

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 15 November 2017

(Extract from book 15)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

(from 16 October 2017)

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

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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(to 15 October 2017)

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Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
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Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, MP

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(to 12 September 2017)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence (until 23 August 2017)	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, MP

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

Speaker

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

The Hon. TELMO LANGUILLER (to 25 February 2017)

Deputy Speaker

Ms J. MAREE EDWARDS (from 7 March 2017)

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

Acting Speakers

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

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier

The Hon. D. M. ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier

The Hon. J. A. MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. M. J. GUY

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

The Hon. D. J. HODGETT

Leader of The Nationals

The Hon. P. L. WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals

Ms S. RYAN

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Ms Bridget Noonan

Council — Acting Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

Member	District	Party	Member	District	Party
Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
Andrews, Mr Daniel Michael	Mulgrave	ALP	Merlino, Mr James Anthony	Monbulk	ALP
Angus, Mr Neil Andrew Warwick	Forest Hill	LP	Morris, Mr David Charles	Mornington	LP
Asher, Ms Louise	Brighton	LP	Mulder, Mr Terence Wynn ²	Polwarth	LP
Battin, Mr Bradley William	Gembrook	LP	Naphine, Dr Denis Vincent ³	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio ⁴	Melton	Ind
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma ¹	South-West Coast	LP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John ⁵	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁶	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Paynter, Mr Brian Francis	Bass	LP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison ⁷	Northcote	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Riordan, Mr Richard ⁸	Polwarth	LP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ⁹	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Brunswick	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP			

¹ Elected 31 October 2015

² Resigned 3 September 2015

³ Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴ ALP until 7 March 2017

⁵ Nats until 28 August 2017

⁶ Elected 14 March 2015

⁷ Died 23 August 2017

⁸ Elected 31 October 2015

⁹ Resigned 2 February 2015

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Legislative Assembly select committees

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

Joint committees

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

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hutchins, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula 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 and Ms Spence. (*Council*): Ms Bath, Ms Patten and 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*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and 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 Gepp 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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Wednesday, 15 November 2017

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

HEALTH AND CHILD WELLBEING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Introduction and first reading

Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005, the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, the Health Complaints Act 2016 and the Health Legislation Amendment (Quality and Safety) Act 2017 and for other purposes.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I request that the minister provide a brief explanation of the bill.

Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — The Health and Child Wellbeing Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 will strengthen the operation of three existing regulatory schemes — no jab, no play; the reportable conduct scheme; and the statutory scheme for responding to complaints made about health service providers. It will also provide for mandatory reporting by hospitals of cases of anaphylaxis to the Department of Health and Human Services and will clarify the operation of the child safe standards.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Mornington Peninsula planning

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the Mornington Peninsula draws to the attention of the house the need to protect the Mornington Peninsula from inappropriate development by:

1. removing 'as of right' approvals which now allow three-storey developments and buildings up to 11 metres high within our general residential zone;
2. repealing recent changes which have expanded the scope of VicSmart planning applications, removing residents rights to be aware of future developments in their neighbourhood;

3. ensuring our existing design development overlays, which prohibit three-storey developments within general residential zones, are protected in perpetuity;
4. implementing mandatory controls to strengthen and enforce the intent of our 2014 *Mornington Peninsula Localised Planning Statement* to override, in unambiguous language, any changes to the planning scheme, thereby providing a clear direction for decision-making;
5. protecting and strengthening local council control within the green wedge zone and rural conservation zone by limiting, or where necessary, preventing commercial and industrial developments on rural land, including accommodation complexes.

By Mr DIXON (Nepean) (1026 signatures).

Mornington Peninsula public transport

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the Mornington Peninsula draws to the attention of the house the legacy of underinvestment in our public transport services and requests a complete service review to identify, fund and resolve shortfalls to enable public transport on the Mornington Peninsula to align with PTV's minimum service level, including but not limited to:

1. bus route changes to ensure all business, commercial, educational and all residential areas are properly serviced with the timetable they need, and in particular bringing route 788 bus (Frankston to Portsea) to a 20-minute timetable; extending route 783 bus (Frankston to Hastings) service; reconfiguring Mornington North bus services;
2. find and invest the \$6 million allocated in the 2014 budget for Mornington Peninsula bus infrastructure, but which has never been seen;
3. provide bus access direct to Frankston Hospital from all points around the Peninsula;
4. a cross-Peninsula service from Hastings to Rosebud, and another from Hastings to Mornington;
5. provide bus services to our key tourism destinations with intra-Peninsula shuttles in peak season;
6. provision of express commuter services of major bus routes directly to Frankston station and Monash University Peninsula campus;
7. update all bus route signage to reflect current standards across all bus routes.

By Mr DIXON (Nepean) (262 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petitions be considered next day on motion of Mr DIXON (Nepean).

DOCUMENTS**Tabled by Acting Clerk:**

Auditor-General:

Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria, 2016–17 — Ordered to be published.

Results of the 2016–17 Audits: Water Entities — Ordered to be published.

Financial Management Act 1994 — 2017–18 Quarterly Financial Report No 1.

Victims of Crime Commissioner, Office of — Report 2016–17.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES**Messages read recommending appropriations for:**

Crimes Legislation Amendment (Protection of Emergency Workers and Others) Bill 2017

Service Victoria Bill 2017

State Taxation Acts Further Amendment Bill 2017

Transport Legislation Amendment (Road Safety, Rail and Other Matters) Bill 2017

Water and Catchment Legislation Amendment Bill 2017.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS**Markham Avenue, Ashburton, redevelopment**

Mr WATT (Burwood) (09:37) — Yesterday the Minister for Major Projects told this house to ‘stand up for these developments’ when referring to the Markham housing estate in Ashburton. As the Member for Burwood, it is my intention to stand up for my local residents and to stand up for good process and good outcomes. There is no justification for the Markham estate redevelopment to proceed in the fashion that it has. The community has been shut out, the Boroondara council has been shut out, public tenants have been shut out, the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues has been shut out and now the minister expects the Parliament to be shut out, even though section 38(2) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 provides for either house to act in the circumstances.

Given that the plans are for a diminished number of social housing tenants and that yesterday the minister intimated that the development may not actually house any public housing tenants at all, the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues should be allowed to do the work they were tasked with. The Boroondara council should be allowed to do the work that they are

tasked with and the Parliament should be allowed to do the work that they are tasked with under the act.

This 225-unit project is nothing but a money grab seeking to make super profits, as revealed in an FOI that was undertaken. I trust that the Legislative Council will show faith in the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues and the Boroondara council to do their work by supporting the motion to revoke amendment C251, as put by David Davis in the other place.

Major Andrew John Balsillie

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (09:38) — Today I rise to pay tribute to the rich and full life of Major Andrew John Balsillie. John passed away recently, a few weeks before his 89th birthday, and I would like to share with the house John’s record of service to our country. He enlisted as an army apprentice in 1945 and served for 40 years. He was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1969 for services to the Australian War Memorial, included finding relics under hazardous conditions. He retired from service in 1985, and at that time he was the last soldier with continuous service in the Australian Regular Army from the Second World War. He was posted to Vietnam and to what was then known as Malaya, and he was posted to number of locations around Australia. Post his armed service John went on to play a civic leadership role in the Bendigo community, serving on the then City of Bendigo council. He was the final mayor of the City of Bendigo prior to amalgamation, serving between 1993 and 1994.

It was always a pleasure when I was out and about, and I would often see John and his wife, Greta, and have the chance to have a chat with them and share an observation. I saw them often, which reflects their passion for our community. My last occasion was at the turning of the sod for a new library being built at Quarry Hill Primary School, which is being named Balsillie in honour of John and his family. John and Greta were there, surrounded by their children and grandchildren. My deepest sympathies go to Greta, John’s family and extended family for the passing of John. And on behalf of the Bendigo community, I thank John for his service to our community and our nation.

Remembrance Day

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (09:40) — I was pleased to attend the Remembrance Day service at Cobram on Saturday. Well done to Rob Brown on the exceptional service, which honoured all those who have served and those who have died in the service of our

country. It was encouraging to see many members of the local community in attendance paying tribute to the sacrifices made by the members of our defence forces.

Today is the 80th anniversary of the opening of the former Repatriation Commission Outpatient Clinic at St Kilda Road. The repatriation clinic was a place of healing for the many that returned home from service, and the facility deserves recognition for the role it played in the lives of so many veterans after the war. There is evidence that more than 1000 veterans visited the repatriation clinic every week, so it is easy to imagine the clinic served veterans from all the major battles of World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam across all three services during its operation from 1937 to 1975. After the war the battle begins, so for many veterans it is fitting that the role this day clinic played in the lives of veterans on returning home be acknowledged here.

Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues

Mr McCURDY — Congratulations to all involved in this year's successful Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues, in particular festival chair Paul Squires. The festival was once again a great event, with many visitors to our beautiful part of north-east Victoria as well as locals enjoying fantastic music, entertainment and attractions. Some 300 volunteers were integral to the success of the jazz festival. These people play a vital role in making the event happen, so their participation is truly crucial.

Wangaratta Turf Club

Mr McCURDY — A great few days in Wangaratta with the jazz festival concluded with the Wangaratta races on Melbourne Cup Day. Wangaratta Turf Club CEO Paul Hoysted and his team had the grounds looking perfect, and a great day was had by all. Racing is an important and growing industry in Wangaratta, and the success of this most recent race meeting shows the turf club is continuing to go from strength to strength.

Remembrance Day

Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) (09:41) — I was honoured to attend the Remembrance Day service at the Caroline Springs RSL sub-branch last Saturday. Remembrance Day is one of the most important days in our nation's calendar. The 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month is a time for us to remember the sacrifice that has been made so we can live in a safe and free society. We remember not only the time that the guns fell silent on the Western Front in 1918 but also

the countless times since then that brave young Australian men and women have fought and died for our liberty. Their sacrifice will never be forgotten.

I would also like to pay tribute to the wonderful Caroline Springs RSL sub-branch and their president, Mr Andrew Marshall. These incredible volunteers work tirelessly to educate young people in our community about our wartime heritage. They also provide significant support, be it through social events or pastoral care, to our veterans, their families and those who are serving in our armed forces. It is through the work of our RSLs that the memory of those lost in times of war will never be forgotten. Lest we forget.

Know Your Council website

Ms KAIROUZ — On another matter, the Andrews Labor government continues to lead the way in creating greater transparency for ratepayers of Kororoit with the Know Your Council website receiving national praise. The federal government's Productivity Commission report has commended the Know Your Council website and encouraged other states to follow Victoria's example. Know Your Council was launched in November 2015 and provides yearly data across a range of council services, allowing the public to compare and contrast the performance of similar councils. I hope to see this fantastic resource become available to all Australian ratepayers, and I congratulate the former Minister for Local Government, the member for Sydenham, for introducing the Know Your Council website to Victoria.

Maroondah Rugby Club

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (09:43) — I wish to bring Maroondah Rugby Club to the attention of the Minister for Sport and their need for a financial contribution to install new lighting at their club located at Griff Hunt Reserve in Croydon. I am pleased the minister is in the house to hear all about the Maroondah Rugby Club. I have met with and visited the club on several occasions on which they have expressed their need for lighting on the front field so that training and games can occur during the evening and all year round. They have the capacity to grow their club and increase participation across all ages. Maroondah City Council has shown great support for the rugby club and has previously given funding for several upgrades. It would be great to see the minister get behind the club and do the same and provide the necessary funding for the establishment of lighting on the front field.

3rd Croydon Scout Group

Mr HODGETT — On another matter, I wish to highlight the needs of our local scout groups, in particular the growing need for urgent upgrades to local scout halls and facilities. One example I wish to draw attention to is the 3rd Croydon Scout Group hall on Birdwood Road, Croydon. The hall badly needs disabled toilets and disability access ramps at three of the entrances. Formed in 1958, 3rd Croydon Scout Group has been having fun and enriching the lives of young people around Croydon for nearly 60 years. Scouting is built on community, and by investing in decent, modern, new facilities we are investing in our local community. It is important that we address the need for disabled toilets and access ramps at the 3rd Croydon Scout Group hall, and I will continue to work hard towards acquiring the funding for these important facility upgrades.

Remembrance Day

Mr EREN (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (09:44) — Thank you to all of those members of the house who supported their local veterans and RSLs by supporting this year's Remembrance Day. All of the money raised from the RSL Poppy Appeal goes directly to services that support our veterans and their loved ones. Those services help veterans get back on their feet when they are doing it tough. They help them find work, find a place to live and make new friendships.

We are also doing our bit in relation to that as a government. We are making sure Australian Defence Force members and their families have all the information and support they need to call Victoria home. Online resources are available to help veterans settle and find a new career in Victoria after they complete their service. This includes information about career opportunities with the Victorian public sector and support services for families in health, public transport and housing.

We are also helping our local RSLs, Legacy clubs and other ex-service organisations. Whether it is by helping 250 young veterans find work in the Victorian public sector or supporting the RSL to address social isolation, our work will not stop in pursuing these very important endeavours. We must also do everything we can to protect those who protect us. They have earned that privilege for the rest of their lives. Remembrance Day is a time to pause and reflect on that very notion.

It was an honour to again attend the shrine this year and especially to see our young Victorians, from toddlers to teenagers, attend and learn about this important part of

our story. Once again, thank you to all of those people in the chamber and across Victoria who helped pay their respects —

The SPEAKER — The member for Caulfield.

Battle of Beersheba commemoration

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (09:46) — It was a privilege to attend the Battle of Beersheba commemoration along with the Minister for Veterans, who is in the chamber today. It was a tremendous commemoration and a way to pay respect to those veterans in the Light Horse, who were so brave in their battle. I particularly want to thank all of those that were involved. I highlight that for me one of the key elements was to talk to many of those descendants of the light horsemen who were there and re-enacted the 100-kilometre charge — or, ultimately, the charge — on horseback and to hear some of their stories.

I want to particularly give my thanks to the Pratt family, who were ultimately responsible for the Park of the Australian Soldier to be there as a memorial. It was certainly one of the places that we visited as part of the events. I also want to thank the Erdi family, Les and Eva Erdi, who are no longer with us — in fact their consecration comes up this week. It was them who funded a lot of the work that the Jewish National Fund did to re-enact the Anzac Trail, and there is a 100-kilometre walk which you can do as part of that.

Malka Leifer

Mr SOUTHWICK — Being in Israel gave me an opportunity, with Dassi Erlich, to visit the Minister of Justice to again advocate to bring back Malka Leifer, who is facing criminal charges here for abuse in Adass Israel School.

Magor Hailu

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (09:48) — There are so many local residents who come to my office seeking help. Many come to me with stories and experiences that are truly heartbreaking. Nebiat Hailu came to me asking for help — not for herself, but for her nephew Magor. Sadly their family had suffered years of abuse in Eritrea, with three of Nebiat's brothers murdered and another falsely imprisoned. Magor had fled Eritrea for a refugee camp in Ethiopia, yet safety and freedom were not to be found.

Magor feared persecution from the authorities in Eritrea and had received death threats since arriving at the camp. Nebiat was growing increasingly worried about her nephew's safety and sought to help him come to

Australia on a refugee and humanitarian visa. We did all we could to help Magor, and thankfully he was approved for a visa and moved to Australia.

He is safe and happy. In fact he recently sent me a card to tell me about his new life in Australia. Magor has recently completed an English course and is now undertaking a certificate IV in disability. He is employed and has a drivers licence and of course his own car. He is making the most of his new life and all the opportunities that our home and our community can offer.

We are a very lucky country, and I am glad that we are still a country that gives hardworking, decent people like Magor a chance. There has always been room in Victoria to give everyone a chance. I have no doubt that our community will benefit from having Magor as a member. I hope that he can find peace and happiness in his new home. There are many more like Magor and his family, and we are a better Victoria if we help them to make our state their home and Casey their community. Welcome, Magor. We are all Victorians and we are proud to have you amongst us.

Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (09:49) — Country people are being penalised for living long distances from health care due to extreme limitations on access to the Victorian Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (VPTAS). A patient recently contacted my office as they could not access VPTAS support for cancer treatment in Warrnambool, even though they were too ill to commute back to their home in Hamilton between treatment, simply because they live 95 kilometres from Warrnambool, which is under the 100-kilometre limit. I ask the minister to provide greater flexibility for country people to access health care to ensure that people do not avoid or delay treatment because they simply cannot afford the cost of travel and accommodation to access treatment.

Regional and rural roads

Ms KEALY — The quality of roads in western Victoria has never been worse. While we are seeing limited roadworks on major roads after three years of Labor neglect, the quality of repairs in some areas is just appalling and nothing more than a waste of money. In Peshurst I witnessed a road maintenance worker shovel a load of bitumen into a pothole, sprinkle a few stones over it and not bother to compact it in any way, and then minutes later a B-double log truck drove over it and blew the pothole again. Country people deserve to drive on safe roads, but most importantly any road repairs must

last for years, not weeks, days or even minutes. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety must explain to our community why road maintenance contractors are not being held to account for their poor workmanship.

Nati Frinj Biennale

Ms KEALY — Congratulations to Kate Finnerty and crew for another amazing Nati Frinj Biennale. This fabulous event is iconic for its ability to engage the local community and a huge number of visitors, all attracted to the quirky fun of this regional arts festival. Thank you to all involved for your significant contribution to our region.

Victoria State Emergency Service Horsham unit

Ms KEALY — It was a great pleasure to meet the crew of amazing volunteers at the Horsham unit of the Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) last week. This small team of great people provide help after car crashes, during floods and even after accidents and falls in the Grampians National Park. I strongly encourage anyone with an interest in helping others while using impressive equipment to contact their local SES and ask how they can become a member today. Thank you to all SES volunteers for their great contribution to the community.

Victoria State Emergency Service Northcote unit

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (09:51) — The Northcote unit of the Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) is to get a new \$3 million home base in West Heidelberg. I would like to thank and congratulate Clare Burns, the Labor candidate for Northcote, one of my neighbouring electorates. Together we have delivered this \$3 million home base for the Northcote SES, which will be in my electorate of Ivanhoe but will also cover our respective communities. Northcote SES is one of the busiest units in the state. It is important that it has a modern, fit-for-purpose base to support its hardworking volunteers. Our community welcomes the Northcote SES to their new base at the old police station site in West Heidelberg.

Can I also say that unit commander Chris Patton said the base, at a former cop station, would make a huge difference to the effectiveness of the volunteer unit. He said:

This ends years of uncertainty where we've not had any future and we're stuck in a building that doesn't suit our purposes anymore.

The unit responds to some 750 incidents across the year, and the council areas of Banyule, Darebin and Yarra have long complained that the tiny home base was creating dangerous delays.

Of course the announcement is part of some \$35 million in investment from our government in the Victoria State Emergency Service. I can tell you our community will be very thankful to have the Northcote SES in West Heidelberg. We will welcome them with open arms. Unlike the Liberals, who left West Heidelberg to rot when they were in government, who did nothing — if they had their time again, there would be nothing but a block of flats delivered to dirty developers in West Heidelberg; that is all they were good for — it is a Labor government that is building a new school at the Olympic Village Primary School site, it is Labor that has built new public housing on the corner of Altona Street and Kokoda Street and it is Labor that will invest in emergency services in West Heidelberg.

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre site, East Melbourne

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (09:52) — Today I would like to raise yet another planning matter regarding the former Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre site in East Melbourne. This building has had tremendous impact on so many people's lives, including my family's. It is where my dad was cared for during his battle with melanoma. Now Peter Mac has moved to the wonderful new Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, but we are at risk of losing the old Peter Mac site in East Melbourne — a publicly owned site — to the hands of private developers.

Historical societies, residents groups and churches have banded together and written to the government, asking them to retain this site in public hands for the public good. Given it is so close to the city and public transport, we should look at using it for a community benefit. Some have suggested a school or aged-care facility, given that it is already so hard and expensive to find sites for public facilities in the city. Or if the site does become apartments, it must include a percentage of affordable housing and have proper density and height controls so that Fitzroy Gardens are not overshadowed.

The Labor government promised to make sure any public land that is sold off would include affordable housing, but they have so far not delivered on this promise. We cannot let yet another public site be sold off with no requirement for affordable housing, not when there are over 35 000 applicants on the public housing waiting list. In the so-called world's most

livable city, we should not be selling off such an amazing public site without first thinking carefully about what should replace it.

McLeod Road, Patterson Lakes, pedestrian crossing

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (09:54) — McLeod Road, Patterson Lakes, will shortly get a new signalised pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of the Patterson Lakes Retirement Village. I was delighted to join with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and about 30 local residents to announce \$400 000 to build the new crossing next year. This is a wonderful result for the local community, improving pedestrian safety and vehicle access into and out of the village. Thanks must go to the local community for their determined and committed advocacy. I would especially like to acknowledge and thank Ernest 'Jock' Purkis for all of his work over many, many years fighting for this important safety initiative on behalf of his fellow village residents. Jock's concern for the safety of local residents and dogged determination to do something about it really made this happen.

Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Women Leaders program

Ms KILKENNY — As Victoria's first and so far only female Premier, the late Joan Kirner is well remembered for her commitment to promoting women and reforming education. She dedicated her career to mentoring many, many women to advance their skills and leadership. It is therefore very fitting that the Victorian government is recognising Joan Kirner's extraordinary legacy through the new Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Women Leaders program.

Last week I was absolutely delighted to help celebrate the launch of the program and to welcome into it the first group of women participants, and what an inspiring and diverse group of women they are. Congratulations to Jaclyn Broadbent, Michaela Epstein, Krista Seddon, Linh Do, Michelle Isles, Rebecca Koss, Stephanie Lai, Caitlyn Hoggan, Sarah Sheridan, Morgan Cataldo, Tayla McKechnie, Rachel Toovey, Keicha Day, Maddi Miller, Melissa Saunders, Penny Scott, Safa Almarhoun, Alisha Fernando, Amna Iqbal, Khayshie Tilak Ramesh and Whitney Yip. I know these women will do an incredible job. We all have a role to play in shaping attitudes and transforming behaviours to improve gender equality.

John Fraser

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (09:55) — I pay tribute to John Fraser, who sadly passed away last week. A longstanding local resident, John was a valued member of the community who was involved in various activities, including the L2P young driver support program. John was also a great supporter of the Forest Hill election campaigns, and in the lead-up to the 2014 election he willingly and enthusiastically undertook various tasks, including letterboxing on a regular basis. I extend my sympathy to his wife Lilian, sons Scott, Simon and John and their families, and to John's extended family and friends at this very sad time.

Vermont Primary School

Mr ANGUS — I was pleased to recently attend the Vermont Primary School production *Pirates of the Curry Bean*. It was an excellent production, with lots of great singing, dancing and acting, along with many colourful costumes. I thank principal Robin Stickland for the invitation and congratulate all the students, staff and volunteers involved in this production.

BlueCross Livingstone Gardens and Livingstone Primary School intergenerational program

Mr ANGUS — I recently had the pleasure of attending the BlueCross Livingstone Gardens aged-care residence in Vermont South for a celebration gathering following the completion of the intergenerational program. This program was a 12-week innovative, intergenerational program between year 5 students from Livingstone Primary School (LPS) and Livingstone Gardens residents, where participants discussed their experiences of growing up back then and now. It provided an opportunity for both the students and residents to interact and share their experiences, enhancing the communication skills and stimulating the mental and social wellbeing of the participants. I congratulate LPS teachers Diane Ballintine and Caleb Webb, together with Joanne King from BlueCross, on this extremely successful and worthwhile program.

Energy supply

Mr ANGUS — The Andrews Labor government's shambolic handling of the energy situation here in Victoria leaves all Victorians at risk coming into the summer. We are at risk, firstly, of failing electricity supply and consequent blackouts and, secondly, of ongoing exorbitantly high electricity bills. Both these issues have massive flow-on effects for Victorians.

Kyneton and Hanging Rock Racing Club

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (09:57) — Congratulations to the Kyneton and Hanging Rock Racing Club on a fabulous Kyneton Cup. Held the day after the Melbourne Cup, it is a tremendous event that has brought our local community together as well as attracted large numbers of visitors to the town and region since 1873. My thanks to Greg Janky and the committee for hosting me at the beautiful Glen Erin marquee on a picture-perfect Macedon Ranges spring day. The Andrews government is pleased to continue to support the Kyneton and Hanging Rock Racing Club and country racing.

Kyneton Primary School

Ms THOMAS — On Saturday I joined my community in saying farewell to Kyneton Primary School on Baynton Street as we prepare to move to the brand-new school in 2018, proudly built by the Andrews government. Established in 1856, there were many great stories shared on the day, like the fence that separated the girls from the boys in the playground, the miniature rifle range that was only closed in 1918 and the 25 tonnes of wood that it would take to keep the school warm until it finally got heating in 1945.

My congratulations to the school council and the Kyneton parents and friends committee for their work putting on such a remarkable day. Congratulations too to Ronda Walker, who compiled all of these great stories in her book *Our School*, and to Julie Duncan, whose work collating the memorabilia was beautifully done and brought back many wonderful memories for those who have passed through the school's doors over the past 161 years.

Remembrance Day

Ms THOMAS — Thank you to Kyneton RSL and president David Watson for a moving Remembrance Day ceremony and to Estelle Winkelmann and Tiarna Sleightholm from Kyneton Secondary College, to Max Short and Emily Waterson from Kyneton Primary School, to Cassandra Hocking and Patrick Nichols from Sacred Heart College, to the choir from Our Lady of the Rosary parish school and to Tylden Primary School for your beautiful contributions on the day.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help School

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) (09:58) — Congratulations to Our Lady of Perpetual Help School and parish on holding a fabulous day to celebrate their 50th anniversary — a day full of great food, rides and

entertainment. It was a fantastic effort by the organising committee and volunteers, who made the day a fabulous success.

Ringwood electorate schools

Ms RYALL — Congratulations to the three local schools in my electorate who participated in the parliamentary schools debate last week. Ringwood Secondary College, Norwood Secondary College and Mullauna College competed for the annual Victorian shield for excellence in debating. With a variety of year 8, 9 and 10 students, all schools showed a high level of preparedness, enthusiasm and competence in debating — a fabulous effort by all. Well done to Mullauna College, who took home the shield for the sixth year in a row.

Red Cross Mitcham branch

Ms RYALL — Congratulations to our fabulous Mitcham Red Cross team, who knitted Trauma Teddies for kids in emergency circumstances. It was wonderful to meet the women who do so much for others and dedicate their time to comfort children who are sick. Our community really appreciates all that you do.

Eastwood Primary School and Deaf Facility

Ms RYALL — Congratulations to Eastwood Primary School and Deaf Facility on their successful twilight market. There was food galore, rides, produce and gifts, as well as music by Eastwood dad's band, and to top it off, perfect weather. Well done to the organising committee and all the volunteers who put in so much time to create a wonderful event.

Sage Hotel, Ringwood

Ms RYALL — Congratulations on the official opening of Sage Hotel, Ringwood. With a fantastic location in the heart of our alfresco dining and shopping mecca at Eastland, Sage Hotel Ringwood has created fabulous employment opportunities for so many locals.

Australian marriage law postal survey

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) (10:00) — It was such a privilege to attend the launch of the Ballarat Pride Hub on Sunday, the first pride hub to be established in Victoria. Of course there was much discussion of same-sex marriage.

Knowing there would be hurtful messages from opponents of same-sex marriage, and knowing the survey would expose past trauma for the LGBTI community, I wanted to make sure there was a place

where positive messages were accessible, so I turned my office window into that place, inviting anyone to come in, write a message on a rainbow heart and put that message up in my window. My office window is now covered in rainbow hearts. Many people walking by or visiting Ballarat have taken the opportunity to come into my office and leave a message on the window. Many have come in in tears, saying the window represented acceptance and safety and the message that it was okay to be themselves.

An example of some of the messages are: from Cameron, 'I am human, I have the same under my skin as you'; and from young Ava, who wrote, 'My aunty is gay. I love her and can't wait to be her flower girl one day.' There is even a heart that contains a marriage proposal. Helen asked her partner of 25 years, Sandy, to be her wife, and I can happily report that Sandy said yes.

The messages from Ballarat locals, the wider community and some from my parliamentary colleagues all express the same sentiment: love is love, and all love is equal. We are all waiting anxiously for the results that are coming down right now, and we are all hoping, of course, that it will be a resounding yes. I want to express my gratitude and my thanks to the LGBTI community.

Remembrance Day

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (10:01) — On Saturday it was 99 years since the end of World War I. I had the pleasure this year of attending the Remembrance Day service in Alexandra. With lots on in the town of Alexandra that weekend, including the annual show, a pretty good crowd turned up to show their respects to those who had fought and fallen for their country.

I want to recognise the RSL President, Henry Andrews, and Clarrie Glass for their roles in the service. The morning tea which followed at the Alexandra RSL was certainly well provided for. I enjoyed chatting with the many locals and hearing more of the military history of the area.

Of great interest to me, and something I had not noticed before, was a letter on the wall in the entrance to the Alexandra RSL. Leslie Maygar VC, who had schooled in the area, had penned a letter to the children at Fawcett State School. Leslie, a VC recipient in the Boer War, lost his life in Beersheba fighting for his country in World War I. His letter provided advice to the students as to their roles and responsibilities in their community and stated that he had fought for their freedom and righteousness.

Marysville Jazz & Blues Weekend

Ms McLEISH — The recent Marysville Jazz & Blues Weekend festival in its third year did not disappoint. I, and a whole bunch of others, saw Russell Morris on the opening night, which was sensational. This could not have been a better start to this year's festival, which featured 25 great acts over the Friday night and two-day weekend in October. The event has twice been voted Murrindindi's best community event of the year.

Events like this do not just happen, there is a lot of work from the ground up. This year's President, Leigh Fraser, is to be congratulated for another great weekend. Leigh of course was ably assisted by a small, diligent and dedicated team of volunteers. The community of Marysville gets behind events like this with excellent levels of volunteering because they love their town and they want to showcase it.

Pascoe Vale electorate schools

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) (10:03) — This week I had the opportunity to take the Minister for Education on visits to two fabulous schools in the heart of my electorate: Pascoe Vale Primary School and Pascoe Vale Girls College. There are great things happening at the schools, but they are in desperate need of investment in infrastructure.

At Pascoe Vale Primary School the minister was taken on a tour of the school's facilities by recently appointed principal Anne Naughton, and I congratulate her on her new role. We were also joined by the ever-committed school council president, Nella Caruana, and members of her committee. I have talked in this chamber previously about the inadequacy of Pascoe Vale Primary School's current facilities as a result of the substantial growth in enrolments it has experienced over recent years, so it was great for the minister to see firsthand the challenges the school faces in accommodating this growth. It was also great for the minister to experience firsthand the passion and commitment for learning that this school clearly has. I would like to thank the school captains, Stelios and Molly, and arts leaders, Max and Deyja, for the interesting questions which they asked the minister. I know he was impressed by the thought that these students placed into their questions.

It was also fantastic for the minister to see some of the facilities at the Pascoe Vale Girls College. This is a renowned school in my area and certainly has a following amongst our local community. In particular the food technology facilities are outdated. Some things

look like they belong in a vintage shop; they are uninviting and pose a serious OH&S hazard. The minister tried his hand at some painting with some artists in residence from the Victorian College of the Arts. The arts facilities are also inadequate.

It was great for the minister to see these facilities at both of these schools and consider investment.

White Ribbon Day

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) (10:04) — Saturday, 25 November, is White Ribbon Day. I will be attending the activities at Pakenham run by the Cardinia Family Violence Network to raise awareness about the issue of men inflicting violence against women in our community. I applaud the local municipalities of Casey, Cardinia and Bass Coast for taking a strong stand on this issue.

Whether you agree with the White Ribbon cause or not the fact remains that one in three women will face physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. On a daily basis women face risks that no man faces. Quite simply when a woman catches public transport, walks home at night, strolls through a park or heads to a parked car she is at risk of sexual assault. For those men who say that violence also happens against men, I say, 'Get your heads out of the sand'. The statistics show that men's violence against women or intimate partner violence is the leading cause of death, injury or ill health to Australian women between the ages of 18 and 44.

No man is born violent. Violence against women is an action that some men learn on their journey through life, whether that be through sporting clubs, the workplace or hanging out at the pub with mates. Cultures, attitudes and actions can change. No longer can we simply stand by and let bad cultures remain in our communities. Men need to address their attitudes towards women and their sense of entitlement. We must all stand up and show leadership on this issue so that slowly but surely the incidence of men inflicting violence on women is eliminated. The women in our lives deserve nothing less.

Concern Australia

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (10:06) — I recently had the pleasure of opening Concern Australia's new south-east regional office in Dandenong. For those of you who may not be familiar with Concern Australia, Concern is a not-for-profit organisation that works with vulnerable young people aged five to 21. It was originally founded by John Smith and the God's Squad

motorcycle club back in the 1970s, but it has grown and evolved significantly since its early days.

Concern runs a range of education programs as well as programs addressing housing and homelessness issues. Inside Out is one such program, assisting young people in the child protection system and the youth justice system transitioning towards independent living. Hand Brake Turn is another key program providing practical, hands-on automotive training experience while also giving young people an opportunity to learn about themselves and gain confidence.

The new Concern office is impressive, with a full mechanics workshop, including two car hoists, as well as some chill-out spaces for the young people coming through. I was also shown some beautiful wall art designed by Hayden, one of Concern Australia's Inside Out youth workers. It was a pleasure to hear from Phil, a Hand Brake Turn student who has by any measure turned himself around. He spoke about how much he loved working on cars and the journey he had taken from stealing them to caring for them and mentoring other young people. Thanks to Concern CEO Michelle Crawford; she brings so much energy to her role.

Australian marriage law postal survey

Ms WILLIAMS — Congratulations to the yes campaign. My thoughts are with my LGBTI comrades — 61.6 per cent yes, 79 per cent participation and 12.7 million people.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: budget estimates 2017–18

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (10:07) — It is a pleasure to again make some reference to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) report on the 2017–18 budget estimates. I talked a little bit during the last sitting week about the contribution of my colleagues on this side of the house and indeed the contribution of the staff, but I did want to just quickly acknowledge the work and contribution of government members. During the estimates process of course we do not always see eye to eye — in fact we rarely see eye to eye across the table — but the system does work. I particularly want to acknowledge the role of the chair, the member for Essendon, and his colleagues in going some way towards modernising the estimates process. Despite the failure of the government to implement their pre-election commitment to introduce a Senate-style estimates process, the government members have been of great assistance in modernising

to some extent the PAEC process — but I think there is much more that can be done on that front.

I wanted to address a number of issues. I highlighted I think last week that the committee covered three areas that are not traditionally addressed in the estimates process — that of risk management, that of managing telecommunications and, lastly and specifically, that of the environmental contribution levy — but there are a number of other matters that are certainly worthy of investigation as well. I think the first one is the relatively short-term nature of the estimates process and particularly, often, the softness of the out years of the forwards estimates process.

Essentially the budget is a one-year document, and while the out years provide some guide to where the budget may be heading, historically, under both sides of politics, those figures have not been accurate. Of course one thing that a number of governments around the country have done is adopt an intergenerational report (IGR). Commentary on the inaugural commonwealth report included comments from Dr David Gruen, who said:

In earlier times governments in Australia and elsewhere typically made spending commitments without any systematic attempt to estimate, or address, the long-term fiscal consequences. The IGR has made an important contribution to changing this pattern of behaviour.

That certainly happened in New South Wales, that certainly happened at commonwealth level, but it has not happened at the Victorian level. We did actually ask the Treasurer whether he had any plans to move down a similar path, and his response was fairly succinct; it was essentially, 'No'. That means that we do not have that discipline in Victoria of considering the impact of the decisions that are being made, not only for this year but the impact on the longer term. When many of those decisions relate to things like asset procurement, I think that is a pretty dangerous path.

