proud to represent, by not giving them one extra cent.

All the government has done in its two and a bit years in office is allocate some money to Camberwell High School. That is something I welcome. It is not enough, but I at least welcome that amount of money. But since December 2014 this government has not given a cent to the people of my electorate, and I have to ask on their behalf: what did they do to the Premier to not get any money? There are people across the chamber who are wandering around their electorates — proudly, I might say, in fairness to them — talking up the government's commitment of money for their people, but for my people, the people I represent, all I can say to them is: 'This government has had nothing for you three years in a row. It has nothing for the people of Hawthorn'.

On a justice portfolio basis and on a local electorate basis this budget is a huge disappointment. The Victorian people are looking for leadership in this space. If anything, what this budget does is highlight the profound importance of the decision the Victorian people will make next year on who they want to govern this state. This budget is a sad indictment on the failure of this government to deliver for law and order.

**Ms GREEN (Yan Yean)** — It gives me great pleasure to speak on yet another brilliant budget from the Treasurer. As he would say, this budget has the Premier's hallmarks all over it.

I had already made a decision in talking about this year's state budget to focus on population growth and what that means for my electorate. I am speaking after the member for Hawthorn, who said — and I could not believe he said it with a straight face — that his electorate of Hawthorn is copping the brunt of population growth. They really do not get out much, do they? His neighbour, the member for Kew, is undertaking a vanity project as their great expert on population growth. If the member for Kew and the member for Hawthorn are the brains trust of the Liberal and National parties' population growth policy, well, I pity Victoria if that lot get back onto the government benches because they have no idea or concept of population growth.

The member for Hawthorn said that his well-heeled electorate had not done very well in the budget, but I would point out to him that the most populous and fastest growing electorate in this state in the last term, in the term before that and in the current term is the Yan Yean electorate. Those opposite went to the 2010 election making not one capital commitment to Yan

Yean, and they delivered in spades, which is why we have a big job to catch up.

But we are not shying away from that responsibility of delivering to the Yan Yean electorate. This budget again brings home the bacon for that electorate. On roads we are including \$100 million to build the north-east link, the missing link in our road network that will finally complete the Metropolitan Ring Road. Those of us who represent communities along the Hurstbridge line know that we suffer the brunt of the congestion and traffic that travels through our residential streets. It is this government that is going to deliver on this, and \$100 million is an absolutely fantastic start.

There is also \$700 million for the M80 ring-road to be upgraded between Princes Freeway and Western Highway, Sydney Road and Edgars Road and, importantly, Plenty Road to Greensborough Highway. Work on the 2.4-kilometre Plenty Road to Greensborough Highway section will include an extra lane in each direction and upgrades to the interchanges in Hurstbridge at Greensborough Highway and Plenty Road as well.

As well as that, another north-south road has been congested and the subject of much discussion and angst for a long time. People have questioned why, in our first budget allocation, the \$134 million for the current section of the current project for Yan Yean Road finished at Kurrak Road. The reason is that it was the only part we could contribute to and could begin in our first budget — the previous government had not transferred responsibility for any section north of Kurrak Road for Yan Yean Road. But we have done that now, and there is a further \$96 million in the budget so that we can relieve congestion on that road.

Also, in a real victory for community activism, the township of Whittlesea is going to have an amazing end to what has been a significant problem for a long time. That is the intersection out the front of Whittlesea Primary School: of Macmeikan Street and Laurel Street or Whittlesea-Yea Road, and Wallan-Whittlesea Road — a very difficult intersection which will now be signalised so children will be safer. I really want to commend Krissy Richmond and other supporters in the Whittlesea community who have been out there collecting signatures and growing that campaign. That is now going to be delivered.

In education, a new school is going to be built near Yarrambat Park. It is near Yarrambat Park but is actually in the postcode of Doreen, south of Bridge Inn Road. So that whole community in a growing suburb will now

have their own local school and will not have to get out onto busy arterial roads. They will actually be able to walk their children to school should they choose to do that. That is in addition to the two schools we already opened this year in Mernda Central College and Mernda Park Primary School as well as the upgrades we are doing to Hazel Glen College and to Wallan Secondary College. Education is our number one priority, and that is why we are called the Education State.

I heard the Minister for Education only today saying that the average spend over four years of the previous government on school capital — building new schools and upgrades — was \$350 million across our state. Across our first three budgets our average spend is \$850 million. That is nearly three times as much to make up for the neglect. We are seeing that spend with the Yarrambat Park primary school.

In Beveridge, they are overjoyed after the pressure experienced by the Beveridge Primary School, which is bursting at the seams, is eased. The school is in a bad state of disrepair because it had a rural upgrade that we actually funded in 2010 that was then cancelled by those opposite — cruelly cancelled. When the Leader of the Opposition was the then minister for planning, they not only cancelled the school building upgrade but they shifted the urban growth boundary, which meant that Beveridge Primary School was inside the urban growth boundary. Then they said, ‘Thank you very much, we will not give you rurality funding anymore, you are a city school now’, ignoring the fact that they are not on the sewerage system and they are not on reticulated water. They have to provide their own water for firefighting and have all the pressures any country school would have. Plus they have the pressures of population growth. We are easing the squeeze on that school by funding land in the Mandalay estate to build a brand-new school on that side of the Hume for that new community.

Just outside Wallan, Wandong Primary School is also going to be upgraded with \$1.2 million for planning and upgrades. I commend the member for Northern Victoria, Jaclyn Symes, in another place for her work in advocating for this. Jaclyn Symes and I did a transport forum for the Wallan community only a couple of weeks ago. The Minister for Public Transport came and spoke to our community and engaged with them about their growing need for transport, whether it be rail or whether it be buses. They told us very strongly that they needed improvement in the local bus network. They are going to benefit from part of a share in a \$17 million investment for better bus services across growing suburbs because, unlike those opposite, we understand that Wallan is now like a growing suburb. It

has the values and the attributes of a great little country town, but the needs of a growing suburb.

We have also allocated \$40 million in the budget for station and signalling upgrades on the Seymour line. It includes \$20 million worth of upgrades to Wallan and Donnybrook stations, and \$20 million for improved signalling and other infrastructure to prepare the north-east line for the next generation of trains we are building in Victoria.

I also went out to the Northern Hospital with the Minister for Health, who I am pleased to say is in the chamber, along with the member for Broadmeadows and the member for Thomastown. There were tears — absolute tears — on that visit because some of the theatre nurses could not believe that what they have been waiting for in their great work of servicing growing communities is in this budget.

Northern Hospital will receive \$162.7 million for the expansion of its inpatient services and the completion of the 7-storey tower which will contain 96 new inpatient beds, three new operating theatres and more treatment rooms. This comes on top of the great work done by Ambulance Victoria. I am really proud that we are the first government to actually have a Minister for Ambulance Services. That is how important we see ambulance services in this state. We have got the best performance data in a very, very long time: 80 per cent of code 1 incidents were responded to within 15 minutes in the last quarter, and that is the best figure in seven years.

There is additional support for improving response times and rebuilding our ambulance services, and I am pleased that there will be a new 24-hour branch built on land just acquired on the border of Diamond Creek and Wattle Glen. I know the member for Eltham and I very much welcome the fact that Nillumbik will be getting its first 24-hour ambulance branch. In the community of Mernda they are getting an ambulance branch there as well. It is always Labor that delivers ambulance services in the north. We delivered the 24-hour ambulance station in the Whittlesea township. We delivered ambulance services to Kinglake, we delivered ambulance services to Wallan and now we are doing the same for Mernda.

On community safety, I know the member for Hawthorn was trying to mount a case that nothing had been done on community safety, but there is \$1.9 billion for the number one law and order problem in this state: family violence. Forty per cent of crime is actually related to family violence. One woman a week dies from the scourge of family violence, and lives,

particularly children's lives, are turned upside down, so \$1.9 billion is an amazing amount of money. What Victoria is spending on responding to family violence is greater than that of every other jurisdiction in the country; every other state and the commonwealth put together do not spend as much on attacking this problem. As part of that, there will be a family violence hub in the north-east of Melbourne to provide support and to keep women and children safe. It will help anyone who is escaping family violence, it will help them get back on their feet, it will help get them into safer accommodation — or to remain in their own homes while the perpetrators are removed — and it will help get them back into employment. It will provide counselling for the children to calm the little adrenaline rush that has been happening with them and help them get back to focusing on being kids again and being involved with and being successful at school, sport and whatever else they might want to do.

I am also pleased to see, and I know the local police in the Whittlesea police service area are absolutely cock-a-hoop to see, 45 additional police. They are not replacing those who have gone on leave or those who have retired; this is 45 additional police for the Whittlesea police service area, and they will be on duty from next month. That is almost three months ahead of the opening of the new Mernda police station that is also being built by this government.

On jobs and growth, the member for Kew seems to be the in-house expert for those opposite on population and having a population policy. Let me tell you the best thing that has been done to spread the population and to grow jobs in regional Victoria — and that is what provides sound population, not shutting down services like those opposite did. The Leader of The Nationals closed down numerous former Department of Primary Industries offices, which caused immeasurable harm to local economies in regional Victoria. Now those local councils are going to have businesses beating a path to their door to establish and expand in regional Victoria. It is actually going to assist outer suburban people as well, because rather than adding to the queue of people heading into town by car or to the queue of people on the train heading into town, with growth and support for businesses in peri-urban areas like Wallan, like Beveridge, like the Macedon Ranges and like Moorabool shire, workers will be able to travel in the opposite direction. Empty carriages are travelling in the opposite direction, and on the other side of the road — the north-heading side, which is quite empty in the morning peak — people will be able to go and get jobs there.

Across the board it is a fantastic budget — I commend the work of the Treasurer and everyone who helped along the way — and it is delivering for my community. I commend the bill to the house.

**Ms STALEY (Ripon)** — I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017. I have been in the chamber for a bit, and before that I was also listening to the debate. It would be true to say that what I have heard is a lot of members of the government getting up and talking about what is being delivered for their electorates. The previous speaker, the member for Yan Yean, was incredibly breathless in her delivery because there was so much to get through. What none of them seem to be focusing on are the taxes that are being raised to pay for these promises. Of course taxes are up 22 per cent since Labor was elected, and that is an average of \$2000 per every Victorian household.

But when we look at my part of the world — when we look at country Victoria and Ripon in particular — we cannot even do the old 'Look what's being delivered here' side of it, because Labor has cut \$32 million from agriculture in the 2017–18 state budget. They have no new capital investments for our country hospitals. Ripon's hospitals get no new capital funds. There is no new money for police stations across Ripon, despite the fact of the statewide crime crisis.

**Ms Green** interjected.

**Ms STALEY** — I have got to tell you that the one that is being yelled about over there is already in play; it is not new money. The country roads and bridges program still has not been restored despite the incredibly poor state of our country roads. Of course too many schools have missed out on funding. There is one school in Ripon that has had some money put towards it this year, and that is planning for a new primary school in Lucas. I have got to say that was a key election promise of mine; it has taken Labor two or three years to get with the program. It is a shame that they have been so slow in delivering a school to the fastest growing area in Ballarat.

While we are talking about education I think it is important that we note that this budget is cutting spending on rural and regional schools by \$87 million this year — \$87 million coming out of rural and regional schools. When you see that, perhaps you should think about what other governments might be doing. There is a very useful website that has been set up that details what Gonski 2.0 is going to deliver for every school in Australia, and I have taken the opportunity to have a look at non-government schools in Ripon. There are nine of them. Over the next decade

those schools will see an increase — this is not total funds, this is an increase — of \$46 252 100. In addition, every government school in Ripon will also get substantial funding.

I have got to say that it is time to end the school funding wars. I am a strong advocate for needs-based funding. I am a fully signed-up member of Gonski 2.0. This is a needs-based funding model that will deliver real money, not made-up promises, that is fair and equitable across all sectors. Many of my schools are in incredibly low socio-economic areas where parents have very few resources. Having a needs-based funding model for rural schools, particularly low-income rural schools, is something I welcome. I think it is an absolute disgrace that Labor nationally cannot move away from their hidebound, ideological position and embrace something that they have wanted for years. They have wanted Gonski for years, they get given Gonski — but no, somehow Gonski is not Gonski anymore.

I move on now to country roads and bridges. The budget claims to allocate more than \$500 million to regional roads. When I go through the budget papers I see that there are two minor roads projects in Ripon and one bridge. By contrast, we still do not have the \$28 million worth of country roads and bridges funding that the Andrews Labor government ripped out of Ripon. They have not put it back.

**Ms Britnell** interjected.

**Ms STALEY** — It was the first thing they did — thank you, member for South-West Coast — and they have not put it back. We get little crumbs back on individual, incredibly dangerous roads. We also have a major rail project going on in Ripon; it is the Murray Basin rail project. It seems to me that one of the things about this project that is particularly pertinent to the budget and some of the commentary around the budget is that there are over 100 level crossings along the Ararat to Maryborough line. The approach that Labor is taking to these level crossings is to close over half of them, stranding landholders and putting safety at risk in fires or emergencies. That is the approach of this government.

But it seems that for others there is a different approach. On 4 May the Minister for Public Transport announced that contracts had been signed for the removal of some level crossings, including one in Werribee Street, Werribee. There was a media conference about this. I read into *Hansard* the transcript of that:

Minister: The value of this package of works is more than \$1 billion.

Journalist: But among them, this crossing in Werribee Street in Werribee. How many trains use it each day?

Minister: Werribee? Four trains. (Turns to adviser) How many trains?

Adviser: Four.

Minister: Four. There you go, four. Four trains a day.

Of course this is the Treasurer's seat — the Treasurer who lives about 20 kilometres away in Williamstown. I think it is probably not unrelated that a recent Galaxy poll in that seat found that the Treasurer's primary vote has dropped to 29 per cent, about half of what it was in the 2014 election. Three out of four people in the seat believe he is doing a poor job of representing them. What we see in Ripon, where we have freight trains — and these are the kinds of trains that are going through the Werribee level crossing — is that they close the level crossings, strand people and create a fire risk. But when it is Werribee, when it is the Treasurer's seat and when it is four trains a day, oh no, that is all right, we will do a grade separation. We will spend millions. That is the Labor way.

That brings me to the regional rail package. Various government members have spoken about the regional rail package. The trouble with this package is that the government has refused to spend money to fund it. It is a media stunt. There is no business plan. There is nothing. They have just put a huge IOU out to the Prime Minister. They brand this as a huge investment. It is not their investment; if anyone is paying for it, it is the federal government. Let us compare and contrast that to the Metro Tunnel. The Metro Tunnel project is now costing \$11.03 billion — \$2 billion more than when it was originally costed by Labor. Of course Labor cannot cost anything properly. It will cost \$11.03 billion to build that rail tunnel. That is state government money, but we do not get any. Clearly with this government there is nothing for regional Victoria, so we will just ask the feds. We would just ask them because we are not going to pay for anything. Clearly we are second class compared to the Metro Tunnel.

There is one other crucial thing in the budget that, bizarrely, the government has not talked about, and that is in budget paper 4, page 10, and the section headed 'Regional projects funded from the sale of Port of Melbourne'. It says:

As part of the commitments made by the government regarding the use of the proceeds from the medium-term lease of Port of Melbourne, the government set aside \$973 million for use on regional projects. Table 3 provides an acquittal of projects ...

What are these projects? There is \$435 million for the regional rail revival in Gippsland. There are what they call 'more regional trains', and that turns out to be some more VLocity carriages to deal with the population growth between Ballarat and Geelong and Melbourne. There is the Shepparton line upgrade and additional services. Then there is \$300 million for maintenance on regional rail. So the government has spent farmers' and country people's proceeds from the port that we forced the government to negotiate to deliver — but no, they have not asked country people what they might want. They have not delivered it as a package of works that will deliver productivity growth for country people — no. They have spent it on ordinary maintenance. This is a disgrace. This is an utter disgrace.

I note that of the money, they are spending some of it on V/Line classic fleet trains. I would have thought they needed maintenance. The word 'classic' in the title might give you an indication that they are old and need maintenance. The port of Melbourne was a once-in-50-year sale. The value of the port of Melbourne was built on the grain growers and the dairy farmers of western Victoria, yet not one dollar is going to western Victoria. On top of that, \$300 million of this package is going to routine maintenance.

This is a disgrace. No wonder Premier Andrews has kept this secret. We have not seen media releases about how they have spent the port of Melbourne money. They buried it because there is nothing in this for the farmers who built the port's value. The western Victoria region has been completely betrayed by Premier Andrews in his allocating this money to ordinary maintenance and projects in other regions. This should have gone to transformative projects — projects that will set up western Victoria and country Victoria more generally for the future to drive our economic growth, to drive serious productivity, to drive hope for our regions and to deliver jobs and futures for our people.

Instead, we have seen the recycling of routine maintenance money into passenger rail. This is without doubt the most serious betrayal by this government of country Victorians, and particularly of farmers, that we have seen. It is one thing to cut our roads. It is another to cut our hospital capital funds. It is another to not invest the same in schools or in police. But to take away our economic future by not delivering the kind of projects — the transformative projects — that our regions need when the money is there, when the whole of the rest of the money is being spent in metro Melbourne, that is just shameful. I see that those opposite are silent, and they are silent because they

know they have duded country Victorians. They have done it deliberately. They do not care about us, and again and again we have seen this.

I think by now it is fairly clear that this budget has done more than abandon my seat and country Victoria. It has been wilful in ignoring us and in denying us the future investment that we need. Our farmers built the port. The dairy industry is the single largest exporter through the port. The dairy industry gets absolutely nothing out of the port of Melbourne sale. The grains industry, of which I am a part, gets nothing. This is disgraceful.

**Mr NOONAN** (Minister for Industry and Employment) — It is a real pleasure to rise and speak on this budget. I have been in this place since 2007, so I have had an opportunity to speak both in government and opposition. Of course this debate takes a predictable form, I suppose, in terms of those things that we talk positively about and those things that do not come through in the budget. I do want to say one thing, and that is that I think budgets are a reflection of your values. I want to touch on two key areas before I go on to speak about some of my portfolio areas, because I think that they really do speak positively about Labor values.

The first one is ambulance services. I remember sitting on opposition benches, year after year under the previous government, when the performance of our ambulances, despite the best efforts of our paramedics in terms of response times, was falling year after year. I am really thrilled that the Minister for Health is in the house because there have now been record investments made in our ambulance services under this government, with the 2017–18 budget to well and truly top \$1 billion as a result of investments that the minister has made. It is great to see growth funding in this budget, on top of those investments that have been made previously, of another \$26 million. That will mean better services, more code 1 incidents getting ambulances on time and, of course, more trained paramedics out there on the road and able to respond.

I want to pay tribute in my contribution this year to Steve and Jo Gibbs and Julie Wilson. They lost their sons who, very sadly, waited for ambulances — sons who had their whole lives ahead of them. They spoke very bravely during the previous government's term and advocated for change in this key area of government delivery. I stood with them very proudly, and their impact still stays with me today, and I know that their impact has also stayed with the health minister. This is a terrific outcome in our budget. I also just want to make mention of Steve McGhie, Danny Hill and all those at the ambulance union and all of the

paramedics who support our health system so magnificently. This is a fantastic outcome.

The second area I want to point to in relation to Labor values is the outstanding landmark commitment of \$1.9 billion to end violence against women and children. I remember very well being in the audience at a Labor Party conference when the then opposition leader and now Premier got up and committed to having a royal commission into this issue — an issue that he described as the number one law and order issue in the state. This investment that is being made in this budget will absolutely change lives, but it will also save lives. Again, it speaks very strongly about Labor's values and the importance we place on women and children who are vulnerable in our state.

Moving to my areas of responsibility — industry, employment and resources — this government has always had a focus on jobs. Right from the word go we understood the absolute neglect and the lack of a jobs plan under the previous government. We have had a plan from the word 'go' and it is terrific to see outcomes coming through for Victoria that are really leading the nation in every way in relation to jobs growth. In fact since we have come to government the number of people employed in this state has grown by 216 000 people, against the four years of the previous government, where that figure was just 96 000 people. We are leading the nation in terms of total employment growth.

Our annual results, particularly last year, were the highest in both absolute and percentage terms in Australia. If you look at the last two months alone, we have had nearly an additional 28 000 people gain work. Again, if you go back to last year Victoria and South Australia were the only states that recorded an increase in full-time jobs.

Let us talk about regional Victoria, because we have recorded the largest increase in both total and full-time employment over the past year. Employment in regional Victoria is up by 40 000 persons since November 2014. Almost 7000 of those 40 000 jobs are full time. This is happening because our state is investing strongly in infrastructure. If you look at the forward estimates for our infrastructure spend, it is about \$9.6 billion on average. That is an absolute record in terms of investment. It will create about 50 000 jobs for Victorians. If you look at the extra trams, the trains, the public transport projects, important projects in the west of Melbourne — the West Gate tunnel project — all of these projects are job-building projects and, importantly, they will create opportunities for apprentices, trainees and cadets. They

will in every way transform many parts of metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

To go to the issue of our fair share and the federal budget tonight, we will look very closely at what the federal government does. This is an opportunity for the Sydney-centric Prime Minister to turn his eyes back to Victoria and give us a greater share of our infrastructure funding. At the moment Victoria only receives 8.5 per cent of the allocated commonwealth infrastructure funding, and that is an indictment of the commonwealth government. Separate to the asset recycling funds, Victoria deserves the additional \$6.6 billion to get its fair share. I do not see the federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport standing up for Victoria, notwithstanding he is from Victoria.

In terms of investment attraction and assistance, we have a proud record here, and the budget provides a further \$90 million for our investment attraction and assistance program. This has been a very successful program for the Andrews government. To date we have attracted many household names to Victoria, either to expand their businesses or to set up their businesses here in Victoria.

I will look at a number of investments that have been announced over the last 12 months, most recently last month with Rinnai establishing its new Braeside manufacturing hub here in Victoria and creating, importantly, 160 new manufacturing jobs and also investing in their research and development facility. Of course Rinnai is a household name. They produce gas and electric hot-water systems and ducted heating. The investment they are making in their business with the support of the Victorian government will also secure the 372 jobs that already existed at Rinnai, so it is great to see that business growing.

In relation to David Jones, in August last year there was a great announcement that South Africa's Woolworths Holdings would essentially establish their Australasian head office in Melbourne. That meant that 820 new jobs would be created here in Victoria and we would secure 680 existing jobs. This is an iconic fashion retailer, and to bring David Jones and Country Road together here in Victoria, as I said, will create all of those additional jobs and secure the 680 that could have easily gone to New South Wales.

Out in the east there was an announcement in June last year to create 120 manufacturing jobs for leading English potato crisp manufacturers Tyrrells. Tyrrells had previously exported their product from the Northern Hemisphere. They wanted to establish an Australian Asia-Pacific head office, and they have

established it with the assistance of the Victorian government's investment attraction and assistance program. We have helped to facilitate their investment to come together with Yarra Valley Snack Foods. Again, this will also help our farming community by using potatoes from Victoria to deliver their product.

Finally, NewCold Logistics, a Dutch-based cold storage and logistics company, is establishing its Asia-Pacific headquarters in Melbourne on the strength of the fact that Victoria is a great place to do business. They are in the process of building their warehouse in Truganina. They will employ people in IT, engineering, software development, management and of course transport and logistics. These are the sorts of investments that Victoria is able to attract, and we want to continue to attract with the investments we are making in this particular budget. It builds on the massive \$116 million that we announced in last year's budget.

We are also investing \$42.5 million over four years to fund the Victorian gas program. This will be the most comprehensive program in our state's history. It will be spearheaded by the state's lead scientist, Amanda Caples. The program will be completed during the extended moratorium on onshore conventional gas exploration and development. It will not have any impact of course on the legislation that passed this Parliament in relation to banning fracking and unconventional gas, but it will get to the bottom, if you like, of gas that potentially exists onshore that can be extracted conventionally, while taking the community with us and also looking at the environmental impacts that may come as a result of any onshore gas industry here in Victoria.

There have been many commentators, including federal coalition MPs, who would say that we are awash with onshore gas in Victoria, but currently, despite issuing many exploration licences under both governments — ours and the previous government — there are currently no proved or probable onshore gas reserves in Victoria. Our program will include geoscientific, environmental and economic studies, and every bit of hard evidence that we need to properly assess the potential for any onshore conventional gas exploration in Victoria. We have invited the commonwealth to join us as part of that program, and we are waiting to hear from them as to whether or not they will participate.

We are also supporting industries in transition. It is one of the key challenges for Victoria in relation to the automotive sector. Of course the car making component of that sector is due to close, but we are seeing good and sustained growth in our manufacturing

base. Forty two per cent of the jobs created in Australian manufacturing last year were located in Victoria, or more than 42 000 additional people working in manufacturing. These are high-skilled, high-value jobs, and obviously they are a very central component of Victoria's economy.

This budget provides a \$15 million boost to a number of programs that have been very critical in relation to growing our manufacturing base. There is an extra \$10 million for the Local Industry Fund for Transition program on top of the \$33 million previously funded and \$5 million to boost the Future Industries Manufacturing Program, building on the \$13 million that we already announced last year.

Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to go to places like Nissan Casting Australia in Dandenong. The member for Dandenong is with us today, and she was with me a week or so ago when we went down there and announced a grant under our Future Industries Manufacturing Program to grow jobs to essentially supplement the investment that Nissan Casting is making in its own business and to support those manufacturing jobs. We want to do more of that, and this budget allows us the opportunity to do more.

Importantly we have seen a supplementation to our social enterprise initiative. We launched this initiative earlier this year. It is a great initiative to support social enterprises. This budget delivers more funding so that we can implement our social enterprise strategy to ensure that those people who may be vulnerable and who may find it difficult to participate in employment can do so through social enterprises, which are dotted right across Victoria and of course in Melbourne as well.

There are a number of other important allocations that have been made in this budget, including allocations to assist retrenched workers who need support to transition to new employment. There is \$1.5 million to support the construction and technology sector of our future industries program and \$500 000 to support young people and disadvantaged Victorians in the construction workforce. This is a terrific suite of initiatives which will help grow jobs in Victoria and support our program to grow the economy.

Just locally in terms of my electorate of Williamstown, I am really pleased to see an outcome for Spotswood Primary School. There is \$1.4 million to deliver the first stage of the modernisation of their school buildings. This is a great school which is over 100 years old. We are all proud of the schools in our electorates, but to achieve an outcome in this budget is a great testament to Jackie Green, the principal, the

teachers at the school and all the staff who do a great job in nurturing, educating and developing our young people. They are really the drivers of better outcomes for students. We want to match their endeavours with the sorts of facilities they expect to have available to their students. It is just terrific to get that as an outcome.

There is also another supplementation for the Footscray learning precinct in this budget, funding that will enable master planning and the appointment of an architect to take this project one step closer to delivering secondary education in the Footscray learning precinct. Again it is testament to the advocacy of many in my community who have been pushing for new secondary education facilities since the previous high school was closed by the Kennett government back in the 1990s.

I also want to acknowledge the Minister for Health and the member for Footscray for the \$50 million allocated to develop a business case and commence design work for the construction of a new Footscray hospital. That is a terrific outcome for Melbourne's west.

**Mr T. BULL** (Gippsland East) — Standing here and talking about the state budget from an East Gippsland perspective for 15 minutes is going to be a rather difficult proposition because, like much of rural and regional Victoria, East Gippsland missed out. Perhaps there is no better evidence of this than can be seen by looking at the map on pages 4 and 5 of the rural and regional budget paper: unfortunately, not for the first time, the index covers East Gippsland where the announcements should be. As I said, this is not the first time that has happened.

Unfortunately in my contribution we have to look at some of the things that the community sought and wanted for various reasons that are important to my electorate that did not arrive in the budget and that we are still obviously very keen to see occur. Probably at the top of that list is Bairnsdale Secondary College, which is the biggest school in the East Gippsland electorate. Through a \$12 million investment, stage 1 of that school was built. It was committed to by the coalition prior to the 2014 election. Unfortunately it did not have bipartisan support prior to the election. There has been strong advocacy from the school community and the wider community for the completion of that school. As I said, it is the biggest in our region.

What the school is simply seeking now and has been seeking for some time is a visit from the minister — not an announcement, just a visit to have a look at the place. The school council forwarded the minister an invitation over 12 months ago, as did I separately. He

was on the local radio station saying that he would attend when his diary allowed. That was over 12 months ago — in February 2016. So in over 12 months our minister, who wants to come in here and espouse how much he cares about education, cannot even find time to visit. I do not think he has even been to my electorate, with over 45 schools, to visit a school of the highest need, and that is simply not good enough.

The school has made it very clear in its invitation: they just want him to visit and have a look and understand the scenario that faces the school community. To not have found the time in over 12 months is rather pathetic, if I may say so. It is not good enough, and I would encourage the minister to make good on what he was happy to say on air but is not happy to do in reality.