Elsewhere in the report we have commented on risk management and the disconnect between the Victorian government's risk management framework and the public-private partnership (PPP) process and the high value, high risk projects in particular. But with regard to the PPPs, they of course lock future governments and future generations in some cases into an expenditure pattern without the full detail of that expenditure pattern being available or known to the Parliament when those agreements are entered into. I think that is a significant problem, and the committee has made a number of recommendations around that. Of course the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) has recognised the shortcomings of the current PPP process, and

indeed the AASB chair has described the accounting treatment by governments of PPPs as 'one of the black holes of accounting'. Given the significant proportion of the budget that is now tied up in servicing PPPs, that is of concern to the committee, and it has been a concern to the committee for almost a decade. So there are a number of recommendations around that matter as well. I commend the report to the house.

**Family and Community Development
Committee: services for people with autism
spectrum disorder**

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (10:12) — I rise to speak about the inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) undertaken by the Family and Community Development Committee which was completed in June this year. The Andrews government is currently considering the recommendations contained within this report.

I would like to thank the committee secretariat, Dr Greg Gardiner, Rachel Macreadie, Dr Kelly Butler, Dr Pamie Fung and Helen Ross-Soden. I very much appreciate their commitment to this important inquiry and their support and guidance. I also wish to thank the chair, the member for Bendigo West, for the tireless work that she put into the meetings, the public hearings and this final report. I also thank my parliamentary colleagues for their participation and support for this significant report.

Importantly, I want to sincerely thank the many individuals and families who wrote submissions, attended the public hearings and gave evidence to tell their story about the challenges they face. The terms of reference for this inquiry were wideranging and included:

- (a) the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder in Victoria;
- (b) the availability and adequacy of services provided by the commonwealth, state and local governments across health, education, disability, housing, sport and employment services;
- (c) the adequacy of services to be provided by the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS);
- (d) evidence of the social and economic cost of failing to provide adequate services; and
- (e) the projected demand for services in Victoria.

I appreciate the opportunity and experience I got from being a part of this inquiry. In my electorate of Geelong I knew there were challenges facing families who have children with ASD. However, I realised that my knowledge was limited when the committee held a

public hearing in Geelong. The response was significant. We heard evidence from individuals, families and community groups; we heard the everyday realities for them.

I do want to acknowledge Gateways Support Services, which provide outstanding support and services to people with autism, and The Treehouse Geelong, a volunteer group of 1000 parents who are committed to improving the lives of their children. We heard how many parents endured the heartache of their children not being invited to birthday parties so they decided to run a birthday party program for all of those children with ASD. We travelled to many regional areas and heard parents and individuals talk about their experience of a lack of understanding of ASD in schools and the broader community. Many of the stories of bullying and a lack of understanding of the challenges for people with ASD were heartbreaking.

These are the real stories that make up this report. I am pleased that the Minister for Education has already begun to address some of these issues. The report identifies the challenge to public policy of ensuring people with ASD have access to the supports they need. Access to early intervention is critical. The committee heard that there must be access to timely, affordable assessment services for diagnosis and that there is a lack of information available about appropriate early intervention services and the cost of these services. The committee made a number of recommendations to improve Victoria's system for assessments. We heard from adults with ASD and the many challenges they faced. Interestingly the committee heard that a number of the adults who submitted or gave evidence were only diagnosed around the same time as their child. The committee recommended that the current age cap of 13 years for the Medicare rebate for diagnosis and assessment of ASD be removed entirely.

The committee made a number of recommendations in relation to the NDIS, many of which are directed to the Victorian government in its capacity as a participant in the Council of Australian Governments Disability Reform Council. These recommendations include improving the provision of information to people with ASD, better training for scheme planners, more plan flexibility so that necessary changes can be easily made, and supported travel costs. The committee also wants to ensure that the national safeguarding framework protects people with ASD and that the NDIS has the capacity to meet the growth in demand for services in Victoria.

The majority of children diagnosed with ASD are male, and the programs are designed for male children. The

community received evidence that indicated that girls and young women have been under-represented in available data. We heard that an understanding of ASD in girls and women could broaden the general understanding of ASD. Recommendations were made in relation to better training to ensure health professionals and teachers have the skills to identify, treat and engage with girls and women with ASD. I do not have a lot of time to go through much of the report — that is just a very brief outline — but I would recommend members read the report and consult with constituents in their electorate. I am looking forward to the government's response in the coming weeks.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee: community energy projects

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (10:17) — I rise to speak on the inquiry into community energy projects. Everybody wants to manage their energy bills, and their circumstances vary. The report discusses solutions to differing circumstances. Mostly what I am going to focus on is 'behind the meter'. That is a term about what you can do in your business, or very near your business or home, to deal with your energy bill. I think everyone in this house will know that energy bill stress is a rising concern in our community, both residentially and with businesses. I am going to talk about what can be done if you are a tenant, and that is very much tied up in issues around costs, ownership and some of the complicated tenancy frameworks that exist.

This is what is known as the split incentive issue. The split incentive is where the landlord will not benefit from investing in renewable energy or energy efficiency measures because the energy and cost savings will accrue to the tenant. Naturally the tenant does not want to pay for the capital infrastructure up-front that will benefit a landlord. However, the stress that surrounds energy bills means that we need to develop solutions to this. In taking evidence, what the committee did hear is that a way to overcome the split incentive for landlords to install renewable energy, when tenants benefit from the energy saving, is using environmental upgrade agreements. These are known as EUAs. The EUAs provide council-based financing to businesses for upgrading existing non-residential buildings to improve energy, water or environmental efficiency.

EUAs have been available to businesses in the City of Melbourne since 2011 and all Victorian councils since 2015 following amendments to the Local Government Act 1989. EUAs enable building owners to take out a loan at competitive interest rates to pay for upgrades such as solar panel installation. Rather than repaying the lender directly, the local council collects the loan

repayments through the existing council rates process and passes them on to the lender. Under commercial leases tenants usually pay the rates, making this a fairer outcome since the tenants benefit from the reduced energy costs. The terms of an EUA are generally set to benefit the tenant by ensuring the energy savings are more than the increase in rates, and that is a really important component in this — that is, finding a way to make solar panels work on your business. The building owner also benefits, as the upgrade increases the value of the property.

In making this work, clearly there is a role for local government to put resources where their mouths are — and many have — and thus support their local businesses. Most councils are keen to promote economic development in their region and most councils are keen to promote the sustainability of the businesses they already have. Most businesses want to continue to grow, particularly as confidence returns — in my case to Mildura. We want to allow those businesses to grow, but energy costs are one of their major concerns at the moment. It is not only threatening the expansion of their businesses but in some cases it is threatening the continuation of their businesses in their current form. Most businesses are under energy stress, and if they are in rented property, then they feel they are constrained. Most businesses are also concerned about supply security, and EUAs offer a solution to all the above concerns.

I urge local governments that are not involved in EUAs — and that includes Mildura council in my electorate — to consider doing so. This is a real opportunity for councils to work with their businesses in order to alleviate the threats that come from increased energy prices. I commend the report to the house.

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

Ms WARD (Eltham) (10:22) — I rise to again speak on the inquiry into the Country Fire Authority (CFA) training college at Fiskville. We have spoken a number of times in this place about this inquiry for a number of reasons, and one concern I keep coming back to is the contamination of PFOS and PFOA. I want to bring to the attention of those in this house and also by extension the federal government a recent study in Italy, the report of which is titled *Drinking Water Contamination from Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): An Ecological Mortality Study in the Veneto Region, Italy*, by Marina Mastrantonio, Edoardo Bai, Raffaella Uccelli, Vincenzo Cordiano, Augusto Screpanti and Paolo Crosignani.

This is a really interesting study that again highlights for us the really important issues around PFOS and PFOA contamination and what it means for human health. I recently spoke in this place about the *Four Corners* report of the extensive pollution in Katherine because of defence force pollution of their waterways and how it had affected their region. People are drinking bottled water; people are unable to sell their mangoes. A whole variety of issues are going on, both economically and health based, in that community.

This report found that in 2014 Italy discovered that drinking water had been contaminated in the Veneto region with PFOS and PFOA. There was a manufacturing company that had been located there since 1964 and had been probably unaware that it was polluting the waterways for decades.

The report found that there were notable increases in diabetes, cerebrovascular disease, myocardial infarction and Alzheimer's disease across the population. For women they found that there were notable increases in kidney and breast cancer, and for men, testicular cancer, pancreatic cancer and leukaemia. I want to highlight that there are parallels with this report and some submissions we received during the Fiskville inquiry of some notable increases in the incidence of certain diseases. I see the member for Frankston is in the chamber, and I know that he shares my concerns. He also made a submission. A number of submissions were deeply concerned about cancers that had been detected in individuals and also family members, including an increased risk of cancers like testicular cancer.

There are a number of parallels going on with study after study showing there is consistent reporting of the types of diseases and illnesses that are coming out in people who have heightened levels of PFOS and PFOA in their bodies. PFOS chemicals lodge in our blood serum, proteins, kidneys and our liver — they stay there. They stay there and they take decades to come out. This report referred to a 2013 study which also found that there was an increased risk of liver and kidney cancer and leukaemia among workers employed in the production of fluorinated polymers. They referred to a 2014 study which found there was an excessive rate of mortality and/or incidence of prostate, bladder and pancreatic cancers, cerebrovascular diseases, diabetes and chronic renal disease among other exposed workers. For people who are actually working in these plants there is a huge risk of them contracting these diseases, these cancers.

We have spoken before in this place about — and it was also referred to in the Fiskville report — the Virginia study which covered 69 000 people living

along the Ohio River, which had intensive PFOS and PFOA pollution through the 3M company. They also found an increase in testicular, kidney, ovarian and prostate cancers and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. You will see, Deputy Speaker, there is a continued reference to the same cancers coming up time and time again with this pollution.

The point that I really want to make is that these are recent studies. During the Fiskville inquiry the expert consultants who came in on behalf of the CFA to talk to us about PFOS pollution were out of date in my mind. They referred to studies from 2004 and 2003. These current studies are showing just how serious this pollution is and what a health risk it is to people. It needs to be taken seriously.

In 2000, 3M, the main manufacturer of PFOS, committed to phasing it out by 2003. In America it completely stopped production by 2015. People know how dangerous these chemicals are. I call on the federal government to do something about this to ensure that there is accurate reporting of what safe levels in our systems are and act on them.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee: performance monitoring framework

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (10:27) — Yesterday I was pleased to table the fourth report of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee, *A Framework for Monitoring the Performance of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission*. Effective performance measurement reporting systems are an essential part of transparent and accountable government. This is no less true for IBAC than for any other public institution. Indeed the need is far greater for an anti-corruption agency like IBAC, given its special role in ensuring Victoria's confidence in the public sector and the considerable investigative powers it quite rightly possesses.

Under the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, the IBAC committee has the functions of monitoring and reviewing the performance of IBAC. Until now the committee has carried out these functions by reviewing relevant reports, conducting hearings on IBAC's performance and undertaking relevant reviews and inquiries, and the most recent was on the whistleblower laws. For more than a decade, however, there have been calls for parliamentary oversight bodies to develop formal frameworks to monitor and assess the performance of anti-corruption agencies. For example, Transparency International has developed guidelines and measures to evaluate their performance. After five

years in operation, the committee thought it timely to enhance its oversight work by developing a framework for a more systematic monitoring of IBAC based on best practice principles. To assist with this process, the committee engaged Professor A. J. Brown of Griffith University as a consultant.

I will now go through an overview of the report. The report sets out a proposed performance monitoring and review framework, to be led and overseen by the IBAC Committee, for ensuring the effective performance and accountability of IBAC. The framework draws on international best practice to develop a range of measures of IBAC's performance across its legislative functions. It also draws on IBAC's own measurement of its performance set out in its corporate plan 2015–18, recognising that the framework needs to support rather than hinder IBAC's fulfilment of its responsibilities.

The proposed framework provides rigorous criteria for assessing IBAC's performance in the following main areas: investigating, exposing and addressing corrupt conduct and police misconduct; preventing corruption and informing the public sector and Victorians about that; impacting positively on levels of integrity and public trust in the public sector; ensuring IBAC's accountability and integrity; ensuring that IBAC has effective governance; and monitoring IBAC's legal and financial capacity.

The committee recognises that the assessment of IBAC's performance needs to take proper account of not only the activities it engages in but also their impact on corruption in Victoria. The report makes three recommendations. Firstly, that the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 be amended to require that the IBAC committee undertake a comprehensive review of IBAC's performance every four years. Secondly, that the IBAC act and the Victorian Inspectorate Act 2011 be amended to ensure greater clarity about the monitoring and oversight roles of the Victorian Inspectorate. Thirdly, that the Victorian government support, and assist in the implementation of, the framework. As noted, the committee appreciates that the four-yearly review needs to take account of IBAC's own systems for performance monitoring.

As chair of the committee, I would like to thank Professor Brown for his insights and expertise. I would also like to thank my committee colleagues, the deputy chair, the member for Footscray, the member for Prahran, the member for Gippsland South, the member for Mordialloc and Mr Simon Ramsay and Ms Jaclyn Symes in the Council, for their cooperative and

bipartisan approach to the preparation of this report. Finally, I would like to thank the secretariat for their hard work: the executive officer, Ms Sandy Cook, the research officer, Dr Stephen James, and the committee administrative officer, Ms Justine Donohue. The committee looks forward to further developing and implementing this pioneering framework in the coming year, confident that it will strengthen the committee's oversight and work and make a distinctive contribution to Victoria's anti-corruption commission and its system.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: budget estimates 2017–18

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (10:31) — I rise to make a contribution on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) report entitled *Inquiry into the 2017–18 Budget Estimates*. Before I go to my main contribution, which is surrounding the contribution made by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I would like to put on the record that all the ministers and the Premier attend these PAEC hearings where I know that issues of equality are discussed. This is indeed a landmark occasion today where we have seen that love has had a landslide victory and 61.9 per cent of Australians have voted yes —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms GRALEY — I would like to commend the Premier and the Minister for Equality for leading the 'yes' campaign in Victoria and achieving a 64.9 per cent result, which sends a very strong message to everyone in Victoria that we are indeed a very progressive and inclusive state.

But, as I said, I would like to focus my contribution on the minister for climate change, who indeed in a progressive and inclusive Victoria is putting the issue of climate change front and centre. As the minister herself said at the PAEC inquiry:

The Andrews Labor government is committed to restoring Victoria's status as a leader in tackling climate change ...

After years of inaction and excuses under the previous government, it is very gratifying and very important that we back tackling climate change as a serious issue. The minister further states:

We are not waiting to act; we now have a comprehensive climate change act, a climate change framework and adaptation plan, and we are working with government, businesses and community through the TAKE2 climate change pledges to keep global warming to below 2 degrees.

On this side of the Parliament we do believe in the science and facts, and that is why the minister is acting in such a considerable way with real purpose. We know this is not the case with many on the opposite side. In fact I recall the former Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, saying that the gradual lift in global temperatures may be beneficial and that extreme weather events were not getting worse but did more damage because there was more to destroy. These are really head-in-the-sand attitudes. So it was very important that when the minister appeared before the PAEC inquiry she had a very comprehensive plan for tackling climate change and indeed, as we have seen in this place in the last couple of sitting weeks, a very strong position on renewable energy and energy policy.

The fact is, as Oliver Yates said as he stood up at that Liberal Party fundraiser last week, climate change is not a laughing matter. That stunt where a piece of coal was brought out for people who had paid \$10 000 to be entertained at a Liberal Party fundraiser was flagrantly immoral. These are very important issues and we need to take them seriously.

I noticed in the *Age* on the weekend that the Leader of the Opposition called himself a bit of a nature lover, or maybe it was the commentator calling him a bit of a nature lover. I know he has solar panels. I know he is very keen on *vitis vinifera* Syrah, the well-known botanic, and *thenus orientalis*, a favourite sea creature. But I know that we on this side actually take this very seriously. It is not a laughing matter.

You only have to look at those opposite — and this is very pertinent to what the minister was saying at the PAEC hearing — they voted against Victoria's Climate Change Act 2017, they voted against the first increase to brown coal mining royalties, they voted against increases to Victoria's solar feed-in tariff. Of course I hear that the opposition leader may in principle be thinking about the great forest national park, but I do not see them anywhere near that issue.

I commend the contribution of the minister; I commend the actions that she is taking where, over the next four years, as the PAEC papers show, we are investing a historic \$811.2 million in this area. This is about making sure that we are not only committed to protecting the environment for the next generation and delivering reliable, sustainable, affordable energy to all Victorians but also to keeping Victorians safe, keeping them in jobs, keeping them safe from the threat of bushfires and making sure that our future is clean, green, renewable and genuinely prosperous for all Victorians.

ROAD SAFETY AMENDMENT (AUTOMATED VEHICLES) BILL 2017

Statement of compatibility

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, (the 'charter'), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Bill 2017.

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

Overview

The Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Bill 2017 will make a number of amendments to the Road Safety Act 1986 to establish a permit scheme to authorise testing and development of automated vehicles on Victorian roads (trials). There are several important preliminary issues to clarify in relation to Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Bill 2017.

Firstly, the bill establishes a permit scheme to authorise trials of automated driving systems installed into motor vehicles to enable them to perform the entire dynamic driving task for sustained periods of time without any human input. The bill will not alter the provisions in the Road Safety Act 1986, or regulations and rules made under it, that relate to a human driver using driver correction or driver assistance functionalities in a motor vehicle.

Secondly, the applicant for an automated vehicle permit will almost always be a company (within the meaning of the Corporations Act 2001 of the commonwealth) which will not have rights protected by the charter (section 6(1) of the charter). However, it is possible that a private individual may wish to trial an automated driving system that has been installed in their private motor vehicle on a public road.

Thirdly, the Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Bill 2017 has the potential to protect and promote human rights of any private individual who buys or is a passenger in a motor vehicle that has automated driving functionality.

For the purpose of this statement of compatibility, only amendments that are relevant to a person will be discussed.

Human rights issues

Right to equality — section 8

Importantly, the bill will potentially protect and promote human rights as it is enabling the development of new technology that will increase mobility for people with a disability, such as vision impairment, who cannot drive a motor vehicle, or use other forms of transport such as buses and trains.

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 and to enter and leave it and has the freedom to choose where to live.

The bill will impose sanctions for trials of automated vehicles without an automated vehicle permit or in breach of conditions of the automated vehicle permit. The imposition of these sanctions is relevant to the right to freedom of movement under section 12 of the charter because the bill will make it an offence for a 'person' to test, develop or trial a motor vehicle while it is in automated mode on a public road without an automated vehicle permit.

However, the right to freedom of movement is not limited because the affected person would be free to drive the vehicle or use other forms of transport.

As stated above, in relation to the rights to equality, the bill will protect and promote human rights as it enables the development of new technology that will increase mobility for those who cannot drive a motor vehicle or use other forms of transport.

Privacy — section 13

Section 13 of the charter provides that a person has the right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.

This right is relevant to the process when a person applies for an automated vehicle permit and personal information relating to the human supervisor is collected to determine the applicant's suitability to obtain a permit.

These provisions do not limit the right set out in section 13 of the charter. An application for an automated vehicle permit is entirely voluntary. If a person wishes to apply for an automated vehicle permit, then the new provisions set out the procedure that must be followed. Thus, any personal information would be collected or disclosed with the free consent of the applicant and the human supervisor for the trial. The provisions serve an important function, namely to monitor trials and to ensure public safety and security.

In addition, the collection, use and disclosure of personal information is authorised by the bill and the Road Safety Act 1986, thereby ensuring that the Privacy Act 1988 of the commonwealth and the Australian Privacy Principles would apply minimising the opportunity for unlawful interference with privacy.

Property rights — section 20

Section 20 of the charter provides that a person must not be deprived of their property other than in accordance with the law.

The bill will make it an offence to test and develop automated vehicles on a public road without a permit. In addition, clause 10 of the bill expands the use of existing offences in the Road Safety Act 1986 to enable Victoria Police to impound an automated vehicle used on a road or road-related area without an automated vehicle permit or in breach of a condition of the permit. Such impoundment may ultimately result in the sale or disposal of the vehicle, if it is uncollected or deemed to be abandoned following reasonable enquiries

and public notification requirements made within the specified period.

The purposes of these provisions is to enable Victoria Police to remove unauthorised and potentially unsafe automated vehicles from the roads for public safety and security. Moreover, the police will only have the power to impound vehicles in limited circumstances, as prescribed in the bill and the Road Safety Act 1986.

In light of the above circumstances, it is my opinion that any deprivation of property under these provisions would be in accordance with the law, would not be arbitrary, and would be compatible with section 20 of the charter.

Rights in criminal proceedings — section 25

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 charter therefore reinforces the principle that in criminal proceedings, the prosecution bears the burden of proof. The right is relevant where a statutory provision shifts the burden of proof onto an accused in a criminal proceeding, so that accused people are required to prove matters to establish, or raise evidence to suggest, that they are not guilty of an offence.

Clause 5 of the bill provides that any body corporate that holds an automated vehicle permit that is testing the automated driving system on a public road or road-related area will be responsible for the trial and any driving offences committed through the use of the automated driving system during the trial. Therefore, the bill will prevent a potential problem whereby any person in the motor vehicle (whether a supervising driver or a passenger) may be responsible for any offences or errors made by the automated driving system.

This is particularly important as the strict liability offences in the Road Safety Act 1986 and the regulations and rules made under it could result in the human occupant of the automated vehicle losing their licence and facing significant financial penalties.

This proposed section is based on the premise that the passenger or test driver may not have the capacity to take back control of the automated driving system or the ability to prove who or what was doing the driving at the time of the offence. Therefore, in my opinion, this provision does not limit the presumption of innocence protected by the charter.

Clause 5 of the bill also provides that if a holder of an automated vehicle permit is a person, then that person will be responsible for the trial and any driving offences committed through the use of the automated driving system during the trial. Given that non-compliance with the bill and the Road Safety Act 1986, and the regulations and rules made under that act can result in death and serious injury, the expansion of the strict liability offences in the act or the regulations and the rules made under it to a person who is a holder of an automated driving system permit is justified and balanced in the interests of public safety.

Hon. Luke Donnellan, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Second reading

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

From automation to autonomy

The era of automated driving of motor vehicles has already begun. The driving task has become easier with the evolution of driver assistance and driver correction functions, and these functions will continue to improve.

Cruise control has been widely used in vehicles for years and has recently evolved into adaptive cruise control, where speed is automatically adjusted to keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead.

Parking assist functions can also now parallel park your car for you and drivers are no doubt pleased that we can hand over responsibility for that particular task.

Blind spot monitoring and lane change assist technology too is becoming more common and evolving into auto lane change where you only need to put on your indicator and the car does the rest.

There are even cars available now that you can summon from your garage while you relax and drink your coffee.

Collectively, these innovations have the potential to significantly improve road safety and driver convenience.

But the future is not just driver assistance and driver correction, it is automated and autonomous driving. Innovations are evolving and coalescing into a driverless future, where the vehicle's driving system is capable of navigating the road network without human input.

This creates great potential for transport system efficiency improvements with better integration, asset utilisation and road space allocation. Autonomy is expected to deliver improved transport and time use choices for many sections of the community and, based on current developments, an improved environment as the vehicles are largely electric with little or no emissions.

The safety opportunities and implications

I am pleased to say that the road toll this year is an improvement on last year, but it is still unacceptable. We must pursue every available option to get our road toll down towards zero, and technology has an increasing role to play.

Human error plays a significant part in road injuries and fatalities. In the long term, automated vehicle technology has the potential to eliminate accidents that are caused by lapses in attention, speeding, erratic driving and impairment by alcohol or drugs. In the short term, the technology needs further development and testing to ensure that it is safe.

This means testing in realistic conditions, with real traffic on real roads. Trials are underway in many countries around the world but these vehicles will also need to operate safely under

our conditions with our infrastructure, right down to the particular width of the road markings.

In November 2016, the Transport Infrastructure Council agreed to support on-road trials of automated vehicles for all levels of automated driving.

In December 2016, the government released a *Future Directions* paper which set out a plan to support trials of automated vehicles operating at any level of automation — including where a driver is not present in the vehicle.

This bill provides for these trials.

Permits and permissioning

The priority for automated vehicle trials in Victoria is safety — we will not compromise community safety and security. A permit will be required to test these new technologies on our roads. In order to gain a permit, prospective participants will need to satisfy VicRoads that all safety precautions have been taken and an appropriate safety management plan is in place. The bill gives VicRoads wide powers to require tests to be carried out, assessments to be performed and training undertaken before a permit is issued.

Permits will be able to limit the times and highways where trials can operate, as well as any conditions determined by VicRoads. Permits will also be able to require the use of a supervising driver for a trial, in much the same way that learner drivers are supervised.

The bill also gives VicRoads powers to suspend, cancel and vary permits. As it is likely that any error in an automated driving system (ADS) may be present in more than one vehicle in a fleet, these powers are important to ensure the safety of all road users. Regulations will be made setting out more detailed procedural requirements for the granting, refusal, renewal, suspension and cancellation of ADS permits.

Some jurisdictions are providing for trials by granting exemptions from safety laws. However, this is a problematic approach that could create uncertainty in enforcing any breaches of permit conditions. Victoria's approach does not diminish obligations and protections — it reallocates accountabilities from the driver to the parties trialling the vehicles.

Permit holder responsibilities

Our existing laws are predicated on a human driver being responsible for the driving decisions and how the vehicle behaves on the road. People are fined and can lose their licence to drive if they don't drive safely. But what if there is no human in the vehicle making the decisions?

This bill does not abrogate responsibilities. Instead, it clearly transfers responsibility from the human driver to the ADS where the vehicle is performing the dynamic driving task. The ADS is the responsibility of the trial permit holder, for example, a car or technology company.

The bill clarifies that the duties of a driver under the Road Safety Act 1986 will also apply to the ADS permit holder. The permit holder effectively steps into the shoes of the driver. Accordingly, if an accident occurs, the bill places responsibility on the permit holder to report the particulars of the accident to the police as soon as possible.

If the rules are broken while the vehicle is operating under ADS direction then the permit holder pays the fine and, much like human drivers, offences can result in the permit being withdrawn. The licence demerit point system for humans will not apply to ADS vehicles or test drivers participating in trials, but that is because there are tougher alternative enforcement measures that will apply to permit holders. This transfer of responsibility also holds true for road safety offences and more serious offences under the Crimes Act 1958, such as culpable driving.

The bill also clarifies that the person who is the supervising driver holds legal responsibility for the vehicle at any time when the vehicle is not operating in automated mode.

It is expected that initially most permits will require that a supervising driver with a full licence be in the driver's seat and be able to take over should there be any warning or failures in the ADS.

However, in time, we can expect to see cars on our roads with no one behind the steering wheel- or no steering wheel at all. That is why we must act now to trial these vehicles in a safe, coherent and contained manner.

Supporting technology development and fostering innovation

This bill demonstrates the Victorian government's commitment to supporting the development of emerging technology and fostering innovation in the transport sector. It complements existing initiatives such as the Australian Integrated Multi-modal Eco-System (AIMES) and the iMove Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).

AIMES is a world first, live, multi-modal, national research and testing precinct for emerging transport related technologies, including connected and automated vehicles. It is located right here in Melbourne and brings together government, industry and academic organisations to test and implement new technologies in a safe and effective manner.

Transport for Victoria has committed \$1 million over the next 10 years to the iMove CRC. Through collaborative research and development projects, iMove will focus on utilising emerging technology and data to improve the movement of goods and people.

The trials and projects conducted through these channels will bring economic benefits to the state by establishing global connections and attracting foreign investment. This is all helping to build a strong and modern transport technologies sector in Victoria, that will support thousands of jobs and help move millions of people.

The bill

Part 1 of the bill deals with preliminary matters.

Part 2 of the bill introduces concepts such the ADS — the technology that is capable of performing the dynamic driving task. The bill makes clear when the ADS is and isn't driving, and the associated duties.

Part 2 provides for the permit scheme, the penalties for breaching permit conditions or not having a permit, the powers of VicRoads as the regulator and permissioning body, and the power to make regulations.

Part 3 amends the Crimes Act 1958 to clarify that any relevant offences under that act will apply to the ADS permit holder when the vehicle is being operated in automated mode.

Conclusion

The far reaching social, economic and environmental benefits promised by automated vehicles are expected to transform how people and goods move around our transport network.

There is a lot to be done to deliver on the exciting promises of motor vehicle automation and autonomy. The technology promises so much. This bill is a key step that provides a framework to facilitate trials in an efficient, flexible and responsive way.

Every step towards automation in Victoria will be taken with the clear understanding that safety is paramount. If an ADS in a vehicle is making the driving decisions, we need to have confidence that it does so safely, every time.

The trial scheme in this bill will build community and industry confidence without compromising safety.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr HODGETT (Croydon).

Debate adjourned until Wednesday, 29 November.

DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT (MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING CENTRE) BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed from 1 November; motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health).

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (10:39) — I rise today to add my contribution as the lead speaker for the Liberals and The Nationals on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. From the outset I would like to make it clear that we will be opposing this bill. There are a number of reasons for this, which I will go into in great detail, but it is clear that this is drug policy on the run. It is concerning that this is the result of a serious backflip that started happening about a month ago. About a month later we hear that we now have injecting rooms planned for Victoria — not just one, but many, many across the state.

Ms Thomas interjected.

Ms KEALY — I would like to just take this time to say that this debate should be respectful. I am already being called a liar across the chamber by the member for Macedon and I ask her to withdraw.

Ms Thomas — On a point of order —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member for Macedon has been asked to withdraw.

Ms Thomas — I withdraw.

Ms KEALY — As I was saying, I hope this is a respectful debate. We are talking about people's lives when we talk about this policy. We are talking about the terrible tragedy of lives lost to drug addiction, whether it is through injectable drugs — intravenous drugs — whether it is through terrible vehicle accidents that occur when people are drug-affected, whether it is through family violence which occurs when people are drug-affected, so I think it is entirely appropriate that we should be respectful and not just completely dismiss other people's views. This is a sensitive issue, and I ask members on both sides of the chamber to respect the debate that will occur during discussion around this bill.

As I said, there are people involved in this. So many times we hear about the statistics involved in drug overdose deaths, whether it is in this state or nationally. Everybody who is linked to an addict knows the tribulations and the trials that they have to go through. It is unlikely that there is ever somebody who has a drug addiction who has not got a story behind them.

I recall I went to Odyssey House earlier in the year where I spoke to some people who were in for treatment at that facility. They talked through some of the extreme challenges that they had faced through their early life. They even made the remark, 'You're pretty lucky if you've just got an addiction. So many times there are other aspects to it', and that is what we need to pay respect to. We need to pay respect to those people who are challenged by addiction, we need to pay respect to their families, to their friends and to their loved ones who see them go through this journey. We also need to pay respect to the alcohol and drug treatment workers who work with these people and see the ups and downs and who unfortunately lose some of the people they work with. I certainly respect everybody who is involved in trying to help people through the awful scourge of drugs that we have and which we have seen more and more of in the state at the moment.

Injecting rooms, as I said, are a very contentious issue. There are many people who have contacted me who strongly support injecting rooms in Victoria. There are many that strongly oppose injecting rooms. Whether you support or you do not support injecting rooms in this state, I will point out that this bill is highly flawed. It is quite clear that this is a last-minute policy decision, and we all know why that is. We know that there is a

by-election in Northcote. This is a touchy topic, and it is deeply disappointing that during the bill briefing we asked so many questions but the responses just were not there. This has not been thought through. It has been designed as trying to be a same but different policy of the Reason party and being same but different to the Greens party position.

It is extremely disappointing that the bill has not just fallen short of what the supporters are looking for in an injecting room in Victoria but also certainly fallen short for people who listened to the Premier when he promised back in 2014, before the election, that there would not be an injecting room in this state. Earlier this year, when we heard the coroner's findings, we were promised there would still not be an injecting room for Victoria. After the parliamentary inquiry was handed down we were promised there would not be an injecting room in Victoria. As recently as in September we were promised there would not be an injecting room in Victoria. And now that we have got this very, very rapid backflip and a piece of legislation that has been pulled together so quickly, there are more questions than there are answers. It is disappointing that something that changes Victoria's strategy on how we manage drugs in this state is deviating so quickly and so significantly from the previous plans, and it is being done poorly on the way through. That is disappointing for people who are supporters of the injecting rooms, as I said.

Just in regard to this bill, as I said, the way the bill has been drafted and the lack of thought about the way it will operate are exceptionally disappointing. I think the best example of this is the huge confusion on the day that this policy was announced as to whether ice was in or out in terms of the drugs that were allowed to be used in this injecting room. In the morning we saw the press release come out, where it referred to skyrocketing ice and heroin deaths in Victoria. Later that day we heard from the minister on 3AW, who made the statement that it would be up to Victoria Police to determine which drugs would be in or out in the centre. Later in the day we heard clarification that ice would be out. We look at the legislation, and there is no indication that ice is not included. In fact it is up to the secretary to determine what drugs and in what quantities will be allowable within the centre. This is the sort of confusion that just shows that this is drug policy on the run. It has not been thought through.

If you are going to base it on the Kings Cross model of an injecting room, Kings Cross includes all different types of drugs. Other injecting rooms around the world have an inhaling area so that staff are not exposed to, for example, ice smoke. Those toxic fumes are related

to that. In terms of staff security, I think before you undertake any recruitment to the injecting room there needs to be strong clarification about which drugs are being used. There is an enormous difference between somebody who is using heroin — it is a depressant, and people are likely to fall asleep if anything — as opposed to ice, where people get the strength of 10 men and can become extremely aggressive. There is no way for staff to know what drugs are going to be used in the centre. They have got no way to police or monitor it. If it is not set up to be able to manage people who are heavy ice users becoming aggressive, then it is a workplace issue. You are not providing full and effective support to your staff and not giving them a choice before employment to understand what sorts of conditions they are going to be working in.

This confusion about what drugs will be used in the centre has flowed through even from people who are supporters of the bill. They want to see ice use in there. If we go back to some of the coronial findings over recent times and when we look at the people who have suffered from a drug overdose death in Victoria, 70 per cent of the time they are multidrug users. It is never just heroin. If this is just a heroin injecting room, we are going to miss out on many, many opportunities where these people would be using other drugs and even alcohol. It has been cobbled together, I think, in terms of trying not to freak people out and saying, ‘All of a sudden we’re condoning ice use after we spent \$184 million on an *Ice Action Plan*, where all we’ve seen is drug use skyrocket’. We are seeing drug deaths increase. We are seeing more and more drug crime in the state. The *Ice Action Plan* has been a complete and utter failure. The only reason I can see for why ice has been excluded is that it is, again, about politics. They are not following another model. They are following the feedback that they are getting in polling rooms behind closed doors of what they need to do to win the Northcote by-election. That is not the way we should be making drug policy decisions in this state.

There is also enormous confusion around the elements of police discretion, and I have received feedback from supporters and opponents of injecting rooms in Victoria around this issue. On one side there is absolute confusion over what that police discretion might look like in terms of whether police will be told to turn a blind eye to any drug dealing or people walking into the centre. This is a centre where there is a primary school next door. It is actually in the same building as a child health and development service. There are going to be people, probably mostly women, who are walking their babies in prams into the centre. There are going to be

children of primary school age walking into their school next door.

Potentially we have got people who are leaving the injecting room, where police have been told to turn a blind eye, and they are at risk of being hit if the police see somebody get behind the wheel of a vehicle after they have left the injecting room and are high. That is when we are at complete and utter risk of creating more deaths. I would hate to see a tragedy where a pram was run over by somebody who had left the injecting room because the police were told to turn a blind eye to drug use in that region.

On the other hand, supporters of the injecting room are absolutely concerned that this could be taken the other way — that police could actively police in the area because they know it will be a hotspot for people who are carrying drugs. There are going to be drug deals in the region because people use where they buy drugs, and therefore people will be discouraged because they will know that it is a hotspot for police. That will discourage them from entering through the doors.

Mr Howard interjected.

Ms KEALY — This is feedback that I have received from stakeholders. This is not something that is made up. I am more than happy to talk to the member for Buninyong about that, but I am actually speaking to stakeholders about it. I know that he would like an injecting room in his part of the state —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Lowan will not respond to interjections.