I also want to note, as I know other members have in previous contributions, the country roads and bridges program. Rather than beating up the government for cutting this program and not funding it, we have just got to have a look at what it means to rural and regional communities. It is \$1 million a year to councils that know that money is coming, and can plan and allocate in their future budgets knowing that the money is there and knowing that it is coming. It is one of the few state or federal government grants that they know the value of in advance.

Despite repeated requests for its reinstatement, not just from individual councils but also from Rural Councils Victoria, that program has not been re-funded at all, which has created a high level of disappointment. I will tell you why it is disappointing. We have the government promoting its Towards Zero campaign, a very worthwhile initiative with the very admirable objective of cutting our road toll, but having the Towards Zero campaign while you cut the country roads and bridges program that maintains our roads and makes them better makes no sense at all.

In line with that I could also mention the tax on new cars. How can we have the Towards Zero campaign when we are making new cars more expensive, which has people purchasing second-hand cars and older cars because the new cars are now out of their price range? We put in place that impediment towards the purchase of a new car and have the Towards Zero campaign. We cut the country roads and bridges program and increase tax on new cars, but we have the Towards Zero campaign. There is some irony in that that simply does not make any sense whatsoever.

The reality of this budget is that country people are being taxed more and getting less in relation to infrastructure and services. Labor's budget means that

country Victorians are paying more but getting less. The Shadow Treasurer's one line summed up what Victorians are facing:

Under —

this government —

the only thing rising faster than the crime rate —

which is up 20.2 per cent — we cannot let that roll off the tongue, it is up by one-fifth —

is the tax rate —

at 22.2 per cent.

So instead of having the Treasurer standing here beating his chest about having a surplus, I would much rather some of those higher priorities in rural and regional areas of Victoria be addressed. But perhaps more importantly than some of the infrastructure projects is some relief to the cost of living for country people who are facing rising taxes in a number of areas and also high utility bills in a number of areas.

If we have a look at the cost-of-living pressures on country Victorians more closely, the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that power prices have risen 7.7 per cent, and we have that additional \$252 million tax on power generators. Firstly, that is only going to be passed on to consumers. Secondly, it was also a factor in, if not solely responsible for, the closure of Hazelwood. The combined result of those two factors is driving up power bills for rural and regional Victorians. I have no doubt that we have not seen yet on our bills the full impact of what the closure of Hazelwood will be. It has risen 7.7 per cent. I am very concerned that is going to be the tip of the iceberg when we are talking about our power bills.

The average Victorian household has seen their energy bills increase by \$300 this year. That is not according to the opposition, that is according to the St Vincent de Paul Society. The answer from this government has been to have another review. Another review is simply not good enough when we are looking at addressing this problem.

The fact that this government has introduced or increased 10 taxes since the election is a clear broken promise. Despite a \$4 billion tax increase, \$10 billion from the port of Melbourne windfall and \$13 billion in higher GST receipts, we are still increasing state debt by \$10 billion. There should be no need for that, given the increased income that has been generated.

Why are country people being expected to pay more while receiving little in return? That is the rhetorical question to which there appears to be no answer, and it is proving to be extremely disappointing for those people that are living in rural and regional Victoria. The only announcement in the budget of any note to my electorate was the Avon River bridge at Stratford. We well know of the jousting that has been going on in relation to whether that is state or federal funding — it has been under dispute for some time, that is quite clear. The state says it is theirs, and the feds say that the state missed their asset recycling deadline. But to come out while this dispute is ongoing and say 'The money is ours, and we are going to put it in the budget' does not ring true when it has been under dispute for quite some time.

I have got no doubt that the federal budget, which we will be sitting down and watching tonight, will have money in it for Gippsland and regional rail, but whether it is going to be the amount that the state is relying on and that the state has put in the budget papers, who would know? I think it is a little bit rude and getting a little bit ahead of yourself to be making those significant announcements in the state budget when you do not know what is coming from the federal budget. The state appears happy to spend federal money and commit federal money when they do not really know how much they have got coming into that space.

Reading the budget papers, one thing that jumped off the page to me was the number of roads programs that have a little asterisk written next to them, and down the bottom it has 'dependent on contributions from the federal government'. I only hope that those come through tonight and that those roads programs can be fulfilled to the level of commitment that has been made.

As was mentioned by the member for Ripon in her contribution, there has been an agriculture budget cut of \$32 million. That is not great for our farmers, who are facing a lot of hardship. In certain areas some have got it okay; cattle prices are okay down my way at the moment. But there are plenty of others who are facing hardship. I would have thought that if we had a budget surplus, the agriculture budget would at least be maintained or slightly improved rather than being cut.

I want to make some quick comments on law and order, and the soaring crime rate. There has been a 20 per cent increase, as I mentioned before, and there has been acknowledgement by the Minister for Police that many Victorians do not feel safe in their own homes — they are her words. We have no new funding for police stations in rural and regional Victoria, and no funding to reopen those that have been closed. We have got a crisis in frontline police numbers. Rosters are not

filled in my area, and right across the state we have issues with police in rural and regional Victoria. I am not talking about increases — I am talking about filling current rosters.

We have had really no increase in the amount of police in stations in rural and regional Victoria in the two years of this Labor government. I think it is about an increase of 300 police overall, but we are not seeing the police allocated to the stations to maintain numbers. This is despite rising crime and a rising population. Since the Premier was elected and Labor came to government the population in Victoria has grown by over 300 000 people and the crime rate has increased by 20 per cent, but in-station police numbers have increased only marginally. That is not good enough when we have public sector wages up 24 per cent in two years and we have not got the police we need in the face of a crime crisis not only in urban areas but in the major centres in rural and regional Victoria as well.

In relation to the shadow ministries that I hold, I will be making some comment in the house on those in time, but I will refrain from doing that until after the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee process in the coming weeks.

Before I finish I want to make some comments on the contribution that was made by the member for Prahran not too long ago. As I was sitting in my office I heard the member for Prahran basically say that he wants no native timber industry in Victoria and he wants it replaced by plantation timber. What I would like the member for Prahran to explain, perhaps in his next members statement if he likes, is where the appearance-grade timber is going to come from that the Victorian consumers want. He wants no native timber industry, and appearance-grade timber cannot come from plantation, so I want him to come in here and explain to this house where the appearance-grade timber is going to come from if it does not come from the native timber industry, because all he is going to do is drive up imports. He spouts these popular lines and has no basis behind his commentary. He is going to drive up imports. Probably in the next sitting week of Parliament he will be standing out there on the front steps joining a protest because we are cutting down rainforests and killing the orangutans, because where the timber will come from is the developing countries that do not have the oversight that the Victorian native timber industry has. The appearance-grade timber will come from there if we do not harvest it in Victoria. You cannot have the best of both worlds. He needs to come into this house and explain that to all members.

I think it was last year, or it might have been the year before, that I had the pleasure of the member for Prahran dropping into my electorate where he gave a talk that was reported in the local paper. He said there was no divide at all between city and country people — this was the member for Prahran. Well, he has got to be kidding himself. If there is no divide, I ask the member for Prahran to come down to my electorate and give his speech on the timber industry in the main street of Heyfield, the main street of Bairnsdale or the main street of Orbost. I will even set it up for him; I will set up a site for him outside the supermarket. He can come to those towns, which have a strong and rich history in the native timber industry, and I will book a little space for him to come and trot out that absolute garbage that he trotted out before. He can see then from the feedback that he will receive whether there is a divide between his views and the views of country people in my electorate.

There is no reason that we cannot have a sustainable timber industry in this state. The member for Prahran and all other members in this chamber ought to recognise that fact. Rather than spread misconceptions about the native timber industry, which harvests only a very, very small percentage of our state forest — 6 per cent to 7 per cent of it on an eighty-year rotation — the member for Prahran ought to recognise that they serve a valuable purpose in this state and support the timber industry in Victoria.

In finishing up, this budget has not been a good one for East Gippsland, and you would probably expect all members of the opposition to say that. But if anyone wants to disagree with me, I would love any member of the government to come and tell me what was in this budget that was good for East Gippsland — there is nothing.

**Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh)** — As usual it is a pleasure to speak on the state budget, the Andrews Labor government's third state budget. Like the last two budgets, it is a budget that invests in the infrastructure Victoria needs; a budget that invests in transport, in our schools, in our hospitals, in community safety, in tackling family violence; and also a budget that creates jobs. Essentially it is a budget that is about getting the job done. Jobs are a central plank of any good Labor budget. At the last election we inherited the highest unemployment rate on the mainland, but since then we have created more than 216 000 jobs. In fact last year more jobs were created in Victoria than in the rest of the country combined. Central to our government's job strategy is strong investment in infrastructure. We are investing an average \$9.6 billion a year on the infrastructure Victoria needs.

We talk a lot about level crossings, and I think mentioning level crossing removals bears repeating because it is such a significant project, one that my electorate of Bentleigh has really been one of the first beneficiaries of. Of course last year we completed the level crossing removals at Bentleigh, McKinnon and Ormond. That created thousands of jobs. We employed local workers, we used local materials and at the end of it we have an infrastructure project that we can all be very, very proud of. Of course this budget continues that investment in level crossing removals around the state.

But we are also investing in very important infrastructure in our schools. We are investing a total of \$685 million this year in new schools and school upgrades, which brings our total investment so far to \$2.5 billion over the three budgets of this government. Earlier I heard the member for Hawthorn lament that there is little money for schools in his electorate. Of course I am not entirely sure what funding is being allocated to schools in the Hawthorn electorate, but he did mention that Camberwell High School received some funding — \$3.5 million — from this government, and I can tell him that is \$3.5 million more received by schools in his electorate than was received by schools in my electorate by the time of the Baillieu-Napthine governments' third budget.

If you look at the last two budgets in my electorate, we funded upgrades at McKinnon Secondary College, Bentleigh Secondary College, Tucker Road Bentleigh Primary School, East Bentleigh Primary School, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Southmoor Primary School and Berendale School; in this budget, Valkstone Primary School, McKinnon Primary School and Bayside Special Developmental School (Bayside SDS); and by our third budget, 10 schools and \$45 million in school investment in the Bentleigh electorate. By the third budget of the Baillieu-Napthine governments: zero schools and zero dollars for schools in the Bentleigh electorate. So while the member for Hawthorn was walking around his electorate lamenting the little investment in his electorate, that is exactly what was happening with the former member for Bentleigh in my electorate: she was lamenting the fact that she was unable to get a single dollar for schools in my electorate.

This year I am very proud that Valkstone Primary School is receiving \$3.72 million for stage 2 of their redevelopment. McKinnon Primary School, which is the largest primary school in the Bentleigh electorate yet is accommodated on a fairly small site, will receive some funding to have a brand-new synthetic sportsground to make the most of the little open space that they have.

I do want to spend some time talking about Bayside Special Developmental School. As a Labor government we are bursting with pride that this government in this budget invests \$44.4 million to upgrade six Victorian special schools. It is our special schools that are often overlooked by successive governments when it comes to funding for capital upgrades, but not by this government. I am absolutely proud that the Bayside Special Developmental School will be receiving \$11.4 million for a total school rebuild.

This is a school that last year celebrated its 30th anniversary. It is a school that cares for and educates our children with the most special of needs, children with severe to moderate disabilities, yet it is currently accommodated in the buildings of the former Moorabbin High School — that is, it is accommodated in buildings that were not purpose built for its specialist needs. In fact in the 1990s the Kennett government sold off their school oval. It takes a certain type of person to sell off a school oval at a special school, and that certain type of person is a Liberal. That is what they did. Not only are we giving them back their school oval, we are rebuilding their school from top to bottom. I could not be more proud, and I can tell you that the principal and the parents of that school could not be more proud. In fact the principal said:

We are extremely grateful to the Andrews government ... for making the new school a reality in the most recent state budget ...

A new school build will not only give us a street presence but also a building and grounds our students, families and members of staff can be proud of.

I have to say that I was inundated with feedback from parents of children educated at Bayside SDS. On my Facebook page Naomi Sirianni wrote:

As a parent of Bayside SDS may I thank you! Thank you for your enthusiasm. Your desire to create an enjoyable space for students and faculty could be seen when discussions began and now that it's become a reality you are firing on all shots!

Stacey Popas wrote:

I'm a parent of a Bayside SDS child, and I would like to thank you so very much for giving our children such a huge opportunity. Imagine what our kids could have available to them in a matter of a few years.

And finally, I will just mention this one from Nicky Mitchell:

It's what our children need and deserve.

It is indeed what children of special schools need and deserve. They deserve the same investment as children in mainstream schools. They have been given that by

this government, and on this side of the house we could not be more proud.

I am also pleased to see in the state budget this year \$500 000 in planning funding for a new secondary school in Bentleigh East. We are not an outer suburb, but I would say that we are a growth area. We of course as a community suffered from the mass closure of schools in the 1990s. It was a short-sighted decision of the Kennett government, and we are now paying the price. The loss of Murrumbeena High School in particular in the 1990s has meant that now that our area is growing again there is a lot of pressure on school infrastructure. At the same time McKinnon Secondary College currently has 2200 students and the smallest enrolment zone of any other school in Victoria. So I am pleased that we have funding in the budget to plan for a new secondary school in the area at the Virginia Park industrial state on East Boundary Road. It is 24 hectares of land. We will never have this opportunity again. We not only govern for the now; we govern for the future. We are going to deliver for families in my electorate.

I am also pleased that there is funding in this budget for improvements to bus services in my electorate — something that is desperately needed. No doubt we will begin consulting on the best ways to improve bus services in the Bentleigh electorate later in the year.

There is \$2.9 billion for our hospitals. That is something that the former Minister for Health, David Davis, could only have dreamed about. It is an investment, along with those in previous budgets, that means we now have the best ambulance response times in Victoria in five years. We all remember the grubby war that was waged on our dedicated paramedics just a few years ago. We ended the war, and now we are enjoying the fruits of that labour.

I will just focus on one particular item in the health portfolio, and that is the \$63.2 million to upgrade the Monash Medical Centre emergency department. It is an upgrade that will separate adult patients from children and young patients and will create an additional 24 emergency department cubicles and an extra 10 short-stay beds for patients who need care for less than 24 hours. I was with the Premier and the Minister for Health when we made that announcement at the new Monash Children's Hospital. Again it is a proud Labor achievement to upgrade one of the busiest emergency departments in our state, one that many of us in the south-east have been caught up in for hours and hours and hours on end. This is a very, very important investment.

Finally I just want to talk about community safety and family violence, because they go hand in hand. Family violence is the number one law and order challenge of our state. I meet regularly with my local superintendent. She is always telling me that the one issue that occupies her members' time the most is responding to family violence. Family violence takes up 40 per cent of police time. It accounts for around 50 per cent of assaults. It is a national emergency. It is also a national shame that it has taken this long to take action on such an important issue.

This government is investing a total of \$1.91 billion this year to tackle family violence, and for that we need a great deal of bipartisanship. Bipartisanship is not opposing the royal commission and calling it a lawyers picnic. Bipartisanship is not undermining the findings of the royal commission, including the respectful relationships program. Bipartisanship is wholeheartedly embracing these findings and getting on board with implementing the recommendations, because we still have one woman a week dying as a result of family violence. We still have many women who flee abusive relationships with their children and seek refuge in their cars. We have too many women and children sleeping in their cars, and one of the initiatives in this \$1.9 billion allocation for family violence is in the area of housing.

I want to end with a plea to the opposition — that is, to particularly back the \$133.2 million for extra long-term housing, rental assistance and improved crisis accommodation for victims of family violence, which builds on the Labor government's \$2.7 billion investment in social housing. I am appealing to them to back that investment because I remember what they did in my electorate, in my community, back in 2009 when a housing facility for women and children was proposed for Bentleigh. They came to Bentleigh. They opposed it. They organised their protests, their meetings, their petitions. They derided the women and children who were going to benefit from that investment as 'scum'. They stood up in town hall meetings and that was the tone of the argument. They were there; they opposed it — a facility for women and children.

Of course a few years later when it opened they were there at the opening as if none of that had ever happened, but the fact is that central to fighting family violence will actually be investing in social housing.

**Mr Burgess** interjected.

**Mr STAIKOS** — The member for Hastings is embarrassed by that, and so he should be. But he should not only be embarrassed; he should hang his head in shame, because every time the Labor Party has

invested in social housing, like now, they have led the charge against it. We will, as always, stand up against them. We will make this investment because the women and children of this state are far too important not to.

**Mr BLACKWOOD** (Narracan) — It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017, and it is very unfortunate that this budget does not go anywhere near enough to actually relieving the enormous cost pressures on small business and the enormous pressures on families and households, both in my electorate and across the state. What this Labor budget does mean though is that Victorians are paying more than ever and getting less and less. Under the Premier the only thing rising faster than crime, which is up by 20.2 per cent since the last election, is the tax take, which is up by 22.2 per cent.

The Treasurer can boast about his surplus, but Victorians have received nothing, as I said before, in cost-of-living relief, just new and higher taxes and charges. Labor has introduced or increased 10 taxes since the election, a clear broken promise from a Premier who cannot be trusted. Despite a \$4 billion tax increase, a \$10 billion port of Melbourne windfall and \$13 billion in higher GST receipts, Labor is increasing state debt by \$10 billion. They cannot even find one dollar to reopen police stations they have closed, yet they can let the member for Melton get away with rorting thousands in taxpayer dollars. Labor's so-called infrastructure agenda is a sham. There is no money to build the north-east link, no money to build regional rail. Instead they are sending the bill to Canberra and they are slugging CityLink users to pay for their western distributor.

I would like to go through the new taxes that Labor has introduced. The energy tax on coal royalties has certainly had a big impact on the decision of Engie to close Hazelwood. With that situation, with Hazelwood coming out of the equation in terms of producing cheap power for industry, we are seeing an enormous increase in energy charges right across Victoria. The taxi and Uber tax is a \$2 slug on every passenger that uses taxis or Uber. The land tax surcharge for absentee landowners introduced at 0.5 per cent has now increased to 1.5 per cent. The stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers introduced at 3 per cent has now been increased to 7 per cent. The fire services property levy will increase. There is an 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 evaluations to increase land tax. In this budget Labor will increase taxation revenue by \$174.8 million in 2017–18 and by \$1.4 billion over four years.

From 1 July 2017 stamp duty on property transfers between spouses and de facto partners will raise \$20 million per year. This budget makes buying a new car more expensive for Victorians. The duty on new passenger vehicles will increase from \$6.40 per \$200 of the market value to \$8.40 per \$200. This will increase the price of new vehicles by 1 per cent, and this will raise \$391.4 million over four years and \$93.8 million in 2017–18.

The budget introduces a vacant residential property tax. This will increase revenue by \$80 million over four years and will raise \$10 million in the first year. The budget removes the off-the-plan stamp duty concession. From 1 July 2017 it will only be available to homebuyers who qualify for the principal place of residence stamp duty concession or qualify for the first home buyers stamp duty exemption or concession. This will raise \$51 million in the first year and \$841.2 million over the four years. The budget also introduces property evaluations annually rather than every two years, and this will have an enormous impact on the fire services levy as it will increase much more quickly. So will council rates.

Of course that is a list of broken promises that the Andrews government has delivered. As we well know, the Premier was on the record back on 28 November 2014, which was election eve, as saying he would not increase taxes or introduce any new taxes. He made that promise to every single Victorian, so how can we trust a Premier who can go back on his word so easily and so quickly, put an enormous impost on Victorians and let them down once again?

It is interesting to compare the state of Victoria with the state of New South Wales. If we look at unemployment, currently New South Wales has an unemployment rate of around 5 per cent. What have we got in Victoria? Victoria has an unemployment rate of 5.75 per cent. We are lagging well behind New South Wales. In terms of government infrastructure investment there is a huge difference in the investment that New South Wales is making compared to Victoria. New South Wales invested \$21.8 billion in 2016–17, and in Victoria it was a measly \$9.3 billion. In 2017–18 New South Wales will spend \$20 billion on infrastructure, and Victoria, \$10.1 billion, so we are lagging behind New South Wales by a long, long way. Then there is our debt as a percentage of our gross state product: in New South Wales, 0.1 per cent; in Victoria, 4.6 per cent, rising to 6 per cent over the four years. It is an enormous difference. Is it any wonder Victorians are feeling very, very disillusioned and left out?

In terms of crime, despite a soaring crime rate up over 20 per cent and an acknowledgement by the Minister for Police that Victorians do not feel safe in their own homes, there is no new funding for police stations or to reopen those that the Andrews government has closed. Following two years of inaction there is currently a crisis in frontline police numbers at police stations right across the state, with virtually no change in the number of police deployed to stations since November 2014, despite both rising crime and population. The first of the promised new police will not be deployed until March next year, well into the fourth year of the Andrews government. Since the Premier was elected Victoria's population has grown by over 300 000 and the crime rate has increased by over 20 per cent, yet police numbers have only increased by 374. Despite crime being up over 20 per cent and three budgets from this Premier, there are fewer maximum security prison beds operating now than in November 2014.

This budget is all about the political interests of the Premier, not the interests of Victorians, who just want to be able to pay their bills and know their families are safe. In my electorate we have really been let down by this budget once again. In terms of the promises around V/Line, we had the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport in Warragul last Sunday week, and they made some very grand promises around improvements to the V/Line service, but when you drill down there is no money from Victoria for what they have promised. They are relying on the federal government coming to their rescue and providing the \$435 million they promised to improve the Gippsland rail corridor.

In actual fact that announcement last Sunday week was nothing more than a political stunt. Not one dollar of state government funding is attached to the project. As I said, it is solely reliant on federal funding, which the Premier is not entitled to. It depends on the asset recycling initiative that was introduced by the federal government, but once again this government has let Victorians down by not meeting the guidelines within which that initiative is operating.

**Mr Richardson** — That is absolute rubbish.

**Mr BLACKWOOD** — In actual fact it is not absolute rubbish because the Treasurer also confirmed that if the federal government did not respond to Labor's demand for funding, the upgrades would not proceed at all. As I said before, this is an absolute insult to long-suffering Gippsland V/Line users. The Premier should apologise to them for misleading them about this project, which he said would start immediately.

We have real demands for funding right across our region in many areas — from road and rail to health care and local government — and games like this will not be forgotten by locals. Thirty-nine new VLocity carriages have been funded in this budget, and I will be advocating very strongly for the Gippsland line to receive its fair share. We were given extra carriages on two services — one going to Melbourne, leaving Warragul at 7.11 a.m., and the other returning from Southern Cross at 4.58 p.m. Those carriages were provided about two months ago and they are already at capacity. There are many other services that have enormous overcrowding issues. We need more VLocity carriages to relieve that stress.

There are much-needed increases in road maintenance funding also missing in this state budget. Local roads in our region are suffering, as they are right across the state. We are finding that VicRoads are forced to reduce the speed limit on many country roads on the basis of safety. They have not been given the funds to upgrade, repair or provide maintenance on the roads, so the fallback position is to decrease speed limits to make sure that motorists are safe. Road maintenance is one of the most common concerns raised right across my electorate, and the failure of the Andrews government to provide details about adequate road maintenance means it is taking longer and costing more for locals to travel in safety on our roads.

There was some money put aside in the budget for the upgrade of bridges at Longwarry and Darnum. This will assist heavy traffic that has to access markets along these roads. But in terms of detail, when it is going to be delivered and what the actual cost is going to be, we have been able to find none in the budget papers at this stage.

The Andrews state budget also neglected to fund the critically important West Gippsland Hospital. This project was committed to by the Liberal-Nationals coalition. Late last year I was very proud to stand with the Leader of the Opposition to announce that if elected we, the Liberal-Nationals coalition, would commit to building a brand-new West Gippsland hospital between Warragul and Drouin. This hospital is in enormous need because the population growth of the area is incredible. The two major towns of Warragul and Drouin are increasing by up to 2000 people a year. The current hospital does a fantastic job in providing great services for the community but it is under enormous stress. The West Gippsland Healthcare Group had the wisdom about 10 years ago to buy 58 acres of land between the two major towns of Warragul and Drouin, a perfect site for a new hospital and a no-brainer in terms of what needs to happen for the ongoing delivery

of high-quality health care in our region. Because of the rapidly growing population the health needs of our local families and our community must be addressed, and the best way to do that is to build a new hospital.

As I said, the existing hospital does a great job. The staff at the hospital do a fantastic job in providing high-quality healthcare services. They deserve the support of this government and they deserve the support of future governments to be able to provide that ongoing high-quality service in a state-of-the-art facility. One million dollars was allocated in the 2016–17 budget to start planning for the redevelopment of the West Gippsland Hospital, but there is nothing more in this budget to make sure that that planning continues.

In terms of health, another issue that is very much at the forefront at the moment is the provision of a 24-hour ambulance service in Drouin. Drouin is probably the largest small town in Victoria to not have a 24-hour ambulance service. Its population is at around 16 000. It is absolutely essential that this government fund a permanent home for the provision of 24-hour ambulance services in Drouin. At the moment Drouin is relying on a response from Warragul, which is about 10 kilometres or 10 minutes away, and that has an enormous impact on response times. It is absolutely essential that the Drouin ambulance station is provided with a permanent home so it can provide a 24-hour service to Drouin and the communities around it.

As I said, the increase in taxes and the impost on business is huge; it is having a big impact on many businesses across my electorate. The increase in electricity bills and the increase in gas bills are having an enormous impact.

In closing I would just like to say that the Victorian coalition has a track record of making commitments and delivering on them for the people of Narracan — in stark contrast to Labor and this Premier, who rely on broken promises and spin to hide their mismanagement and waste. Over four years the Victorian coalition government funded key infrastructure projects, including the Sand Road interchange upgrade, the Warragul railway station precinct upgrade, the West Gippsland Hospital emergency department upgrade and the Lardners Track level crossing upgrade.

**Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc)** — It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Victorian budget 2017–18, which is the third budget of the Andrews Labor government. This is an important milestone in this government's agenda of supporting Victorians and investing in our state in order to leave it better off than

it was under those opposite three years ago. A budget is an opportunity to put your values into action and state what you believe are the priorities for the state. It is an opportunity to put forward necessary investments in a range of areas and to really set the priorities for the year to come and over the forward estimates.

It is important to think about the Victorian budget in the context of the federal budget that will be delivered tonight, and its record investments in infrastructure and projects creating employment across our state — tens of thousands of jobs — through the direct investment by the Victorian government, and the benefit that that has in spilling over into other industries and other sectors. It has brought confidence back to Victoria. It took a Victorian Labor government to bring confidence back to our state to arrest the job losses that had occurred. Forty-six jobs were lost each and every day over the four-year period of the previous government. Instead of trying to deliver the necessary infrastructure projects, in the last year of the previous government's term they came up with a project that did not stack up, that did not have a business case and that left our community behind.

We stand here today on the cusp of the federal Treasurer about to deliver the federal budget, with 8 per cent of infrastructure funding allocated to go to Victoria. The stark absence of anyone on that side of the house attempting to address this shows their priorities. They cannot even acknowledge that this is a fact that our state confronts: that 8 per cent of infrastructure funding from the commonwealth — the GST revenue that comes to us — is not fair and equitable. We need to change this; we need to address this. The fact that we are the fastest growing city and the fastest growing state yet we do not attract the necessary infrastructure investment is an absolute disgrace.

Today we had a shadow Treasurer more interested in the gags he could deliver to his backbench — he was almost showing off to his backbench — than in putting forward a plan for Victoria. Being a shadow Treasurer or an opposition leader allows you to put forward your alternative vision. All we had today were cheap gags. That is what the shadow Treasurer led with on Twitter today — cheap gags and short-term politicking.

This government is making the necessary investments. Nothing can be more important than the protection of families; nothing can be more important than supporting people in their homes. That is why the \$1.9 billion invested in this budget to go towards delivering the more than 200 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence shows our values in action. When you have the opportunity to

make the necessary investment, you take that opportunity. In stark contrast we have a federal government which is not making that investment. Other states and territories have to get on board and learn the lessons of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. They need to learn those lessons and they need to deliver the necessary infrastructure funding.

We are creating half the jobs of the nation in Victoria. We are not without our challenges, with the exiting of the automotive component parts industry in my area. The City of Kingston and the City of Greater Dandenong have not quite felt the effects in my community. It is coming, and in the next 12 months we will be dealing with those challenges. But I am confident that with the infrastructure agenda, with the focus on investing in Victorian jobs and putting Victorian skills first, and by mandating into our contracts a minimum standard for apprentices and a minimum standard on Victorian and Australian content, we are ensuring that we are doing all we can do as a state to protect jobs into the future.