Ms KEALY — Perhaps the Deputy Speaker would like to ask the member for Buninyong to refrain from making interjections in the first place.

There is no direction around police discretion and how that may be interpreted, and as I said, that creates great concern for supporters of injecting rooms but also for opponents of injecting rooms. The information within the bill certainly provides no comfort to either side. I reiterate that there has not been full thought and consideration given to these elements of the bill and how this will operate and how it will impact on local people — the local community, the workers within the North Richmond Community Health centre and also drug users who may enter the facility — and police.

The other element around the injecting room which is a key component of a review of the trial is around consideration of the key performance indicators (KPIs) or the data that will be collected by the injecting room

staff in relation to the success or otherwise of the injecting room. It is extremely concerning that when we went through elements of those KPIs, or those measurements, during the bill briefing there had not been any consideration at all given to how these may be measured. If we are going to undertake a review, we need to make sure that we get the data right from the start. You cannot retrospectively collect data. There has been no thought given as to what data will be collected to actually get a true measurement of the success or otherwise of this injecting room.

I asked about whether there would be any longitudinal studies to get an understanding as to whether people who go to the injecting room have not had an overdose elsewhere at another time. Unfortunately that is what we have seen in other areas — that is, that people who use an injecting room do use drugs in other areas 80 per cent of the time; they do not use an injecting room for each and every hit that they take. So there are no lives lost in an injecting room — absolutely; nobody denies that. That is exactly what should be happening when you are surrounded by clinical staff who have the skills and the ability and the instruments around them to resuscitate people. But to resuscitate somebody and then to follow their journey through to make sure not just that they are given some information about rehab but that they successfully complete treatment, that they are no longer using after six or 12 months or some period of time, that is saving somebody's life, that is helping them get their life back on track, and that is what we should be measuring.

I do not think that the data capture of this has been properly thought through, and it needs to be done from the outset. I am also concerned that the data could easily be skewed. I mean, just saying how many people have been referred to rehab does not really tell us anything. We need to get an understanding of how many people have managed to get their life back on track. It might be how many people have been referred to a mental health professional and seen them for X period of time and have been compliant with their medication, or how many people have found a home after being homeless for a period of time and have been in a permanent residence for longer than six months — that may be the measurement. But that is not what is being looked at. So I question what the 'success' will be of the injecting room if we are not actually collecting the data that will tell us whether people are getting a better life and managing their addiction to make sure that their life has been saved. It is not saving a life if somebody's life or thoughts revolve around addiction — whether it is about where they get their next drug deal from, where they get the money to buy it, using and enjoying the high and

going back and thinking, 'Where am I going to get my next hit? Where do I get the money from?'. That is no way to live, and that is the critical issue that we need to make sure we support.

There are elements of this bill which talk about internal management, and there are elements of this which concern me, because again, I do not think that it has been thought through. There is no mention of clinical protocols in here, and given that it is effectively a health centre where there will be medical intervention provided, I am concerned that there is a heavy loading upon internal management protocols but no reference to clinical management protocols. There is no discussion around, for example, credentialing and privileging and what sort of drugs might be available on site. I realise that some of that will come through regulation, but to go so heavily into internal management and administration without looking at the clinical side and what this health centre will effectively be doing is deeply concerning.

I would like to quote now some feedback that I received from David Penington. Obviously David has been a strong advocate of injecting rooms and has done a lot of work in this area and is highly respected in terms of not only his knowledge of injecting rooms but also the drug and alcohol sector. I quote:

My major concern is that the director is only accountable to the departmental secretary, who is the only one with responsibility for modifying 'management protocols'. Management of the facility will not be simple: it must evolve. It needs to be managed in the best way to achieve high-quality outcomes amongst a difficult clientele. Heavy IV heroin users frequently also use other drugs, and if some are also heavily into ice methamphetamine, aggressive behaviour may often occur. If the director or the supervisor find themselves seriously challenged, they may need local support, especially if they have to refuse accepting some clients on behavioural grounds. Conflicts could also arise between staff members. Local resolution may become essential. For these reasons, I believe it is important to have a supervisory committee, however styled, to which the director reports and which can then report as necessary to the secretary, not only on matters in dispute, but on overall quality of performance of the facility.

I think this is an important recommendation for the government to take on board. David Penington would have to be one of the strongest reference points that the government should have talked to when they were creating a bill, and it is very disappointing that either the government have not consulted with David Penington or they have not listened to his advice.

There are a number of elements related to internal management protocols which also raise concerns for me. There has been no discussion or decision or even

thought around what may preclude employment at the facility. When talking about what might be examples of internal management protocols, there was discussion around criminal history checks of staff members during the recruitment process and making sure they had the right skills and qualifications. It was actually recommended that it may be good for somebody to have a criminal history in drug possession or dealing because they would have a lived history in the drug and alcohol sector.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms KEALY — That was given to me during the bill briefing. It concerns me that it is thought that that would be an appropriate background. It was again put forward that this was something that could come up during the review. This needs to be thought through beforehand. This bill provides for specific exemptions from criminal charges for staff for the supply and use of drugs within the centre. We need to make sure that the people who are working in this injecting room do not have a criminal history of drug dealing, because they could easily see this as an opportunity to make a quick buck.

The fact that this has not been thought through is really concerning. Again, this is another example of a bill that has been devised on the run. It is drug policy on the run, and it is representative of a Premier who is panicking about the possible Northcote by-election. He has backflipped on a pre-election commitment to not have injecting rooms in Victoria and on multiple commitments given over this year, as recently as in September, and he has broken that promise.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:01) — I advise that the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services will be absent from question time today. The Minister for Mental Health will answer questions in the health and ambulance services portfolios, and the Minister for Police will answer questions in the women and prevention of family violence portfolios. Further, the Attorney-General will also be absent from question time today, and the Minister for Police will answer in his place.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Energy policy

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:01) — My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Noting that the diesel generators used or supplied for baseload power in Tasmania and South Australia all exceeded emissions limits specified by the national environment protection measures for air quality, including nitrogen oxide, Minister, will you rule out using these same machines — the APR TM2500 — in Victoria?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:02) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I do say very clearly that the Australian Energy Market Operator has a process to seek new supplies of energy when they believe there may be a shortfall. The type of energy that may be brought forward — and there is a whole variety of resources that come forward — are a matter for the market and the Australian Energy Market Operator. My understanding is that those negotiations are underway right now. I will remind those opposite that the same thing happened in early 2014 when those opposite were in government. Did they actually rule out diesel generation when they were in government?

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, Victoria has never had baseload diesel generator machines before, so I asked the minister in the question will she rule out using, for the first time in our state's history, the baseload machines — the APR TM2500 — that were used in South Australia and Tasmania. I have asked her: will she rule out those being used in Victoria?

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the minister was being entirely relevant to the question that was asked, and she was also giving detail on the role of the independent market operator. I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition would do well to get his advice from people who know the policy as opposed to those opposite who make it up.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Thank you, Speaker. Unlike those opposite, we actually have confidence in the experts in this space, and that is the market operator. It is the market operator's role to ensure that we have a matching of demand and supply in the system. Whether it is for Victoria, whether it is for other states, the mix

of energy that they may rely on to meet that matching is a matter for the market and the Australian Energy Market Operator. It is not the role of governments to intervene in the way that those opposite are suggesting. For them to suggest otherwise is basically a failure on their part and not letting the market operator do their job, and that is what they are doing right now.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:05) — Minister, when Tasmania installed large baseload diesel generators for that baseload supply, there were numerous complaints from residents about their operating noise. What noise control conditions will you be placing on any diesel generators used for baseload power in Victoria, specifically any placed near residential areas?

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, I seek your guidance on this matter. The content of the question that was asked by the Leader of the Opposition appears to be a hypothetical based on a set of circumstances that have not happened or may not happen here in Victoria, and I would ask that you rule the question out of order.

Mr Guy — On the point of order, Speaker, yesterday in question time the minister told the house that she was in ongoing negotiations regarding these generators. Therefore if the minister is in those ongoing negotiations, as she told this house yesterday, I have asked a simple question about those negotiations, which she herself said yesterday she is a part of.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not need the assistance of the member for Warrandyte. I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:07) — Thank you very much, Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition is frankly wrong on this front, and his memory is very, very selective.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — His memory is very selective. I have been very clear about this. It is the role of the market operator to enter into commercial negotiations with all proponents who are prepared to

provide additional supply to the market. Now, having said that —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, again on relevance, the minister, I remind you, yesterday said that she was involved in negotiations in relation to the placement of these generators. She is now saying that it is entirely the role of the market operator. I ask you to bring her back to answering the question, which was very clear about those negotiations she said she was a part of and putting in place the noise conditions, which I have raised to her in this house.

The SPEAKER — The minister was being responsive to the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Thanks very much, Speaker. With any negotiated outcomes that the market operator may strike with any single proponent, matters to do with environmental impacts of course have to be part of those negotiations and have to be considered. We have the Environment Protection Authority Victoria, which has the role to oversee and provide approvals or otherwise of any projects that may meet the contracted obligations that are negotiated by the market operator.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn has been warned. He will not be warned again.

Ministers statements: Australian marriage law postal survey

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:09) — I am very, very proud today to be able to report to the house that 64.9 per cent of Victorians have voted for decency, for fairness, for equality and for love — for all of those values held equally dear by a 61.6 per cent majority across the whole country.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Those opposite seem completely happy with this outcome; it is very good. I do not know about that, but anyway they are making a little bit of noise.

For those of us who campaigned very strongly for this outcome, I do not think we can understate just how profoundly important this is for members of the LGBTI community across Victoria and Australia. I do not think those heterosexuals who campaigned for this reform — this long overdue and profound reform — can properly or perhaps ever will properly appreciate what this validation, what this fundamentally respectful outcome,

means for couples in loving relationships and gay members of the community more broadly.

None of us have had to perhaps endure what so many in the LGBTI community have endured for far too long. Very few of us, if any of us, have had to deal with the persecution, the stigma, the vilification and the frankly un-Australian approach that is a part of daily life for so many in communities. Today is not only a proud moment for Victoria — the most progressive state in our nation — but it is a proud moment for those who have fought long and hard, because in Victoria love is love, fair is fair and equality is not negotiable.

Energy policy

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:11) — My question is again to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, again noting your comments yesterday in this house around the ongoing negotiations you are having around the installation of baseload diesel generators here in Victoria, and noting that last year in Tasmania diesel generators used for baseload power generation spilt fuel, creating fire and environmental hazards, some of which were close to residential areas, what safety conditions will you be imposing on any diesel generators used in Victoria for baseload power generation?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:11) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Can I say at the outset there are a lot of assumptions in that, a lot of hypotheticals, that the Leader of the Opposition is wanting us to believe will be a situation that Victoria will face. I have been very, very clear about this. Even though the Leader of the Opposition and his side do not actually want to hear this, we do have a market operator that is overseeing the commercial-in-confidence negotiations about our energy supply matters for this coming summer. Thanks to our government's significant financial assistance and boost to the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA), we will again see the EPA being the leader of the pack in this country in terms of environmental standards and protections. I will be very clear about this —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — They do not want to hear about it, but the reality is this: negotiations that the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) is undertaking with the proponents of additional energy supply for this coming summer, regardless of the energy source that may be fuelling that, will all be

subject to environmental standards no matter what source of energy they are derived from, and no matter where they may be located.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:13) — Noting that in Tasmania on 18 April 2016, 500 litres of diesel was spilt at the location of the diesel generators — and you will note that a number of those articles feature comments from the Tasmanian Labor opposition — I also ask: with the AEMO saying that they have secured these diesel generators and yesterday in this house the minister saying that there are ongoing negotiations, Minister, exactly what is the substance of the negotiations you are having regarding these baseload diesel generators, given that the AEMO says that they are already secured?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:14) — I thank the opposition leader for the supplementary question. I make it absolutely clear: these matters are for the market operator to negotiate. This is the reality of it, but they do not want to hear that, because all they want to hear is bad news.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister said, 'These matters are for the market operator'. The substance of the supplementary question was, 'What is the substance of the negotiations the minister is having?', not what the operator is determining themselves. What is the substance of the minister's discussions with that operator? For the minister to say that they are entirely of the operator, and nothing to do with her — she offered up the fact that she was having those discussions. I ask you to bring her back to answering the question.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The substance of the negotiations that are being undertaken by the market operator and proponents is about additional energy supply. Whatever the substance of that —

Mr Guy interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — You are just making it up. He does it all the time, whether it is making up the subject matter of the lobster dinner at the Lobster Cave, or making it up in terms of the side deal letters —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance. The minister again said that the question is being made up. She was the one who yesterday said,

‘There are ongoing negotiations’. If she thinks after 24 hours she has made her own comments up, well, the minister might want to correct them. The reality is that the minister said she is having ongoing negotiations. So if anything is being made up, it is the minister’s evidence to this house.

The SPEAKER — Order! The issue of consistency, or lack thereof, of the minister’s answer is a matter that members may raise, but it is not for me to determine the accuracy of a minister’s answer — only whether they are being relevant and responsive to the question.

Mr Walsh — She doesn’t know what she is talking about.

The SPEAKER — Order! Without the assistance of the Leader of The Nationals. In this case she has been, until the last few moments, where she strayed from answering the question. I ask the minister to come back to answering the question.

Ms D’AMBROSIO — The reality is we are committed to ensuring that Victorians can have a safe and reliable energy supply for this coming summer. The market operator has given every confidence, publicly and privately, to the government that they are well on their way to achieving just that.

Ministers statements: education funding

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) (11:17) — Earlier this week I was delighted to announce that on top of the biggest school building program in the state’s history, the Andrews government will also be implementing a rolling facilities evaluation of school buildings right across Victoria.

When we came to government we found that there was indeed an assessment of schools in 2012, but then that was it. No follow-up with desperately needed school capital investment. We inherited over 400 schools classified under that audit as either ‘red’ or ‘orange’ — that is, in extremely poor condition. Over the last three years, we have made significant inroads in addressing that disgraceful backlog.

If I can focus on Geelong and South Barwon, I note that the 25th shadow Minister for Education, the drinks-carrying shadow minister, the member for Kew, has visited some schools in that beautiful region. He visited Bellbrae Primary School, in which the Andrews government has invested over \$750 000; Belmont High School, a red school, in which the Andrews government has invested \$5 million; Grovedale College, in which the Andrews government has invested \$7 million; Highton Primary School, in which

the Andrews government has invested \$2.5 million; Mandama Primary School, which I will be visiting next week; Moriac Primary School, in which the Andrews government has invested \$3 million; Oberon High School, in which the Andrews government has invested \$2.5 million — for a total of almost \$21 million.

What was the investment in capital upgrades for these schools under the previous Liberal government? Zero! Not one dollar. That is what we would see if the 25th shadow minister is ever the education minister in this state.

Energy policy

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:19) — My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Minister, the diesel generators that the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) are placing with your consent in Victoria will cause significant pollution from the half a million litres of diesel they will burn every single day. Minister, what impact will the consumption of half a million litres of diesel per day have on your government’s plan to reduce carbon emissions?

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:20) — I thank the member for Caulfield for his question. The premise of this question again relies on hypotheticals and unknowns. The market operator is yet to formally —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The opposition have asked a question. They should allow the minister to answer it without her being shouted down.

Ms D’AMBROSIO — These are matters that are before the market operator. It is absolutely clear that once the market operator has concluded their negotiations — the commercial-in-confidence negotiations that are underway — they will be making clear to the market their conclusions to that, and we look forward to getting their advice on that. All issues to do with environmental impacts will be acquitted through that process, and they will be known. The facts are these. The Environment Protection Authority Victoria has a very important function, and we have supported them with additional funding and a stronger regulatory compliance and enforcement regime. I am absolutely confident that the market operator will present to Victorians a system that will be reliable this coming summer and —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Frankston!

Mr Southwick — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister has had a fair time now to answer that question, and I ask you to bring her back to actually answering it. What emissions will we see from these diesel generators being brought into the market? AEMO are about to bring these diesel generators into the market. The minister has said that she has had negotiations and discussions with AEMO. Surely the minister, who is also the minister for the environment, would have some consideration about the diesel generation and the carbon emissions. Will the minister please answer the question: what emissions will be done as a result of these diesel generators that she is allowing to be introduced into the market here in Victoria?

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I do feel compelled to give my answer in the form of another lesson — yet another lesson — to the member for Caulfield. The market works in this way. When there is a potential shortage of supply the market operator goes to the market seeking additional supply which is then, once they are locked in as contracts, available to the market.

Mr Pesutto interjected.

The SPEAKER — The member for Hawthorn has been warned.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Whether they are actually required by the market is a day-to-day proposition depending on weather outcomes and weather patterns during the summer period. So to actually answer a question —

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was about the impact of emissions from these diesel generators on the government's own emissions target. What that has to do with the operator, I have no idea, but the operator does not have an impact on the government's own emissions targets. This question is about the government's own emissions targets. You should bring the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — I do not uphold the point of order. The minister is being responsive to the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Issues to do with emissions of any energy generation are dependent on what is actually used at any particular point in time. To provide an answer in the form that those opposite are seeking

believes the fact that there is a range of energy generation supply that will be made available through the negotiated contracts of AEMO. If they are actually required, it is at that point that we actually know what the emissions level may be — that is, if these are actually required at the point that they are brought on-call by the market operator.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

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

Supplementary question

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (11:24) — Will the minister commit to providing weekly public updates on the operation of any baseload diesel generators, including electricity delivered into the grid, wholesale prices charged for that electricity, operating costs of the generators and any environmental emissions caused by these diesel generators?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:25) — I thank the member for Caulfield for his hypothetical. I do refer the member for Caulfield to a really useful app that is available to anybody, which is called Red Dolphin Systems. It actually tells you by generator how much is actually being provided to the market on a 5-minute by five —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will resume her seat. Members on both sides of the house! I ask everybody to put their phones away.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question was —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Frankston has been warned.

Mr Walsh — The question was very clear about the minister providing updates, and they were set out in the question. I would ask you to bring the minister back to actually giving a commitment — yes or no — as to whether she will provide that information to the public of Victoria about the impact of these diesel generators on the environment, on the cost of electricity and on the consumption and price of diesel.

The SPEAKER — Order! It is impossible for me to tell where the minister was going with the answer at this point in her response. I ask the minister, without

waving her phone around, to continue answering the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Our government is absolutely the most transparent government that there has ever been in the state of Victoria. That is the reality of this. Those opposite are happy to settle on side letters and side deals, lobster restaurant meals and deals with the Mafia —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will leave the chamber for a period of half an hour. I will not have members cheering and clapping in the chamber.

Honourable member for Croydon withdrew from chamber.

Mr Southwick — On a point of order, Speaker, I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question. This is very simple. We want to know whether the minister will commit to providing this information to the house, particularly when it comes to reducing carbon emissions. In the previous part of the question she said she needed to wait until these generators came into play before she could give that information. If the minister is transparent then it is a very simple question. All the minister has to say is yes, she will provide the details with respect to each and every one of the things that we have asked, including the operational costs and the carbon emissions that will be burnt as a result of these diesel generators.

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

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Our commitments are very clear when it comes to climate change and tackling the causes of climate change, but suddenly those opposite have discovered that they believe in it for one half an hour of the day. We are absolutely committed to informing the community of any additional supply that might be called on by the market operator during this coming period. The price issues are a matter of discovery through the market and we will absolutely report on it.

Ministers statements: Murray Basin rail project

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (11:28) — I am pleased to update the house on yet another Andrews Labor government transport project — the Murray Basin rail project. It is about getting freight to market but, like this government

always does, we are also making sure that there are great benefits across the regional community. We are seeing a great jobs boost to this project. We have 150 staff based at the project's main office in Maryborough and at nearby sites at Ararat, Dunolly, Donald and St Arnaud. We also have people across the north-west of the state working as administrators, supervisors, labourers and machine operators.

But there is more to this story as well. There are more than 40 local businesses who have been engaged so far. This includes Maryborough-based disability service provider, Asteria Business Services. Since July Asteria has been providing printing and mail distribution services to the project, and they have been providing cleaning services for the office accommodation and other facilities. There is also Western Quarries in Ararat, which is providing the ballast for the project. There are other suppliers right across the region, like Troy Walker Electrical and Wattle Office Supplies in Maryborough, as well as Wazza and Co in Beaufort and Hull Plumbing in Ararat.

And there is also more. There is hospitality, catering, accommodation and rental properties across central and north-western Victoria which have been in strong demand; that includes, I am advised, the Donald Caravan Park that is in strong demand since construction of the project started in July. There is no doubt that the delivery of this project and the way we have structured it so that local businesses can benefit is creating significant jobs in this part of the state. That is in stark contrast to the secret plan of those opposite, as part of their \$120 million cuts to V/Line, to cut 100 jobs at V/line. We are investing in regional services.

Drug rehabilitation services

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (11:30) — My question is for the Minister for Mental Health. The establishment of a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in my electorate has been on the agenda for quite some time. It was initially flagged more than two years ago for a site in Mooroopna; later it moved to Numurkah. In July this year VCAT overturned a decision by Moira Shire Council to block a permit for the facility to be made on various planning grounds. The reputed ice epidemic affecting our young people, the ongoing and well-known issues of alcohol addiction and the overall lack of residential treatment facilities in regional Victoria make this really important. The permit for the facility requires construction to commence within two years. Minister, what is the current position of the government in relation to ensuring that such a facility is established in my electorate?

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health)

(11:31) — I thank the honourable member for Shepparton for her question and for her leadership in making sure that this nationwide issue of alcohol and particularly drug addiction gets the support that it quite rightly should at all levels of our community.

The honourable member for Shepparton was describing the process that surrounded an application by the Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO), which has gone through a series of iterations as one of our leading community providers across a whole range of social community services. ACSO have led a proposal that has gone through a series of iterations now and, as the honourable member quite rightly says, that is reflected in a recent VCAT decision. That VCAT decision allows this development to go ahead under the conditions that the honourable member referred to. There cannot be a more serious issue in this state. I know that the honourable member for South-West Coast has this view, and I know the honourable member for East Gippsland has this view. This is a particular issue that is ravaging our regional communities, in fact more so than it does in Melbourne metropolitan areas, and that is in fact a high benchmark that, sadly, those and other communities have passed.

In the Hume region, which encompasses the honourable member for Shepparton's electorate, for some time now the number of referrals to support agencies for illicit drugs have passed referrals for alcohol. This is a major issue, particularly in the honourable member's electorate. That is why as part of our most recent budget we allocated \$9.7 million for the delivery of land for dedicated new residential rehabilitation facilities in the Hume region, in the Barwon region and in the Gippsland region. In terms of how that is playing out, I can inform the honourable member that my department is well and truly aware of that recent decision. We are well and truly aware from discussions that have been going on with ACSO as the proponent of that application of what that means.

What I just reflect on is that this is an issue that transcends, you would like to think, daily partisan politics. These facilities are there for any Victorian, whether it is our children, whether it is our partners, whether it is our family members or whether it is our community members. The fact that this is a particular issue in our regional communities is a focus of this government, as it rolls out a doubling of residential rehabilitation beds. It is important to recognise that when we came to government there were 208 beds for residential rehabilitation support in Victoria, and by the time this political cycle ends in a little over 12 months there will be 420 beds in the system.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (11:34) — Minister, I think it is fair to say that there is wide recognition that we need drug rehabilitation services in regional Victoria, but there is also a really strong tendency to say, 'Not in my backyard'. There are local concerns in my electorate about where such a facility should go, so I am just wondering whether you can provide any sorts of resources or outline processes which your government might be able to provide to try to address the issues around location and also the mitigation of the sorts of risks that communities raise.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health)

(11:35) — Yes, the honourable member is right. Sadly there is too much of the kneejerk reaction. Communities at one level have an understandable concern about addiction services coming into their community, but when we see these services land and when we see these services properly negotiated and supported in the community, we see community support.

I understand that the recent VCAT process in the honourable member's community saw some of that community opposition, and I am aware in recent days of some of that community opposition. I undertake to the honourable member that our department, the proponents of the scheme, which will bring in other partners — reputable partners, as I understand it, who have a long and proud history of success in this difficult and challenging space — will work with the honourable member, her community and her local areas to make sure that community support is built for this important project.

Ministers statements: Victoria Police

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (11:36) — On this great day, where love has been the winner, I am very pleased to update the house on major investments we are making in building the forensic capacity of Victoria Police. We know forensic capability is absolutely critical to the fight against drugs in our community and the fight against organised crime and firearms in our community and also to the important work in crime scene investigations.

Over the past three years we have invested in new forensic officers to close down drug labs; 48 new forensic officers and intelligence analysts working with our counterterrorism command; over 50 forensic officers and specialist staff analysing fingerprints and monitoring online activity at the Victoria Police Monitoring and Assessment Centre; and additional capability to analyse firearms and bullets that is being

used with the Australian Federal Police to disrupt organised crime, particularly associated with firearms. So we have got new people, new capabilities, new IT and new buildings all building that forensic capability.

This is part of the biggest rebuild of Victoria Police. So we now have 630 more police on our streets than when we came to government, with thousands more coming. We have 200 more protective services officers and more coming. We have got over 350 police custody officers and over 500 additional specialist staff, and all of these investments are absolutely critical to rebuild Victoria Police's capacity.

When we came to government there had been zero police funded in four years. In fact substantial cuts had been undertaken, so Victoria Police were facing a situation where they had seen digital and forensic analysts cut, intelligence officers cut, cybercrime analysts cut, psychologists cut and police lawyers cut, so no wonder we saw a crime rate rise of 21 per cent under those four years of the Liberal Party and National Party government. So on this side of the house we are rebuilding the Victoria Police force. We are giving them the capabilities they need to keep crime down in our streets.

Energy policy

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (11:38) — My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and there are no so-called hypotheticals or unknowns in this question. The iconic Black Spur Inn is in Narbethong, a town that was all but wiped out on Black Saturday. The inn was lucky to survive. Over the last two years the inn's power bills have more than doubled. Alternatives like solar are no use, as the inn is located between the Yarra and Cathedral ranges and there is not enough direct sunlight. The owners are now considering closing. Minister, how many businesses like the iconic Black Spur Inn have to close before you admit your energy policies are a complete failure?

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:39) — I thank the member for Eildon for her question. The view that somehow we have failed energy policies is the absolute opposite of reality. The reality is this: rising energy prices are a result of the abject long-term failure of their mates in the federal government for failing to have any energy policy.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members on my left!

Ms D'AMBROSIO — It is a situation that our government knows absolutely well the impacts of. We understand that families and businesses, no matter where they are across the state, are feeling the pinch of rising energy costs — absolutely. That is why we have been very committed to argue at a national level for a gas reservation policy to protect our domestic gas for domestic consumption ahead of the international global market. Unfortunately the Prime Minister has failed to heed our government's —

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I would like you to bring the minister back. This is not about gas. I do not know how the minister thinks the Black Spur Inn are going to access gas reserves and a gas pipeline where they are, when they are reliant solely on electricity generation. I would like her to consider the Black Spur Inn in her response.

The SPEAKER — The minister is being relevant to the question.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — It is really sad when we have those opposite who still refuse to understand how the energy market works. I am very, very happy to meet with the owners of the Black Spur Inn to come and have a talk about the range of programs that our government is making available to businesses so that they can get through these very difficult periods where gas prices have increased and electricity prices have increased. Be assured that our government's longer term commitment is to get those prices down, and the surest and quickest way to do that is to get more energy generation supply into the market.

That is why our Victorian renewable energy target will deliver that additional quick, cheap and affordable new power generation to come into the system, and we are already building as we speak. Those opposite ought to get on board. They ought to get on board and support renewable energy and the efforts that we are making to drive those prices down. They ought to start advocating nationally too to their counterparts to fix up the gas problem.

Mr Southwick — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, this is not about the federal government. This is about what the minister's government is doing to help the Black Spur Inn be able to afford to keep their doors open. Before, the minister alerted us to PocketNEM as a way of being able to fix the situation. Currently PocketNEM shows Victoria having the highest wholesale price in the country, and we are importing from every other state, including South Australia. This is a policy joke, thanks to this government.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, despite the rant from the professor from Caulfield, the minister was being entirely relevant to the question. We have seen question after question today that has exposed the lack of understanding of those opposite about a national energy market and the intersection between gas and electricity generation, and I would ask that you allow the minister to continue to answer the question and provide the information that clearly those opposite so sorely need to help them to frame their future questions.

Mr Walsh — Further on the point of order, Speaker, you have always been very strong on using correct titles, and I would ask you to make sure the manager of government business actually addresses the member for Caulfield appropriately.

An honourable member — Is this supposed to help, is it?

Mr Walsh — Yes, it is. It is actually about respect for this place. You might not understand it, but it is actually about respect.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! We have reached the last question, but I will not rule out removing members from the chamber if they keep shouting across the chamber in question time. The first point of order went to the adequacy of the answer being given by the minister in relation to the question asked. The actual question was quite a broad question; therefore I say the minister was being relevant to the question. In relation to the separate point of order raised by the Leader of The Nationals, I do ask the Leader of the House to refer to members by their correct title, and I remind all members to do the same.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The hypocrisy of those opposite — first they say, 'We do not need state plans; we only need the national one', and we have got to get on board with the national one, which actually does not exist, and now they want to attack us for actually having a plan when there is not one at the national level. Speaker, every business and every family in this state can be absolutely confident that we are on their side. Our agenda, our program and our policies will deliver more energy supply into the system, lowering energy prices and lowering energy costs. We will always advocate in their interests first and foremost.

For the Black Spur Inn, I will be very happy to meet with them and go through the range of programs for direct financial assistance for any businesses that are struggling to meet their energy costs in the meantime.

Supplementary question

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (11:46) — The Black Spur Inn has reduced consumption by a whopping 40 per cent since the owners purchased the business so that they are using less power today than they were a decade ago. The owners have also shopped around looking for the best deal. Minister, what immediate suggestions do you have for those Black Saturday survivors about how to reduce their power bills and save their business from closing this year?

Mr Southwick interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Caulfield, I am sure, wishes to stay in the chamber.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:47) — I thank the member for Eildon for the supplementary question. Speaker, I am absolutely committed to opening up my diary and meeting with any business that wants to come down, sit with the government and discuss the variety of programs and financial assistance that are available to them right now. Really struggling businesses — I am happy to meet with them anytime, anywhere.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, for the minister to suggest that a family who are running a business in Narbethong can come down to the city to meet with her is just not —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr R. Smith — That is not what she said. It is ludicrous. She should go to them if she thinks it is important.

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

Mr Wakeling interjected.

The SPEAKER — The member for Ferntree Gully has been warned.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I have been very clear, and the member has obviously decided to say something that was not said by me at all. I was very, very clear: I would be happy to meet anywhere and with any business right across the state to discuss any energy cost challenges that they are facing. We have got significant financial support available to them. I remind everybody in this house that without a plan we have got no hope of getting those prices down for everyone, and that is what our government will deliver — a very strong plan and a very strong agenda. Those opposite

should have got on board in support of our Victorian renewable energy target legislation.

Ministers statements: regional and rural roads

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (11:48) — I rise to update the house on the marvellous work that the Andrews government is doing in regional road maintenance and surface replacement funding. I know that, over the next 12 months, we are going to be spending more than ever before — \$530 million on 1400 kilometres of road across the state, rebuilding entire sections.

In September I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to visit the area where we are doing a lot of the great work. I stayed at the Caledonian Hotel in Echuca and went to Leitchville. On the way to Leitchville, I even went by the member for Murray Plains' little church, and I noticed that the Murray Valley Highway was being rebuilt. What a marvellous job we are doing there. Then on the back on the way through to Echuca, I noticed the great work we are doing at the intersection of Warren Street and the Murray Valley Highway. Remember, that is all part of the Echuca bridge. We know what the National Party did with the Echuca bridge. It spent four years playing tootsies on a new route, and it still came back to the original route.

While I was sitting in the Caledonian Hotel reading the paper, I suddenly one morning came across the biggest black cat porky pie I had seen in a long time. Big porky pies! And do you know what?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, from sessional orders, the minister, in advising the house about matters relating to his portfolio, is commencing to debate issues. I ask you to remind him of his obligations to confine his remarks to making a ministers statement.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, the manager of opposition business is perhaps anticipating. The minister has yet to go into the detail of what he is referring to. I think he should be allowed to provide that context to the house.

The SPEAKER — I do not uphold the point of order, but I do ask the minister to remember the sessional orders in relation to making a ministers statement.

Mr DONNELLAN — It was a great time to be up there — great turf pitches and a great country welcome.

Mr Paynter interjected.

The SPEAKER — The member for Bass is warned.

Mr DONNELLAN — There were suggestions that we had an alternative policy of cutting \$360 million from road maintenance, so I went to the trumpet of truth, the budget papers, because that is the only place you will find it. With the National Party, it is a bit like the office of living banjo players; they can never tell the truth. I looked at the budget papers, and when we left office, there was \$286 million; in their last full budget it was \$222 million. It went down, it was cut, and now it is at \$418 million. So that is down, up, down again with the National Party.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Rowville electorate

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (11:52) — (13 589) The question I wish to raise is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Minister, what plans do VicRoads have for road improvements to Wellington and Stud roads to provide for the large number of new residents moving into the Kingston Links development in Rowville?

Minister, the Kingston Links golf course, along with a large parcel of Knox council land, is due to be developed into a new housing estate as a result of the strong population growth in outer suburban seats like Rowville. The development of over 800 houses, along with new parks, new community facilities and new commercial premises within the estate will generate a large amount of extra traffic. Already 81 per cent of Rowville residents rely on their cars to get to work, which is the highest proportion in Victoria. Rowville residents are extremely worried that extra traffic will put enormous pressure on Wellington Road and Stud Road. These major roads provide access for Rowville residents onto EastLink and the Monash Freeway and are at choking point.

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (11:53) — (13 590) My constituency question is for the Minister for Suburban Development. What information can the minister provide on the outcomes from the recent Northern Metropolitan Partnership Assembly and the next steps in assessing priorities for communities in Melbourne's north?

Residents from across Melbourne's north turned out to the first-ever Northern Metropolitan Partnership Assembly last month, sharing their priorities and ideas for our region. It was a pleasure to be able to attend, along with a number of other MPs, including several ministers, the Premier and indeed yourself, Speaker. The establishment of the suburban development portfolio and the metropolitan partnerships initiative are both great ways of making sure that grassroots local priorities are heard, and I am sure that local residents would be eager to receive information from the minister on the next steps in developing plans for the future of our suburbs.

Gippsland East electorate

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) (11:54) — (13 591) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the information I seek is whether VicRoads completed a flood impact study on Paynesville Road prior to commencing its wire rope barrier installation works. I am advised by locals that although work has commenced and the road is to be raised several inches along the Paynesville Road that no flood impact study was completed and is only now being considered. Everyone familiar with this area is aware it is prone to serious flooding, and houses have been inundated many times in years past. As the minister would know, changing the floodplain often has impacts on other areas, so I ask the minister if the study was completed before work started, and if not, why not?

Narre Warren South electorate

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (11:55) — (13 592) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and it concerns the upgrade of Thompsons Road level crossing as part of the major upgrade of Thompsons Road. I ask: what stage has been reached in the works to build the north bridge over the Thompsons Road level crossing? I am regularly contacted by many local residents who cannot wait for the project to be completed. Janet is one of them. She contacted me only last week to ask for a progress report as she regularly uses the train station to get to and from work. The removal of this level crossing will ensure more trains can be run more often so Janet's commute to work becomes much easier.

The duplication of Thompsons Road to three lanes in each direction will also make the drive to and from the station much quicker, and surrounding works will make it much easier to get in and out of the station car park and around the local estate streets. It will just make life easier for so many local residents who will spend less time stuck in traffic and more time with their families.

Burwood electorate

Mr WATT (Burwood) (11:56) — (13 593) My question is for the Minister for Planning. Given the revocation motion in the upper house for amendment C251, what contingency plan does the minister have in place for that site?

Cranbourne electorate

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (11:56) — (13 594) My question is to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. A proposal has been put forward to revitalise the old Cranbourne pool site, which has become derelict, attracting refuse and antisocial behaviour since its closure in 2009. The proposal will see the former site reactivated and used for the development of a cinema-based entertainment facility. I ask the minister in her capacity as the minister responsible for Crown land to inform my constituents what is being done to ensure that this community facility development can proceed on the Crown land site.

Prahran electorate

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (11:57) — (13 595) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and I ask: what is the latest information on the plan to upgrade South Yarra station? Earlier this year commuters were pleased to see that finally \$2 million was allocated to start planning for an upgrade to South Yarra station. This is after years of neglect, 1300 signatures on my 'Upgrade South Yarra station' petition and hundreds of submissions to my commuters survey. Residents are now keen to know what progress has been made and when community consultation will occur.

My survey showed that commuters priorities were for a northern entrance, an expanded front foyer, maintaining heritage character and a safe pedestrian crossing at Yarra Street. With more and more high-rise towers going up right next door in Forest Hill and a growing population it is absolutely critical that residents have their say, and that once the plan is completed funding is allocated so that South Yarra gets the upgrades it needs.

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (11:58) — (13 596) My constituency question is to the Minister for Veterans. Is your department considering a refurbishment of the Broadmeadows remembrance memorial? Diggers, Light Horsemen and Victoria Cross winners were trained and dispatched from the Maygar Barracks in Broadmeadows to fight at Gallipoli

and on the Western Front. The Johnnies and the Mehmetts killed in the slaughter at Gallipoli lie side by side in Turkey. As the founder of the republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk declared:

After having lost their lives on this land they have become our sons as well.

With the ebb and flow of history part of the Maygar Barracks compound was converted into a migrant hostel after the Second World War, when Turkish families en masse first called Australia home. So Broadmeadows is where the Johnnies and the Mehmetts now live, side by side. Repairing the remembrance memorial honours the past and could become a symbol of crucial social cohesion in the future.

Bass electorate

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) (11:59) — (13 597) My question is for the Minister for Police. Last week the Leader of the Opposition announced that if elected in November 2018 we would build a police station in Clyde North with \$15 million funding in our first budget. Will your government match that commitment in the upcoming 2018–19 state budget?

Sunbury electorate

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) (11:59) — (13 598) My question is for the Minister for Education. What are the design and construction time lines for the \$4.57 million upgrade of Tullamarine Primary School? I had the incredible opportunity to visit the school last week and make this fabulous announcement. Staff, students, the school council and parents are overjoyed with this news, which will see asbestos-ridden buildings knocked down and replaced with modern, high-class, new facilities. This is yet again another great local announcement from a government committed to getting things done. I thank the minister and ask him for the design and construction time lines for this very important project.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Questions without notice

The SPEAKER (11:59) — Order! Before moving back to the business program, I advise the house that yesterday the manager of opposition business raised two points of order regarding the responsiveness of ministers answers to questions. I reviewed the transcript and rule that the answer given by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to the member for Caulfield's first substantive question was responsive. I also rule the answer given by the Minister

for Housing, Disability and Ageing to the member for Lowan's substantive question was responsive.

DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT (MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING CENTRE) BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (12:00) — I continue my contribution. Prior to the break I raised my concern about the lack of detail, planning and understanding around this policy to introduce injecting rooms into Victoria. I do not have time, unfortunately, to go through all of those pieces of evidence. Questions were asked during the bill briefing where information was simply not forthcoming and it seemed like it was a new idea. This reflects what I have heard from people who are in support of injecting rooms and those who oppose them. Even those in favour of the bill have concerns and criticisms around this bill and have concerns in particular about how it will operate in practice.

There is broad support within the drug and alcohol sector, that they want all drugs in. As I referenced earlier, the coroner recently reported that 70 per cent of Victorian overdose deaths involve the use of multiple drugs. There has not been a clear line from Labor as to whether ice is in or out. This will make an enormous difference to the operation of the facility and the impact it will have on staff and on the surrounding services in that area, whether it is a maternal child health centre in the building or the nearby primary school. Nearby businesses have concerns around the injecting room. There is not a 100 per cent consensus around this. There are people within the community that do not want the injecting room locally. They are concerned, but they are too scared to come forward because the support for it is very, very strong by some within that community as well.

The other criticism of the bill by those who are in support of injecting rooms is that they want many injecting rooms right across the state. They do not want to be limited to one injecting room. We know that this is a view that is shared by some Labor MPs, and two weeks ago we saw the member for Geelong make the comment that she wanted to see an injecting room open in that region. The minister then had to quickly get on the phone and hose that idea down, although we know that there are local members of Parliament who are desperately pushing for more injecting rooms across the state.

We have heard before from the Premier and from the Minister for Mental Health that we are not going to get injecting rooms in the state. It was a promise before the 2014 election. It was promised on many occasions over this year, as recently as September, and now we are getting an injecting room. How can we trust somebody who said there would be no injecting rooms in Victoria to now say there will not be more than one injecting room in Victoria and that we will not have many, many injecting rooms across Victoria? How can we trust that ice will not be able to be used within the injecting room when that was included in the media release, which was put out less than 10 days ago? There are deep concerns around this, and we simply cannot trust what the minister or the Premier are going to do around this, because they are saying one thing and are doing something completely different.

We have also heard from the sector that they think the model is wrong. They do not agree with this model. They prefer the model that was put forward by the Reason party earlier this year. They prefer the Kings Cross model. They think that Labor have got this model wrong in the structure and in not giving enough detail, particularly with the restriction of some drug types. So nobody is happy with how this policy has been delivered. Nobody is happy with how this bill is being constructed.

We know, and there is absolutely no doubt, that there have been no lives lost in an injecting room. That is the great work of the staff involved in injecting rooms right around the world. That is their job. It is their job to resuscitate people who have had a drug overdose. The problem is that people do not use injecting centres 100 per cent of the time when they are drug users. In fact the evidence states that 80 per cent of the time they inject elsewhere. This is where we have the risk. A life addicted to heroin is no way to live a life. That is where we really need to make the key difference — making sure that we provide those interventions to try to avoid people getting into that drug cycle wherever possible and that we provide support and make sure that they are able to get the support they need when they need it.

We have got waitlists for rehab of over a year. The first thing that Labor did when they came to government was scrap funding for three rehabilitation centres. We would have had more residential rehab beds today if Labor had not scrapped that funding. We had a pre-election commitment as well, and we actually had money within the budget which Labor pulled. I think that is a disgrace. When we see no response from Labor in over three years in government and now the

government are thinking, 'We made a mistake. We should've actually built those three rehab centres that the Liberals and Nationals promised', it is another backflip. At least they are catching up, but they cannot say that we did nothing when they are the ones who scrapped the funding.

We know that the greatest reduction in heroin deaths actually occurred in 2001. There has been a reduction in heroin deaths in Victoria by 80 per cent. This is because of immense work by police. They had a huge task force which broke up heroin trafficking rings in the state. In fact right across Australia there was this disruption. At the same time, in 2001 the Kings Cross medically supervised injecting centre was opened. However, even with the injecting centre, New South Wales only achieved a 50 per cent reduction in heroin deaths. Victoria managed to save more lives by having a strong task force and focus on breaking down the trafficking rings, breaking down those people and making sure the people who are preying on our most vulnerable and making money out of it are behind bars. That is where we need to target our resources, and Labor have completely ignored that there is an element within this where we need to tackle the supply of drugs. There is a lot of Afghani heroin in the state at the moment. We need to shut down that supply, limit that supply and provide support to people who need it most.

I was speaking to someone from the Police Association Victoria just under a year ago. In South Australia there are 250 police allocated to their drug task force team. I was shocked to hear that in Victoria we had just 20 police officers on our drug task force. And we wonder why we have got this flood of heroin throughout our drug market. It is no surprise when we are not willing to take a harder and tougher approach to crime and breaking down these drug syndicates. That is what we need to do. There has been the comment made that there is no increase in crime where there is an injecting room. That may be the case, but the evidence again is that there is no decrease either. Unfortunately people buy drugs near the injecting centre. They use drugs — obviously they will in the injecting centre — and they commit crimes in that area so they can fund their next hit. That is how it works. It does not decrease crime.

There are also many opportunities for our hardworking drug and alcohol workers to engage with addicts now. I think the work that drug support workers do is great. I am so impressed that they work with people and put in tireless hours. They always work long hours. They know people by name. They know when they are in trouble and when they have got homelessness issues. They know when they need further assistance. We need

to support them through better access to rehab. We need to make sure that we have a targeted approach to education to make sure that people are supported and do not get into that horrific drug cycle, that they can get through those tough times so that they are not self-medicating and that we can deal with their mental health issues.

I would like to thank everybody involved in the drug and alcohol sector because it is a tough gig, and they do a very, very good job. I would like to extend my deepest sympathies to all of those who have been impacted by a drug addiction and particularly those who have been impacted by the loss of life due to a drug overdose. Yes, we need to do more to tackle drugs. After three years under Labor we have seen absolutely nothing, and now this short-sighted drug policy on the run is not going to do what we need to see. What we need to see is more police to break up those drug trafficking rings. We need to make sure that we have better targeted education for those most at risk, and we need to make sure people have got better access to drug treatment. Only the coalition will deliver on that.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) (12:09) — I rise to make a contribution to this very important bill, not as the Minister for Planning but as the member for Richmond. I do so in the context of what is widely recognised to be a very courageous, balanced and compassionate response by this government to the scourge of heroin addiction — the locus of which has for so long been in my electorate and particularly in the North Richmond area. This is part of a suite of initiatives which the government will be putting in place, which I think provides a balanced response to this crucial social issue.

Of course today's debate is about a medically supervised injecting facility, but there are two other significant elements to our response. The first of those is 100 new treatment beds. I acknowledge the great work of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing in putting this package together. These treatment beds will be distributed right across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria as well, as we heard in question time today from the minister in response to a question from the member for Shepparton. There will also be a stronger penalty regime for people who traffick in drugs.

Heroin overdoses are rising every year, reaching their highest level since the heroin crisis of the late 1990s, and, as I indicated, North Richmond is the epicentre of this tragic problem. We as a government have listened, we have heard and now we are acting. I have been an

advocate for a medically supervised injecting centre since we initially tried to get this legislation through the Parliament in the early 2000s. I had the honour then, and I am grateful to my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to lead this debate on behalf of the government. Unfortunately at that time, whilst it passed the lower house of this Parliament, it was refused in the upper house. But its time has now come. We have recognised that the harm minimisation strategies that we have put in place, as well targeted as they have been, have not been sufficient to address what has been an extraordinary outbreak.

Since 2012 heroin overdose rates have been rising across Victoria, particularly in my own area in the City of Yarra. In 2016, 190 Victorians lost their lives to heroin overdose, and of those, 24 occurred in the City of Yarra. Whilst we cannot yet confirm accurately, the Victorian coroner's anecdotal reports for the area tell us that already this year we have had 35 deaths in North Richmond. We had another one last week in the high-rise estates in North Richmond. These are not just numbers in a report; they are real people — with families, friends and colleagues. They are someone's son or daughter, someone's parent or sibling, someone's partner, and we owe it to these families to do everything we can to keep these loved ones alive.

When you look into the eyes of people who have lost a loved one, you see that these are the lives of people who have been loved and are in the grips of their greatest fight. We have to ensure that families do not go through what people like Cherie Short has been through. Cherie Short lost her son, Aaron, in 2015. He had been off drugs for 12 months, had established a relationship and was getting his life back on track, when he relapsed and died. Cherie Short says that her son would still be alive today if a medically supervised injecting room was operating. She met with me and the Premier, and in her profound grief there was a stillness and a sense that despite this incredible tragedy that she was coping with she had to lend her voice and experience to advocate for a safe injecting facility. None of us can or should lose sight of Cherie or indeed other people who have suffered this most profound grief of losing a loved one. It is in that context that Cherie said to me and the Premier that no child could have been loved any more than her son, Aaron. She said that no child could have been loved more than him. Sadly, he passed away in the most appalling of circumstances.

You can also look at people like Laura Turner. Laura Turner would be known to many people here as a very distinguished journalist through the Channel 9 network. She is utterly heartbroken. Her sister, Skye, was getting

help in a psychiatric ward for many of her complaints, and she died a terribly, terribly tragic death in North Richmond. We as a community have to show compassion. We have to recognise that the response to date has not been adequate — that we can and we will do better. We as a government have listened. The member for Lowan talked about a backflip. It is not a backflip for a government to say that it is prepared to look at the evidence and to listen to the experts, to listen to the coroner's reports, to listen —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WYNNE — This is such a debased comment by the opposition, such a debased comment. We are talking about saving people's lives, and you want to degrade this debate in such a disgusting way to say that this is about some by-election issue. I have been working on and advocating for this issue for years and years, and that is well known to all on that side of the house. They should never think that I am not prepared to stand by and be with my community at their time of need. None of us can turn our back on the fact that 35 people this year alone have died in North Richmond. They are the facts of the matter.

We have put in place appropriate checks and balances. To suggest that this is not supported by the school community and that it is not supported by the trader community is utterly wrong. Victoria Police were at the launch of this, along with all of the key paramedics and the Australian Medical Association. This is a widely supported proposition. It is a two-year trial. It is subject to review, with the potential for an extension for a further three years. Former Premier Jeff Kennett will take a leading role in terms of oversight both of the establishment of this facility and indeed the important research that needs to underpin any extensions of this facility going forward.

For us the time has now come. The time has now come to act because of the shocking data that attends to this issue in my own electorate. We simply cannot turn our backs. We cannot turn our backs on the family of Cherie Short and indeed all of those families, because ultimately this measure will save lives. We know from the experience at Kings Cross that not one death has occurred in the 17 years of the Kings Cross supervised injecting facility. We believe that is a model that we very much will be mirroring and will give us the opportunity to put in place a comprehensive response. So it will not just be a safe injecting facility; it will also be linked into all the facilities that are available at the community health centre, as they have said, to get

people on the road to recovery. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (12:19) — I am very pleased to rise today to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017 and to follow the member for Richmond. I certainly wish to acknowledge his passion for the issue. I am very fond of the member for Richmond, and I respect him. We do disagree with him, and many of the arguments for why we are opposing the bill were set out very eloquently by my friend and colleague the member for Lowan in her lead address. I want to deal with a few issues, and I do so indicating at the outset that this is a very complex issue. Although we might disagree over this bill, reflecting on the goodwill of everybody who is engaged in this debate, I think we all want the same thing: we want to save lives. The real question is what will work.

So my first key point is that I fear that in all of this debate right across the world there is what I would call delicately a data black hole. What I mean by a data black hole is that while we know that thankfully those people who do inject heroin or any other substance in a supervised environment will not in all likelihood die in that environment — and to that extent that is very important; it is not to be dismissed as a factor — a black hole exists because we do not know what happens to every person who travels through, injects a substance in a supervised facility and does so at other locations on other occasions.

There is evidence to suggest that the most acutely afflicted addicts, whether it is of heroin, ice or any other illicit and dangerous substance, will inject most of the time at a location other than a supervised facility; they do not just use at the facility. Some figures put that, for the most acutely afflicted, as high as 80 per cent. That data might be contested, but I do not think the proposition can be disproved, because there is no data about it. Even with the Kings Cross data, which is often cited, there is nothing which tells us what happens to a person who goes through a facility once, twice or more. We do not know their history of use outside of the facility. It is true, and it is a salutary and welcome fact, that nobody, according to the data, has suffered a fatal overdose in the Kings Cross facility, but what we do not know is how many people over the years it has operated have used the facility but died of a fatal overdose elsewhere on another occasion, as we know they will inject in other locations. No data exists anywhere on this, so that is a real black hole, given that many people use in other locations.

The figures which record the deaths due to fatal overdoses of drugs in Victoria, and indeed everywhere else, are distressing and disturbing. There were 190 deaths last year due to heroin and 116 deaths due to ice. These are people who are losing their lives, and as a community we need to do much better to prevent their deaths where we can. The question is whether this will help with that, because our fear is that an injecting facility, albeit supervised, does not get you any closer to access to beds if you are not investing in beds and treatment and counselling. I think we would all agree that not enough has been done in Victoria to promote that to the best extent that we can.

I do not think anyone would argue that we have enough residential beds that are accessible by people who are suffering from addiction and need help. Our argument would be that is where you need to get people. We might argue over whether it is a large figure or a small figure, but we would say that a very high proportion of people who go through Kings Cross and use that facility do not go to rehabilitation or enrol in treatment programs. Yes, there is a component that does, but many do not. That is a big problem, because if that is what is happening — if people are simply going through the facility, using it but not committing to rehab or treatment — are we getting any closer to the end goal, which is to get them into treatment so that they can recover? Our fear is that that will not happen.

So what I say to the government and to those that will engage in this process is that if you proceed with it, if you get your way and it is enacted, our hope and our intention is to apply very strict scrutiny to the outcomes. We do not just want to know what happens to people in the facility, because we know, helpfully and thankfully, that in the facility, under supervised conditions, there are not likely to be fatal overdoses. What we do want to know is what happens to people who might come through the facility once or twice but continue to use elsewhere. What happens to them? What happens outside the facility to those who use it? We need to see a reduction in overdoses; that is true.

When the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee some months ago reported on this, it talked in part of its report about evaluations of supervised injecting centres, and it noted some work by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Interestingly in relation to that it was said that in terms of measuring the effect of harm reduction initiatives, particularly programs such as needle or syringe programs and injecting facilities:

... a reduction in harm occurring is the key indicator of 'success', not a reduction in use per se, however desirable this might otherwise be.

That is a concern, because we do want to know whether it reduces usage, because if people are going to continue to use, not just in the centre but importantly elsewhere, in unsupervised conditions, as we know most people who are suffering addictions will, then are we saving lives? That is the question we need to answer. If it does, that will be terrific, but I do worry that unless the assessment is rigorous and does not just focus on what is going on in the centre, then we may miss the point and the real objective on this.

I do want to note a couple of things in relation to the bill itself which feed into the point by the member for Lowan that this has been rushed, as important as the issue is. There is a lot in this bill that is not stipulated clearly, and I will just talk about a couple of them in the short time I have got. The first thing I want to note — and this is not exhaustive of all my concerns — is access by children to the centre, which is dealt with in proposed section 55H. That is very unclear. It talks about no child being admitted to any part of a licensed medically supervised centre that is used for the purposes of the administration of any injecting drug. That does not cover a whole lot of other scenarios. It needs to be clear.

Proposed section 55K, exemptions from criminal liability: this is nebulous at best. It provides that a person who is a client of a centre:

... who uses, supplies, possesses or administers a drug of dependence that is an injecting centre drug ... is exempt from liability for an offence under Part V ...

It talks about whatever is prescribed in the definition. Who knows what that is going to be. It also does not indicate who is a client. When does a person become a client? When does a person stop becoming a client? This is very unclear. The government should clarify that.

Proposed section 55L says that licensees and each member of staff are exempt from liability for an offence, and so on and so forth and:

... whether or not the drug of dependence is an injecting centre drug in a permitted quantity of that injecting centre drug.

What does all of that mean? It refers to drugs that may not even be authorised drugs for the purposes of the centre. So does that mean that if people bring in ice, that is okay? It is unclear and should be cleaned up.

Police discretions — my colleague the member for Lowan addressed this. This seems to be an invitation for police to exercise a discretion not to charge. But again the circumstances prescribed in the paragraphs to proposed section 55M are very unclear. What does travelling to or from mean? How far? What is the vicinity of the centre? This is a recipe for great uncertainty.

I also note that taxpayers will be exposed. Although we all want to see lives saved, there are issues around potential negligence claims in terms of how that is going to operate. Unfortunately the bill is rushed. I do not criticise those who support this because I know people mean well, and that is the way our debates should be run. We want the same thing. The question is whether it will work. I trust that the government will proceed with this, and I hope and trust and certainly intend that the level of scrutiny will be as I described — not just of what goes on in the centre but of what happens around the centre and of what happens to those who use, not only at the centre but on numerous occasions elsewhere.

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) (12:29) — I wish I did not have to speak on this bill. In fact I wish this bill was not before the house. I wish we did not have people dying in the streets from heroin overdoses, I really do. But what we wish for and the reality of life are never the same. So it is really incumbent upon us to make sure that we make decisions that are in the best interests of people, and when those decisions mean that we can save lives, then we need to stand up and talk about that and we need to develop legislation around that.

I have long been a supporter of medically supervised injecting facilities; I have been a supporter for many, many years. I have followed the St Kilda model, which seems to have made sense to me. In some ways it seemed commonsense that if there is a problem here, then we should look at every avenue we can to address that problem. So while I am sad that we have to speak on a bill such as this, I do welcome the chance to be able to provide some comments.

I will just quickly go through what the bill provides for: the licensing and operation of a single medically supervised injecting centre on a two-year trial basis at North Richmond Community Health, the granting of the licence by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services on certain conditions and with potential sanctions for non-compliance, the ongoing operating requirements for the centre including strong oversight of the centre by medical practitioners, review of the trial after 12 months and a potential for the trial to be extended by grant of a second licence for

a further period of up to three years, and limited statutory protections against liability for drug users attending the centre and staff working at the North Richmond Community Health premises.

My husband and I have five kids between us, all in their 20s. Four of them, I guess I could say, are very actively engaged in life and attend lots of music festivals and lots of parties. I am so glad they do — they have a great time and it makes me wish I was in my 20s again of course. But I also know that that means that they are exposed to various risks. I do not think I am a stupid parent. I would say some of them, if not all of them, have probably come into contact with drugs and have probably experimented with them — I apologise to my children if I am wrong about that.

Of course what I hope, like any parent, is that they never, ever reach a point of absolute addiction. I hope that they will always be safe and that they will never face those dreadful challenges of having an addiction to heroin. If they do or their friends do, I hope that there is a facility like this where they can go, where they can be safe and where they can be referred to other services, where they will receive counselling, where they will receive referrals to wherever it is that they need to go to. I think that is a great benefit of having a medically supervised injecting facility.

All the evidence says to us that drug addiction, heroin addiction, impacts on all levels of society — rich, poor, it does not matter where you come from, it does not matter about your sexuality, it does not matter about anything. No group, no area is immune to this. So what we need to do is learn as much as we can about how we can prevent and how we can treat addictions. I absolutely agree with the member for Hawthorn. I think that it is so important that we research all methodologies around drug prevention and around drug treatment and around saving the lives of those who are drug addicted.

We do need to learn more, and I think a medically supervised injecting facility not only will save lives but also provide a place where we can focus on new learnings about how to treat drug addiction — about what sort of services we need, what sort of resources we need. It will provide a point where there will be some expertise around this area. I think opportunity to learn more, to do better, we should absolutely embrace.

I want to acknowledge my colleague the member for Buninyong at this point, who I know has also long been an advocate of safe injecting facilities and who I think has been really prominent in leading us to this point. I

think it takes a lot of courage and a lot of bravery to be verbal and out there advocating for something like this when it may not be popular with everyone. There will be questions about it, particularly in the beginning of these conversations. So I would like to put on record my thanks to the member for Buninyong and to everyone else who has advocated strongly for this.

I would like to also acknowledge all those whose children have died from any addiction at all. I cannot even imagine, as I mentioned in the beginning, losing a child to this and trying desperately to help. I have lots of friends who either have had an addiction or who have kids that have an addiction, and the grief, the trauma, the anguish and the choices that need to be made are indescribable. I only hope that in future nobody goes through that.

I want to acknowledge too all of those who work tirelessly in this area, who see the most horrific of things and who have such kindness and such strength in their heart. They get up every day and go to work and make it their mission to really support and help those who are in the throes of addiction. I also acknowledge those who are caring for those who are facing addiction.

I would like to dedicate my contribution to a friend of mine, Matthew, who contacted me fairly recently, whose brother died of a heroin overdose. He really pleaded with me that as a Victorian Labor Party we look at the issue of safe injecting rooms with compassion and kindness and also at the evidence behind it — that there are real gains to be made, particularly when it comes to saving people's lives. So Matthew, in honour of you and in honour of your brother and your family, I want to dedicate my contribution to you. I will leave it there by saying that I fully support this bill, and I wish it a speedy passage through the chamber.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) — I rise in support of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017 and the creation of a supervised injecting centre in North Richmond. This medically supervised injecting centre will save lives and it will reduce the number of overdoses that are currently occurring in the back streets, alleyways and bathrooms in North Richmond. It will act as a gateway to the services and treatments that those people will need. It will get used syringes off the streets. It is long overdue

There probably has not been a Greens candidate over the last 10 years or so who has not copped it over their support of supervised injecting rooms. So I am really

glad now, and the Greens are really glad, to see this legislation brought before Parliament. We really are hoping that it will pass this house and the upper house as well.

When the government announced their support for the measure the Premier said a lot of things that I agreed with. He said that it was time to deal with this issue with compassion and empathy. He said that it was not just a law and order issue, that it was a health issue. He said that you cannot get treatment if you are dead. I agreed with all those things, but I would have agreed with them last year, and the year before that, and the year before that.

The fact is that it should not have taken this long for the bill to be introduced. The Richmond community have wanted this, as have the local council, health services and many of the traders. There has been an increase in the number of people overdosing in North Richmond, and there have been calls for this centre for years. It should not have got to crisis point before this decision was made. I do not say this just to have a go. I say it in the hope that this is a turning point for this state. For this government and for future governments I hope that this is a case of the evidence coming before politics. There is no doubt that these decisions are tough politically. There will be future reforms involving pill testing or an early warning system, the placement of needle exchange programs or other locations for supervised injecting rooms. So I really do hope that this bill is a step towards evidence coming first when it comes to drugs and drug policy.

Supervised injecting rooms are not a new concept. They have been operating around the world. One was first opened in Switzerland in the early 1980s. There are more than 100 around the world, all contributing to that evidence that these centres do reduce the risk of overdose, save lives and reduce the costs to society.

In Sydney we have had a centre that has been open since 2001, and it has effectively managed over 6000 drug overdoses. Many of those could have gone the other way and people could have died. They have referred around 11 000 people to treatment; this would not have occurred otherwise. This centre has been a success, and it again provides the evidence as to why we need this centre, particularly in North Richmond.

The North Richmond community, and the City of Yarra community, have been forced to deal with this issue, to clean up this mess, because previous governments have not had the courage to act. We have got the highest

frequency of heroin overdose deaths of any local government in Victoria: 34 deaths in Richmond last year, which was an increase of 3 from 2011; and 59 deaths in 2015. If there was a supervised injecting room some of these lives could have been saved.

But it is not just about saving lives. It is about that referral to other services. It is about reducing the risk of blood-borne diseases, which is a risk not just for intravenous drug users but to the whole community. We are already providing needle-exchange programs, and this is another step on top of that — to provide that space, the supervised injecting room, for a person to go and inject those drugs.

This measure will take the strain off emergency services that are getting the call-outs to the overdoses. I was really shocked to see from the parliamentary committee's report the number of those call-outs that involved violence against emergency services workers and of course risk to their health from needlestick injuries. It will address the concerns of residents and traders who are having to clean up their front yards and pavements from used needles; they themselves are having to call out emergency services. So this will have a positive impact on the Yarra community.

As I said, there has been a lot of support. We saw from the parliamentary inquiry that 46 of the 49 submissions supported the trial. We had organisations such as the Public Health Association of Australia, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, ambulance employees, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. We heard from the coroner, who stated that they were:

... convinced that a safe injecting facility in North Richmond is an essential intervention that could reduce the risk of future heroin overdose deaths ...

We have had the Police Association Victoria announce their support.

I think from the inquiry itself I can address some of the concerns around some of the issues that were raised by some opposition speakers. While we saw that the City of Yarra has the highest rate of overdoses, we also saw that in Yarra, in terms of overdoses, many of those people overdosing came from outside Yarra — 68 per cent versus 31 per cent who lived in the area. Those numbers are generally inverted when it comes to other local government. It is a fact too that 48 per cent of those overdoses occurred in a non-residential setting, while for example, in the City of Melbourne it was 32 per cent and in Greater Dandenong it was 10 per

cent. So the need for this to occur in Yarra, where people are not injecting in their own homes or someone else's home, is clearer than ever.

In terms of some of the details in this bill, people will have to declare to this facility the type and quantity of drugs they are carrying to exempt themselves from criminal liability. They have to be over 18 years old, and if there is any doubt, they will be asked for ID.

Opposition speakers pointed to the need for research as well, and I am glad that was brought up. They were asking questions like, 'Are people just going to use this and are they going to keep using? Are they going to have an overdose somewhere else?'. It is interesting, because I was at the Burnet Institute just recently, and they are undertaking a longitudinal study — I think that is the correct term — of intravenous drug users. They are tracking those users — their health, their drug use — and they will have the ability when this supervised injecting centre opens to incorporate that within their own research. There are research organisations that will have the ability to really dig down into how the injecting centre will help and into what the patterns of use are for people who use that centre. The ability is there, and I do not think it is fair for the opposition speakers to raise these sorts of concerns and say that this will not actually work when there is a body of evidence to suggest that it will.

It is really clear that the traditional way, the law and order approach to illicit drug problems and abuse, really is not working. We have seen over many years a shift in the right direction to a health-based approach, but reforms like this are steps in the right direction. We know that there are really complex issues around drug use and drug abuse — interrelated health issues, social issues, childhood trauma, poor mental health management, homelessness — and having a supervised injecting centre will really open the door to allow more people to access services that will help them.

We do need this supervised injecting centre. We do need to have that focus on health and harm reduction. We need to put evidence-based policies first. So the Greens are certainly supporting this bill — it has been Greens policy for many years — and we will also be encouraging the government to continue, as they have done, I feel, with this bill, to put evidence and harm reduction first; to embrace other drug law reforms, such as pill testing at festivals and a warning system for when there are dangerous batches of drugs out on the street; and to continue to make sure that we have got further investment in drug treatment programs, rehabilitation and social services. The Greens will be supporting this

bill. I am hopeful that it will pass this house, and I hope that it will pass the upper house as well.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) (12:50) — I am certainly pleased to add my comments in regard to this important piece of legislation. As the member for Buninyong, I would start by saying that of course this particular legislation does not have any specific relevance to the people of my electorate of Buninyong, but as members of this house we know that we are addressing issues for all of this state, and clearly this is of significant benefit to a large number of people, particularly those who are coming into the Richmond community.

I speak particularly as the chair of the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee. Our committee has this year been reviewing a broad range of issues associated with drug use, drug treatment and drug law reform. Over the year we have had 220 written submissions come to our committee. We have held many public hearings on the issue, and we have heard from a range of people in regard to their views about how we could move forward in regard to drug treatment and responding to drug issues across the state. Our committee has visited Richmond; we have visited Sydney, particularly the Kings Cross Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre that is there; and we have travelled overseas to Switzerland, to Vancouver and to other sites.

What has been such a profound issue for me is that I have seen that people have clearly been dying from overdoses of heroin in this state for a period of time now, and in fact more people are dying as a result of overdose deaths than are dying on our roads. So it is vitally important that as a government we take action to try and address this. Of course it is very distressing when you, as our committee members have, meet with parents who have lost children or family members, and we have heard from other community members of the distress that they have experienced as a result of deaths from overdose.

While we know that the police have a role to play in trying to identify the supply of heroin and other drugs into our state, and that they have a range of roles in trying to reduce the harm to our community, we have spoken to police both in Victoria and other places, and they acknowledge that while they can do so much, even if they are very well resourced, they cannot do it all. We have great reason to recognise, especially when it gets down to the level of people who are addicted to drugs, that police are not the best people to deal with addicts on the streets who are acting in antisocial ways and

who clearly need support. They recognise that the health authorities are the best people to help people who are addicts, who have a health-related problem.

From speaking to the residents of Richmond too, we are aware that they have been very concerned that people who are using heroin in their neighbourhood are going to back lanes behind where these people live or even in their front yards. They are seeing the evidence of the syringes that are being left there, which of course is not appropriate, and they are periodically coming into contact with people who have taken an overdose. The need then to call an ambulance while the residents are left to try and support those people is a matter of great distress to them. So this proposal for a supervised injecting facility to be created at the North Richmond Community Health centre is entirely appropriate. It will not only save lives, and we have heard of 35 deaths in Richmond this year; it will also bring those people into contact with service providers, and that is a very important thing too. Not only will it save some lives; it will bring people into contact with a range of services that might help them get onto a path towards a better future. And at the same time, as we have heard, it will improve the amenity of the Richmond area. This announcement has been welcomed by the people of Richmond.

I have to say also, after travelling overseas and seeing the issues that we saw while we were overseas, that I put an article in our local Ballarat paper talking about the realities of drugs and talking about the need for a supervised injecting room. While I had a lot of people then contact me to say, 'Good on you, well done, we do need a compassionate approach and what you said makes sense', I had not one person from my Ballarat electorate contact me to say how dreadful it was that I had advocated a supervised injecting room. There is an appreciation out there in our community, I believe, that this is the right approach to take.

We have heard the example of what has been happening in the medically supervised injecting centre in Kings Cross, and clearly lives have been saved there. I find the comments from the opposition to be totally disingenuous and totally frustrating. They are saying, 'Well, some people will go elsewhere and take drugs, and they will die elsewhere'. Of course they will. We cannot save every life, but there will be many lives saved because people will see this is a place to go, and this is a place where they will be supervised and, if they overdose there, they will not lose their life on that night. And maybe they will not ever lose their life; they will get on a pathway to good health. So we cannot save everyone's

life, but we cannot use that as an excuse to not go ahead with a supervised injecting facility in Richmond.

There are so many reasons that we have heard. The opposition failed to acknowledge that there has been a process here; they want to say that we have rushed this through, but we have heard from the coroner this year. The coroner has brought out reports when she has looked into deaths in Richmond, and the coroner has recommended a supervised injecting facility for Richmond. That is something that has taken place this year. We know that there has been an inquiry by an upper house committee where people from all parties have looked at this specific issue of supervised injecting rooms. That report came out in September, and in it they acknowledged that a supervised injecting facility could be of benefit. So this government has acted in response to those issues and the advocacy of many people, including those from Richmond, and has acted in an appropriate way in response to that.

I think that this is such an important issue. I am so pleased that this government is taking that proactive approach. The negativity that we are hearing from the opposition in regard to this just shows that they are typical conservatives; they would never take this action. They will find many reasons not to support this. They will say, as we have heard, that the way the centre will be operated is still unclear. That is not true. We have said it is based on the Sydney model. The Sydney model has been operating, as we know, very soundly since 2001, and the same procedures will be in operation in so many ways so that is not a reason not to go ahead with this centre. All of the feedback and the research on the issues will go into ensuring that the centre operates in its best possible way with properly qualified health practitioners as well as social welfare people operating in the centre too, or in the broader part of the community health centre, to support these people. That is not an excuse not to go ahead.

There is clear and sound evidence from Switzerland, there is clear and sound evidence from Vancouver and there is clear and sound evidence from so many places across the world, as well as Kings Cross, which shows that this is a sensible thing to do. The government of course is recognising that this is a trial for two years, but I reckon it is highly unlikely that we will have solved the problem of drug overdoses in the Richmond area in two years, sadly, so we will see that it is appropriate to continue the centre. We are not suggesting that it be anywhere else, and the information that came to our parliamentary committee has not suggested one for anywhere else in Melbourne, only in Richmond. So the misinformation that others in the opposition might want to present about, 'This is only

the start, and then they'll be cropping up all over the place', is just not true. This is a trial for two years initially in Richmond.