If we think about some of the highlights in this budget, it includes a record boost to police resources — something that is welcomed by my community. There is nothing more important than keeping our community safe and providing Victoria Police with the necessary resources to ensure that happens. Politicians are not police. It is up to the Chief Commissioner of Police with the resourcing and modelling that has been put in place. That \$2 billion is so very integral to their resourcing and providing over 3000 more police to our communities. The model that has been put forward tries to look towards stripping away the short-term politicking and addressing the real law and order challenges in our state.

Forty per cent of police work is dealing with family violence. We need to provide that necessary resourcing. Those opposite need to acknowledge whether they support that investment or whether they will move amendments in the upper house. There has been a lot of silence on that side about whether they support that extra police resourcing and extra community support resourcing and the family violence hubs. That does not feature in any of the speeches of those opposite. They need to answer that question. Where do they stand on the investment being made? Do they support it? Do they oppose it? What is their position?

When we come to looking at the longer term challenges of our state and our growing population, something that has underpinned a lot of the economic prosperity in our state is our population growth, the construction industry humming and particularly property in the regions. What

we see is the challenge of delivering the necessary infrastructure that underpins our prosperity, gets Victorians home safer and gets them home sooner to their families. An example of that is the investment in the Mordialloc bypass, a project that features prominently in this state budget, the third budget of the Andrews Labor government. The Mordialloc bypass has been talked about for too long. It has been promised by all persuasions of government. What I am proud of is that we are actually delivering this project. It has been in the road reserve for 48 years. It is time to get on and build this necessary project. It will look towards addressing some of those challenges of congestion that we face in our area.

The City of Kingston will grow by 15 per cent over the coming 10 years, and we need to be forward thinking and on the front foot to make this happen. That will be combined with the removal of dangerous and congested level crossings — a policy that is widely supported and a policy that is so very important to our community. Getting rid of level crossings was something that was always thought about but never actually delivered — crossings like Edithvale Road, Balcombe Road in Mentone and Charman and Park roads in Cheltenham. I went to a historical society event recently where they talked about the first life that was lost at the Cheltenham level crossing in the late 1800s. It took 117 years for a government to act and ensure that there is safety at this crossing into the future. We will get rid of this level crossing, and this budget provides the necessary funding to deliver the extra resources to provide for removing some of those dangerous and congested level crossings.

Something that is close to my heart and something that I am quite passionate about is investment in education. I was the product of a public education. I was the first in my family to go through and go on to university. A public education underpinned my education and my ability to go on and do other things. What is so important is that everyone has the access to a quality education — no matter your circumstances, no matter what challenges you confront.

There is a school in my electorate called Yarrabah School, a special development school that has grown by 800 per cent over the last 30 years. It is a school that now resembles a portable city. The approach to growth over the last six or seven years has been just to put in another portable on site, not looking to the longer term by trying to address some of the challenges faced by students there — students with a range of needs that cannot be supported in mainstream education. Yarrabah supports many schools across our region in

professional development, and it supports mainstream schools.

A rebuild has been talked about for this school. A master plan has been talked about being delivered for many years. Well, last year we committed the master plan funding to get on and do the necessary planning work with families, teachers, professionals, speech pathologists and physiotherapists, and we did all that necessary work to plan a vision for that school. It came in that it would cost close to \$20 million. Another barrier that this school has faced for more than 30 years was put forward — that we might not be able to get that funding and we might have to wait for many years to come. Well, I am very, very pleased that the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education joined me to announce that Yarrabah School will get a complete rebuild, all in one go. No stages — \$20 million for a complete rebuild of this school to give this community certainty.

This school was termed the little school with a big heart. Well, it still has a lot of heart in our community. It still has so much going for it. It is a wonderful school community, but it is nowhere near a small school anymore. It is one highlight for my community that finally Yarrabah School has got the funding it deserves and the community has got the support it so desperately needs.

Another highlight in this budget was the delivery of a new State Emergency Service (SES) unit for Chelsea SES — an exciting development. This SES has a wonderful group of volunteers. In times of emergency, in flood and rescue, they are there to support our community. What we saw recently was the community come together. We saw the Chelsea SES lose half of their facilities. We had a fire on site there, and that really hit the community hard as the volunteers put so much money, time and resources into supporting their unit. I was so pleased that the Minister for Emergency Services announced that a new Chelsea SES will be built in Aspendale. It is a very exciting outcome to set up the SES in our community for the future. It builds on our support for volunteers and emergency services in our community.

Of course the previous budget had extra funding for the Edithvale Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigade. We are rebuilding the Edithvale CFA station. I had the pleasure of having the then Minister for Emergency Services, the member for Brunswick, join me at the brigade's 90-year celebration some time ago. It was fantastic to unveil those plans while that celebration was progressing, and that station is going to be fantastic for our community.

Those are some of the highlights of this budget, but I want to reflect finally on something else that is very important, something that we took to the election and something that the previous coalition government could have addressed in the 2014 state budget, and that is extra support for our paramedics, our dedicated paramedics who day in and day out risk their lives travelling on the roads at high speed, dealing with a range of different challenges and putting others first in their community. This budget once again makes significant investments in health, and it provides significant support for our paramedics.

We came into government and we promised to end the war on our paramedics. We promised to provide the necessary support and to deliver that necessary support for our paramedics. Those calls were not heard by those opposite. They could have gone into the 2014 budget and delivered the necessary investment. They chose not to; they chose to put our state and our community at risk for another 12 months. We have ended the war on our paramedics, and response times are the best they have been in seven years. I am so proud that the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services and the Premier have been unwavering in their support for our paramedics. An extra 450 paramedics have been delivered, and I was so proud to join the Minister for Health and the Premier some months ago at Chelsea to make that announcement. That is an outstanding delivery of a commitment.

Just finally, the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel will be of substantial benefit to the community. The building of that second rail tunnel will be so very critical. Those opposite were left with planning money by the Brumby Labor government. They chose to put that back into consolidated revenue and did not have a landmark transport project. They claimed they had regional rail, even though most of the funding was from the then Rudd and Gillard federal governments and the Brumby government. They did not have a signature transport policy, and that left our state behind for years. We could be so much further ahead if they had put short-term politicking aside and made the necessary investment in our state.

Finally, with property prices increasing in our community, housing affordability continues to be a challenge. A generation is coming through now looking to find employment, trying to make their way and struggling to enter the property market. Just in Chelsea alone in the last year we had a 25 per cent increase in the median property price. This is putting more and more pressure on our communities and pressure on people seeking to enter the market, and I am so pleased that the Premier has announced that there will be an abolition of

stamp duty for first home buyers for properties up to the value of \$600 000 and cuts to stamp duty on homes valued up to \$750 000. That is looking at how we can make housing more affordable and how we can support people to enter the housing market and realise the Australian dream of getting a good job, owning bricks and mortar — owning a house — and making it in life. That is the Victorian dream, and that is something that this government, the Andrews Labor government, is putting forward well and truly into the future.

I commend the third budget of the Andrews Labor government, a proud budget that is true to our values — true to our Labor values — sets our state up for the future and provides confidence for Victorians going forward.

**Ms VICTORIA** (Bayswater) — Tax, tax, tax — that is all they think about. If the shadow Treasurer, the member for Malvern, can quote Monty Python, then so can I. This is the biggest taxing Victorian budget ever. This is the highest taxing state budget in Australia. This budget means the average Victorian household is paying \$2000 more every year than they were under the last coalition government. The rivers of gold that came with the sale of the lease of the port of Melbourne and the massive gains in stamp duties and land taxes with the property boom are not enough for this money-hungry government, and what does the community see for it? I have got to tell you: in my electorate, not much at all.

Despite a \$4 billion tax increase, a \$10 billion or thereabouts port of Melbourne windfall and a \$13 billion windfall in higher GST receipts, Labor is increasing debt by \$10 billion. There is a \$10 billion increase in state debt. They are also increasing taxes, fees, charges — whatever you want to call them. Prior to the election the then opposition leader, the now Premier, said there would be no new taxes, no ifs, no buts. He was emphatic. That was untrue at best.

There are in fact at least 10 new taxes: a \$252 million energy tax on coal royalties, which led of course to Hazelwood's closure, and that is history now; the taxi and Uber tax; the land tax surcharge for absentee owners, which was introduced at 0.5 per cent and then increased to 1.5 per cent; and the stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers, introduced at 3 per cent and now at 7 per cent. The fire services property levy has been hyped, and an increase in stamp duty is there on new cars, and of course we know what ramifications that can have on safety for drivers and passengers. There are new stamp duties on off-the-plan purchases and new stamp duties on property transfers between spouses; new annual property valuations to increase

land tax and council rates, whereas before it was every second year; and of course do not forget the new vacant residential property tax.

Every household in my electorate will pay their share of the extra at an average of about \$2000, but what are they getting for it? All my electorate gets is the continuation of works at Boronia Heights Primary School. This is a very worthy school and project, but the budget tells us that earlier stages of this upgrade, originally due for completion in mid-2016 and 2017, are already late. Most of the other ongoing projects in my patch are running significantly late too. There is nothing specific in here for Boronia West Primary School and its desperate need for an upgrade post removal of termites and asbestos. There is nothing specific in here for Heathmont College — again, a fantastic school community with leadership that is breaking away from mediocrity to be a shining example of what can be achieved with love and dedication.

There is nothing for traffic congestion, health or anything else. There is not even anything for crime. While taxes are up 20 per cent, crime is up 26.64 per cent in Knox since Labor was elected. In Maroondah, again, taxes are up 20 per cent, but crime is up 19.64 per cent since Labor was elected. But there is no money to boost police stations or introduce tougher sentencing for violent criminals. Victorians are being treated as cash cows, and we are all being milked.

We are paying more, but road congestion is getting worse, public transport is more crowded and less reliable, the standard of education our children are receiving is declining, social engineering is foremost on the agenda, and then there are the billions the government paid to not build the east–west link — something that we vitally need, not only for locals in Bayswater but also for industry. This Labor budget is a dud for Bayswater and also the outer east.

Let us have a quick look at my shadow portfolios. It is a dud for tourism. In fact you would have to say the government is disinterested in tourism. The sector is worth more than \$20 billion and employs more than 200 000 Victorians, but the government ignores it. There is just one new tourism-specific initiative in the budget. There is nothing at all for major events, and ongoing projects have been cut or are running late. Under the coalition, funding increases saw Victoria move ahead of Queensland in most tourism measures. Our 2014–15 budget increased the tourism departmental spend to \$96.9 million, but then Labor's 2015–16 budget slashed it back to just \$40.8 million and we fell off the map. They have been trying to catch

up ever since. This time Labor has added the appropriately titled Putting Victoria on the Map program, but not much else.

There are plenty of other projects that the budget reveals are either running late or have been cut. Some \$5 million was cut from the coalition's improving tourism in national parks, state forests and public land program in 2015–16. The Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund for nature-based tourism will invest less than \$1 million of the \$10.1 million allocated for 2016–17. The Royal Exhibition Building protection and promotion project is running a year overdue. The State Library redevelopment is over \$3 million behind schedule, and Zoos Victoria's Big Cat Row redevelopment is running six months late.

Labor anticipates that it has allowed the department to spend \$204.3 million on tourism this year, but the budget was \$109 million. In this portfolio when some differential occurs it can be substantial, but this is totally out of control. There is no vision, plan or passion for tourism in this budget. The industry is screaming for the government to invest in what present-day tourists desire, in encouraging careers in tourism and for the Andrews Labor government to care.

Labor refuse to actually commit to obvious things like the airport rail link. We do not need another paper or investigation into this; we need to keep up with every other major city in the world. Labor have not set challenging performance targets either; they have not even bothered to issue a media release on tourism and major events in this budget. I guess they do not have anything to talk about. The Minister for Tourism and Major Events is far more interested in soccer than in tourism and major events. For tourism and major events the budget gets a massive 'F' — 'F' for failure.

But it gets worse. For the arts and creative industries, the budget is a tale of mismanagement and cuts. The arts community should be appalled. Labor has cut a substantial \$3.2 million from the department's creative industries access, development and innovation funding pool. How many emerging artists could have had a hand up with a share of that? The budget also shows that the government blew the total departmental arts budget by \$39.4 million, and of the nine ongoing arts infrastructure projects one was slashed, five are late and one is way behind target. The Arts and Cultural Facilities Maintenance Fund was cut from \$20 million to \$18.318 million and is behind schedule. We have always said that Labor cannot manage money.

Aside from the ones I have mentioned that cross portfolio boundaries, like the Royal Exhibition

Building and the State Library, the Arts Centre Melbourne building services upgrade is running six months late, the collections storage upgrade's completion has been set back to the end of 2018 — this is critical for the storage of our assets — and the Geelong Performing Arts Centre redevelopment is running six months late. The creative industries portfolio agencies area blew their \$328.8 million budget by \$36.7 million, or 11 per cent, to \$365.5 million, so this year they have been rewarded with \$365.8 million in the budget. This led to the total departmental funding, which was budgeted for \$509.6 million last year, blowing out by an anticipated \$39.4 million to \$549 million, and now we see that funding has been cut to \$543.4 million this year. That is a cut and it is a very big concern for our industry. You would have to worry and you would have to wonder if the Minister for Creative Industries is wearing too many hats or if he simply has no passion for the arts. There is not much vision there.

But it gets even worse when you look at some of the performance indicators. Attendances are down, regional touring is down, public information is rated worse, performance grant agreements are late, additional film employment is down on last year, website visits are down on last year, members and friends of agencies are down, student participation in agency education programs is way down, users are down, satisfaction with the Arts Centre is down, satisfaction with the Australian Centre for the Moving Image is down and satisfaction with the National Gallery of Victoria is down. It is a dreadful set of results. Taxes and crime are up, up, up. The arts is down, down, down.

They have fared little better in the Aboriginal affairs portfolio, with at least one glaring problem. Aboriginal education is in crisis. Hidden away in the budget papers, performance indicators reveal that for 2016–17 only 19.9 per cent of Victorian year 9 Aboriginal students will be in the top seven of the 10 NAPLAN bands in numeracy. Of course we have to note that this week is NAPLAN week. It is down from 24.3 per cent in 2015–16.

In literacy, numbers have also fallen from 24.6 per cent to 21.4 per cent, and 51.5 per cent of all Victorian students are in the top seven bands for numeracy and 48.9 per cent for reading. Those figures are also down on previous years. Further, the government is not going to meet its own targets in six out of eight measures around Aboriginal student performance indicators in NAPLAN. It is a crisis. A decent society does not leave people behind, and a decent government finds ways to make things better, not worse. Literacy and numeracy

are vital to bridging gaps, so falling education standards are a disaster.