I know that the member for Lowan, while I was very disappointed with her contribution, understands this is the right thing to do. I am confident that we will demonstrate as a government this is the right thing to do. It will be something that will be saving the lives of people who do have serious drug problems. There is plenty more that this government is doing, including doubling the residential rehab beds and committing to more in that area, and I am pleased to see we are getting a residential rehab unit in Ballarat next year. I certainly commend this bill. I hope it will move through both houses as quickly as possible and we see this in place as soon as possible.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.01 p.m.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Housing affordability

The SPEAKER — I have accepted a statement from the honourable member for Mulgrave proposing the following matter of public importance for discussion:

That this house notes that only the Victorian Labor government has a plan to make housing more affordable and to make renting fair.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (14:02) — I am delighted to lead off a debate today about what is absolutely, without question, a matter of public importance. I want to start by going back a little bit, telling about a chapter in my life and a chapter in our family's life that has been very formative in terms of my conviction to do much better in this particular policy area. Cath and I, way back in the early 2000s, bought our very first home. It was a three-bedroom brick veneer home in the best place in our state, the great suburb of Mulgrave. It was not anything particularly flash, and there are some of my colleagues who can absolutely attest to that. It was nothing particularly flash, but it was ours and it became the foundation upon which we grew our family and built our lives. Our kids of course took their first steps there, we celebrated birthdays and Christmases and there were all those things — those special occasions — that are so formative in terms of your family's life together that give you that sense of security and safety, that sense of belonging and that sense of constancy in your life. The best way to put it

really is that this pretty humble house became our home; that is exactly what it became.

Now, back then the median house price in Melbourne was about \$258 000. Back then in regional Victoria it was \$144 000. These days, 15 years since we bought our first home, those numbers seem very, very distant indeed because since then the average Melbourne house price has almost tripled. It means that for thousands of Victorians the dream of buying their own home, and the security and stability that affords, is slipping out of reach. The government that I lead, though, knows and understands this challenge, this issue. That is why earlier this year we committed to making housing more affordable and to making sure the next generation of Victorians would not miss out on all those things that are sometimes difficult to describe and quantify — all those matters I spoke about before.

Fundamentally we committed to do what the federal government has been spectacularly unsuccessful at doing: making things fairer. They talk a very good game, but time may be against me to go through the litany of their failures when it comes to this policy, unless people are going to perhaps give me some of their speaking time. It would be a long list of talk, talk and more talk about housing affordability and then delivering absolutely nothing when they have so many of the big and profound policy levers, but not all the policy levers, in this area. We said that we would do what they will not, and that is make the system fairer, so we abolished stamp duty for first home buyers purchasing properties up to \$600 000. Median first home prices are about \$470 000, so this is absolutely targeted at first home buyers — not just at them as a cohort of purchasers but at their place in the market. This is well-targeted policy. Of course we introduced cuts to stamp duty on purchases up to \$750 000. While others have been sprung with one sort of a cut agenda, we have got our own: cutting stamp duty for first home buyers. They are not the sort of cutbacks that others have been exposed as being all about if ever they were to slip back onto the Treasury benches.

But of course that is not all we have done. We have done significant things on stamp duty, but that is not all we have done. From 1 July this year we also doubled the first home owners grant for regional Victoria. That is an increase from \$10 000 to \$20 000. As my good friend the member for Macedon says, her community loves it. Regional communities, regional tradespeople, regional businesses and of course regional first home buyers are big fans of that policy. It is a very different policy setting from the one that we inherited when we came back to government in 2014. That increase is very real and makes a big difference to first home buyers

and a big difference to people working in our domestic construction industry. That change is as much about jobs as it is about affordability in the housing market.

I am very pleased to be able to provide some updates on the reforms I have just mentioned. Since our cuts to stamp duty came into effect, more than 4300 Victorians have bought their first home. How does that compare? That is more than double —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Don't get too carried away. That is more than double the number for this time last year. That would give you some sense that the policy setting was well structured, well targeted and would be of significant impact.

On average those first home buyers are saving \$8000, giving them more money to put towards their purchase, their furniture, whatever it might be — all those expenses at what is an expensive time in your life, but it means you are a step closer to getting into your home and building your future. That is what good Labor governments — and only Labor governments — are prepared to do.

In regional Victoria the news is pretty good as well. In fact the number of first home buyers in regional Victoria applying for the grant that I mentioned earlier has increased. It has not doubled; it has increased fivefold — fivefold. Between July and September 319 Victorians received a first home owners grant, up from just 66 people the year before. At the same time we are boosting supply. So many people who have no wit or imagination or willingness to get this done will talk about supply. All they ever do is talk about supply. If only every time Scott Morrison mentioned housing supply, we had more of it; the problem would be solved. But we are doing lots of work on that side as well.

With my honourable friend the Minister for Planning here, we are releasing 100 000 additional lots right across our state. This is very important and exactly what we are doing.

Mr M. O'Brien interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — Don't worry about the member for Malvern. He is completely irrelevant to this. He is the one who has been doing the floor walks. He has been down to Channel 7 and Channel 9; he has been meeting with editors. He has been very, very busy. No doubt he was visiting those places to say how much he supports the member for Bulleen.

Mr M. O'Brien — Absolutely.

Mr ANDREWS — Thank you, member for Malvern, for confirming that you have been doing those floor walks. Anyway, we should not be distracted by the member for Malvern. That is a trick for new players.

Mr M. O'Brien interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — I am sorry; I will not be distracted by the member for Malvern. After all he is completely irrelevant to housing affordability. Where was I?

Mr Foley — One-hundred thousand lots.

Mr ANDREWS — That's right — 100 000 lots.

Of course beyond that, we are piloting a new shared equity scheme, providing under that scheme up to 25 per cent of the initial house price for 400 first-time buyers — that is a \$50 million pilot program and one that I think we can confidently predict will be a great success, but we will pilot it and make sure; if there are any modifications or changes to make, we will get those done. That is a fantastic policy and one that has never been employed in Victoria before.

Beyond that we are levelling the playing field when it comes to not just lowering tax rates but changing the tax mix. We have removed the off-the-plan stamp duty concessions, which were for investment properties only. Those are gone, but they remain for principal places of residence. Of course from 1 January next year, homes that are left deliberately empty for more than six months will be the subject of our vacant residential property tax. It is not universally popular, but it will be universally effective in getting more supply either onto the rental market or into the first home buyers market. I must say, though, that I would be pleased if that measure raised not one dollar, and if people, instead of having properties dormant, having them vacant, having them performing no meaningful or productive function, made those properties available. You will not often hear me say this, but call a real estate agent. That is what you need to do if you have got a property that you think is going to be vacant for six months in a given year — either sell it or put it out there for rental, because you will be very, very surprised to see the level of interest. It will be significant. That is how hot the property market is right now.

Of course there are many other ways in which we have made substantial reform. The reality, though, is that not everybody wants to or will ultimately buy a home. Already one in four Victorians rent. If you go to places like Northcote for instance — and I do not think the member for Malvern has been to Northcote

perhaps ever — it is something like 40 per cent of people who rent.

Mr Foley — Fifty-two per cent in my electorate.

Mr ANDREWS — It is 52 per cent in the great seat of Albert Park. For some that will be a choice; for many that will simply be a reality that is a function of the unaffordability and the gaps that we see in our market right now. That reality is made worse of course by the fact that we have current laws that are decades old that are just not keeping up — laws that stack the deck against tenants. Every renter should be able to make their house a home, and that is why we are going to make renting fair through the most comprehensive set of reforms that this state has ever seen. This is all about making sure that we get the balance right — a crackdown on rental bidding and beyond that a whole series of other important changes, but I just want to stick with rental bidding for one moment.

This is an experience that many people know only too well. Renters can go to a house inspection, and after the inspection if they have found a place that they think is going to meet their needs, then of course they get the call from the agent saying, 'Oh, well, you know, you might, if you could just offer a bit more'. It is not transparent. There is a lot of competition out there because Scott Morrison will not do much about supply or affordability other than talk about it. Beyond the political point, though, it is the lived experience of so many people, and it is a simple change we can make and it is one that we will make.

Beyond that we are going to provide some stability and certainty to renters in relation to increases — one rent increase a year. That is fair, and it is vastly different to what we see now. Beyond that we are going to get rid of the notices to vacate provisions or the notion that you can have an almost instant eviction hanging over you and used as a tool to stop you complaining when something needs fixing, and the notion of not being able to access things that are fundamentally your rights under the law because you are too scared that if you become a troublesome tenant, you will be evicted for no good reason at all. These are changes that are all about fairness and they are all about making sure that we get the balance right and tip the balance back in favour of tenants or the first home buyer. That is what motivates us as a government that does not just talk about fairness but actually delivers it.

These are just a few of the measures in the comprehensive package of reforms in relation to renting, and I will tell you where they come from. They come from the good work of my honourable friend, the

relevant minister, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, who is in the chamber, but they also come from candidates, from caucus members. They come from so many representations that we have received, but I will tell you where the strongest representations have come from. They have come from Labor's candidate in Northcote, Clare Burns, who is not only running to be Northcote's voice but actually can get things done if she is given that great gift and that great privilege on Saturday. If she is given that profound opportunity, that wonderful gift by the people of Northcote, she will turn up here and work hard as a renter. She lives in a share house and has been the victim — and so many others like her — of dodgy practices and that fundamental imbalance in what is always going to be a challenging power relationship.

The current laws are not fit for purpose. They are decades old. They facilitate unfairness even. Clare has made sure that I understand that in a very contemporary sense. She is hearing it. She knows it and understands it. It is her lived experience. It is the lived experience of at least 40 per cent of her local community, and that is why she has made sure that we have a policy framework — a set of changes that will make renting fairer. They come on top of the *Homes for Victorians* commitments we made earlier this year in the budget — those stamp duty changes I spoke about before. But ultimately these policy settings are important in and of themselves. We are going to get this done because it needs to be done. It has been left as the victim of the indolence of others for far too long. But it is not just important for the very significant benefit that will flow from it. It is important because it allows us to make a broader point.

Some are commentators, some sit on the sidelines. They are the people who cannot. They will never be able to do it. Then there are those who are too mean-spirited and too ineffective in their own unique way. They are the ones who will not. So you have got those who cannot, those who will not and those who are doing it right now. Why would you want to take a number off a government that is doing exactly that work? Well, that is why we will fight hard until 6 o'clock on Saturday, and we will continue to deliver on this agenda because fairness is what we do.

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (14:17) — I am pleased to rise on this matter of public importance debate. What we heard there was a 15-minute advertisement for the Labor Party's prospects in Northcote. Every single thing this government has been doing is all about desperately trying to hang on to the seat of Northcote. It is not about policy. It is not about outcomes for Victorians. It is all about trying to save their political bacon. That is the beginning of it and that

is the end of it. The Premier admitted just as much in his contribution. This is a government that is in shambles. It is a shambles. We have got the highest taxes in the country. We have got the highest crime rate in the country. We have got the highest unemployment rate in the country, and yet the Premier comes in here and boasts as though everything is going really well. Well, it is not going well.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Malvern to resume his seat. If the member for Warrandyte wishes to raise a matter about the behaviour of the members in the house, he can raise a point of order instead of having a direct conversation with the chair.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — We have got the highest unemployment rate in the country. It is very hard for people to afford a house. It is very hard for people to be able to afford to rent when we have got more unemployed people here percentage-wise than in any other state in the country.

This is a government that seems to believe that, magically, taxing something makes it more affordable. It does not work anywhere else. It does not work in any other part of the economy. When public health officials say, 'We need to try and discourage tobacco and cigarettes', they do not say, 'Tax it less'. They say, 'Tax it more'. When public health advocates say, 'Look, let us try and discourage drinking', they do not say, 'Tax it less'. They say, 'Tax it more'. This government has come into this Parliament over the last three years and taxed property more. Well, here is a newsflash: you do not make it more affordable by taxing it more. You make it less affordable, and that is exactly what this government has done now.

I want to talk briefly about the coalition's record when we were in office. The coalition actually believes in cutting taxes without raising them on the other hand. We gave a 50 per cent cut to stamp duty for first home buyers — we just cut the tax by 50 per cent. We did not have any sneaky tax rises or say, 'Oh, we are going to cut taxes here, but we are going to raise them here'. We just cut taxes because a tax cut should be a tax cut. We delivered a 50 per cent cut in stamp duty for first home buyers. We got rid of the first 50 per cent without increasing taxes. When Labor got in, they boasted, 'Oh, we removed the second 50 per cent'. Yes, but they increased taxes on a whole range of other property buyers.

We also increased the first home owners grant for newly constructed homes. And when it comes to public housing, something that has been sorely neglected by members opposite —

Mr Wynne — You have got to be kidding.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — I am not kidding, Minister. In fact, I am very happy to go to the Auditor-General's report *Managing Victoria's Public Housing*. We can see what the Auditor-General had to say about it.

Mr Wynne — By the end of your term, there was less public housing than when you started. That is a fact.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Don't worry about it, I will get to Crown Towers shortly.

Mr Wynne — That will be fine.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Plenty of time.

Ms Thomas — What about Fishermans Bend?

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Reading from page 15 of the Auditor-General's report *Managing Victoria's Public Housing*, released this year, under the heading 'Public housing waiting list' —

Mr Wynne — Public housing, my goodness!

Mr M. O'BRIEN —

Figure 2G shows that between 2010–11 and 2015–16 —

most of which was in the four-year term of the coalition government —

the total waiting list for public housing reduced by 16 per cent ...

Mr Wynne — Well, you know why! You bodgied up the waiting list.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Speaker, there is no grace in the Minister for Planning. He will not even accept the words of the Auditor-General. His report says that, under the coalition, we saw the public housing waiting list reduced by 16 per cent. That is because we actually had a strategy in relation to —

Mr Wynne — Yes, I know what your strategy was!

Mr M. O'BRIEN — improving public housing. Can I say we also had a strategy for making things fair for renters, because we believe that public housing tenants who do the right thing should not be subject to terrible antisocial behaviour from other public housing tenants who do the wrong thing. We had ridiculous

interpretations of laws by VCAT that said, even when people are caught dealing drugs in public housing —

Mr Wynne — Yes, that's right.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — they could not be evicted.

Mr Wynne — And we supported that.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — We said that was ridiculous.

We stood up for renters. Labor had 11 years to do something about it when they were last in office — 11 years — and did nothing about it. It took a coalition government to actually stand up for the rights of proper public housing tenants who do the right thing because we believe that whether people live in public housing or in private housing or in their own houses, everyone deserves to be treated fairly. Everyone deserves to live in an environment which is safe. Encouraging antisocial behaviour by saying people can deal drugs, commit criminal activity and not face the risk of the loss of their tenancy is ridiculous. The coalition has got a very strong and proud record when it comes to improving the outcomes of public housing tenants. I am not going to hear any criticism from those opposite about it because the figures are there in black and white.

Mr Wynne — Less public housing than when you came to government — less!

Mr M. O'BRIEN — The coalition's record is one where we made public housing more affordable. We cut stamp duty without increasing other taxes. We also increased landlords. There is something that the current government has not done well, unless it comes to breaking planning laws to look after Crown Casino, which the planning minister has done extremely well, and we know the views of the member for Albert Park about that — it's causing ructions in cabinet. We know all about that.

But when it comes to actually releasing land to try and encourage the supplier to get prices down, it was up to the coalition government. I pay tribute to the Leader of the Opposition, who was then planning minister, who was very active in releasing land to make sure that people could have more of an opportunity to build their own homes. That is what we are about — we are about giving people opportunity. We are the side of politics that rewards opportunity, that wants to encourage people who want to work hard, make a living and make a home. We want to say we want to reward you for that. We do not want to tax you for that.

Now I mentioned before about how Labor is actually taxing property, thinking that taxing property makes it

somehow more affordable. Here are some of the property taxes that we have seen increased under Labor. We have seen a new stamp duty introduced on property transferred between spouses. So a husband and wife marry. One of the partners coming into the marriage might have a holiday house. They might have a small unit. If they want to transfer that into joint names for the family, they now pay stamp duty because the Treasurer thinks he wants to clip the ticket on a mum and dad or a husband and wife who want to get married and have the property — their property — in joint names.

How on earth can that be justified? That is something that is anti-family. It is anti-small business, because it means that people who want to set up their own business and put their assets jointly in the names of their spouse or partner cannot do that. This is just taxing property for the sake of taxing property. We have also seen a \$140 million increase in property transfer fees — properties worth more than \$500 000 have been hit with up to \$2234 extra in state charges. That is a sneaky little tax increase again on property, making buying property and transferring property more expensive.

We see the bill which will be debated in the house today. I will not pre-empt the debate, but this is a government that wants to increase land tax even further by moving to annual property valuations, the only purpose of which is to gouge out extra land tax for this Treasurer. As we saw from the Auditor-General's report today, we have a government whose spending is out of control. The public sector wage bill is out of control. You have seen public sector numbers blowing out much greater than population increase. You are seeing public sector wages blowing out much greater than private sector wage increase. The same Auditor-General's report, by the way, says there is a huge maintenance backlog in the state that is getting worse, but the Treasury does not care about that — he is more interested in just making more taxes so he can look after the Community and Public Sector Union.

We have also seen a new stamp duty introduced on off-the-plan purchases, so unless you are a first home buyer, if you want to buy an off-the-plan property, you now pay full stamp duty. What happens there is that that is simply hurting supply, because a lot of those apartment buildings that want to get off the ground, in order for them to be built, the banks need to be assured that a certain percentage has been presold. A lot of the presales come from people who are investors. What the Treasurer has done by saying, 'You now don't get the benefit of off-the-plan stamp duty. You pay full clip', is say to those developers, 'You simply will take much longer to bring any development into reality', so jobs are hurt, supply is hurt and prices are damaged. This is

a government that has just jacked up prices and jacked up taxes.

And we have seen it in the tax collections. Since this government came to office, we have seen stamp duty increase by 39.4 per cent — a \$1.74 billion increase in stamp duty in just three years. Land tax is up by 35.1 per cent, a \$615 million increase. This is a government that is addicted to taxes on property and it cannot help itself. One of the worst taxes, I think, is this new so-called vacant residential property tax —

Mr Angus — The Big Brother tax?

Mr M. O'BRIEN — As the member for Forest Hill points out, it is the Big Brother tax; it is a socialist tax. We had the Premier in here basically saying, 'Well, if you've got a property and it's going to be vacant for more than six months, you should go down and visit a real estate agent and you should rent it out'. Here he is telling everyone what they should be doing with their private property because if they do not deal with it the way the Premier wants, he is going to tax it. He is going to hit them with a punitive new land tax.

Now, there are some categories of people that it does not apply to, interestingly. So if you are an inner-city Labor lawyer or an inner-city Labor spin doctor and you have a beautiful holiday house down at Portsea or Sorrento, you can leave that vacant 12 months of the year, 365 days of the year, 24 hours a day and do you know how much extra tax you will pay? Nothing — nothing at all. Labor look after their inner-city luvvies who have their coastal millionaire properties and they do not pay any extra tax.

But if you are a dairy farmer from Gippsland and your home is in Gippsland and your farm is in Gippsland and you have a one-bedroom bolthole in Melbourne for when you have to come to town because maybe you have some medical appointments or maybe you want to go and see the grandkids in the school play or maybe you want to go and see a concert or maybe you want to go and see the footy, if you do not spend more than six months of the year sleeping in that one-bedroom property, you are an evil capitalist, according to this government, and you need to be hit with a higher land tax on your property. If it is a \$500 000 property that is an extra \$5000 a year.

This is not just a tax which is socialist in nature, where the government tries to tell you what to do with your property, it is also deeply hypocritical, because if you are a Labor mate from the inner city, you can have as much property as you like down the coast or in the bush and you can leave it vacant 365 days a year and you

pay nothing. But if you dare to be a farmer with a small place, a one-bedroom apartment in Melbourne for when you need to come to town, you get hit between the eyes. This is the sort of hypocrisy we get from this government.

This government has got nothing to be proud of in relation to its record. We keep hearing about all these changes to rental laws, but they have not actually bothered introducing them into the Parliament yet. All we see are press releases, all we hear is talk, all we see are a lot of photo opportunities with the Labor candidate down in Northcote, because that is all this is about. The minute the polls close at 6.01 p.m. on Saturday, when that Northcote by-election is over, I think, will be the end of it. Labor's interest in Northcote will end at 6.01 p.m. on Saturday. If they win, they will say, 'Thanks very much. We've bluffed them for another couple of years'. If they lose, they will say, 'Well, we tried', and they will move on. This is not about policy, it is not about our outcomes; it is simply about trying to save the Labor Party's political bacon.

The reason why this Premier is so worried about it is that he knows the drums are stirring. The drums are beating. We have seen the vitriol and the venom come out in this preselection. There is no fight like a Labor Party fight, I will say that. I have seen some stoushes in my time and on my side, but we cannot hold a candle to these guys when it comes to hating on each other —

An honourable member — The Treasurer says, 'Hear, hear!'.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — Well, as the Treasurer did say, a Labor preselection is a bit like beating your head against a wall — it feels so good when it stops. Well, it is about to stop, but unfortunately it is the people of Victoria who are getting lost in the process. This is all about politics, it is all about trying to save the Premier and it is all about trying to save his job.

I make this prediction now: if the Labor Party loses the Northcote by-election on Saturday night, the drums will start beating, the numbers will start being counted and the Premier will hear footsteps that he will not want to hear.

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (14:32) — It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of the matter of public importance because, quite frankly, the Andrews government is instituting a real change to make housing more affordable for first home buyers and also to make renting fair. Importantly, one in four Victorians, as we hear, may not be able to call the house that they live in the home that they own, but it is

most definitely their home in every material respect, so looking after renters and making sure they get a fair deal is critically important.

Housing affordability is important and it is also a very complex issue. It is easy to commentate from the sidelines and suggest that introducing change will have a positive impact for first home buyers and renters, but it is no easy task when you actually have to get down and do it, and that is what this government is about: getting on and doing it and delivering for those people who actually need a government that is committed to making substantial and real change.

This year we have implemented a raft of measures that seek to provide every Victorian with the opportunity for a safe and secure home. There is recognition across Australia that we have taken the lead whilst the commonwealth has done what the commonwealth does best: sit around and deliver bloviating lectures to everybody else about what everybody else should do and why it is not really their problem; it is somebody else's problem.

In the lead-up to this year's federal budget, we were repeatedly told that the federal Treasurer's housing affordability package would be a game changer. Unfortunately, of course, like so many other things, the federal government and this federal Treasurer squibbed it, and what little they did offer is now unlikely to get through the Senate. We estimated our package would contribute more than \$3.7 billion to the Victorian economy and create 50 000 new construction jobs over a four-year period. Now, that is not the sort of thing that you imagine would earn the ire of the opposition, but they have lived up to their title — they are opposing everything that comes before them despite the clear and obvious merit of it.

But the benefits extend well beyond mere numbers. This encompasses many issues, from shifting the balance back to first home buyers rather than investors to also shoring up Victoria's housing stock for future generations. So this is a big play. It is not about what might happen in the next 5 minutes. This is about the future, and it is about where our kids and their kids get the opportunity to live proximate to their families and communities that they have grown up in.

We abolished stamp duty for first home buyers on homes valued up to \$600 000, and we provided discounts on homes valued up to \$750 000. We have doubled the first home owner grants in regional Victoria, and we have added zoned land for another 100 000 lots in the state's growth corridors. We supported long-term leases. Out of our review of the

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 we are also introducing huge reforms to make renting fair. All of these initiatives are decisive moves, really aimed at unlocking the housing market to deliver affordability, access and, importantly, choice. We are not being judgemental about where people choose to make their homes, but our number one and abiding priority is to give them the opportunity to have a place they can call home and have the security, safety and hopefully, as time progresses, affordability not only to live in that home but also to have their kids and their kids' kids live near them in their own homes.

So with median house prices in Melbourne up around 60 per cent since 2012, it is essential that we shift some of this balance back to first home buyers. Our abolition of stamp duty for first home purchases under \$600 000, and discounts up to \$750 000, will help level the playing field. Between 1 July and 12 October almost 4300 first home buyers benefitted. More than 3700 of them paid no stamp duty at all, saving a total of \$76.3 million. It is forgone revenue to the state, but a choice that this government made. We gave up taxation revenue to look after those most in need and those most deserving, and that is those people starting out in life looking for a home that they can call their own. This is more, as I say, than double the number of beneficiaries compared with the same time last year.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data released last week confirmed a 2.1 per cent increase in owner-occupier home loan approvals in Victoria, while the rest of the country went backwards to the tune of 2.3 per cent, so clearly something is happening to the market. Some interventions that the government has put in place have had a distinct and profound effect upon the way the market operates. Victoria is heading one way in positive territory, while the nation is going the other way. Indeed the ABS — no lesser authority than the Australian Bureau of Statistics — stated that:

The increase has been driven mainly by changes to first home buyer incentives made in July by the New South Wales and Victorian governments.

The outrage in that sentence is that they actually suggested that the New South Wales government were in the lead. They copied us. As soon as we did it, they went out and they copied our policy almost word for word. We have not seen so many first home buyers seeking finance since before the last government. Isn't that coincidental! It begs the question of what the Baillieu-Napthine governments did to help first home buyers during their time in government. Well, the answer to that is simple: not a lot. Beyond criticising this government, which they are very good at, and having been inactive for four years in government

themselves, they woke up out of their stupor when they were introduced to opposition and they grew a voice, although I think sometimes silence is the best policy, particularly when all that you have done is such an abject embarrassment and a demonstration that you failed the people of Victoria. You should let somebody who actually has a plan to help give the home owners a chance.

In regional Victoria I would have thought there would have been massive support for what this government has done, doubling the first home owners grant in regional Victoria to \$20 000. That not only ensures that young Victorians have a bigger deposit and the opportunity to remain in their local community, but it also has positive spin-off effects in terms of regional jobs and economic growth. Three hundred and nineteen first home buyers have already received grants this year to 12 October. That compares to about 66 buyers at the same time last year. That is almost five times the amount.

I do want to turn to an issue of grave concern, and that is the planning supply issue. Given that the housing approvals are now at near record levels and Victoria's population continues to grow, it is essential this not be undermined by planning delays and red tape. We are speeding up development approvals in the inner and middle suburbs. Developers are positive about the initiatives. Stockland CEO Mark Steinert noted that the government's 100 000 additional lots were a very positive thing. And in short, we are going to continue that work with developers in the industry as a whole.

We are developing plans for former industrial lands such as Fishermans Bend and Arden. That compares to those opposite, who do not really seem to comprehend the importance of certainty and transparency in planning. They did not when they were in government, and today they have shown it again. Earlier this year the government of course completed the planning for a residential tower adjacent to Ormond station, and what have we seen? Working in alignment with the Greens, the Liberal-Green coalition sought to knock off the planning scheme approval for this.

Mr Wynne — They have knocked it off.

Mr PALLAS — They have done it? Craven. And of course we know the Leader of the Opposition used to lecture us about how this is important. Quite frankly, this is more than just a political stunt. These have serious implications in terms of financing and sovereign risk, and you will wear it.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (14:42) — I would like to welcome to the gallery His Excellency the Ambassador of Sweden to Australia, Mr Pär Ahlberger.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Housing affordability

Debate resumed.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (14:42) — I am pleased to rise to speak on this matter of Northcote importance. That is really what this is; this is a matter of Northcote importance. To make that judgement we need only to look at who has submitted it. The member for Mulgrave has deigned to come into the chamber and speak on a matter of public importance. Certainly in my time in this place I have not seen the Premier come and speak on something like this. It is very clear, as the member for Malvern talked about earlier, what this matter of public importance is about. It is actually not about public importance; it is about the Labor Party's chances in the Northcote by-election.

There must be a fascinating internal battle going on within the Labor Party at the moment, and that will only intensify, depending on the result of this weekend's by-election in Northcote, as they decide whether they are defending the inner city or whether they are going to abandon it altogether. I do not normally get much pleasure from anything the Greens say, but an unnamed Greens source said in one of the papers a few weeks ago that the ALP might be just like the Anzacs at Gallipoli, leaving a rifle to shoot off every now and again. It might be the way the ALP abandons the inner city if they lose Northcote this weekend.

I hope they do not, not just for the sake of the member for Richmond, who is going to try to defend his seat next year, because I personally — and I think I speak for many on this side — do not want to see more Greens in here, because that would be a disaster. Unfortunately what we have seen over the last couple of months, and again with this housing affordability matter of public importance today, is not the ALP trying to outgreen the Greens; it is the ALP becoming the Greens. We have seen the ban on plastic bags, we have seen the changes to renters' rights, we have seen the big backflip on injecting rooms, and then of course we have had numerous announcements — ranging from an announcement about the Victoria State Emergency Service just yesterday to funding for a number of schools in the Northcote electorate. These schools are suddenly in need of funding. The

government just happens to have found \$3 million and \$4 million here and there for these important projects. Suddenly Northcote is important.

I say to the ALP as it goes through this battle that there is one other policy that the Greens want — and that is, the great forest national park. I warn you: do not go near it. It would be to the great detriment of this state, not just to the timber industry but to a whole range of industries, including those people who like to get out and about in the bush. Whether they are four-wheel drivers, hunters, motorbike riders, campers — all of those — there is a groundswell against this proposal. I urge the government to be very cautious before it even considers going near the great forest national park because ultimately it would be to its detriment, particularly in the regional seats.

I will briefly touch on the coalition's record, as the member for Malvern has done a good job of pointing it out. In government there was a 50 per cent cut in stamp duty for first home buyers, delivered without any increase in other taxes. We increased the first home buyers grant for new homes, again. Of course it is not liked by those on the other side because it is an inconvenient truth, but the public housing waiting list reduced by 16 per cent. That is one of those matters where those on the left just do not like to admit the facts, to the extent that they will not even believe the Victorian Auditor-General, who reported on that statistic.

I would like to go also to some wider issues with respect to housing affordability. It is not just about the affordability of the house. When someone goes to either rent a house or to buy a house and they consider the price and what they can afford — whether it is the rent or whether it is the repayments on a loan — they have to consider their whole budget. Of course the other area that this government has failed dismally on with respect to affordability is energy prices — and cost of living more generally, but energy prices in particular. The government has pursued policies that it has held for many years now and going back to 2010, when it wanted to formally force the closure of the Hazelwood power station.

We know that this time around they did not bother doing it as a formal policy; they just taxed the place out of existence, tripling the coal royalty, a \$250 million increase in the coal royalty on Latrobe Valley generators, and — surprise, surprise! — Hazelwood brought forward its closure date as a result. That the Premier stands there and says, 'Oh, this was a decision made by a foreign company in Paris', and does not either understand or want to understand the impact of his government's own taxes on that decision is just

outrageous. That has led directly to increases in power prices for all Victorians and has also had a massive impact on the Latrobe Valley, which I will come back to in a moment.

I have got dairy farmers in my electorate who at the end of a five-year contract have gone seeking a new contract. On the energy component of their bill alone they have got a 400 per cent increase in their power bill. I met with a family in Welshpool a couple of weeks ago who had a \$7000 electricity bill, just for a standard three-bedroom home. I have got a farmer in my electorate — admittedly, a big farmer, a big salad producer — with a \$900 000 increase in their electricity bill this year. These figures are astounding. We have got big employers like Burra Foods, a big exporter in my electorate that brings wealth and creates jobs in my electorate and brings wealth to this state. It has had an 80 or 90 per cent increase in its gas and electricity prices in the last 12 months or so.

These things have had a big impact, and the Hazelwood power station closure, along with the misguided Victorian renewable energy target that this government has introduced, have had a direct impact on those affordability issues through power prices. As I said, it has had an impact in my electorate and Gippsland more generally, but particularly in the Latrobe Valley.

The other thing that you need to be able to afford a house is a good job. Unfortunately Labor has failed dismally on unemployment in Gippsland. If we look at the Latrobe-Gippsland figures, the most recent stats released, when we left office unemployment was 6.1 per cent in Latrobe-Gippsland; it is now 6.7 per cent. At this time last year it was 8.4 per cent. When you look at the youth figures, they are even more alarming for those young people who are getting a job, studying and maybe starting to save for a house. It was 11.2 per cent when we left government — still too high of course — but youth unemployment in Latrobe-Gippsland is now 15 per cent. On a more localised level, it is far worse in Morwell and Moe-Newborough, where Hazelwood workers tended to live. In Morwell there was 17.6 per cent unemployment on the June 2017 small area labour market figures, as opposed to 13, when we left government, and in Moe-Newborough it was 13.3 per cent. So if you do not have a job, then it is very difficult to be able to afford a house.

On that note, this is another area where the government has failed. I have the great pleasure of being the Liberal-Nationals coalition population policy task force chair. What we are doing is developing a whole suite of policies to encourage the decentralisation of our state —

to get people out of Melbourne and to encourage people to establish their businesses and move themselves into regional Victoria. Why would they do that? One of the easiest selling points of course for that is housing prices. The Australian Bureau of Statistics residential property prices index from June 2017 shows the median price of an established house in Melbourne at \$713 000, versus the rest of Victoria at \$335 000. So literally Melbourne is more than double the price of regional Victoria. That is a simple selling point.

But what did this government do on coming to office? They axed the regional living expo that we had that was actually encouraging people to come to regional Victoria. It gave a platform for our councils and our tourism organisations and our regional development groups to come to the city and sell their wares and encourage people to move to the country, where of course people will find it much cheaper to buy a house. But it is not just about housing of course. If people are going to move, they need facilities, they need services and they need jobs. We will be developing and releasing in the next 12 months the policies that will help us do that.

Unfortunately the Labor Party has not seen any need to deal with the massive population growth that we are seeing in Melbourne, and that is what is causing the housing affordability crisis. There is no great rocket science in that: more people, not enough houses — the price is going up. The Labor Party is not working to manage our population growth, and I emphasise that population growth is not a bad thing in itself, but it does need to be managed. I encourage the government to get on board, as the Liberal-Nationals have done, and understand that we need to decentralise our state and create jobs in the regions — and that will have a big part to play in reducing the housing affordability crisis.

Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) (14:52) — I rise with pleasure to speak on the matter of public importance and state from the outset that I believe, as does this government, that adequate housing is essential to human dignity. Housing is fundamental. Without it, other human rights such as the right to privacy, the right to safety and indeed rights in relation to one's health are compromised. I would hope and expect that across this chamber there would be few if any that would argue against adequate housing as a right for all Victorians. However, on this side of the chamber we are not just talking about a roof over one's head, we are not just talking about the need for basic shelter; we are talking about every Victorian having access to a place they call home, whether they have the capacity to buy their home or whether they are forced to rent. We want Victorians

to have a place where they can put down roots, a place where they can become part of the local community, send their children to local schools and know that they cannot just be tossed out on a whim without a second thought by a landlord whose only interest may be return on investment. That is why the Andrews Labor government has taken a stand. We have taken a stand for Victorians seeking to purchase their first home, and we have taken a stand to ensure that renters are more than just a number on a balance sheet or a series of names on a rent roll.

When the Treasurer stood up and announced the doubling of the first home owner grant in rural and regional Victoria and that stamp duty had been abolished for first home buyers purchasing a home for up to \$600 000 and would be phased in for purchases between \$601 000 and \$750 000 on contracts entered into from 1 July 2017, the nay-sayers came out in force. One of those, Shane Oliver from AMP, was quoted in an article by Charis Chang on news.com.au on 7 March this year as saying, 'Ultimately it could have the effect of pushing houses further out of reach for first home buyers' and 'Affordability in Victoria would probably deteriorate, relative to income'. Was he right? Of course not — not according to figures from the Department of Treasury and Finance which say that 2742 new home owners paid no stamp duty and 429 received concessions in the three months after the new measures kicked in on 1 July. That is not a bad result from an initiative that was meant to fail. The total number of beneficiaries — 3171 — was more than double the 1435 to receive stamp duty reductions in the same period last year and almost triple the 1171 recipients in the three months before the reforms. These concessions are providing opportunities for people trying to get their feet firmly on the property ladder, and the Treasurer is to be congratulated for helping Victorians realise their dream of home ownership.

This is just one side of the story of course, because we also have a plan for those who either choose to or are forced to rent. We know that more and more Victorians are renting and many of them are renting for longer. For many Victorians renting is no longer the transitional state from young adulthood until settling down and buying a house to raise a family in. The reality for many people is that someone else's house will be their home, either forever or for a long portion of their life. That is why we have announced sweeping reforms to the rental market, rebalancing the rights and the responsibilities of tenants and landlords to give renters a fair go. Why shouldn't a tenant be able to hang a picture on a wall or keep a pet? Why should renters face rent increases more than once a year? And why

should renters not get their bond back within 14 days if there is no dispute? These are just some of the questions that we have been regularly asked by the one in four Victorians who are renters and of course by our fantastic candidate for Northcote, Clare Burns, who is a renter herself and knows and understands the uncertainty that renters face.

We have answered these questions in the best possible way, and we have done that by being prepared to listen and to shake things up to give renters a better deal. We have done this through changes like a crackdown on rental bidding; fewer rent increases; faster tenant reimbursement for urgent repairs; removing the 'no specified reason' notice to vacate; limiting the use of 'end of fixed-term lease' notices to vacate; an updated bond cap and up-front rent cap for most properties; automatic bond repayments within 14 days; earlier release of bond by agreement at the end of a tenancy; allowing tenants to more easily make minor modifications to the house; allowing tenants to more easily keep pets; prohibiting false, misleading or deceptive representations by landlords; requiring precontractual disclosure by landlords of the known presence of asbestos in premises and other important information; a new commissioner for residential tenancies; and introducing a landlord and estate agent blacklist available to tenants. These are some of the changes that we have made, and of course there are many more.

Yes, there are some that are bleating that the sky will fall in and that every landlord will sell their rental property. That is a load of rubbish, because residential property will remain a viable investment choice. Landlords will still have the tools available to effectively manage their properties; they just will not be able to treat renters as cash cows or second-class citizens anymore, simply because there are renters. I do not want to be too disparaging towards the opposition. After all, the Tories have never made a secret of where they stand on this issue. They stand side by side with those that have money — those that can afford to purchase a home — and they stand side by side with capital, and of course they have come out and stood against renters. I get that — that is who they are; that is what they stand for. We can always be certain of where they stand; there is no mistaking that.

What I cannot abide is the thoughtless drivel coming from the Greens on this issue. We have announced the biggest rental reforms in Victoria's history; the Greens have been hard at work producing thought bubbles. Their idea of capping rent increases might sound nice, but we might find that landlords raise rents in anticipation of any cap. While our reforms are tied to a

sweeping, evidence-based review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, the Greens announced that they will cap rents without any due consideration of the effect that this may have on the rental market. Economists widely condemn rent control as a means of achieving housing affordability. Its effects have been likened to a bomb blast on the economy, the housing sector and tenant welfare.

Rent control has backfired in places like New York City and San Francisco, constraining the supply of rental homes and increasing rental prices in newer properties that are not under the cap. Back home, where we have been working to make long-term leases a reality, we might find that landlords are unwilling to commit to long-term leases out of a fear they will not be able to recover their costs over time. When rent is set below the market value, demand outstrips supply and you end up with a housing shortage. It is not very difficult to comprehend. Rather than buying properties and leasing them out, investors turn to more lucrative prospects, and this restricts the supply of new dwellings. Under a rent control regime, landlords are less inclined to maintain their properties to a proper standard, lowering the living conditions of tenants.

Just on another thought bubble from the Greens, they have decided to run a candidate in Northcote who thinks that housing can only be solved at a federal level. That is quite interesting when you consider that in Northcote 40 per cent of the electorate rent. We know that the opposition is not really interested in those renters. They did not run a candidate; they have not stood up for people who rent in our community. We also know that the opposition simply does not care about average Victorians who are struggling and who are renting, and we know that the Greens do not understand what it takes to get Victorians into housing.

I am extremely proud to be part of an Andrews Labor government that not only understands what needs to be done but is getting on with the job of governing for all Victorians. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Clare Burns, the Labor candidate for Northcote, who has raised this renting issue with me on a number of occasions, particularly around the asbestos issue. She has met with members of the local community and has raised this issue with me. I want to congratulate her and reassure those that are renting in Victoria that on this side of the house we are getting things done to ensure that housing is fairer and safer.

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) (15:02) — I rise to make a contribution on the matter of public importance. I was in my Parliament House office doing constituent work when the debate started. I listened to the Premier,

and I waited in hope that we might hear something on housing affordability from the Premier, and I have got to say that for the constituents in my district, in Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley, we are not interested in a trip down memory lane from the Premier. What we are interested in is what changes this government is going to put in place to reverse the disastrous consequences resulting from its policies that have made housing affordability worse. That is right, housing affordability has gone backwards under this government, and it has gone backwards under this government in a number of ways.

First and foremost, there are the massive increases in state government taxes and charges that this government has hoisted upon the residents of Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley and the rest of the state of Victoria. The figures tell the real story. The massive increases in taxes and charges are highlighted by land tax being up by 35 per cent. Land tax up by 35 per cent means that people who own property and may be prepared to provide that property as a rental property have had a significant increase in their land tax as a consequence of this government's policies. Stamp duty under this government will exceed \$6 billion for the first time in our state's history. Of course we have got the introduction of annual property valuations, which is another tax grab expected to raise an extra \$200 million a year in 2019–20, and there are the new stamp duties on property transfers between spouses.

I note that if you look at those tax arrangements, those massive tax increases, they are overwhelmingly skewed to the property sector. On the one hand the government are saying, 'Look, haven't we done a great job', backslapping each other and opening the French champagne — the Treasurer tells us how grateful residents in Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley should be about this government's housing affordability policy — but in reality when you cut through all of that, the figures are very, very clear. They are that the massive increases in taxes and charges that this government is putting in place for residents in my district and across the state, which are overwhelmingly hitting the property market, are further reducing housing affordability for people.

You do not have to be a rocket scientist to understand that. When you have a 35 per cent increase in land tax, that flows through to rental properties and flows through to the price that those rental properties will be offered at. When you have stamp duty exceeding \$6 billion for the first time in our state, that flows through to properties and flows through to housing affordability. When you move for a tax grab to annual valuations, it means that the owners of those properties

have increased costs in the order of potentially \$200 million for 2019–20. Again, those costs are going to be passed onto people in the rental market, for example, or passed onto people who are seeking to buy a property. As a consequence of that, we know that housing affordability will be worse. Indeed in just over two years the member for Mulgrave and the Andrews Labor government have increased taxes by nearly \$4 billion, an increase in tax revenue of over 22 per cent, with the statistics that I have highlighted coming, significantly, from the property sector.

In addition to the direct increase in property taxes that this government has so effectively put on the people of Victoria and the property sector in Victoria, which is punishing those who might want to buy a house, punishing those who seek to rent and driving down housing affordability — notwithstanding the smoke and mirrors of the Treasurer, as I said, telling Victorians how grateful we should be for the housing affordability package that he has put in place — we know that the government is driving up cost-of-living expenses each and every year.

We have got the \$252 million energy tax on coal royalties that is flowing through to energy bills, which means that people have less capacity to save out of their wage because their energy costs go up and therefore they have less money to potentially put into an upgraded house, a new house or moving into a rental property. There is the taxi and Uber tax and the massive increases in the fire services property levy, which is passed onto householders. I talked yesterday in the Parliament about the increases in taxes on new motor vehicles for somebody buying their first car, a modest vehicle that does not attract the luxury car tax. It might be a family seeking to buy a family car; they need to upgrade because they have had more children. Again, they are hit by the increase in stamp duty on new cars, and as I mentioned, there is the new stamp duty on property transfers between spouses.

What all of that means is that if people's wages are increasing at the level which they are, which is below the pace of the massive increases in taxes and charges that this government is putting on Victorians, they have got less to save for their home. They have got less to be able to afford to pay the rent. As a consequence, not only is the government whacking Victorians and making housing and rents so much more expensive directly through its tax increases in the property sector, but it is also on the other hand whacking Victorians and hitting families, households and small and medium-sized businesses through massive increases in the cost of living, meaning that they have less to put aside at the end of the week, the end of the fortnight or

the end of the month to be able to save for a new home or increased rent.

Of course those inflationary measures flow through the entire economy. They not only flow through to the property sector; they flow through to the local milk bar and the local bread shop, whether it is a Brumby's, a Bakers Delight or an independent bakery. Again, it all means that life is harder for Victorians under this government than it should be. It means that Victorians have less purchasing power on the housing affordability front. As I said, that is just so disappointing.

So I am not interested in a trip down memory lane from the Premier. That is all well and good for him. I wish him well. I am not interested in that. My residents are not interested in a trip down memory lane from the Premier. They are interested in what changes this government is going to put forward to reverse the disastrous increases in housing costs and rental costs that are flowing directly as a result of this government's policies.

Of course we know that leading economic indicators and leading economic think tanks have made it very clear that when you undertake massive increases in taxes and charges, as this government has done in the property sector, they flow through directly to the people at the end of line, because they need to be paid for somehow. In addition to that, it also leads to a reduction in housing supply, because investment in housing becomes less attractive as those yields go down. That is basic economics. It is confirmed consistently by leading economic think tanks about the increases in property taxes that this government is imposing and the consequences of less supply. Therefore there is less housing affordability for the residents of Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley and throughout the entire state.

I will note that at least some senior Labor figures on the right understand and acknowledge these concerns and do agree that there is an issue in relation to the level of taxes and charges in the property sector in Victoria and the manner in which they are flowing through to housing affordability and making housing less affordable.

I want to touch on the comments of one of the most senior industry organisations in property in relation to the so-called rental reforms. I have no doubt that the minister is well-intentioned, but I do note that the consequences of the minister's actions are anything but improving housing affordability. I turn to the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV), which on 9 October put out a statement and very, very clearly said:

Victoria's new rental laws lack balance and have the potential to devastate the private rental market ...

REIV CEO Gil King said these changes involve the loss of a number of valuable rights and will reduce a landlord's security over what is a significant financial investment.

The Andrews government has been short-sighted in introducing these reforms which have the ability to decimate the private rental market, ultimately driving up rents and reducing supply of rental properties at a time of unprecedented population growth.

...

These changes will reduce the attractiveness of property investment in Victoria with a significant number of landlords indicating they will exit the market.

...

While these changes have been designed to provide tenants with better protections, ironically they will result in increased competition for properties, higher rents and greater landlord screening of applicants.

That says it all. As I said, the minister may be well-intentioned, but the outcomes of the policies that this government are implementing are going to be furtherly disastrous for Victorians. They will further deteriorate housing affordability measures for residents in Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley. They will reduce housing affordability measures not only for Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley residents, but indeed across the entire state of Victoria.

I just ask the government: please take a step back from the tax increases that you have imposed on the property sector, take a step back from these new laws that the REIV have outlined are going to affect housing affordability, take a step back and please stop reducing housing affordability for Glen Waverley and Mount Waverley residents and the state of Victoria.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) (15:12) — It gives me great pleasure to rise and join this very sensible matter of public importance:

That this house notes that only the Victorian Labor government has a plan to make housing more affordable and to make renting fair.

I do so through a number of prisms. One is as the member for Albert Park. The last time I counted — and I look forward to the final results when updated from the most recent census — 52 per cent of my community rent, which is one of the highest rates in the state. I think that is only exceeded by the honourable member for Melbourne's electorate. In that regard, ensuring that renters are secure, that their rights are increasingly protected and enhanced and the culture of how we go about delivering housing, not just in the private sector but more broadly, is a very important issue to my community. I commend the Minister for Consumer

Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation on leading the charge in this important space.

I rise today to contribute to the issue in my portfolio of housing, disability and ageing, because you cannot have an ecology of housing affordability unless all aspects of housing are delivered. That is why the Victorian government is very, very proud of the work it is doing through the *Homes for Victorians* policy, despite the attempts to frustrate it by the unusual coalition of opposition in this space when it comes to the range of options that come to this debate.

This government, under that policy — and I hope to add more to it in time in the very near future — is at the moment making \$799 million worth of investment in housing and homelessness direct support and growth. Add to that a further \$2.1 billion that we seek to leverage with local government and with housing and community associations — associations that continue to be opposed ferociously by those opposite. Indeed, sadly, it is made more difficult to leverage by the environment that the federal government is creating for growth in this sector — or inhibiting growth in this sector would be more accurate.

We are investing that record amount, and those people at the coalface who deal with this issue know that it is an important, groundbreaking piece of work that is seeking to address the growing crisis, which grows day by day, for housing affordability, homelessness and social housing in the state — in this nation, in fact. That is why we are, through that process, proud that that policy will deliver an increase of 6000 new social housing units, it will deliver 16 000 extra engagements for people who are homeless and it will deliver the record investment that I have referred to in this space.

I will briefly touch on the issues when it comes to our federal government and what they might want to do. It was interesting to note after the policy was released that Scott Morrison, the federal Treasurer — unlike those opposite — came out and supported that investment. He said, 'Well, at least the Victorians are having a go'. Unfortunately, rather than take up that invitation to have a go himself, he has in fact made things worse. In addition, we are coming off the base where we saw over \$300 million cut from the sector by those opposite when they were on the Treasury bench, and we have had a further \$100 million taken out of the Victorian system by the commonwealth government in their repeated cuts since 2014. Now the most savage of those have been how they have slashed the national partnership agreement on homelessness. They have cut funding to housing and homelessness advocacy bodies. They have cut the national rental affordability scheme,

and they have taken out, essentially, the rung from so many organisations that work in this homelessness and social housing space.

The Turnbull government has devised new and even more creative ways of continuing that trend. Not content with what they have done, they are now threatening a further \$370 million in cuts — that is the equivalent of the entirety of the federal funding for housing in the state of Victoria — in new legislation introduced last month. This will unleash a tsunami of homelessness in this state and indeed around the country. I challenge Minister Porter and the federal Treasurer to nominate which housing agencies they propose should be closed if the legislation proceeds. They seek to impose a national plan which has no additional dollars but just has threats of funding cuts to homelessness and housing organisations. I would love to say that we led the charge against this at the recent ministerial conference — and I was more than prepared to — but our New South Wales equivalents beat us to the punch, out nice and early. It was a very unusual combination, with Victoria on one side and New South Wales on the other, leading the charge against this draconian proposal from the commonwealth government.

Despite that, the commonwealth went and introduced the Treasury Laws Amendment (National Housing and Homelessness Agreement) Bill 2017. It is an appalling piece of legislation. It is an unprecedented attack on what has been the framework for how we deal with housing and homelessness in this nation for generations. As difficult and as underfunded as that has been, this framework will be a disaster. That is why both I and the Treasurer have stood side by side with our homelessness sector in writing to the federal government and raising these issues at the various ministerial and sector conferences to deliver our opposition to it.

While those opposite and particularly, interestingly enough, the Greens candidate in Northcote might come out and say housing affordability is only a federal issue, I would take the view that while of course they are significant leaders in this space, there is a role for all levels of government. There is a role for every level of government, which is why our \$2.1 billion worth of leverage seeks to buy even more in this space in partnership with those councils that want to be constructive in this space, with the private sector and with, hopefully, the commonwealth through an expanded national rental affordability scheme and other arrangements that they have within their power to grow social housing to deal with the mounting crisis that we face.

Of course we know that those opposite speak with a forked tongue when it comes to this issue, because they have opposed each element of the package of *Homes for Victorians* every step of the way. I just remind honourable members of our Towards Home package for rough sleepers in the central city, worked out with our friends from the City of Melbourne and our friends from the housing and homelessness agencies. We have nothing but opposition from the Liberal Party candidate for Brighton to house homeless people in that community. Five homeless people to be supported with multiple and complex needs in that community have been opposed every step of the way by the Liberal Party and the Liberal candidate for Brighton, who apparently is now on the Liberal Party campaign committee following the craven collapse of any opposition to extremists within the Liberal Party by the Leader of the Opposition. Even though he is not even a member of this place, he has sought to be —

Mr Morris — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the minister is now way outside the terms of the matter of public importance (MPI), and I ask you to bring him back to it.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The minister should speak to the MPI.

Mr FOLEY — I will desist from any further reflections on the extreme Liberal Party candidate in Brighton.

So in terms of how this process will play out, it is extremely important that all levels of government and all levels of community put their shoulder to the wheel to make sure that we deliver as far as we possibly can a joint and coordinated effort here. That is why things like the stunt being played out in the Legislative Council at the moment to revoke approvals in Markham is really disappointing. Those opposite would leave instead a vacant lot, because previously there was unsuitable, asbestos-ridden housing that has been removed, and those opposite would deny 65 families and elderly people secure public housing in trying to make a political point by setting aside, for the first time since 1991, appropriately delivered planning approval not on any planning grounds whatsoever but instead for cheap, craven politics. It will come home to roost for the Liberal Party and the Greens. They will be held accountable for denying public and social housing growth as part of that 6000-unit improvement in public and social housing.

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) (15:22) — I rise to speak to the member for Mulgrave's matter of public importance today. I do note that the member for

Mulgrave, the Premier, is big on talk and very little on substance. I purchased my first house in 1991 during ‘the recession we had to have’. I remember interest rates starting off at about the 14 per cent mark, and therefore it was not so much about the cost of housing but about the ability to actually make repayments at that time. The Premier says he has a plan for everything, and what the people of Victoria have come to know is that this is just windbag talk — a lot of wind that seldom amounts to anything — and just vacuous promises that say a lot but have very little outcome.

We certainly know that what the Premier says and what he does are two completely different things. An example of this is that emphatic declaration that he made to all Victorians on the eve of the election, speaking to Peter Mitchell on Channel 7 on 28 November 2014. Who could forget that? It sets the pattern for things to come. Peter Mitchell said:

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

The now Premier said:

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

Who can forget that? So when this Premier says he has a plan around housing affordability and fairness for renters, who can believe him? We have a Premier who continuously breaks his commitments and continuously breaks his promises. There are some further examples that go to the heart of the Premier’s trustworthiness in relation to making promises to Victorians. On 4 September 2014 Jon Faine asked him:

Are you going to put taxes up?

And the now Premier said:

Of course we’re not. We’re not going to tax our way into — we reduce taxes ...

On 19 November 2014, in an interview with David Speers, the Premier said:

No, we’re not interested in making it harder for Victorian families ...

David Speers then asked:

So any higher taxes, levies?

And the Premier responded:

Absolutely not.

So at the heart of this debate for those wanting to buy a home and those who are renting are those statements,

those promises, those cast-iron commitments that this Victorian Premier went on to break.

He has indeed made it harder for people to be able to afford to buy a home, and even afford to pay their rent, and here is why: when you buy a property you need to have the funds available for the mortgage repayments; you need to have the funds available for the deposit; you need to allow for the possibility that those mortgage repayments will go up, as mine did in 1991 with the ‘recession we had to have’ — it went from 14 per cent up to 17 per cent; now, if 14 per cent was not big enough, 17 per cent was absolutely massive. They need to be able to pay their rates, and with those rates comes the fire services property levy, which has gone up extraordinarily with this government and with this Premier who said he would not increase or introduce taxes. All home owners pay that levy, and it has been massively hiked up.

Bills: those trying to get out of renting and into buying a home, or indeed those renting, have seen a massive increase in gas, electricity and water bills, but the Premier will not commit to allowing onshore conventional gas exploration to help increase the supply of gas through our own natural resources and thereby reduce gas bills, because he is so addicted to massive bills for all Victorian households, whether they are renting or buying, because everything he does and has done has driven up the cost of living for those who actually want to buy or who are renting. How is that fair?

On electricity, the Premier forced the closure of Hazelwood because of his greedy taxes — the ones he was not going to increase. He foisted \$252 million in taxes on our coal-fired electricity generators, and we know what that led to. In the *Herald Sun* on 28 May 2017 the shadow minister for energy and resources is quoted as saying that the Premier gave Hazelwood power station an ultimatum, and that is exactly what happened: ‘shut down or pay \$87.5 million in a new coal tax’. The shadow minister also said:

Because of Daniel Andrews’ tax grab, Victoria’s energy supply has been slashed by 22 per cent and annual energy bills have already soared by an average of \$300 per household.

How is that assisting renters? How is that assisting those who are trying to save to buy a house?

Further to that issue, that was back in May and we know that electricity bills have been skyrocketing for both households and businesses. So people who are renting or seeking to buy their home have been hit with massive increases to the cost of living and to their energy bills, compliments of a Premier who lied to

them before the election and who now says he has a plan to make housing more affordable and to make renting fair. The thing is if people cannot afford to pay their rent or cannot afford to save and pay for their deposit because of the Premier's own policies, because of the mistruths, because of the broken promises, how on earth is that making anything affordable for anyone?

Mr Andrews interjected.

Ms RYALL — And not only that, when they do manage to pay their bills they do not feel safe in their homes, because this Premier sat on his hands for two and a half years while a massive crime crisis swamped this state. He has refused to acknowledge it or accept it; even while it is happening he still will not.

Mr Andrews interjected.

Ms RYALL — We have the Premier himself in the chamber — good to see you here.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms RYALL — The member for Mulgrave. I note that he is not in his seat either. I am pleased because he is listening to the broken commitments of the Premier to the people of Victoria and how he has driven up those costs of living so they have difficulty paying their rent, so they have difficulty saving for a deposit on a house, let alone buying one. So I am glad he is in here to sit here and actually listen to the facts.

Mr Andrews interjected.

Ms RYALL — He might move to his seat so he can actually officially interject. So with over half a million small businesses in Victoria, many of whose owners are seeking to buy a house or who are actually renting, when they are trying to deal with the cost of living issues, with the cost of energy for their businesses and their properties and homes, how on earth do they do this?

Let us look at some of the other costs foisted upon those seeking to buy a house or who are renting: there has been an increase in stamp duty on new cars — remember, we were not having any new taxes. I note that the Premier has now vacated the house, because the truth does hurt. There have been the new stamp duties on property transfers between spouses and the new annual property valuations looking at increasing land tax and council rates — this is just another sneaky move to increase the tax take by a Premier who is addicted to other people's money. He has an insatiable addiction to spending other people's money.

The problem with this Premier is we know that when his lips are moving, it is usually not the truth that is coming out, and you can pretty well guarantee that when he says he is going to do something, he will do the complete opposite. An example of that is the impact he has had on the cost of living for people who are stuck in traffic. In relation to my community, we have the east–west link — the one that was not worth the paper it was written on, the one where we paid \$1.3 billion to not build a road. When he says one thing — I think it was something along the lines of ‘only an irresponsible political leader would walk away from existing contracts’; he said that once — well, we know that what he says and what he does are two completely different things. So we have got people in both the east and the west who are stuck in traffic, and that is impacting on their time with their family, impacting on their fuel costs, impacting on their productivity and impacting on their being able to make a living.

It is interesting — what the Premier says and what he does are two different things. The east–west link would have been half-finished by now, and it would have helped ease congestion, costs on households and costs on businesses in both the east and the west for those renting and those seeking to buy a home.

We all know who the irresponsible political leader is, when the Premier said ‘only an irresponsible political leader’ would do that — it is him. Do not listen to what he says; watch what he does. This matter of public importance is not worth the paper it is written on.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (15:32) — I have great pleasure in joining the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Mulgrave:

That this house notes that only the Victorian Labor government has a plan to make housing more affordable and to make renting fair.

I am particularly going to focus most of my contribution around the areas that I know best — that is, the outer suburbs that I have the privilege to represent and have done for 15 years, and country Victoria where I grew up. That is the particular focus of our policies in terms of providing assistance up-front, particularly to first home owners, that can really assist in getting young people into the market and first home buyers into those areas.

What did those opposite do? They have got an opposition leader now who was the Minister for Planning, and what we saw was no spending on infrastructure and no jobs growth. They had no jobs plan. The best thing you can do for housing affordability or the

ability to get people into the market is for them to have jobs. We have had huge jobs growth, and we have had the best jobs growth in the nation. In fact the rest of the country has not created anywhere near the jobs that we have created in Victoria.

We have introduced a swathe of measures that were introduced primarily in the budget, and most came into effect on 1 July. I would just like to inform the house in particular about the exemption for first home buyers when they are buying their first home, either getting an exemption or getting a reduction. We have had a huge number of those, almost 3000, just to the end of September. By any measure that is a great success, and in addition to that those who are purchasing a newly constructed home would on top of that be getting \$10 000 inside the urban growth boundary and \$20 000 outside it.

In the municipality of Wyndham there have been 202 exemptions and 253 transactions altogether, which is 8 per cent of all state transactions. Casey has had 164 exemptions and 216 altogether — that is, reductions and exemptions. Hume has had 162 transactions, 10 being reductions and 152 exemptions. Whittlesea, which I have the privilege of representing, has had 125 transactions — 26 reductions and 99 exemptions. Greater Bendigo has had 92 transactions — one reduction and 91 exemptions, which means all of those properties would be under \$600 000, which shows how affordable Bendigo is. Similarly in Ballarat there have been 77 exemptions and two reductions. Greater Shepparton has had 62 exemptions and no reductions, so that is a very affordable market. Wodonga has had 61 exemptions. Greater Geelong has had 125 exemptions and only 10 reductions. So across the state and in particular in the outer suburbs and those regional areas we are seeing a great take-up. I think that shows the success of the policies that are coming through.

I would particularly like to go to the contribution by the member for Gippsland South, who seemed to think that he had a smoking gun that proved we are not doing enough for regional Victorians. He said that we had defunded the regional expo. That is one day in the year when those opposite actually thought about regional Victoria and said, 'Come to Melbourne. You'll be welcome. We'll have a bit of a booze-up. We'll all go along. It'll be at taxpayers expense'. But could they actually demonstrate that many people moved to regional Victoria after that? We care about it every single day of the year, Deputy Speaker, as I know that you in particular do. With our regional partnerships across the nine regions of the state, we are engaging with those regional communities constantly and are

asking them to come up with proposals that will make their communities better places to live.

I have already mentioned the first home owners grants. They are \$10 000 within the urban growth boundary of Melbourne, but they are \$20 000 in regional Victoria. The member for Bulleen, the Leader of the Opposition, made a big deal of having had the most urban member in his team, the member for Kew, do a population task force. Well, what did he actually come up with? We are actually doing it. We are not having a task force to talk about it; we are actually doing it. We are growing jobs in the regions and we are improving transport connections and roads in the regions, and that is improving livability and making home ownership more affordable.

If you are a young person, particularly if you grew up in regional Victoria like I did and like my children did for part of their lives, once you get to a point where you might want to be having children or be thinking about buying a home or are trying to juggle all of that and pay off your higher education contribution scheme (HECS) debt, or you might actually have a business that is going quite well and be getting into the frame of paying payroll tax, then the best thing that you can do for your hip pocket, for your bank balance and for housing affordability is to move to regional Victoria. If you buy a newly constructed home, you will get \$20 000 for the first home owners grants, and if you have got a business, you will have a 25 per cent payroll tax reduction — the lowest of any state in the country. You will be able to buy a much more affordable home and probably be able to pay off your HECS debt, have a great lifestyle and maybe have some change left over for a holiday. You might want to go overseas, but I would suggest that you have it in another part of beautiful regional Victoria.

Those opposite have done nothing on population. After two and a half years they released their first policy document about regional Victoria, and there were zero mentions of the national broadband network, zero mentions about road safety, zero mentions about nurses, zero mentions of TAFE, zero mentions about ambulances or paramedics, zero mentions about ice and zero mentions about the national disability insurance scheme or disability, but there were six mentions about the British and nine mentions about the gold rush.

Mr Morris — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, while undoubtedly the coalition's population task force has come up with some excellent work, this MPI is in fact about the plan that the Victorian Labor government apparently has to make housing more affordable. I ask you to bring the member back to debating that subject.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The MPI has been quite wideranging this afternoon, but I do ask the member for Yan Yean to speak to the MPI.

Ms GREEN — Housing affordability is particularly important in regional Victoria, and we care about people who live in all parts of the state — in every single corner. That is why we have released more land — 100 000 lots within the urban growth boundary and in regional Victoria — and we have sped up the releasing of that land. We have released a Social Housing Growth Fund, which has been welcomed by the Tenants Union of Victoria. The Property Council of Victoria has said that the stamp duty concessions and changes we are making will have a good impact on affordable housing options. The Victorian Council of Social Service has applauded a game-changing \$2.1 billion social housing package, and the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said that our measures to tackle housing affordability issues are very welcome. So do not just believe us; believe what the commentariat is saying. Only Labor has a plan for affordability, for renters and for first home owners.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I must say it has been quite interesting to listen to this debate and to the Labor government stand up and take credit for policies which the community have been calling for for years and that the Greens have championed for years. Our housing crisis is something that successive governments have completely failed to address. In fact governments of both Labor and Liberal flavours have championed policies that have got us into this situation in the first place, from negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions to selling off our public housing. Now, in the midst of a crucial Northcote by-election which Labor could lose to the Greens, we are all of a sudden seeing a flurry of announcements when it comes to housing affordability. Well, they say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. We are flattered and we are also happy, not just for the residents of Northcote but for all renters, for all homebuyers and in fact for all residents who have been worried that they or their kids simply cannot afford a place to live. We are finally getting some change.

But we cannot kid ourselves that the policies that Labor have announced in the lead-up to the by-election will solve the housing affordability crisis, because fixing this crisis requires real change that the old parties' developer mates will not like. It requires real courage, not just tinkering around the edges. Let us be clear: Victoria is in a housing affordability crisis. Rents are skyrocketing. In metropolitan Melbourne alone we are seeing rent increases of 4 per cent a year; in Northcote, it is double that. A recent report by Anglicare Victoria

showed that, of all the one-bedroom flats in the greater Melbourne area, only 25 were affordable to someone living on Newstart. Not 25 per cent — 25 in total.

Buying a house is becoming an impossible dream for nearly an entire generation. A new home in Melbourne now costs 9.7 times the median income. In the 1980s it was only three times the median income. The public housing list, of course, is completely out of control, with over 35 000 people on the list, and this list has not decreased since Labor came to power three years ago. In the face of this crisis, what is Labor's so-called plan to fix it? Some tinkering with rent protection is good, but there is no commitment to rent control. Labor exempted stamp duty on properties of up to \$600 000 for first home buyers, but it has no appetite to fix the rigged tax system that created the problem so that now the cost of a median house in Northcote is \$1.3 million. There is a plan to sell off public housing land to private developers for expensive apartments. It is clear that our current housing system is simply not working. It is clear it needs to be fixed. But tinkering around the edges simply is not enough.

If Labor want a real plan to fix housing affordability, then they would do well to adopt the Greens' full plan, not just cherry-pick the bits that their developer mates and donors let them get away with. Here we go —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms SANDELL — The members interjecting might do well to listen. Here is the Greens' housing plan. Firstly, I refer to our plan for first-time buyers. The old parties will not fix the rigged housing system that favours super wealthy investors over people buying their first home. That is why the Greens will phase out negative gearing. Indeed we have campaigned on this for years. The Greens will remove capital gains tax concessions, which were explicitly designed to help investors buy more and more properties. It should never be easier for someone to buy the fifth house for their portfolio than for someone to buy their first home. The Greens will also ban developer donations to political parties — not cap them, not limit them, not reduce them but ban them now.

Secondly, the Greens have a plan for giving renters their rights. I welcome the government borrowing our policies to ban rental bidding, end no-grounds evictions, allow pets and create long-term leases. But we actually need to fix the main issue, which is affordability. We need to control rents and cap rent increases at a maximum of 2.5 per cent a year in line with inflation. That is the Greens' plan: to cap rents so your rent cannot go up twice as fast as your annual pay

increase. We will ensure that rental properties have minimum energy efficiency standards. A rental property should not be impossible to heat in winter or to cool during a heat wave.

Thirdly, the Greens have a plan to actually defend our public housing. Under this government public housing is under attack. As I speak, private developers are circling around inner Melbourne public housing land that this government cannot wait to sell. Labor's plan is to sell off 80 per cent of the land on nine public housing estates to private developers. All they ask in return is that developers increase public housing by a paltry 10 per cent. This represents only a handful of public housing properties when the waiting list is over 35 000 people long. This system of selling off to solve our problems is so short-sighted. As one Melbourne University academic put it, it is like chopping up the back of your house to use as firewood to heat the front of your house. At some point we will need more public housing, and there will be no public land left to sell.

Similar approaches to public housing redevelopment occurred in Carlton and Kensington in my electorate. There were some serious issues with those developments, including the building of a wall between private and public housing tenants to separate them in Carlton — highly unethical — and the fact that in the end developers did not provide any extra public housing in Kensington at all.

On the Northcote estate there are over 30 three-bedroom family apartments, but the new development is proposed to only include five. What will families come back to? Studio apartments? You live in one studio apartment and your child lives in the next one? But under Labor's plan, replacing a three-bedroom apartment with two studio apartments is considered a 100 per cent increase in public housing. I hear the interjections have stopped, probably because it does not seem that they have a solution to this problem.

This is a flawed model that benefits developers at the expense of the community. Instead of leaving this up to developers, we need to take advantage of the low cost of borrowing to renew our current stock and build the thousands of the public homes we need. We need to build public housing on the scale we did in the 1960s. Labor has no plan to build large-scale public housing. What they do have is a convenient way to sell off public land, wash their hands of the responsibility, make a mint for developers and pretend they are doing something about our housing crisis.

Lastly, the Greens have a plan to build more affordable housing to require all new large-scale developments of

20 units or more to have 30 per cent affordable housing in them. These policies have been successful in cities like London, which has 35 per cent affordable housing in developments, and they can work here. Labor promised to trial this policy years ago but — surprise, surprise! — it has not happened. The world's most liveable city cannot just be the world's most liveable city for some.

The Greens have a plan to fix the rigged tax system, to build more affordable housing, to protect public housing and to give renters rights to make renting fair. With the Greens breathing down the necks of Labor in the inner city, we are pleased to see that we have already been able to change their views on some of these issues. It is sad that it took a by-election in the seat of Northcote for Labor to stop sitting on their hands and act on housing affordability, but we are happy to see the change. If this is what we see with the Greens pressuring the government, imagine what another Greens MP in Parliament could do. But we cannot let Labor just tinker around the edges and only announce policies that their developer mates and donors will allow. We need to fix the housing crisis and make sure everyone has a safe and secure place to live.

While Labor defends the rigged tax system that favours super wealthy investors, the Greens will get rid of negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions. While Labor sells off public land to let developers build private, expensive apartments and make a mint, the Greens will require developers to build 30 per cent affordable housing in all big new developments. While Labor has taken developer donations for years, the Greens will get rid of developer influence in our cities by banning these donations. While Labor has introduced some good reforms for renters, the Greens will introduce rent control and require minimum standards for energy efficiency. While Labor plans to sell 80 per cent of our public housing land to private developers, the Greens will oppose this plan and advocate for a big new public housing build of the scale we saw in the 1960s. This plan is what it will take to truly fix the housing affordability crisis, and this is why the residents of Northcote should vote for Greens candidate Lidia Thorpe at the by-election on Saturday.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (15:52) — Yet another day in this place, yet another contribution from the Greens political party and yet again they cannot speak for their allocated time. Where to begin? I suppose I will start with that great quote:

Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.

It is well and fine to be talking about capital gains and negative gearing, but those matters are matters for the federal Parliament. They are not matters for this Parliament. The reality is that whatever the members for Melbourne or Prahran may wish to do in this place, they have no power over capital gains nor do they have any power over negative gearing because they do not sit in Canberra. If they wish to sit in Canberra, then they should nominate for a federal seat or the Senate.

I listened with great interest to that past contribution. I also listened to the federal member for Melbourne talk about this 1960s housing rebuild. A lesson in history: as many would know, a lot of these public housing estates are in inner urban areas and they were basically built in the 1950s and 1960s in order to provide housing for workers in factories in industrialised areas in inner Melbourne areas. It is worth noting that where these housing developments currently reside were not undulating fields of beauty and elegance; they were workers cottages. What happened in the 1960s was that two unelectable, unaccountable officials from Housing Commission Victoria would get in the car, knock on someone's door, slap a compulsory acquisition notice on that house and tell those people, 'We are kicking you out. You will no longer live here. We are compulsorily acquiring your property, and we are doing that because we want to build public housing estates here'.