The budget also reveals that there has not been an Aboriginal affairs project in the capital part of the budget since the coalition's 2013–14 budget, and there are none in the forward estimates either. The Aboriginal cultural heritage management and protection, community infrastructure and young Aboriginal people's health and wellbeing programs in last year's budget have been discontinued. The healing the stolen generations and improving health outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians programs from the coalition's 2013–14 budget do not appear to have been funded again.

It is a big-taxing budget, but there is not much there for the Bayswater electorate. There is nothing exciting for tourism; it is virtually forgotten. Creative industries is in complete disarray, and Aboriginal affairs shows a fall in education outcomes. It is totally unacceptable. The community is starting to see through the smoke and mirrors and is awake to this government's failures on crime and their rorts. This budget reveals there are plenty more failures. Labor's budget means that Victorians are paying more than ever but getting less and less. So I say to the Premier and his ministers: you cannot keep using bank notes as band-aids. You have let down my electorate. You have let down the people of Victoria. This budget shows off you and your ideals very, very accurately.

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution in relation to the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017. Firstly, I would like to talk about the state of the accounts. The budget papers reveal that gross state product over the next 12 months is predicted to grow at 3.3 per cent. It is because the economy has been consistently expanding at a state level that we on this side of the house can say that we have been able to create 200 000 jobs since we were elected. It is also important to note that for the next financial year we are projecting an operating surplus in the general government sector of \$1.2 billion.

Being able to run a strong and disciplined budget enables you as a government to make certain choices as to how you spend the proceeds. I listened to the member for Malvern's contribution in which he talked about the fact that there has been an increase in debt of around \$10 billion. It is important to note that it is not so much the debt itself; it comes down to your capacity to service that debt. So if we look at the measure of net debt as a percentage of gross state product, despite taking on additional debt we are still below the 6.2 per cent that we inherited.

I know the federal government has talked about good debt and bad debt. I think you could make an argument as to what that actually means, but I think you want to make sure that you put your balance sheet to work, that you make the investment in essential economic infrastructure like the level crossing removal project or like the Mordialloc bypass to make the economy work more efficiently.

Another point I would make is that the share of the state government of Victoria, as a proportion of the state economy, is around about 25 per cent. That is important, because it is not a dominant role in the way in which business is conducted in the state of Victoria. However, if you have got a 25 per cent share and you can make some strategic investments — such as saying to the private sector that we are going to have a \$10 billion Melbourne Metro rail tunnel project that is going to last for 10 years — then the private sector can make some decisions about what that means, about the fact that they can see a pipeline of activity and they can start to employ more people. They can see that the project will run.

With big projects like this, whether there is a change of government next year or in five years or in nine years, the reality is that projects like this are so well advanced that an incoming government will, I would assume, take that on. That gives confidence to the private sector to invest, and when the private sector has that confidence to invest then you can grow and expand the economy. It becomes a virtuous cycle whereby the state makes a decision, it invests with confidence, the private sector can see that there is a pipeline of activity and it can respond. You see the situation we are in now where after three years we have had that constant rate of growth and the improvement in the economy.

I note too that we are blessed because of the fact that we are standing on the shoulders of giants — those who have gone before us. We are in a situation where the economy has expanded for 99 out of the last 102 quarters. Since the September 1991 quarter — this is at a national level and I would assume that Victoria broadly would track the national accounts — we have seen that expansion in 99 out of the last 102 quarters. What that means, if you are looking at gross state product on a per capita basis, is that, for example, in 1992 the figure was \$39 895. By 1999 it had grown to \$51 309; in 2014 it had expanded to \$59 838; and now in 2016 the most recent figures show that gross state product on a per capita basis for Victoria is \$61 241.

Markets work. An effective market where you have got productivity reforms, where you have got flexible workplaces, where you have got the ability for the

private sector to respond — and they have taken off the straitjacket of centralised wage-fixing — where they have got the ability to invest in confidence off the back of having a strong, forward capital works program of this government, has enabled that level of growth and affluence to occur. That enables the government to turn around and, if you are running a very strong and disciplined budget framework, make sure that you can take on that debt that is appropriate. You can put your balance sheet to work for the betterment of Victoria. You can make sure that you have got recurrent budget surpluses so that you can then make these sorts of investments which you think as a government are important.

It is also interesting to note that the nature of work is starting to change. I read with interest on the weekend that Paul Keating, who was interviewed by Troy Bramston in the *Australian*, said that at its peak General Motors employed 900 000 people. Facebook now — and I think you would say Facebook has peaked, or it is on its way to peaking — employs 56 000 people, but the market capitalisation of Facebook is greater than General Motors. If I look at page 6 of budget paper 2, which sets out jobs growth, jobs are being created in professional services, education, health care and social assistance, finance and insurance, and in construction. I think you could put the growth in construction down to the capital works agenda of this administration.

It is interesting to note that the nature of work is changing. What you are starting to see is a splintering of the workforce. You are seeing high value-added, high-value jobs, well-paid jobs occurring in the marketplace, more so than when you are looking at very large workplaces with low value-added jobs and low-skill jobs. What that means is that you are seeing more microbusinesses being formed. You are seeing people who are being — I suppose to use the buzz phrase from the federal government — more agile, more innovative and quite nimble.

Of course one of the challenges for those workforces and those workplaces is that they are vulnerable. They might not be members of a trade union. They might not have large levels of debt in the workplaces that they are operating in, but the reality is that they are vulnerable to market forces and to change. If I look in my electorate of Essendon and at places like Flemington, you have people who have got high levels of household debt. They might be working in non-unionised workforces, they might be working in either the service economy or in the new economy, but they are exposed. They are exposed to the changes of market forces.

Therefore there is a requirement to make sure that the state is able to be an activist state in terms of investing in education and health care, and to try to make sure that there is a light-handed approach to regulation. My sense of the notion of the state relative to the broader state economy is that it is a bit like the difference between a board of governance in an organisation and the organisation itself. As a state, because we control 25 per cent of the economy through our investments, we are more like the non-executive directors of a board where the bulk of the heavy lifting is being done by the organisation itself. By that I mean that we have got the capacity to guide and steer the organisation in a broader strategic sense, get our policy settings right and encourage the private sector to go down certain paths, but the private sector will do the bulk of the heavy lifting, as it should and as it must.

We must be mindful and careful, in light of the expansion of the economy, in light of the affluence and the growth that has occurred for 99 out of 102 quarters, as a state to try to ensure that we keep the private sector on the straight and narrow so they do not stumble and fall, and that you do not have a situation where you have unfettered capitalism, where you turn your back on market failure where market failure exists.

So there is a need to make sure that as a state we get those settings right and we provide that level of clear guidance and direction. That is evidenced in terms of the capital works program that we are currently embarking upon and making those sorts of strategic investments in some of those specific industries. You have got to get the balance right.

Turning to the budget itself, I think the fact that we are investing \$1.9 billion in the family violence portfolio is of enormous significance, and it builds on the \$572 million we invested in the last financial year. I think that is particularly important because if you are looking at human capital in its purest form, if you have children who are the victims of family violence who end up being deprived, neglected and abused and they go to school and are well behind their peers, the achievement gap is present and it will expand over the course of time.

So you will have children who will not be able to fulfil their potential. Therefore rather than, for example, these children playing a role as adults in professional services or in education or health care, they might be working in the service economy, or they might be in prison, or they might be in a mental health institution, or they might be receiving a government transfer payment for the rest of their lives because of the trauma and abuse they experienced as children. If we are trying to become a

more productive society, if we want to become a great society, if we want to become a fairer society, having these sorts of investments that address the scourge of family violence is really important. Indeed I think that if you have 40 per cent of police call-outs relating to family violence, being able to address that means that Victoria Police can get on with their core business rather than dealing with this abomination.

Coming briefly to the electorate of Essendon, I am absolutely delighted and thrilled with the investments in some of my local primary schools, with \$766 000 for Essendon Primary School, \$1.759 million for Ascot Vale Primary School, and \$502 000 for Moonee Ponds West Primary School.

I am really pleased to see the line item of \$36 million for the Flemington public housing estate. I am firmly of the view that broadacre public housing estates have failed. They have consistently failed the tenants over many generations, and we have got to break the cycle of intergenerational welfare dependency. I think you can build stronger, more vibrant and more resilient communities by having a mix of people living together — the private sector worker, the private renter and the private owner living with public tenants. It leads to stronger and more resilient communities and better outcomes for people, rather than having instances where people are basically locked up in a ghetto and institutionalised.

I am also delighted and thrilled that we are bringing forward the removal of the Buckley Street level crossing. This is a really exciting project. I was looking at an article in the *Age* from 1924, when there was a meeting between the tramways board, the Victorian Railways and the old City of Essendon, talking about the removal of the Buckley Street level crossing. It is fantastic to see that we are now able to get on and fast-track that work and remove the level crossing as a matter of urgency so we can make sure that we are increasing the efficiency of that road network. You can make sure that people are not stuck at boom gates. I was speaking with a principal recently, and her record at that crossing was 25 minutes waiting for the boom gates to go up.

It is really a very, very strong budget. It has the hallmarks of a traditional Labor government budget, which we have seen at a state level year in, year out, for close to 20 years, where you have that level of strong financial management. So you have low debt, you are putting your balance sheet to work and you make sure that you have got very strong budget surpluses so you can be in command of your own destiny. I think that is a really important thing.

It will be an interesting challenge for the opposition as they go into an election next year as to what they will do. Will they cut taxes? Will they abandon these taxes? Do they want then to cut the public sector? Will they not embark upon these capital projects and initiatives? You have got to get the balance right. You have got to make sure that you send the right signal to the private sector so that you can continue to grow and expand the economy, but you have got to make sure that you have got the capacity to make those choices about investing in what you want to do.

The reality is that if you have got a budget deficit, if you are trying to service a recurrent deficit, you are not going to be able to do the things that are really important to you as a government. It does not matter whether it is a Labor government or a coalition government; you have got to make sure that you have got the right policy settings in place so that you can run that very strong and disciplined financial framework.

It is a fantastic budget. I look forward to exploring it in far more depth and detail over the course of the 56½ hours in which I think we will be experiencing the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings. It is an outstanding budget, and I commend it to the house.

**Ms RYALL** (Ringwood) — I rise to make a contribution to the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017. Unfortunately this is a typical high-taxing Labor budget. It does little more than push up the cost of living for everyday Victorians and deliver less and less. To quote the shadow Treasurer: under the Premier the only thing rising faster than the crime rate, which is up 20.2 per cent since the election, is the tax take, up 22.2 per cent.

In Maroondah we have 14 less frontline sworn police officers than we did at the end of 2014, and crime is up 18.8 per cent in the latest official crime statistics for Maroondah. Residents are fearful. They are worried about their own and their family's safety and security in their homes and on the roads as they go about their daily activities. Never have we as Victorians felt like this before, where crooks and thugs seem to have more rights than everyone else, where violent youth offenders can breach bail and not wear the consequences of that and where a family asleep in their home in Mitcham have their home invaded by thugs who have escaped from the Malmsbury youth detention centre and who hold them up with a machete and a baseball bat while their kids sleep. Our population is increasing substantially, and yet there are 14 less police in Maroondah than there were when this government was elected. We saw in the *Herald Sun* of 22 April that

Ringwood station was in the top two suburban stations for daytime crime in 2016.

While the Premier boasts about his surplus, Victorians have received nothing in cost-of-living relief, just new and higher taxes and charges. In fact taxes have increased by almost \$4 billion since this government came to power. That is an average of around \$2000 for each household in higher taxes since the election. On top of that, households are dealing with higher gas and electricity prices, higher water bills, higher tolls and higher transport costs. While this government is hitting families with higher taxes and doing nothing about the cost of living, it is behaving in a reckless manner and putting families and households under more pressure by doing things like taxing Hazelwood to extinction in the Latrobe Valley — all of this from a Premier who looked every Victorian in the eye on television prior to the last election and categorically promised them that there would be no new or increased taxes. The point is that no-one can trust this Premier — no-one.

Families are under more pressure because small businesses are struggling with increased energy costs. In my electorate 89.9 LightFM, a fabulous community radio station with 1 million listeners, has seen its energy bills triple. It is now paying \$22 000 per annum, which is triple what it was paying. Where does it get the money from? That is not to mention the butchers, the grocers and our drycleaners, those small businesses that rely heavily on power. That is just a small sample of the small businesses that have been hit by this government's heavy hand.

All the while we have skyrocketing crime, we have roads that are more congested than ever, we have education outcomes that are declining and public transport that is packed to the limit. Never forget that this is the Premier and this is the government that cancelled the east–west link and wasted \$1.2 billion to not build a critical road, because they were more worried about losing their inner-city seats to the Greens than they were about the 42 000 adults and their children in my community. They wasted \$1.2 billion to not build a critical link that would have seen the eastern end half finished by now. They wasted \$1.2 billion without considering the wider economic benefits.

We know that the largest drag on economic productivity is that area that would have been dealt with. Quite simply we know that the cost to businesses of people not being able to make their way around this state and around the metropolitan area is significant. This government is more interested in politics than in helping families in my community spend more time with each other and less time in traffic. So while the

Andrews Labor government is taxing Victorians to the hilt, to the tune of an extra \$4 billion, they have had the \$10 billion windfall from the port and received \$13 billion more in GST, yet they are still putting us in further debt to the tune of \$10 billion.

It is a government whose members have been found to be rorting the taxpayer. It is a government that spent a very significant undisclosed sum of taxpayer funds fighting to stop the Ombudsman from investigating Labor Party members' own allegations that Labor rorted taxpayers at the last election in the rorts for votes scandal. In fact they spent taxpayer money to challenge the Ombudsman, would not accept the Supreme Court's ruling, went to the Court of Appeal and then even went to the High Court — all on the purse of the taxpayer. This is the most disgraceful, dishonest and untrustworthy government known to Victorians. They cannot find a dollar to reopen police stations they closed, but they can let the member for Melton get away with rorting thousands of taxpayers dollars, only having to pay a proportion of it back with the very money he is earning by being kept in this chamber by the Premier, on the taxpayer, right now.

When you go to the government's website and enter the postcodes of my electorate of Ringwood — enter the municipalities — to find out what the government has committed to, two little blue squares pop up. So I clicked on those squares getting a little bit excited, thinking that there might actually be something in this budget for my electorate, and what popped up? Two upgrades — one at the intersection of Canterbury and Bedford roads and one at the corner of Whitehorse and Dunlavin roads — that do not even belong to this government; two upgrades that are not funded by this government; two upgrades that Michael Sukkar and the federal government have funded. So the Victorian government has tried to pull wool over the eyes of my community by putting on their website that they have funded some upgrades that actually were not even from their own budget. All to make it look like they are doing something when they are doing nothing. They are dishonest and desperate.