When the federal member for Melbourne talks about a 1960s housing rebuild, I want to know: is that what he is talking about? Is what he is talking about going into North Melbourne, Carlton and Richmond and knocking on million-dollar homes that people have lived in and raised their families in — and the Premier of Victoria spoke about his family home — and compulsorily acquiring them to knock them down and build more public housing? Is that what they are saying? Or are they saying, 'What we need are towers in the outer suburbs.'? If the case is the latter, then what I would say is that most of the jobs and most of the economic growth that is occurring in this state at this time is happening within 10 kilometres of the CBD of Melbourne. If you are saying, 'The policy is that we are going to put the most disadvantaged, isolated people in our community further afield, further beyond the general post office of Melbourne', then you are denying those people access to these real economy jobs and futures. So what is it? Are you kicking people out of their homes and forcing people to live in abject poverty and misery 50 kilometres out from Melbourne? That is the question, and neither the state member for Melbourne nor the federal member for Melbourne has actually been able to articulate what it is that they are standing for.

I note that the Greens political party talked about having rent control and energy efficiency standards — noble endeavours. One question I would ask though is: let us suppose, for example, I have a rental property and I decide that I want to upgrade it from a 3-star to a 5-star home and I decide that I want to spend \$50 000 on making those adjustments and improvements. Am I going to be able to get a return on that investment? The two propositions being proposed by those opposite are mutually inconsistent because there is no incentive for me to do so. If I am only capped to get a return of 2.5 per cent, I will not make those investments because I will not be able to recoup the investment that I made. What we will end up with is a set of circumstances where a lot of these properties, if that is allowed to occur, will not have those investments made. You are going to be condemning the tenant to live in worse housing stock rather than more housing stock. It is another example of those opposite thinking they know what is best: they will determine what they think is the right thing to do, and they will impose it on the community without properly understanding the way markets work.

I listened to the earlier contributions and made a couple of observations. We do have to do something in this space because if I look at Flemington, which I represent in this place, back in 1995 when I graduated from university the house price in Flemington was 2.5 times gross median household income and that equated to roughly \$139 000. This year it is standing at \$1.097 million. It is huge; it is absolutely huge. It is no great surprise that 61 per cent of the suburb of Flemington were renters at the time of the last census and 25 per cent of those renters are suffering rental stress. To put it in another way, if you walk down any street in Flemington, six out of 10 homes are renters and one out of those 15 renters is suffering rental stress. We need to look at taking action to address that, and that is one of the reasons we are looking at rebuilding the Flemington public housing estate by providing more supply into that space and by providing a mixture of housing such as public housing, social housing and private housing.

Those opposite, particularly the Greens political party, are totally opposed to these sorts of developments. They seem to think, in their world, that this is some sort of nirvana, some sort of paradise. What the evidence has shown and what Raj Chetty, who is a professor of economics at Stanford, has shown is that if a child is raised in abject property, the chances that they will be able to get into the top quintile of income earners as an adult is significantly reduced compared to those who live in either mixed or affluent communities. If you are talking about condemning children to live in abject

poverty on these public housing estates, then the reality is that that is what you are more likely to see.

If members opposite spent the amount of time that I do on public housing estates, they would see for themselves that these are not safe places; these are not great places to raise a family. They are unsafe in many cases. Where you have instances of intergenerational welfare dependency occurring in these communities and instances of drug, alcohol and mental health issues occurring on these estates, they are not a great place to live and raise a family. If the member for Prahran bothered to get out of his electorate office and go and spend time on his public housing estates, as I do, he would actually see for himself what I am talking about, because these are not great places to live. That is why we need to try to make those sorts of improvements.

It is about having a mix of the private worker living next door to the private tenant living next door to the social housing tenant living next door to the public housing tenant in a strong resilient community so that you have got instances where the child of a public housing tenant has the opportunity of mixing with somebody who might be, for example, working in a profession they might aspire to work in.

That is what you want to see. That is how you create stronger and more resilient communities, not by forcing communities to live in abject poverty and misery, which is the policy of the Greens political party. That is what they want to do. They have no interest. And when it comes to the Greens political party, you know they are interested in supporting the vested property interests of those who bought cheap real estate in inner-urban areas in the 1990s and the 2000s ahead of the public housing tenants. They are not interested in supporting public housing tenants. They do not care what sort of conditions public housing tenants live in.

The member for Melbourne talked about housing mix, and housing mix is an important issue. But it is clear that the member for Melbourne has not read the Auditor-General's report on public housing. I would encourage the member to do so, as I would encourage the member for Prahran to do so. What that report shows is that we have got an abundance of three-bedroom homes in public housing in Victoria. When you are building housing stock now, it has got at least a 40-year life cycle or possibly longer. So why are we going to build a whole lot of really large homes that can only house really large families for the next 40 years, when in 20 years time there might be a different cohort coming through? That does not make sense, and what the Auditor-General found is odd. If those members opposite

did their work, they would know that. Instead what you need to do is you need to have flexibility in the way in which you construct these public housing dwellings so you have got scalability. That is the way forward. But again it is just sheer laziness.

We do not need to be lectured by the Greens about defending working people. We have been defending working people since 1891. They are nothing more than dilettantes, Johnny-come-latelies who do not care about working people the way we care about working people. We will stand here, and we will continue to defend the rights of working-class people long after they are gone.

**DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED
SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT
(MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING
CENTRE) BILL 2017**

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (16:02) — I rise this afternoon to make a contribution on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. Straight from the get-go and right off the bat I will state and place on the record that I am fundamentally opposed to the idea. I do, however, acknowledge that the government's decision to introduce this legislation is motivated by a genuine desire to combat and negate the harmful effects of one of the most insidious, harmful and destructive influences on Victorian society. It is a menace which, if not stopped, has the potential to ruin lives, destroy the family unit and lay waste to the people of Victoria as its influence is increasingly felt across the inner-city suburbs of Melbourne.

I speak of course of the Greens and the threat they pose to the inner-city seats held by this Labor government. I note the determination of the ALP to repel this assault on what they regard as their traditional lands. No doubt the Premier, channelling Sir Winston Churchill, has pledged to fight them in Northcote, fight them in Melbourne, fight them in the streets of Brunswick and Richmond and on the beaches of Albert Park. I say to the Premier: best of British to you. What the Premier cannot do is vow to never surrender because this bill shows that he has already done that — surrendering the few principles he holds for the sake of political expediency and survival.

I also commend the government on the political athleticism they have shown. Not since I last observed

Cirque du Soleil have I seen such a display of enthusiastic backflips. Many in this house would remember the Premier's earnest declarations in the lead-up to the last election that there would be 'no heroin injecting rooms under the government that I lead'. He repeated this promise only just a couple of weeks ago. Now we find ourselves back in this place debating this legislation. I always suspected the Premier was a Marxist, but I did not think he would turn out to be Groucho. After all it was Groucho who said, 'Those are my principles, and if you don't like them, well, I have others'.

There is no doubt the government will say that circumstances have changed, and their analysis of statistical data convinces them that urgent action is required. I suppose in some ways they may be right. A margin of less than 2 per cent in Northcote opinion polls would need some ideological pork-barrelling to try and turn things around. What a difference a by-election makes. From my side of the house I must say what fun it has been to see the lefties bashing away at one another. We saw that in this place over the last 20 minutes, particularly watching the lefties bash away at one another. Not since the little known 1979 border war between China and Vietnam have we seen two commo groups engaged in such ferocious combat over disputed territory. As much as I would like to dwell further on the reasons behind this bill, certainly time does not permit me.

Turning to the legislation itself, this bill would have to be one of the most shambolic and ill-conceived pieces of legislation ever cobbled together. We said in recent debates that we cannot vote on the vibe of these things; we have got to look at the legislation. This is absolutely shambolic, and it has just been cobbled together overnight. It is just ridiculous.

There are flaws and holes so large that they give me the greatest concern. Much of the poorly drafted legislation legalises not only drug use and possession, but also its sale and supply in the state of Victoria. It is a sad day in Victoria when this Parliament proposes legislation that serves to protect drug dealing. I will give you a perfect example of that. Section 55K of the bill provides that a user of an injecting room is exempt from part 5 of the act for any act involving the possession, use, administration or supply of heroin.

Part 5 in particular contains all of the criminal provisions pertaining to drug trafficking. I emphasise the word 'supply' because the act itself at section 4, in the definitions section, defines supply as being to:

supply, provide, give or deliver, whether or not for fee, reward or consideration or in expectation of fee, reward or consideration ...

Looking at section 55L, it is even worse, as it provides immunity from prosecution for staff working in the centre if they supply drugs to others, irrespective of the type of drug or the quantity supplied. So here you are in this legislation creating a safe haven for the distribution and the supply of narcotics, poisons and anything else that will be used in this facility.

Again with reference to section 4 of the principal act, I must reiterate that 'supply' includes supplying drugs for fee or reward. What this bill does is legalise drug dealing, with people being free to sell drugs to others with immunity once inside the doors. If that is not bad enough, new section 55M appears to have been designed to place pressure on the police to go soft on crime — the poor coppers — and anyone caught with drugs near or whilst travelling to the centre. Under the social engineering of this lot under this bill and the pressure that this bill seeks to exert, I fear for the career of any member of the police force that arrests and charges a drug addict within 10 miles of a drug injecting room. Just imagine the outcry of the social justice set when Harry the heroin addict is banged up by the coppers and his drugs are confiscated whilst supposedly en route to Dan's drug den to participate in what is now classified as some form of self-harm minimisation.

I note that the proposed first site for the heroin injecting room is to be located at the North Richmond Community Health centre, which just happens to be next door to the Richmond West Primary School. What an inspired piece of thinking it was to locate a heroin injecting room next to a primary school. The risks associated with exposing children to drugs are well-known. This is acknowledged by the provisions of section 71AC(2) of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981, which increase the maximum penalty for trafficking drugs from 15 years to 20 years if this takes place within 500 metres of a school. Heaven forbid. Which genius dreamed up the idea that having a bunch of drug addicts and their dealers hanging out next to a school would be a great idea?

If you think that this room will be the only one established under this legislation, think again. It is good to see that the member for Geelong is in the chamber. She has also been calling for a drug den to be established in her electorate. Fast-forward a few years from this bill becoming legislation, and who knows, maybe some bright spark will set up a franchise operation where local addicts can meet with their dealer

in the car park before heading inside McSmack's to minimise the harm they do to themselves. Whilst mummy gets high, the kids can play in the adjacent playroom or watch Smacky McSmackface, the heroin clown, make animals out of the discarded heroin balloons that he has spare and at his disposal. Then it is back to the car whilst mummy drives, while she is affected by drugs, taking the kids home.

We are constantly told that heroin injecting rooms are a part of the harm minimisation model. This is the best practice, we are told. This state has gone to great lengths to reducing harm. This place — a previous Parliament in this very room — brought in legislation to minimise harm. This is what governments and parliaments should be doing. Go back to the 1960s. We brought in seatbelts. That is harm minimisation. Have a look at the drink-driver legislation that this very place brought in: we are leading the world for laws on exceeding the prescribed concentration of alcohol. Absolutely, this is the place. That is harm minimisation, not allowing people to go and inject poisons into their veins.

I always find it amusing that the best way to minimise harm is to actively support and provide mechanisms by which people can inject a deadly poison into themselves. It is entirely at odds with the approach taken to counter other social ills. Think about it. In this place we have also been talking about, or legislation has come in, not being able to smoke at a restaurant. What are some other things? Banning the sale of bongs and ice pipes. There are a whole lot of ridiculous end-of-scale things that have been going on in this place. We recently heard the do-gooders denouncing sugar. Heaven help us when we start denouncing sugar and health food in this place, making it illegal to consume amounts of sugar and outlawing that. Yet we are all too ready to encourage the usage of an illicit substance that can, as we know, cause great harm.

In saying that, I wish that I had significantly more time because there is a fair bit of anomaly with this particular bill. Let me tell you, you should go and have a damn good look at it, because I tell you what — I have said it once before — you will have blood on your hands, you lot, because people will start dropping around the place because they do not use these places principally; some of them might significantly have dealings with them. God help youse all.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (16:12) — I wish to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. Unlike my friend the member for Benambra, I will devote all my time to the merits of this initiative

because a lot more has happened not just here but also around the world to talk about. I in no way support the use of addictive drugs — so-called recreational drugs. However, I am pragmatic enough to accept that they are out there, and we need to find modern solutions to address this issue and save drug users from overdosing and, when possible, from addiction.

The first injecting room was opened in 1986 in Berne, Switzerland, followed by a number of other places in Switzerland. There are now 88 drug consumption centres operating in 58 cities in nine countries. Most drug consumption centres are in Europe, except for one in Vancouver and another one in Sydney. Canada wants to open more drug consumption centres, while France, Ireland, Slovenia and Portugal are all planning to open drug consumption centres right now. This fast spread of supervised drug consumption centres is proof of their positive effects on society, whatever the opposition believes.

A medically supervised injecting centre with 16 places was established in the Kings Cross area in New South Wales in 2001. According to Dr Alex Wodak, emeritus consultant at St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, and director of the alcohol and drug service:

The best evaluations of drug consumption rooms were carried out in Sydney and Vancouver. These found no evidence of increased crime in the vicinity, and no evidence for increased drug use or delayed entry to drug treatment.

Fears that the problems of drug markets might be exacerbated have proved groundless.

It is no wonder that former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett has been strongly advocating for the establishment of a Melbourne drug consumption centre since visiting the medically supervised injecting centre in Sydney's Kings Cross in 2015. I think he should be speaking to his Liberal Party colleagues in the Parliament.

In the other place Fiona Patten, in her contribution on her private members bill, revealed the following findings on the New South Wales centre. The New South Wales medically supervised centre has generated 9500 referrals, decreased ambulance call-outs to Kings Cross by 80 per cent and halved the number of publicly discarded syringes in the area, and over 4000 overdoses were successfully managed, saving over 4000 lives.

In Victoria heroin claimed the highest number of lives in 16 years last year. There were strong calls from a range of health services, including doctors and paramedics, local traders, social workers and even the police association to trial a safe drug-injecting centre in

Melbourne's heroin hotspot in North Richmond. The State Coroner has twice called for a trial, with 34 people dying in a four-block area near popular Victoria Street in one 12-month period. Data from the coroner shows that in 2016, 190 people died from heroin in Victoria — the highest number since 2000, when 331 died from the drug. At present there are a record number of deaths from methamphetamine or ice; 116 people died last year, up from 72 in 2015.

Former Australian federal police commissioner Mick Palmer said in 2012:

... Australian police are now better trained, generally better equipped and resourced and more operationally effective than at any time in our history. But, on any objective assessment policing of the illicit drug market has had only marginal impact on the profitability of the drug trade or the availability of illicit drugs.

This proves the war on drugs cannot be won easily. Those who oppose the bill lack modern, rational thinking in line with present-day realities. They are advocating only a single solution to this multifaceted problem — that is, the war on drugs approach — and vigorously opposing this pragmatic policy to establish the trial supervised injecting centre. Drug users are not all supporters of Labor, Greens or the Reason party. They could be your sons, daughters, partners, relatives or even conservative voters.

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte's hardline approach to stamping out drugs is creating a treatment crisis in the Philippines, hitting treatment centres and prisons hard as they struggle to cope with the numbers. In the Philippines more than 12 000 people have been summarily executed in the past 15 months by police and police-backed vigilantes who are targeting suspected drug dealers and users. The victims are predominantly the urban poor, including children. The opposition need to take the blinkers off and embrace the realities of life rather than advocating a direction parallel to that of the Philippines President.

In the *European Report on Drug Consumption Rooms: Executive Summary* published in June 2004, the following information was presented. Drug consumption centres:

... reach their defined target population, including street users and older, long-term users who have never been in treatment. There is no evidence that they recruit drug users into injecting.

It says consumption centres:

... achieve the immediate objective of providing a safe place for lower risk, more hygienic drug consumption without

increasing the levels of drug use or risky patterns of consumption.

Health education at consumption centres encourages sustainable changes in risk-taking. They have seen a decreased incidence of drug-related deaths and provided increased access to social, health, and drug treatment services and:

In so doing, they promote the social inclusion of a group of extremely marginalised problem drug users.

Besides supervision of drug consumption, other services are usually delivered on-site. Low-threshold medical care and psychosocial counselling services are especially well used and contribute to stabilisation of and improvement in the physical and psychological health of service users.

Consumption rooms make referrals to further services, including drug treatment.

Also:

Consumption rooms can reduce the level of drug use in public.

According to available research, the evidence suggests that the benefits of consumption centres can outweigh even any perceived risk, although there are very few or next to no actual risks. That is exactly why we need the North Richmond safe and well-managed trial of a medically supervised injecting centre. This will have a two-year trial period, which can be extended for a further three years if it is successful. I am sure it will work well, because this initiative has the full support of the local North Richmond community, as they are the people who suffer from having injecting needles everywhere around North Richmond. I am sure this trial will be good for Melbourne and people will give their full support to this initiative. Therefore I commend the bill to the house.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (16:21) — I rise to speak on this bill, which amends the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to allow for a trial of a medically supervised injecting centre for certain kinds of drugs of dependence at the North Richmond Community Health Centre. This is a conflicting piece of legislation for me. I understand the reasons behind setting up a trial site, but I also have concerns about the message this sends to the wider community. I understand that the traders and residents in Richmond are concerned and have been confronted by some horrible situations over the past few years, but I am not convinced that the answer is this sort of centre in the format that is being proposed. I do not think it sends the right message to the community at all.

The argument for this trial is based around the facts that there have been 34 deaths in the area surrounding the proposed site in the past 12 months and the number of Victorians overdosing has doubled since 2012. The North Richmond Community Health Centre hands out 60 000 needles a month and has been described as the epicentre of the heroin problem in Victoria. But I fail to see how this proposal addresses why so many people are dying, particularly in the North Richmond area. Why is this the epicentre of the problem, and what does this proposal do to solve that? In my view it simply moves the problem behind closed doors.

I am reluctant to speak again about my experience as a nurse, but in this area I have a great deal of knowledge and experience, because for 15 years I managed an Aboriginal community health centre and worked directly in patient care, and unfortunately dealing with drug and alcohol-addicted clients was a major part of that role. I spent many, many days walking patients through the journey of rehab or looking for rehab beds. One thing I do know is that most of those people felt ashamed of their addiction, and if a facility like this was available, I am not convinced they would want to use it. Evidence shows that 80 per cent of the time injecting drug users injected in all sorts of other locations. This was certainly what my clients told me. Whilst it may stop fatal overdoses while people are in the centre, there is no guarantee that lives will be saved elsewhere when people inject when they are not at the centre. It strikes me as interesting that we think someone will get up, get on a tram and head down to a safe place. What I saw was people just doing it when they had drugs available.

I think what works is when someone a person trusts and who believes in them walks through the journey of withdrawal and rehab with them. A centre can provide that. It is about a service being resourced and the trust and support offered by the people working in that centre and their ability to form that trust with their client. For me it is about intensive support; that is what I saw more than anything else when I was working. You do not have to look too far to see this type of support and care succeeding. There are people like Les Twentyman, a gentleman I asked to speak to my community one night. People like that, who are committed and really trying hard at a practical level, have a huge rate of success. More support is needed from people who are really committed like that. I doubt this centre would be able to deliver that by being an injecting centre; it is more about having a wraparound centre.

In the Sydney experience my research tells me that only 11 per cent of injecting room clients were referred to maintenance, treatment, detox or rehab: 3.5 per cent of

clients were referred to detox; and only 1 per cent were referred to rehab. So there is no evidence yet from the Sydney experience that people have kicked their habit in the long term. It is also reported that none of Sydney's major rehab services, such as Odyssey House, WHOS or the Salvation Army, have ever sighted one of the referrals. You can make as many referrals as you want, but if the person you are referring does not have the appropriate support and follow-up on the referral, and someone to walk that withdrawal journey with them and help them with the rehab pathway, it simply will not work. I do hold concerns that this bill sends a message that we have given up. Rather than trying to stop people becoming addicted or assisting them through the intensive support to be properly rehabilitated, we are simply enabling people to continue to use drugs, albeit under supervision and behind closed doors.

In my electorate we are not immune to drug problems and we face our own series of issues, mostly around the lack of appropriate rehab places and a withdrawal treatment program which is not fully funded and only operates Monday to Friday and not on school holidays or public holidays. This is a critical failing that must be addressed, because you do not withdraw between 9 and 5, you do not have public holidays off when withdrawing and you do not have school holidays off from withdrawing. It needs a 24-hour service because the demand is clearly there.

There are also no locally based drug and alcohol rehabilitation beds in the South-West Coast electorate. The closest is over 2 hours away. Residential rehabilitation targets people with severe and longstanding alcohol and other drug use problems who have tried other services but with limited success. It involves stays of up to three months, and sometimes longer, at a dedicated facility that provides a structured, work-based program within a supportive environment. Clients undergo detoxification before coming to the service so they are not chemically dependent on alcohol or other drugs. They engage in therapeutic counselling and have group and individual activities to develop personal and social skills that are so critically important in addressing alcohol and other drug use problems for a longer term approach. The wraparound service model facilitates clients' engagement with other services, with variations according to their individual concerns. Clients may engage with primary and mental health care services and they may utilise employment, education, welfare, family and other services to establish pathways that are integral to their eventual reintegration into the broader community.

As we know, the further people have to travel from their home, the less likely they are to take up treatments. So in the South-West Coast electorate our community has come together to address this gap in services and has set about solving a problem by themselves as a community. The result is the Lookout Project, a planned 20-bed rehab facility in Warrnambool, servicing the entire south-west region. A location has been identified. The community fundraising campaign has been gung-ho in raising the capital costs to get this problem sorted ourselves. Last week we hit the half-million dollar mark in just a matter of weeks. I have spoken with the Minister for Mental Health, who is at the table, and I appreciate and thank him for listening to what I had to say. I hope the far west is considered because we are ready.

In the South-West Coast electorate we have the unique ability to claim an almost full suite of services of drug and alcohol treatment, including centralised hospital-based withdrawal programs. Our community wants this rehab facility. Letters of support are coming from everywhere. A ‘not in my backyard’ attitude has not emerged; there has just been support. We have an incredibly lucky situation, where we have a good team of people with many years experience. In that team we have got doctors like Dr Rodger Brough, with over 30 years experience in the drug and alcohol area, and Geoff Soma, who has run the Western Region Alcohol and Other Drug Centre for, I think, 17 years in the region.

Whilst we have got these experienced people and the team under them, it is an opportunity for their skills and knowledge to be used to make sure we educate the next generation. Learning from experts like this is invaluable for new specialists, but we have a limited window and must act now. The Lookout, fully funding Dr Brough’s withdrawal unit and fixing other issues must become a priority. The Lookout is the community coming up with a solution to a community problem, and I respectfully ask the minister to consider making funding available to cover the operational costs of the centre.

Whilst I know there is support for this injecting room, I cannot help but feel the funding and the focus should be on strengthening other areas of addiction services to stop people becoming addicted in the first place, and supporting those who are on the rehabilitation pathway. The workers in the field need resources to assist, and the families beg us to help them. That was certainly my experience and that is where our focus should be — on supporting families. Residential rehabilitation does this; I do not think injecting rooms do.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (16:30) — It is my pleasure to rise and support this bill. Many of us have stood in this place and talked about the tragic impacts of drug addiction, not just on the individuals battling that addiction but on their families and loved ones. Many of us will remember the heroin crisis of the late 1990s. I was at the tail end of secondary school at that time and I remember discussions about supervised injecting facilities even then. In fact I even have vague recollections of writing a year 12 English assessment on the issue.

We have all heard the rhetoric both here and abroad about the war on drugs, and I do not think anybody in this place could in all honesty put their hand on their heart and say they think the status quo of drug policy has worked or is working. The statistics clearly demonstrate that it has not worked and that it is not working. The fact is that heroin deaths are rising every year, and they have reached their highest level since that awful crisis of the 1990s.

We also know that overdose rates have affected certain geographic areas, particularly the Yarra local government area. We know that North Richmond is the epicentre of this problem — the epicentre of pain, of loss, of lives cut short far too early, where families are left to grieve a pointless death. Last year we lost 190 Victorians to heroin overdoses, and that is a 50 per cent increase since 2009. Twenty-four of those 190 deaths occurred in the City of Yarra. We think that so far this year there have been 35 heroin-related deaths in the City of Yarra alone, and while North Richmond is clearly the epicentre, the issue of drug abuse and overdose is one that touches all communities.

Sadly, my own community is one that is affected more than many others, and I have seen the scars it has left on families. I have spoken to parents who are worried sick about their children, parents who have watched their kids transform into unrecognisable personalities, parents who have seen their children die and parents who have been failed by the system, and, in short, failed by the status quo.

The problem is not getting better — that is a fact. So what has been put forward in this bill is the licensing and operation of a single medically supervised injecting centre on a two-year trial basis at North Richmond Community Health. The trial will be reviewed after 12 months, and the bill provides for a possible extension of the trial for up to three years.

In many ways this legislation has been a long time coming. We know of the Legislative Council’s Legal

and Social Issues Committee's inquiry, which was the result of a reference on a private members bill that was introduced by Fiona Patten in the other place. This private members bill provided for the establishment of a supervised injecting facility trial. The inquiry received 49 submissions, and 46 of those submissions supported the introduction of a medically supervised injecting facility. The committee handed down its report earlier this year, and not only did it outline the crisis that had unfolded in North Richmond but it also identified that it is a major concern to residents, to business owners and to emergency services. It also outlined that medically supervised injecting centres improved the health of injecting drug users and improved the safety of the broader community by reducing signs of drug use in surrounding streets and in that broader area.

This bill is a response to the work of the committee, as well as to a significant body of work that exists elsewhere, and it is also based on international experiences and an interstate one here in Australia. It should be noted that while the bill before the house today reflects many of the key principles that were included in Ms Patten's private members bill, there are also significant differences, and I hope to outline some of those differences if time permits.

First of all, particularly for those in our community who may wonder what a medically supervised injecting centre is, it is essentially a place where drug users can bring externally sourced drugs of dependence and inject these drugs in a safer, more hygienic environment under supervision. The aim is to facilitate a safer setting for injecting substances and also to facilitate referrals to treatment and support services. While Melbourne does not yet have such a facility, they are not a new concept. As I alluded to before, the first such facility was opened in Switzerland in the 1980s, and there are about 90 centres worldwide, including one in Sydney which has been referred to by other speakers.

We know that trials around the world have demonstrated that these facilities have been successful in saving lives. In Sydney, at a centre that was opened in 2001, staff have supervised more than 965 000 injections, and managed 6089 overdoses without a single death. When I see those statistics I think of the thousands of families that have been spared the trauma of a frantic rush to hospital, and the many who will be saved the horror of losing — for good — a loved one who is already lost in the grip of an addiction.

Regarding the differences between this bill and the private members bill that was put forward by Ms Patten in the other place, I want to talk through just a few of

the key differences. One key difference relates to proposed locations. Let us be clear, the bill before us today is very prescriptive. This bill specifies that the trial will be at North Richmond only. It does not allow for another location.

This is important, and it is one component of this bill I wanted to emphasise because those opposite have previously tried to run fear campaigns on this. They have infiltrated local council processes, they have drafted misleading motions filled with falsehoods and they have handed them to Liberal councillors and asked them to perpetuate mistruths in order to gain political mileage. It is the sort of cynical operation we have become accustomed to seeing from those opposite, particularly I must say, in Melbourne's south-east, where I hail from.

Secondly, the trial period will be two years rather than 18 months. As I have outlined, there will be an option to extend this period by three years. In contrast, the private members bill did not allow an extension beyond the 18-month trial, and the reason we have extended this period beyond the 18 months is because some submissions expressed concern that 18 months was not long enough to adequately measure impact and ascertain outcomes of the trial. The experience in New South Wales also supports this view.

Finally, some additional protections against liability will be afforded to the health practitioners providing services in relation to the injecting centre. The bill provides that users of the injecting centre will not be criminally liable for the possession of small quantities of specified drugs for personal use, and only small quantities of specific drugs will be authorised for use at the centre. It is anticipated that these drugs will include opioids, but will exclude ice.

Now I know some may try to argue that this bill in some ways seeks to encourage or condone drug use, but I think that is a wildly simplistic argument, and misunderstands, to a very profound degree, the nature of the problem we are seeking to address. The crux of it is this: the bill has a health focus, as it rightly should. My federal colleague, the member for Bruce, Julian Hill, recently stood up in the commonwealth Parliament and said the following. I want to share his contribution because he is a man who has been personally touched by heroin addiction in his family. He rightly said it was not his story to share, but he did share the impact and he said this:

... addiction is a health issue — a health issue, a health issue, a health issue — which must be treated as a health issue like other health issues. Making it a moral issue simply does not

help and criminalising addiction does not help. It's a health issue, a health issue, a health issue. I firmly believe that as a community we must do much more to help people battling addiction. I detest what heroin addiction does to people. It takes prisoner their conscience and makes them do awful things while they have to watch, chained inside the box in their head. It does not destroy their morality.

He outlined his own family's experience with addiction. He spoke eloquently about the way it had touched his life and the loved ones he had watched suffer from it. The saddest part is that he is not alone in this experience; thousands of families experience this. Changing our lens from a moral one to a health one is the only change for most, if not all, of these people. It is the only change that could work.

This is what this bill does. Not only does it oversee and ensure a safer injecting environment, it requires that a centre facilitates access and referral to health and support services, including mental health services, and it requires that the director and supervisors of the centre be medical practitioners. This is about having a health focus. It is about saving lives, not judging them.

I am conscious that many other people want to speak on this bill and I want to give them an opportunity to do so, so I will sum up on that point. This for me is the overwhelming reason why this bill should be supported in this house. We cannot continue with patterns of policy that are not bearing fruit. It is time for a change. Our job in this place is to innovate and to respond to genuine need. This is one way in which to do this, and I am personally very supportive of the trial.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (16:39) — Interesting, isn't it, that we are here today debating a bill to introduce a safe injecting room, and it just happens to be prior to the by-election being held this weekend. Having served in this house for 11 years as a member, and for many of those years the Labor Party has been in power, we have never seen a bill introduced into the Parliament by this government — under the current Premier or the previous Premiers Bracks and Brumby — in the area of safe injecting rooms.

In fact the constant position of the Labor Party under each of those three Premiers was that they were opposed to the introduction of safe injecting rooms in the state of Victoria. In fact this current government — the ministers at the table, the ministers of this government, the Premier of this government — made it very clear to the Victorian community that they would not be introducing a safe injecting room under their government.

Well, clearly something changed — and we know exactly what the change was. It was the polling that was coming out of the by-election, which showed that this government needed to cobble together a position in order to try to save its seat from being taken by the Greens political party. We know that is what this is about.

So let us just be very clear. This is not about safe injecting rooms. This is not about medicine. This is not about the health of residents in that community. This is all about politics. The reason we are having this discussion today is because of the politics that the Labor Party is facing to try to shore up their credentials to hold on to that traditional seat of Northcote, which they have held for generations. They know that there is every chance this weekend that they will lose it to the Greens, and they need to out-green the Greens, so that is why we are seeing policies like this being thrust upon the Victorian community.

I support the position Labor had in the past when they had concerns about this legislation, because as we know, this facility will only apply to those residents in Victoria who choose to use the facility in North Richmond. But as we know there are many users of drugs in the state who inject all across Victoria. They will not be using this facility. People who inject drugs in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, in the northern and outer northern suburbs of Melbourne, in the western suburbs of Melbourne, in Geelong, in the regions — they will not be accessing this service. As the member for Geelong rightly pointed out, she wanted to have a facility in her community.

Ms Couzens — I didn't say that.

Mr WAKELING — 'I didn't say it. It wasn't me. I had a dressing-down from the minister'. Which minister was it that gave her the dressing-down? It was the minister at the table, the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The minister at the table had to dress down the member for Geelong. He had to get on the phone to the local newspaper and hose it down. 'It won't happen in Geelong'. Well, why wouldn't it happen in Geelong? Why is it that this facility is so important for the residents in North Richmond but not important for the residents in Geelong? When the member for Geelong was advocating for her community and said, 'I want a similar facility' —

Ms Couzens — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I ask that the member withdraw those comments, because I did not make those comments to the *Geelong Advertiser*; they made the comments. I am offended by those comments.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — I am just clarifying: if the member for Geelong has taken offence at the comments from the member for Ferntree Gully, she can ask him to withdraw those comments. Is the member for Geelong seeking that the member withdraw?

Ms Couzens — Yes, I ask him to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Well, that is a simple matter for the member for Ferntree Gully to respond to.

Mr WAKELING — I withdraw the comments.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Very well, the member for Ferntree Gully will now continue.

Mr WAKELING — I just think it is very interesting that here we are trying to rewrite history about what in fact happened in Geelong. The member for South Barwon, who has taken a very close interest in this issue, will, I am sure, place on the record his views of what has occurred in that community. But regardless of what the member for Geelong said about her community, one thing is very clear: the minister at the table — and if I am wrong, I ask him to tell me — made it very clear when he made comments to the *Geelong Advertiser* that he would rule out a facility being built in Geelong. If I am misquoting the minister, I am more than happy to take direction from him, but he is not giving me an indication that I am wrong.

Presuming that what I have just said is correct, why is it that the minister would say to the people of Geelong that a facility such as this is inappropriate to be constructed in Geelong but is appropriate to be constructed in North Richmond? What is it about the people who are using drugs in Geelong that is different to the people who are using drugs in North Richmond? If people are using drugs in Geelong in laneways and potentially dying from overdoses, as horrendous as that may be, why is it that the people who are injecting drugs in laneways in Richmond should have access to facilities when similar users who are injecting drugs in laneways in Geelong should not have access to those facilities?

We know that the government's policy is nothing about the health system. We know that the government's policy is nothing about protecting drug users across Victoria or drug users in Geelong. It is everything about cobbling together a position to try to save their political bacon at this weekend's by-election.

Ms Graley interjected.

Mr WAKELING — I take up the member for Narre Warren South's interjection. Is she such a strong advocate for this position? *Hansard* will tell us whether she has or has not advocated for such a facility to be constructed over the time she has been in this house, over the past 11 years. But if she believes this is such an important facility, then does she support a similar facility being constructed in the City of Casey? Yes or no? The stark look on her face tells us that she does not support a safe injecting facility being constructed in the City of Casey. So if she is such a strong advocate for the importance of this facility —

Mr Foley — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I understand that this is necessarily a free-ranging debate, but the bill before the house is extremely specific. It provides for a single licensed medically supervised safe injecting room in North Richmond.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! It is not a free-ranging point of order, Minister.

Mr Foley — And I would encourage the Chair to encourage the honourable member in his contributions to keep vaguely to the realms of the debate rather than engaging in unnecessary provocations to incite disorderly interjections from this side of the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Okay, I think I have heard enough from —

Mr Foley — We are happy to accommodate him if that is what he is looking for, but that would be highly inappropriate.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Thank you, Minister, for your point of order. In ruling on the point of order, I indicate that it has been pretty free ranging. I have listened intently to the member for Ferntree Gully, and I am prepared to continue to hear him in relation to the bill. I am sure that in the remaining moments left to him he will confine his comments to the bill.

Mr WAKELING — To pick up the point of order made by the minister, the minister rightly pointed out that this is about a single-site facility, and that is exactly the point I am making — that this is not about health. This is not about the health of Victorians. This is about a single site being established in Richmond. Why is it that we are talking about a single site being established in Richmond when, if it is such an important health issue, the minister could be advocating for constructing such facilities across the state? It is not about the single site; it is everything about this weekend's by-election.

The minister can call it ridiculous as much as he likes; people know this is purely about politics.

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (16:49) — I rise to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. This bill will introduce a trial medically supervised injecting centre in North Richmond and help facilitate a safer setting for injecting and greater referrals for users to treatment, support and other services. The purpose of the bill is to prevent overdoses on our streets and reduce pressure on the community and of course our emergency services.