We have got Norwood Secondary College in my electorate. I have just been listening to Labor members roll off their tongues a plethora of schools in their own electorates and how they are being funded, how they are being rebuilt and how they are being upgraded. Yet we have got Norwood Secondary College, which has not had capital works to its educational buildings or class areas since 1970. It has a Gough Whitlam library.

**Mr R. Smith** — The education state isn't for everyone.

**Ms RYALL** — That is it. That is exactly right: the education state is not for everybody. We have a Premier who could not even give a double basketball court to 1100 students. They get a single-court stadium.

**Mr R. Smith** interjected.

**Ms RYALL** — That is right. So a school of 1100 students is stranded by this government. Make no mistake; Labor can stand there and say, ‘In four years you didn’t fix our \$280-odd million of maintenance that we left behind’. They have been in government for 13½ years out of the last 17½ years. What we are hearing about is Labor seats getting schools and all sorts of upgrades. I am not hearing or seeing anything in my electorate of Ringwood.

In terms of that one single court, once again we were rescued by the federal government. Michael Sukkar has advocated for and provided the Ringwood Basketball Association with a second court that will be built at Norwood, so they will actually get a double-court stadium for the school. But it is not from this government, and that is so unfortunate. What does that say about what the Premier thinks of the young people who go to Norwood Secondary College? Why are they not as important as those students in Labor-held seats? What does it say to the school community? We do not even know whether the single basketball court will be funded in this actual budget because it is not clear on the line items.

There is nothing for Maroondah Hospital car park in the budget. A \$12 million car park is desperately needed, which is a responsibility of the state government. Once again the feds have had to step in to fund some of that car park. They have put \$2 million towards it, thanks again to the member for Deakin. There was nothing from this government. The hospital in fact has to borrow \$10 million from the government, to be repaid with interest, and we all know what that means. That is an increase in parking fees right at a time when people are under pressure and the cost of living is going up. They are sick or they are anxious because family members are not well, and they are hit again by this government.

I come to transparency — or should I say a lack of transparency. To determine that for our community and for taxpayers wanting to know about value for money, I asked 18 months ago about the business case for the Heatherdale and Blackburn level crossing removals. Taxpayers want to know what they are getting for their money and that everything had been considered.

Eighteen months ago the minister wrote to me and said, ‘It’s on its way’. She said an overarching business case was being done for all level crossing removals. That was 18 months ago, and there is no business case. Eighteen months later the politics being played out by this government on level crossings is extraordinary. The costs have blown out and Victorians are being kept in the dark. There is no transparency whatsoever. Now we find out that they are removing a level crossing that only has four trains a day going through it. That is money that belongs to Victorians. But we have a Premier who thinks that whatever belongs to others is his for the taking — his to use and abuse for Labor’s political purposes. This government should be ashamed of itself.

As I said, all I have heard is members opposite spruiking about the wonderful things they are getting for their schools in terms of upgrades and new buildings. I asked for \$50 000 on behalf of Eastwood Primary School, one of the most run down in the state. We built them a new school for \$7.3 million. They had a car park flooding issue and needed to spend some money that would have normally gone on an evaporative box. All the duct work is in place; they just needed the box to get some evaporative airflow into two of their pods. On two occasions I asked the Minister for Education for \$50 000 so those children can have some airflow into two of those pods in their new school, and both times I was knocked back. Now, it is one thing to hear about all the wonderful things that are happening in Labor seats, but when you cannot even provide \$50 000 in this high-taxing budget to provide my school, Eastwood Primary School, and the students there with some evaporative airflow simply so they are more comfortable on hot days, I just think that is extraordinary.

There is very little, if anything, for my local community. As I said, the only two things that are highlighted are federal government funding upgrades of intersections on the corners of main roads. I think this government should be ashamed of itself. It has put politics before policy. It is squeezing Victorians left, right and centre with high taxes. It is just so true to type for Labor to put themselves first and Victorians second.

I am very, very concerned about small business. Obviously I had 15 years experience in small business prior to coming into this place. I know how difficult it is to keep the doors open. I know the cost of compliance. I know how hard you work to make sure that your employees are always looked after and are always paid before you even take a cent, and how hard you work to create opportunities for others to have jobs. These small businesses and microbusinesses are

starting out or trying to survive but are getting squeezed with massive energy costs. That is one of the most demoralising things, for a business to watch any opportunity and any growth going out the door, squandered by an increase in bills. I am deeply concerned, particularly for our local grocery stores and small businesses. As I said, butchers, bakers — all those in a shopping strip.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Ms RYALL** — It is not funny. I will absolutely say, member for Pascoe Vale, it is not funny, because we work very, very hard to give job opportunities to others, only to find our cafes, our butcher shops and so forth really struggling. I have a local IGA, and the cost does not go away just because they are closed. They have refrigeration and heating needs all night — temperature issues all night — so their energy costs are just spiralling out of control. As I said, we have got a community radio station whose energy costs have trebled to \$22 000 a year.

It is one thing for them to say how great they are or to say, ‘We’re doing great things for people’, but if people cannot pay their bills and if businesses cannot pay their bills, then the opportunity to keep people employed is at risk. It is so difficult to maintain staff when your costs are going through the roof and you have no control and no ability to rein them in.

So I am very, very disappointed for my local community in relation to this budget. There is nothing in it for them. My schools are in need as well, but there is nothing there for them. I have heard so much from others about how much they are getting for their communities, how much they are getting for their schools and how much they are getting for infrastructure. There is nothing for the electorate of Ringwood, and I am deeply concerned about the pressure and the costs that are being applied to families and to the household budgets in my community.

**Mr EREN** (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — It is an absolute pleasure to speak in support of the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017. I would like to begin by congratulating the Premier, the Treasurer, the ministers and all of the caucus who have made this a successful budget, and I will outline exactly what I mean by a successful budget.

For a long time the conservative side of this house has tried to portray Labor as somehow mismanaging finances and not being prudent in terms of the budget. But let me say this: when we were in government from 1999 and then subsequently up until 2010, in every

single year and every single budget we were in surplus and had a healthy surplus forecast, which meant that we had a AAA credit rating all the way, with record investment in infrastructure. That was through some of the toughest years the financial world has ever seen with the global financial crisis. All the way back to its beginnings in 2006 and through to 2010 it devastated economies right across the globe.

We as a state were seen from afar, and people actually made determinations that Victoria’s economy was probably stronger under those difficult circumstances than many other nations across the globe. We had one of the best Treasurers in John Brumby, and in this term of government we have the best Treasurer going forward. The Treasurer has done a tremendous job, leaving yet again a healthy surplus in the kitty to make sure that we survive some of the volatility that occurs in financial markets from time to time and that we have a AAA credit rating. By the way, we are the only state in the nation to have a AAA credit rating. I think New South Wales came on board recently. So it is a fantastic budget from that perspective.

I think the lesson learned by the opposition was that they were in government for only one term because they did not actually listen to the community. They cut back viciously on those vital areas of health, education, TAFE and so on and so forth, which we have done extremely well in accommodating. Even in today’s question time there was not one question about the budget. We have just handed down one of our biggest budgets. It is the third budget of our four-year term, and you would think that the opposition could find a fault with the budget and have one question on the budget, but there were no questions from them in relation to this wonderful budget.

I am extremely proud of the work that has been done by our government. The Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, who is also the Minister for Women, is at the table, and I am extremely proud of the unprecedented, comprehensive and long overdue package that we have provided to address some of the issues in relation to family violence. It is a \$1.9 billion package. We are leading the way across the nation, and everybody is looking at us in terms of where to from here. People are looking for opportunities to make some of the changes that they need to make to tackle this issue head-on, and that is exactly what we have enabled. We are very proud of the fact that we are the first state to have a Royal Commission into Family Violence. The recommendations have been set, and we have allocated large amounts of money to tackle that very important issue.

The budget also commits \$1.3 billion to continue the revitalisation of our education system. We said in the lead-up to the last election that we would make Victoria the Education State. That is exactly what we have done. When you look at the massive investments we have made budget after budget, and at the neglect that existed and which was inflicted upon this state in the four years of the terrible previous administration, you can see that we have played catch-up. The current Minister for Education has done a tremendous job in catching up on the lack of progress that the Opposition made when they were in government. We are working towards making sure that we continue that very important investment in education.

The budget also builds on our record-breaking investments in the state's health system, with almost \$2.9 billion to ensure all Victorians, irrespective of their economic circumstances, receive world-class care.

**Mr R. Smith** interjected.

**Mr EREN** — I take up that interjection. I know it is unruly to make interjections, but when it comes to education we are proud of the investments that we have made. Tonight, you know what, if only the opposition could pick up the phone and ring their federal counterparts to fund education. We have been doing it on our own for the last three budgets because the federal government is asleep at the wheel when it comes to helping this state achieve educational outcomes for our kids and their futures. I would suggest to the opposition they actually pick up the phone.

But it is too late. The federal government are about to announce their budget, and we know that they do not really care about Victoria. They are a Sydney-centric government, and they do not really listen to the opposition here because they are not worth listening to. That is why I think it is important to have a strong and robust opposition so that we can at least get the federal government to pay some attention to this state. Unfortunately that is not the case, so we are allocating \$2.9 billion to ensure all Victorians, irrespective of their economic circumstances, receive world-class health care.

It is very important to make sure of that of course. Health is number one. There is no question about that. There is nothing more important than making sure that our health is paramount, that we have a healthcare system that gives us a good quality of life going forward. Longevity is very important. We are the sporting capital. We are the major events capital. We are the most livable city. Our population is growing faster than anywhere else, and people want to live a

long and healthy life. That is why it is so important to make sure that we have a good health system.

The budget also provides a \$2 billion boost to Victoria Police, ensuring they have every resource they need to keep our streets safe, put victims first and hold perpetrators to account. This is a record investment, and we saw the Police Association Victoria and the Chief Commissioner of Police proudly standing next to our Minister for Police crediting the government for investing the largest amount ever in the history of police in a state — the largest amount ever invested into our police and resourcing. We are very proud of that.

We are also very proud of the \$4 billion investment into regional Victoria. We remember the days — and we will never forget the days — of Jeff Kennett calling regional Victoria the toenails of Victoria. That did not really sit well with people in regional Victoria, and I think people appreciate the fact that we have changed that now. We are certainly front and centre in terms of making sure that the needs of regional Victoria are catered for, and this \$4 billion investment is a testament to our commitment to it.

I now go to my part of the world, which is Geelong. On top of the fantastic general initiatives that we have provided for Victorians I am also proud of the investments we have made in the Geelong region. For the wider Geelong region we have seen some key investments, including \$3.9 million to kickstart the planning and design of stage 5 of Kardinia Park, which as many would know is a very important piece of infrastructure that drives the economy in Geelong. Every time we have an event in Geelong at that wonderful stadium we generate about \$3 million to \$4 million for the wider economy of Geelong. We understand the value of that very important infrastructure. We are dedicated to making sure that we have the best first-class facilities of anywhere in the nation and indeed internationally. By the time the next stage is finished it will be the best international stadium in a regional area. We are very proud of the investments we have made in Kardinia Park.

We also have an Ice Action Plan and a share in \$9.7 million to acquire land in the Barwon region to build an up to 18-bed residential drug rehabilitation facility. Further, we are also investing \$210 million as part of the regional rail revival plan to upgrade the Warrnambool and Geelong lines to enable more trains and better services, which is so important to regional Victoria. This is dependent, of course, upon the federal government. We are just asking for money that we are owed by the federal government so that we can proceed

with these very important plans to upgrade our regional rail facilities.

Today I was very proud to stand alongside the Minister for Public Transport and the Premier in announcing a further 140 services throughout regional areas, which is so important. Connectivity is everything for regional Victoria, and that is why the additional 69 services we are adding to the Geelong line will make sure that Geelong is a great place to live, work, raise a family and catch public transport. There is also \$311 million for extra VLocity carriages and \$316 million for rail maintenance to support train punctuality, safety and reliability for passenger trains. There is \$530 million to maintain and upgrade regional roads and bridges and to plan for future expansion to cater for regional growth, including \$65.8 million confirmed for our roads across south-west Victoria, including the Great Ocean Road.

There is \$21.1 million for 15 school upgrades across the Geelong region and \$50 million to double the first home owner grant to \$20 000 for new homes in regional areas, which will help thousands of Victorians to settle into regional areas like Geelong. Payroll tax cuts of 25 per cent for all businesses operating substantially in regional Victoria will benefit around 4000 businesses. There is \$448 million to establish support and safety hubs, with regional launch sites in the Barwon region, \$1.12 billion for better transport of course and \$65.8 million towards a south-west Victoria roads package. There is \$15 million for a future industries manufacturing program to extend support for former automotive industry workers, including those in Geelong.

Funding of \$15 million has been allocated for the Revitalising Central Geelong Action Plan, including new stormwater and infrastructure at Johnstone Park, construction of new laneway connections to Malop Street, planning to expand the Green Spine, and new bus infrastructure. Geelong will share in \$29 million to help develop and deliver identified regional partnership priorities. This includes funds to upgrade local tourism infrastructure and the establishment of a task force and project team to simplify the complex management arrangements for the Great Ocean Road. Regional tourism is crucial to the Geelong economy, with highlights like the Great Ocean Road and the Otways drawing visitors from around the globe. The budget also includes \$24.8 million to increase the reach of Visit Victoria and showcase the best of our regions to the world.

My electorate of Lara is again a big winner in education. Hamlyn Banks Primary School will receive \$1.5 million for modernisation of existing school

buildings, and Lara Lakes Primary School has been allocated \$1.8 million for modernisation and upgrades that will take place at that school. Corio State Emergency Service (SES) has been allocated \$1.6 million for the relocation of the Corio SES.

I just want to point out that we will complete other very important infrastructure, which includes Melbourne Park. When you consider the Melbourne Park redevelopment, the Australian Open tennis has been the most successful ever for three years running. In 2015 we had 703 000 people attend, which was a record number. In 2016 we had 720 000 people attend, which again broke the record, and this year of course we had 728 000 people attend the Australian Open — the best grand slam tournament ever, anywhere. In the Southern Hemisphere it is the largest sporting event on the calendar. Of course that very important precinct is not just about tennis, which is so important, but it is about the 300 events that we have in that precinct — so the 5500 jobs and \$420 million associated with it.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER** — Order! The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

### Bayside bay trail

**Mr R. SMITH** (Warrandyte) — (12 557) My contribution to the adjournment debate is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and concerns the stalled plans to build a trail along Beach Road from Mentone to Mordialloc Creek. My specific request of the minister is that he makes his position clear on this matter, stating whether he supports the majority of residents who were consulted on this issue many months ago and who settled on a compromise position that was widely accepted or whether he supports the minority view of his Labor Kingston council colleagues who wish to continue to re-prosecute the issue until they get the answer they want.

There could not be a clearer or more simple approach to this issue. Council has heard the will of Kingston ratepayers in its previous iteration, before the most recent local government elections, and none of the newly elected Labor councillors made this a platform issue when they asked Kingston residents for their vote. Yet here we are, months later, and for reasons that are purely focused on the political rather than on ratepayers wishes, this matter has become a toxic issue that has divided and angered the community. They are angry

that their views have been discarded and angry that some members of council are taking such a pig-headed approach and employing underhanded tactics to frustrate the will of the ratepayers.

Local Labor MP the member for Mordialloc is employing a typical Labor tactic — pretending to support his local community while doing nothing to actually have the problem dealt with. The only other explanation for his inability to have this issue resolved is that his colleague the minister for roads, who he sits with in the Labor caucus, is so disinterested in the member for Mordialloc's views that the issue is not even on the minister's radar.

Residents of Kingston deserve a state member of Parliament who is effective and active in supporting the community he is supposed to represent. This issue has dragged on for months but not once has the member for Mordialloc raised the matter in this chamber and, frankly, I doubt that he has even raised it behind closed doors.

As it now falls on the opposition to support and represent Kingston residents I ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety what the member for Mordialloc is unprepared to ask: Minister, make a public statement on where you stand on this important local issue.

### Police numbers

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** (Oakleigh) — (12 558) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Police. The action I seek is for the minister to visit the Oakleigh electorate to meet with local police officers and discuss the policing needs of our community.

As members are aware, though some opposite like to ignore it, the Andrews government is recruiting over 3000 new police officers in Victoria. This is the biggest recruitment of police in Victoria's history. There is more equipment, better technology and more helicopters, vehicles and aircraft. This is a \$2 billion investment. It follows on from the massive recruitment that took place during the Bracks and Brumby Labor government years.

As we know, the previous Liberal government failed to invest in police. They did not fund any additional frontline officers in their four long years of government. Funding was cut. Around 500 police staff lost their jobs. In my own community, police numbers dropped significantly between 2010 and 2014. Stations across Victoria were closed. And do you know what? They even effectively closed the Murrumbeena police

station in my electorate in 2013. But what members might not be aware was that it was not the first time they closed this station. They had form. They had also closed it back in 1999.

Locals do not believe for a second that the Liberals have a real commitment to police in our community. They have shown their true colours on police for over a generation now. Let us also not forget that under the Liberal government in the 1990s police numbers were reduced by around 800 and stations were closed. If you want to look at the facts, you need to go back as far as 1982 to see the last time a Liberal government funded additional police officers. I believe the shadow Minister for Police had not long been in primary school at that time. Those are the facts. They are not alternative facts either. These are the real facts.

It is Labor governments that fund police, just as we fund paramedics, nurses, teachers and all sorts of public servants who look after us, and we have the record to prove it. I was very pleased to be with the minister at the police academy in Glen Waverley in December to welcome new police and protective services officer graduates. They are already on the beat. I would welcome the minister coming to the Oakleigh electorate to meet with me and local police. I know she has shown a real commitment to the police portfolio and to people. We have a government that is making a real effort on law and order, more than any other government before it.

### Victorian pet food processors

**Ms KEALY** (Lowan) — (12 559) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The action I seek is that the minister immediately provide all required information, including a kangaroo management plan, to the federal government so that approval for wildlife trade operations (WTO) can be granted for Victorian pet food processors.

Following extensive lobbying by my Nationals colleagues and me, in September 2016 the government finally announced an extension and expansion of the kangaroo pet food trial. To minimise waste from harvesting kangaroos for pet food it is essential that pet food processors can export the skins to international markets. This requires federal approval as a wildlife trade operation.

Nine months ago David Preece of Victorian Petfood Processors in Hamilton and Seymour applied for WTO approval for the expanded kangaroo pet food trial regions of Glenelg, West Wimmera, Loddon and Bendigo. However, the federal government cannot

approve the application for a WTO until further information is received from the Victorian government.

So here we are, nine months on, and after numerous meetings with Victorian government department representatives, the Victorian Labor government has done absolutely nothing to supply the required information to the federal government so that this WTO approval can be granted. Perhaps it is seeking to sabotage the kangaroo pet food trial to appease inner-city Greens voters.

The delay by Labor in supplying the required information has led to the suspension of an expansion of the Hamilton pet food abattoir, costing local jobs. Victorian pet food processors now have a stockpile of kangaroo skins from the new harvest regions, which has significantly impacted on company cash flow and is putting 30 jobs at risk, all because the Victorian Labor government is sitting on its hands and doing absolutely nothing to provide the required information to the federal government so that the WTO can be approved.

I therefore ask that the minister finally do something to undertake the required kangaroo surveys, release the data and submit the Victorian kangaroo management plan to the federal government so that the Victorian pet food processors' wildlife trade operations for the export of kangaroo skins can be assessed and approved.

### **Moonee Ponds courthouse**

**Mr PEARSON** (Essendon) — (12 560) My adjournment matter tonight relates to the Minister for Planning. The action I seek is that the Minister for Planning meet with me at the Moonee Ponds courthouse, which was damaged by fire late last year. The minister was very helpful in providing some initial funds to provide some rehabilitation of the site. I welcome the minister to come out to inspect the site at his earliest convenience.

### **Red Hill Consolidated School**

**Mr DIXON** (Nepean) — (12 561) I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for him to visit Red Hill Consolidated School. The school was assessed about four years ago as needing \$1.5 million worth of maintenance. There was a commitment made by the previous government to fund that maintenance.

Obviously there was nothing in the budget this year for the school. I have raised this matter before with the minister, and I know the school has also written to him on a couple of occasions regarding their maintenance needs. The school is over 60 years old

and since its construction has never received a capital grant. The school has over 600 students. It really is a top-class school with very high educational outcomes and is very popular.

The school is located in a bush setting. It has no mains water or sewerage, so there are large expenses in that regard. The parents and the community raise a lot of money for the school; in fact I attended their annual art show — which was huge — on the weekend. However, all the money the school raises — and they raise a lot — has to go towards maintenance; it does not go towards any of the school programs. You can only do that for so long.

The maintenance needed at the school was assessed at \$1.5 million four years ago. The only money the school has been able to spend on it comes from its fundraising. They just cannot keep up. The place is now literally falling apart. Everything is rotting. It is their turn for capital works. As I said, they have not received any capital grants for 60 years. They have been totally self-sufficient, but now they cannot keep up with their maintenance requirements.

They want to spend their money. They are a very high-performing school. They want modern teaching spaces. The fact that they actually have to spend their money on maintenance means they are unable to provide any of that themselves, so the school needs a massive capital injection not only to upgrade the school but also to catch up on the maintenance.

The action I require is that the minister visit the school. A petition will be tabled tomorrow in this place calling on the minister to visit to look at the great programs going on in that school but, most importantly, to inspect the facilities and see the dire need. This is a school that has looked after itself for 60 years. It has not received any grants other than for things like ramps and the regular maintenance that any school receives. It is their turn.

### **Bentleigh electorate bus services**

**Mr STAIKOS** (Bentleigh) — (12 562) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that the minister direct Public Transport Victoria to commence a program of consultation on improvements to bus services in my electorate. The bus network in my electorate has changed very little for at least as long as I can remember, and I have lived in the electorate all my life —

**Mr Gidley** interjected.

**Mr STAIKOS** — Yes, that was pretty good, but there is more to do than the 703. It is important that we look at the issue holistically, that we look at all the bus services we have in the electorate, that we look at the bus network and that we look for the service gaps and ways to address them.

At a forum last year our community identified a number of service gaps, including the lack of a north-south route between East Boundary Road and the Nepean Highway. There is some funding in the budget to improve bus services in a number of locations, including my electorate, so I ask the minister to commence a program of consultation on ways forward.

### **Mount Waverley electorate schools**

**Mr GIDLEY** (Mount Waverley) — (12 563) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Education. The action that I seek from the minister is to reverse his cancellation of key school rebuild projects in the Mount Waverley district that were signed off by the previous state Liberal government but which he cancelled after being elected to government at the November 2014 election.

The cancellations that the education minister presided over in my electorate are of significant concern. We had a \$6 million rebuild project for the worthy students, staff and school community at Glen Waverley Primary School. Unfortunately that commitment, which had been signed off, has been cancelled. Now the school is faced with just a school hall rebuild project. That school is worthy of a capital upgrade and rebuild. The plans were there, the heavy lifting was done, but it was cancelled.

Mount Waverley Secondary College was undertaking a \$10.58 million two-stage rebuild program, signed off by the previous Liberal government, as well as a commitment to the second stage, estimated at about \$8.3 million. Again this is a worthy school in my district. A number of school audits noted that it required capital maintenance. It has good student numbers, good teachers and a good school community, who are working and fundraising hard, but it was in desperate need of that commitment; it was in desperate need of that rebuild program for the middle school and the senior school to ensure that students could have modern technology and modern classrooms. Unfortunately, as I said, it has been cancelled by the state Labor government.

At the final one in my electorate, Brentwood Secondary College, there was a commitment for a stage 1 and 2 rebuild. Stage 1 would have got \$8.381 million and the

commitment to stage 2 was estimated at between \$10 million and \$11 million. Brentwood Secondary College is another very good secondary school in my district. Numbers are continuing to climb as a consequence of good teachers, good student leadership, good staff leadership and a community that values education. It is just so disappointing as these schools — where all the preparation, the heavy lifting and the sign-off was done — were worthy recipients. Then from November 2014, in the first Andrews Labor government budget, those funds just disappeared; they just disappeared. It is such a shame because those students are worthy.

I have continued to fight for my district and for those students, those parents and those school communities. Regardless of whether or not the Minister for Education thinks it is a priority or not, I will continue the good fight for those schools in this district. We need the funding, and I ask the minister to reverse the education cuts of the Victorian Labor government.

### **Albion railway station**

**Ms SULEYMAN** (St Albans) — (12 564) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. The action that I seek is for the minister to investigate the possibility of funding the installation of secure bike cages for commuters at Albion station. Albion station is one of the most popular stations in my electorate, with over 17 000 people using it every week. It is one of the top 50 busiest stations in Victoria and a major travel hub for students attending the Victoria University Sunshine campus. The number of commuters using it is on the rise, as I previously stated, as the population in the west continues to rapidly grow. We have experienced a large increase in commuters cycling to and from the station. Albion station needs a secure bike cage to cater for the growing number of commuters using the station so that they are able to securely store their bikes, and to encourage others to cycle too.

### **Polwarth electorate roads**

**Mr RIORDAN** (Polwarth) — (12 565) My adjournment matter tonight is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is for the minister to provide a list of initiatives he plans to implement in order to ensure foreign drivers who are allowed on Victorian roads are capable of meeting minimum safety standards. Increasingly many tourist regions around Victoria are experiencing an unsettling rise in accidents caused by foreign drivers as the self-drive tourist craze continues to gather speed.

In recent years VicRoads have done much to raise the standard of drivers in Victoria, in particular young and inexperienced drivers, through better education and by continually trying to improve behaviour, whether it is around speed, road sharing or other initiatives. Little to nothing has been done to make sure tourists who are at times tackling some of our most difficult roads, such as the Great Ocean Road, are qualified to do so. The desire by government to reach a zero road toll will never be possible when we allow people who have never driven before, let alone on the left-hand side of the road, to have as their first drive a full-day drive from Melbourne to Port Campbell and back again. This is not a theme park ride. In fact most theme parks put in place more regulations and have more care over people going on a ride than what this government does over people taking their first drive along the Great Ocean Road.

Foreign tourists are an important component of regional Victoria's tourist offer. However, it is irresponsible of this government to put at risk both the lives of international tourists and locals alike who drive on these roads on a daily basis through inaction and a lack of will to improve road safety.

### **Yan Yean electorate schools zoning**

**Ms GREEN** (Yan Yean) — (12 566) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that he review the proposed school attendance boundaries in Mernda and Doreen, which are causing some consternation and distress for families in Mernda and Doreen. I want to thank Narelle Hargreaves, who has written to me on behalf of families in Mernda and Doreen. They suggest that the line-of-sight boundaries that have been proposed by the department will disadvantage some people in those communities. I know that the minister has been a frequent visitor to the area, and I have no doubt that he will get involved in this matter.

I think it is important that we support the great schools in the area, including Hazel Glen College, and Mernda Central P-12 College and Mernda Park Primary School, which both opened this year. Laurimar Primary School is also a fantastic school, as well as that great local country school, Doreen Primary School, which is limited in the number of students that can attend because it is not on reticulated sewerage; it is limited to 150 students. I also want to protect the needs of other great schools such as Diamond Valley College and Whittlesea Secondary College. I want to support the families in Doreen and Mernda, and I have every confidence that the minister will act to review these proposed boundaries.

### **Responses**

**Ms NEVILLE** (Minister for Police) — Can I thank the member for Oakleigh for raising this matter with me and asking me to come and visit his electorate and meet with local residents and also local hardworking police in the area. He pointed out some interesting facts, and I just remind the house that I think I mentioned today that we have funded, in the three budgets we have had, 43 significant new police stations, upgrades or refurbishments, compared to 14 by those opposite. What we have actually had is those opposite spending their time out there promising to reopen stations that they closed. Murrumbeena is an example; they closed it twice.

The reason they have not been able to deliver on their promises around police stations, whether it is Murrumbeena or whether it is the Waurn Ponds station, is that they never funded new police to be able to staff those stations. Let us be clear: there were zero new police in their time. Every single police officer was funded by a Labor government, and we have got record numbers coming. I would just say to the member for Oakleigh I very much look forward in the next few weeks to coming out and visiting, with him, the very hardworking police officers and the local residents.

A number of other members raised a number of other issues for ministers, and I will pass those issues on.

**The SPEAKER** — Order! The house stands adjourned until tomorrow.

**House adjourned 7.20 p.m.**