I need to be extremely honest. Originally I was against this proposal. Back in my time as mayor of a local council so many years ago I was probably one of the mayors of the western region that fought very vigorously against any proposal at that time. But during my time on the Law Reform Committee I have listened to many submissions to our inquiry into drug reform — the inquiry is continuing and there will be a report in the new year — from the coroner, young people, stakeholders, the Australian Medical Association, families, many service providers, professionals, Victoria Police, the federal police, and the list goes on. Quite frankly, through this inquiry I have had the opportunity to visit numerous cities and countries, starting with Sydney and working our way through Vancouver in Canada, Portugal, the UK and many other countries, seeing how other countries deal with their drug —

Mr Tilley — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I am on the same committee and the report has not been completed and it has not been tabled yet. I just caution the member not to go into too much more detail about what the committee is doing at the moment, with all due respect.

Mr McGuire — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I just make a point that there has been no revelation, there has not been no insight, there has just been a description of the breadth of the investigation and therefore the new knowledge that the member is using.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! After having clarified matters with the Acting Clerk, can I say that it is okay to make commentary in broad terms in relation to transcripts of some of the hearings that are freely available, but certainly in relation to some of the more detailed matters that are still before the committee it would be wise not to comment on those. I think the point of order from the member for Benambra is a very reasonable one, as are the points made by the

member for Broadmeadows. In providing some further guidance from the Chair certainly transcripts and some of the work that committee members have done that is publicly available is reasonable, but obviously deliberations and other matters that are not publicly known are best steered away from. I think the house understands those matters, and I call the member for St Albans to continue.

Ms SULEYMAN — I appreciate those comments, Acting Speaker. I just want to give my personal experience in seeing firsthand how other countries deal with their drug problems, and in particular closer to home in Kings Cross, in Sydney, noting media reports on how critical that particular injecting facility has been for local businesses and the community and the fact that there have been no deaths in that injecting facility. What we do know, and what I certainly know, is that this facility has improved the overall community.

When I have talked to my residents in St Albans I have put this issue to them, and I have flagged it to the families, because I think every person knows one person that has been affected by drugs and the horrific impacts that drugs play in our community. My constituents have said to me overwhelmingly that anything is better than doing nothing at the moment.

It is not just about a safe injecting facility. It is about making sure that the right support services are also facilitated in these centres. People have to understand that no-one chooses to be, or wakes up one day and decides to be, addicted to drugs. They do not want to go through the unfortunate attempts to shoot up, whether it is in a parking lot, in an alleyway, on a road, on a street or behind a bin. These are the events that this safe injecting centre will stop. This centre will have the ability to encourage people in a safe, supervised environment where medical supervision is also present. I am surprised to hear those on the other side say that this is about politics and so on. This measure is about preventing death. The facts are there; the evidence is there. When we have more people dying from drug overdoses than being killed in road accidents it is clear that we need to act on this.

It takes a brave government to take action on this issue. After having had consultation with the local community and stakeholders we have been able to facilitate an opportunity to trial a facility and hopefully save a life — save someone's son, save someone's daughter. We have had nothing positive from those on the other side. I am flabbergasted by the comments of those opposite. They offer no solutions. It is just opposing and being negative. There are no solutions — yet

again — on this issue. Everybody knows someone in our community that is affected by drug use of some sort. So the time has come to take action on this — real action — with support services and Victoria Police. We have got our whole strategy — we are looking into ice, rehab and many other services — to actually connect together and make sure that we can save lives.

I also thank Judy Ryan, who has been a fantastic advocate for local residents. She has shared her experiences of what it is like to see a person overdose on local streets. The government has listened to the people and taken action. It is easy to sit back and criticise, but it is much harder to take brave action. I commend and support this bill. I congratulate the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Mental Health. This is a step to actually saving lives.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (16:58) — I rise to make a contribution in relation to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. This is a bill that offers a framework for establishing a medically supervised injecting centre trial. It is in response to the increasing number of heroin deaths in North Richmond and is to be conducted on a trial basis only, for a two-year period. I heard the minister indicate that there had been up to 190 deaths in the area and that that was part of the driving force for this to happen.

By chance I was in Sydney in early October to visit a new hospital that was being built there, for the purpose of looking at ideas for the new hospital redevelopment that we are having undertaken in Shepparton at the moment and also to visit a cancer centre. For some reason we decided to build into that trip a visit to the Kings Cross safe injecting room. Why? Because it seemed to be on the agenda and seemed to be a good idea to find out as much as I could about this issue because there was a flag up already. The committee was looking at the issue, and it seemed to me that there would be action in this area.

Looking at the Kings Cross centre, it is somewhat different I think to what is proposed here. This safe injecting room in North Richmond will have much more of a focus on health; it must be run by a medical practitioner. While indeed the person in charge in Sydney is also a medical practitioner, it is perhaps more a referral service than anything else. In that centre we had the opportunity to talk with the person who operates it and met a number of members of staff. We were able to observe people coming in, taking their drugs and mixing them up. It is not just heroin that is allowed in that centre; clearly other drugs are being

used. We could observe people collecting a spoon and clean water and crushing up drugs to inject. Generally speaking the process is that they will do that, pass out to another room, where they usually wait for approximately 15 minutes to be observed and see how they are travelling, and then move on. They effectively come in the front door and go out the back door.

It was pretty confronting, I have to say, to see people coming in in this way. I suppose if you live in North Richmond, you have been very much exposed to people on the street behaving in this way — shooting up and leaving needles — and indeed there have been a number of deaths, and that has really prompted the community action around this issue.

I have a number of concerns about this bill. It is being established in an existing community health centre. While they have no doubt agreed to that, it does raise concerns in my mind in relation to the separateness of this facility as compared to people perhaps using the maternal and child health service or coming in to see a doctor for other reasons. These are people who are often very long-term addicts. They are often unwell. They are carrying drugs when they come in to use, and it would be highly undesirable in my view for them to be in any way mixing with, interacting with or even entering through the same door as the remainder of the community health service. I hope that these things will be addressed in a way that makes sure that does not occur.

In the Sydney facility there was a security guard on duty at all times. We noticed him in the front room, and on a later occasion, when someone was suffering some ill effects out the back, the security guard came through and was offering some assistance to the other staff members who were there. Again, it is important from the point of view of staff security that there is someone there to ensure the safety of employees who are working in the place.

In this case we are told that ice will not be allowed to be used, which is again a difference from the Sydney experience, where there does seem to be a much freer attitude to the medications that are used. In this case it seems to be the heroin addicts who are the most likely to be using it and others, I understand, will not be. The bill does not say anything about that, but I am told that will appear in the regulations. There is going to be no testing of the drugs on site, I understand, so people will come in with what they have got and in a sense it will be, in many instances, perhaps hard to know what they are proposing to use. That in itself is an issue. They will be provided with a clean syringe and anything else they might need to assist them in injecting.

It is a trial, and it is very important that there is a proper evaluation done of this. Now, there is to be a review. I think it is important that throughout this whole process there is a very close watch kept on every aspect of this trial because it is something that we can seriously learn from. There is an opportunity to provide people with access to a readily available health service. I think one of the things we know and one of the reasons we like to see hubs in our communities, where all services are gathered together, is the fact that if you are walking from one door to the next, there is a much higher chance of someone accessing a service than if they have to leave the premises, make an appointment and go somewhere else later or on another day. So there is an advantage no doubt in that being part of the centre.

The police have clearly been ineffective in being able to deal with the Richmond situation up-to-date and they support a more health-based approach. Clearly the criminal justice system is unable to deal with these people, and it is not desirable really that it does. I think given the prison space we have available, in any event you would not be wanting to see the sort of people who are suffering from addiction in this way filling up prison cells for that reason alone. We have to accept that there will be problems, and we need to identify them as we go along and make sure that they are dealt with.

One of the things that apparently happens in a centre like this is it can suddenly become very busy when someone has arrived outside or in the area with drugs. It was something that was commented on at the Sydney facility, where it was quiet for a while, for about half an hour, and then within a short time people were coming in very quickly and the comment was that some drugs had arrived in the area. This is very confronting and very difficult, I think, and it certainly raises issues around the whole criminal justice system, around the fact that we have laws that make these things illegal but we are faced with a situation where we effectively have to turn a blind eye to enable an entirely different approach and trial to be set up to try to deal with these things.

In my area there are people who are addicted to drugs. We have a problem in even getting up a methadone program that works in Shepparton, and it has been a real challenge for a long time and is something I hope we can address over time. We have huge problems in attracting addiction specialists to our hospital or indeed to any facility in the area, so again, a real problem.

There is always a lack of services in regional areas for people, and I asked a question this afternoon of the Minister for Mental Health, who is sitting here, about drug rehabilitation services in our area. It is my view

that these sorts of facilities — drug rehabilitation centres, even this safe injecting room — are really about caring for people and providing people with support. It would be unrealistic to think we are going to see an amazing outcome in terms of rehabilitation and better outcomes for people. There may be some, but the experience is that the numbers are not great. It is to me about caring for people, giving them a safe place and an opportunity to access other services.

I support the trial period and I will be watching with interest to see how it goes. Of course I therefore support the bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (17:07) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. This is a great piece of legislation, and it continues a great Labor tradition of dealing with issues in a very proactive way as they emerge.

In preparing this contribution I was reminded of a conversation I had with David White many years ago. David was the Minister for Health from 1985 to 1989, I believe, and it was under David's stewardship as health minister that the needle exchange program was first commenced in this state. David was asked at the time as the minister whether he was condoning an illegal act. David's response was that he absolutely was condoning an illegal act but the alternative was far too terrible to contemplate.

In those days it was about making sure that you had clean needles in order to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS, and from David's perspective it was about making sure that if you had a ready supply of needles, then you could reduce the risk of transmission that an intravenous drug user would have in terms of infecting someone who they engaged with sexually. So from my perspective I think that this is a bill that can be seen in a very similar way.

I do recall being here as a staffer in the 1990s in the opposition rooms —

Mr Foley — You must have been a baby.

Mr PEARSON — The Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, who is at the table, says I must have been a baby. Sure, some days it sure does feel a long time ago. I recall back in the 1990s there were fierce debates amongst the staff as to whether we would go down this path or not. In particular I pay tribute to Jeff Pulford because Jeff, who is Jaala Pulford's husband, was working for John Brumby and Steve

Bracks, as was I at that time, and Jeff really took this issue up internally inside the opposition rooms. He pushed it very hard. He was absolutely committed that this was the right thing to do.

Often in life in these professional environments there are times when you sometimes think, 'Maybe it is in my interests that I don't push this so hard. It might help my career if I just back off a bit'. Jeff did not do that because from his perspective he was absolutely fervently of the view this was the right thing to do. He pushed it through internally, and it was a really important matter that he took up and pursued. As others have mentioned earlier the bill did pass this place but was defeated in the other place in 2001, I think.

I was in the chamber briefly for the member for Lowan's contribution, and the member for Lowan I think indicated that the death rate from heroin overdoses dropped in 2001. That was I think a quote that the member quoted, and I do not dispute that because in the late 1990s what you saw was a huge increase in deaths. Back in those days I remember the *Herald Sun*, on the bottom of their editorial, would have the road toll and the heroin toll. Basically the number of people who were killed on our roads in the late 1990s and early 2000s was the same as the number of people who lost their lives through a heroin overdose.

One explanation for why the deaths dropped quite significantly in 2001 came down to climactic conditions in Afghanistan. According to *Business Insider* in an article from 11 October 2016, 90 per cent of heroin comes from Afghanistan and in 2001 there was a significant drought that hit Afghanistan that saw a significant drop in their production rates. Interestingly, illicit cultivation of opium in Afghanistan was greater than 200 000 hectares in 2015, and it was one of the top three years of heroin production in Afghanistan since 1994. So I think what you will find is that what we are seeing in terms of the deaths that have been occurring on our streets is a function of the level of poppy production in Afghanistan now compared to previously when there were droughts.

You do not have to look far in a lot of our communities to see this level of drug abuse. Drug abuse is happening in our communities, and we know that often when drugs are mixed or if heroin is mixed with alcohol, that people are more likely to potentially overdose. I recall when the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing was in my electorate in Flemington a couple of years ago. One of my constituents — I think he was one of my constituents — in front of us overdosed on heroin.

He had been drinking and he just went down — he was a big guy and he went down.

I was there and performed mouth-to-mouth on him and stayed with him, as did the minister, while we waited for the ambulance to arrive. While I was doing that I was constantly thinking to myself, 'How soon will it be before the ambulance arrives? Will this person suffer an acquired brain injury as a consequence of having overdosed and not having sufficient oxygen to their brain? What will be the longer term impacts for this person from a quality-of-life perspective?'

A lot of these things go through your mind when you are performing CPR and mouth-to-mouth on a person, and you hope they will be okay. In this particular instance the ambulance was not far away and the person was revived, but for me it was just a really timely reminder of the fact that these things can happen and it can have a really profound impact on a lot of people, not just the person who had overdosed but the people who saw this. Often some of the people who see this in our public housing estates or in our communities are people who should not really see it. Do you want to have a five-year-old or a 10-year-old child see a person overdose on heroin in the street? I do not think you do. I do not think I would want my kids to see that, but that is what is happening on our streets now.

A friend of mine who lives in North Richmond said to me 12 months ago, 'Look, you've just got to do something'. He said, 'This is just insane'. He said, 'I go to work. I go to North Richmond station every morning, and there are syringes everywhere. There are people passed out. There are people in different stages of either intoxication or coming out of it. It's just awful, you have to do something'.

When we see systemic failure like this, then it is incumbent upon us to act. We cannot allow or tolerate a situation where we are seeing people overdose and die. It is just such a waste. It is an absolute waste. I think a lot of people with a heroin addiction can become clean if they can kick the habit, and they can lead more productive lives. Ice addiction is probably different because you are more likely to potentially suffer an acquired brain injury as a consequence of excessive use. When we are looking at this situation, this is about protecting people to make sure that they do not overdose, that they do not end up with an acquired brain injury and that they can potentially get the help and support they need to lead a full and productive life.

It is a really important piece of legislation. I know those opposite have been tempted to implicitly or explicitly

make this a political issue. This is a public health issue. This is about making sure that people are safe, that people who wish to inject heroin can do so now in a safe environment and safe place. I do hope that people will use this facility, and also while they are there potentially look at trying to engage with the staff of cohealth, think about options, think about getting the help and support they need to kick the habit and try to get referrals for other help and assistance. The reality is, as the member for St Albans eloquently put it in her contribution, people do not wake up and become a drug addict. Drugs and drug abuse are often symptoms of an underlying cause or issue, a trauma that a person has experienced in childhood and a pain that they have felt through life. They use heroin as a way of trying to soften the pain and to try to make sense of the life that they are left with.

Keeping people alive and keeping people safe is really important. Others have spoken about the tragic loss of life of others. I recall reading a biography about former Senator John Button and the tragic impact the loss of his son had on him and the fact that, at every Labor victory, he would often cry because he would be reminded of the price that he had paid through the loss of his son. This is really important legislation. It is important that we act on this and act on it now. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (17:17) — I rise to make a contribution on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Miscellaneous Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. All I can say at the outset is that this bill is a backflip that Nadia Comăneci — the Romanian gymnast who scored the perfect 10 — would be proud of. At the last election the Labor Party took a policy to the election saying that there would be no medically supervised injecting rooms in Victoria. Yet here we are with a Northcote by-election and with the member for Richmond's seat under siege from the Greens. What are we having? We are having a medically supervised injecting room in North Richmond after repeated promises that this would never happen. It was even ruled out only a couple of months ago by the Premier saying that this would never happen.

I might focus my contribution on the Geelong side, particularly the comments of the member for Geelong. Before I go there, I strongly oppose these injecting rooms. I personally do not believe that there is any way to safely inject heroin or ice or any other substance for that matter, and we should not be putting in these facilities. We should be putting more emphasis on rehabilitation, we should be putting in more

enforcement and not giving up the war on drugs by having these injecting rooms.

I refer to an article by Harrison Tippet in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 1 November headed 'Push for injecting rooms'. That article says:

Geelong state Labor MP Christine Couzens also said she would consider a safe injecting room in Geelong if it was found necessary.

The member for Geelong is quoted as saying:

In Geelong I am not aware we are experiencing the same number of deaths as in Richmond, however I will be monitoring how this works and would consider the same in Geelong if it were necessary.

The member for Geelong has clearly gone on the record in the *Geelong Advertiser* saying that she supports —

Ms Couzens — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I find that quote from the *Geelong Advertiser* offensive, as I already clarified in the chamber earlier. I am sure the member for South Barwon does not believe that the *Geelong Advertiser* is right all the time either, so I ask him to withdraw those comments.

Mr KATOS — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I am quoting the *Geelong Advertiser*. These are comments from the *Geelong Advertiser*. I am quoting directly from an article which I am happy to supply to Hansard. How can you be offended by the *Geelong Advertiser's* comments? I am not making the comments. I am reading a quote from the *Geelong Advertiser*. What am I withdrawing: the comments of the *Geelong Advertiser*? What am I withdrawing here?

Mr Eren — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is objecting to some comments being made. Even though the member for South Barwon is referring to an article and that article is inaccurate, it is a wrong portrayal of a current member who is in the house and who is offended by it. The practice of the house is if the member takes objection to what is being reported and says it is inaccurate, then the member who is quoting it should desist from quoting it. The member in the house is actually objecting to it.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the minister is misrepresenting the precedent set in this house.

Mr Lim interjected.

Mr R. Smith — If you want to say something, you can rise to your feet and get the call.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr R. Smith — The minister is misrepresenting the precedents of this house. The member can take objection if there is a criticism or a comment made directly to the member themselves, but in my 11 years here I have never heard having to be asked to be withdrawn a quote that is taken from a public publication. We quote from documents and from news articles all the time, and if you are on the public record, that is something that we have to deal with as public figures. I ask you to tell the member for Geelong that her request should not be accommodated.

Mr McGuire — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, this has already been dealt with before these members were obviously in the chamber. I was here, and the member for Geelong made exactly the same point and it was upheld. The member of the opposition who made the claims withdrew, as is the appropriate procedure of the house.

Ms Kealy — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I have a copy of the article. It is a quote, and I will speak to that:

... I will be monitoring how this works and would consider the same in Geelong if it were necessary.

I am happy to make this document available to the house. My understanding is that there has been no retraction published by the *Geelong Advertiser*. This is a published document, it is available publicly, it has not been retracted in any way and it is therefore able to be referenced. Again, I will make the document available to the house if you wish.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! Members from time to time do quote from documents in this place in making their contributions. However, the longstanding practice of this place has been that if a member takes offence to a comment made in this place by another member and that member is asked to withdraw, then that member does withdraw. So I would ask, consistent with the previous ruling from the previous Acting Speaker, that the member for South Barwon withdraw.

Mr KATOS — I withdraw. Then the very next day after that article was published the Minister for Mental Health actually phoned the *Geelong Advertiser* and said there would be no injecting rooms in Geelong. One can only speculate as to why this would be, but I think the editorial of the *Geelong Advertiser* on the same day, 2 November, summed it up. It says:

Perhaps the government has found itself lumped with a radical idea to keep those living in Melbourne's inner northern suburbs happy that it knows is roundly unpopular across middle Victoria.

Why else would something hailed as yesterday's success in Melbourne be so emphatically dismissed in Geelong a mere day later?

That is the editorial in the *Geelong Advertiser* of 2 November. I think that pretty much sums it up. You have an MP with one position, and then the minister rebukes that position the following day. It just shows the cynicism of this bill. This is purely about by-elections and about defending inner-city seats from the Greens. That is all this is about. It is not about health outcomes. That is all it is about. We should be investing more money in rehabilitation services. In the Geelong region there should be more money going into the Swanston Centre. There should be more money going into organisations such as Foundation 61 at Mount Duneed. These are organisations that are rehabilitating drug addicts. That is where the emphasis should be; the emphasis should be on enforcement. As other speakers have said, the opposition will be opposing this bill.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (17:26) — It is a pleasure to have the opportunity, and I take it with some pride, to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. I recall the member for Lowan beginning her presentation saying we must all show respect when speaking about this. I would say to the members who spoke on the other side that this is not a bill that requires you to treat it as some sort of laughing matter or as some sort of opportunity for cheap political pointscore; it is indeed a very serious matter.

When those opposite ask why in fact this government has brought this bill to this house, the fact of the matter is that that is what good governments do. They make decisions, they take action and, if it requires legislative change, they bring those matters to this chamber for debate. I think we should all seriously consider why we are debating this bill. It is a simple answer and a very, very daunting answer, and it is the fact that last year 190 people died of heroin overdoses and already this year 35 people have died of heroin overdoses. Indeed even when the Premier and the minister were making this announcement a person fell on the ground after having some sort of drug overdose.

The fact of the matter is that drug overdoses are beyond the pale; they are beyond what the community thinks is acceptable. The fact is that the coroner's report, the

police, the Australian Medical Association, North Richmond Community Health, which is going to run this trial, paramedics and the upper house committee, while they did not say, 'Do it', they came very close to saying that, and they made a very good case for it. Above all, the grieving families whose children are dying on our streets are asking for the government to take action. As I said at the outset, that is what good governments do. They respond to an overwhelmingly desperate cry from family members and professions to take action and introduce legislation such as this.

I must admit that I like going to North Richmond. I like going down there to have my Vietnamese meal. In fact when my children were little one of my favourite things to do with them was take them out of their white community and bring them up to Richmond to have a Vietnamese meal before or after seeing the Bulldogs play at the MCG or at Etihad Stadium. We would meet with friends, and these were happy family occasions that we still reminisce about today. But I have to say, because I still go down to North Richmond, that in the last couple of years that I have been going down there I have seen some of the most blatant drug taking and dealing, I have seen some of the most scary and confronting behaviour and I have also seen some of the most sad and desperate behaviour on those streets.

I will not back away because the member for Ferntree Gully is in this house. I have actually gone up to the Minister for Mental Health and the local members that represent that area and said to them I am very, very concerned about what is happening in the neighbourhood. Something had to be done about it, and that is exactly what is happening. When the member for South Barwon says there is no such thing as safe injecting, I disagree completely. The fact of the matter is that what we have at the moment is unsafe injecting in unsafe circumstances and with unsafe results.

What we need to do is to provide opportunities for supervised injecting where there are other services that wrap around these people and provide them with the support to safely inject if they need to, but also give them the opportunity to get on with their lives with some extra support. We know this works because we have seen in Sydney — and that is not exactly what we are doing here; we are having our own trial, indigenous to our area — that this works. You only need look at newspaper articles, where it says:

A safe injecting room in the heart of Sydney has prevented thousands of overdose deaths, reduced ambulance call-outs and connected vulnerable people with help.

What is wrong with that, I ask? How could you possibly object to saving people's lives, preventing overdoses and reducing ambulance call-outs? There are lots of things paramedics can be involved in rather than scooping up people on the streets of North Richmond and connecting vulnerable people. Drug addiction and drug harm are so prevalent in our community. I suspect there is not a person in this house who does not know a family that has had to grieve or deal with these issues. This is just one way of providing another opportunity where these matters can be dealt with and these life-saving opportunities can be provided to people that are very vulnerable, very sick in many circumstances, and do deserve our compassion.

It was the member for Richmond who I think actually said it was a balanced and compassionate way of approaching this issue. There are many people who want to speak on this matter, and I will conclude by just saying that this is an opportunity that the community expects us to take. It is an opportunity that the Labor Party is willing to provide. I suggest to other people opposite to not just look at the political framework that they judge everything through but to also look at the families out there who need our support. I commend this bill to the house.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (17:33) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. The bill seeks to amend the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 to provide for the licensing, for a trial period of two years initially at a single specified site — the North Richmond Community Health centre — of the operation of a single medically supervised injecting centre for certain kinds of drugs of dependence. Having considered the legislation and having received various correspondence on the matter, I must confess that part of me is torn. On one hand I unfortunately know people who live in pretty horrible circumstances and persons who have passed away from heroin overdoses. Indeed an ex-school friend of mine, Ty Nickels, passed away many, many years ago now to that insidious drug when he was only 17. And unfortunately we have had a wave of people and generations who in reality have had to deal with drugs and drug addiction. Unfortunately it knows no bounds.

In my mind the problem has changed a little bit over the years, and I have become a hell of a lot more sympathetic to people in those circumstances. For those who are addicted to drugs it is an absolutely terrible situation for not only them but also the people around them and indeed many communities. The Latrobe

Valley community unfortunately ranks quite highly when you have a look at the number of overdose deaths, particularly from a regional perspective, in Victoria. It is a massive problem that we all seek to find the answers to. On the one hand we have got the health perspective of these people. I am sure everybody in the chamber, no matter what political allegiance they have, wants to see the best for people within our community and make sure they have the appropriate help, support and services to get through their problems. On the other hand, I confess I am finding difficult the notion of a person taking an illegal substance into a centre and having that injected, under supervision nonetheless, but still, that they have that illegal substance does give me some cause for concern.

I note the Sydney model, and the successors of that, that has been spoken about and articulated by many members of Parliament. The Kings Cross injecting centre was established in 2001, and nearly 1 million injections have occurred over that time. When you think about it, that is a hell of a lot of injections. I am not sure how many people have submitted themselves to the injecting room in Kings Cross, but 965 000 injections is a hell of a lot. It has been noted that there have been no deaths, and that is really, really important of course. That is replicated, as I understand, across most of the supervised injecting centres across the world. That is certainly something to hang your hat on. I note that in the Sydney model there have been over 6000 overdoses.

Again through the briefing — and I thank the minister's departmental staff for the briefing that I had on this — I suppose the question in my mind was why when you have a person with an illegal substance going into a supervised injecting room we are still having a number of overdoses as a consequence. I suppose my questions are related to how we are going to monitor the situation in terms of what is in that substance, what quantities this person is taking and whether it is going to lead to an overdose. Because in my mind I think if somebody is taking the time and effort and trying to do the right thing by walking into a supervised injecting room, the last thing you want to see is that person overdosing.

I come back to the point: I concede the fact that there have been a number of overdoses but no deaths, but for me I think we have to get that first part right when a person walks into an injecting room of making sure that the substance they are using is not going to cause them harm and they are not going to overdose. I think if you could somehow eliminate the 6000 examples in Sydney, take them down to zero, I would feel a hell of a

lot more comfortable. But nonetheless, they are my concerns with it.

It was interesting yesterday — I am not sure if members heard Neil Mitchell in conversation with Senator Larry Campbell from Canada. He is currently a Canadian senator, and he previously worked in the drug squad with law enforcement. He was a coroner, and he is now a Canadian senator. He is very much in support of heroin injecting rooms across Canada. It was a really interesting conversation. One of the questions that Neil Mitchell had asked was whether it had reduced deaths from heroin overdoses in Canada. The senator categorically said, 'No, unfortunately it hasn't'. In Canada at the moment, as I understand it, the main problem is that whilst they have not had any deaths within supervised heroin injecting centres, they are dealing with a drug called —

Mr Howard — Fentanyl.

Mr NORTHE — Fentanyl — thank you for that kind interjection.

Obviously he believes that is the main cause of concern for those Canadians at the moment dealing with those injecting heroin. Hopefully we do not see that occur within this state or indeed this country.

I want to make just a couple of closing points. One, I concur with many other speakers on this legislation that, particularly from a Gippsland-Latrobe perspective, we desperately really need rehabilitation beds for those who are dealing with drug and alcohol addiction. From my own experience, my own family's experience, this is a thing that really is lacking in many regional centres, and it is something that all political parties and all governments need to really address, and address quickly.

The member for Hawthorn in his contribution I think raised a valid point in terms of statistics and making sure that there is better oversight if a person is not only injecting in a supervised capacity but doing it in the community as well. We need to keep track of these people not only to give them the support and services that they require but also ultimately so we know what happens with those people and so that hopefully they do not end up as part of a coronial inquiry. We need to have better oversight of those people.

I am also just a little bit concerned that it is not described within the legislation what drugs may be allowed to be injected. As I understand, it will be the part of the regulations to specify that. I know certainly from the briefing that I received — I have been told —

that it would exclude ice. We will wait to hear some further information on that.

As I said, unfortunately it is a big issue within my electorate. If you look at the coroner's report on overdose deaths from 2009 to 2016 in Victoria, there are alarming statistics about overdose deaths occurring, and I think one of the things we do have to consider is what type of drugs are contributing to that. I note that since 2009 there has been a rise of over 400 per cent for methamphetamine and 51 per cent for heroin. So I think it is incumbent on all of us to not forget that that insidious drug as well is causing so much harm and damage within our community. We need to make every effort we can to help those people who are addicted to those types of drugs as well.

Ms WARD (Eltham) (17:42) — I also rise to speak on the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017. As I rise I am very, very happy and sad that we are debating this bill. This is something that I looked at a number of years ago when I was working for the member for Jaga Jaga when she was Labor's spokesperson for health federally. I did a lot of reading, I did a lot of research and I spoke to a lot of people in the sector, and it became very clear to me just how important these kinds of facilities are. They are very important because they do save lives. I think that any conversation around this that is trivial or makes jokes or any conversation around this that tries to generate hyperbole is just immature and senseless.

This is a really serious issue because it is actually a life-and-death issue. This is legislation that will save lives. We have seen in the Sydney experience that at least 6000 lives have been saved through these centres — that is 6000 lives. These are 6000 bodies that could have been on the street, that could have been lying in a gutter, that could have been lying in an alleyway, on a verandah, in a shop stoop — all sorts of terrible places where you would not want your loved one to spend their last minutes on earth, where you would not want neighbourhoods to have to see these bodies lying there. This is not what we want. This is not what we want to see.

We recognise that there is addiction, and we recognise that addiction is a serious problem, no matter what the addiction is. It is the role of government to step in and help. It is the role of government to help people where we can. These are centres where people can use drugs under the supervision of medical staff and health professionals. Injecting drugs is not safe. We know this. Injecting drugs will not be safe. It will continue to not

be safe. What we can do, though, is create a safe environment — as you said, Acting Speaker Graley — where people can actually be protected, where we can keep them alive, where we can give them clean syringes, where we can ensure that any diseases they may have do not get passed on to other people, where we can also give them the supports that they may need, should they be ready to ask for them, and where we can help them get the support they need when they are ready. This is so incredibly important. We know that when someone has an addiction you can only help them when they are ready, and to have a facility like this that is there to help someone when they have identified that they are ready is exactly what is needed.

We know from the Sydney experience that around 70 per cent of people who have presented there had never been in contact with a local health service before. This was their first step. This was the first step towards helping them beat their addiction. They may need to visit the medically supervised injecting centre a number of times before they come to the point where they seek help, but if they do seek help, then this is something that is very important and something that will not only save their life but save their community. It helps their community, and it helps their family and their friends — all of those people who are devastated by the effects of this terrible addiction. These are people who are so hurt and wounded by the fact that someone they love cannot be helped until they are ready to be helped.

What is also important about this legislation is not only the effect it has on keeping the community safe by preventing poor local residents from having to confront used syringes in playgrounds, comatose bodies in parks and sleeping addicts coming off their hit on verandahs but also the help it provides to our paramedics. It helps our paramedics in that it reduces the attacks on paramedics when they come to save the life of someone who loses it because their hit has been diminished. It saves the call-outs. Kings Cross call-outs have been reduced by 80 per cent since the centre was set up there in Sydney in 2001. Danny Hill from Ambulance Employees Australia said that this centre:

... would save lives, it would reduce assaults and needlestick injuries on emergency services, it gets people who are addicted to drugs, addicted to heroin into some form of drug education and health care ...

This is wideranging in terms of the ripple effect it would have. For anybody who says that this will reward addicts, you are incredibly short-sighted and you are incredibly ignorant, because it saves lives, it helps communities, it saves the community money, it saves

the government money and it is something well worth investing in. I recommend this bill to the house.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (17:47) — I rise to support the legislation before the house. I have been involved with the Australian Parliamentary Group on Drug Law Reform now for around 20 years, and the discussion has been around, ‘How do you try and help people who are addicted to drugs?’. Certainly in terms of heroin when you talk to heroin addicts and you ask them, ‘Why don’t you get off it? What drives you to stay on the drugs?’, they say to you, ‘Because it hurts’. When you are coming down from the drug your body reacts and it starts to hurt. The thing that then drives that person is not that they want to be addicted to the drug — they have become addicted to the drug for a number of reasons — but they do not want that hurt to continue. That is the thing that drives them. Their life is driven by getting the next hit to try and stop that pain that is occurring physically and mentally within their body. There are other mechanisms through methadone and other drugs to relieve that — putting in a substitute where that can then decrease — but that does not suit everybody.

With drug addicts — from my discussions with doctors and with health professionals within this area — they have to make a decision to come off the drugs. Most of us have smoked, and until you make a decision to stop smoking, until you go through the process, either cold turkey or by using Nicorettes, or through a process of hypnosis or something else that might work, it is impossible for you to stop that addiction. Sometimes you regress. Sometimes you go back to it. A number of people who have smoked will stop smoking and then go back, or they will just have one and then they start again. Part of it is about the milieu, the environment, they are in.

What this legislation provides is a health alternative for drug addicts. So instead of the drug addict only seeing their drug dealer, they get to see doctors, nurses and social workers. Their lives are chaotic. Their lives are ones of absolute instability, and they need those types of supports — some would say wraparound services. So once they make a decision to get off the drugs, what do they need? It is not just a bed; it is all the other social supports they need to then restart their lives in these instances.

One of my parliamentary interns in October 2009, Anne Poulos from Monash University, did a report for me and the Parliament entitled *Client-centred, Service-focused?*. It is about safe injecting rooms. We visited Kings Cross and Dr Alex Wodak. We had a

look at the facility before it opened in the morning, and we saw some of the clients that were going to go through later on. What those people did in the past, before the facility was there, was inject anywhere. They would find what they considered to be a safe place and they would inject. They would buy the stuff and inject, and then it would be up to God whether they survived or not. It would be up to their friends whether, if there was an overdose, they would call the ambulance. The injecting room provides some safety for these addicts to do what they need to do to stop the pain and hurt.

Kings Cross is really interesting because it gets reviewed and analysed to within an inch of its life. I think it was the Baird government that did the last review, and they continued with the Kings Cross facility. The evidence is that it does save lives. There have been a million injections, and there have been no deaths within the facility whatsoever. When you go in you see the cubicles where they inject and the room they go to afterwards. Apparently there have been about 6000 overdoses there.

Sometimes you get a mix of chemicals with the heroin. If they get a very bad batch — and this one of the things they said to us — and if there is one after the other coming in with a bad batch, they will then go out of their way to work with the police and with the other drug addicts to stop that being sold on the streets. They do actually stop it and they stop the deaths from occurring.

I went to Richmond, and my honourable friend the member for Buninyong went to Richmond. I think the member for Lowan also went to Richmond. You see the syringes and you see the faeces, because when people inject their bowels release. You see the desperate situations that they are in because they need to have that hit. The syringes are everywhere. People have said in this house, ‘What about the kids down the street?’. You see this if you walk down any alleyway, in any car park or behind any bin — and we could not go behind one of the bins because someone was injecting behind it.

The kids, traders and everybody else walk past these areas all the time. To say that that is the situation in which you would want one of your family members or one of your friends or an acquaintance to live their lives without any access to a doctor is actually cruel. I think you have no humanity if you want to make sure that people are in the worst situation of their lives and that they will die in awful, isolated, lonely places in laneways or behind bins and fences. People say that the injecting centre is so many metres away from a school or a kindergarten or the flats. They are already injecting

in those areas; the kids are already in that environment. Take the addicts out of that environment and put them in a safe area so that they can inject safely and have their lives saved.

A couple of political points — and this has nothing to do with the Greens political party. They claim credit for everything that we do, but in actual fact this has nothing to do with them or with Northcote; it is about the evidence around this type of facility. Premier Kennett commissioned the Penington report — I was here when it was tabled — and was going to implement it after the 1999 election. People know my views about Mr Kennett, but at least he had the foresight to get the evidence and he was going to put that evidence from experts into practice, and now he has come on board. I commend — mark this, Acting Speaker — the Honourable Jeff Kennett for coming on board with this, unlike members of his former party here.

The war on drugs, as Nixon called it in 1971, cannot be won, but we have a responsibility to save lives here in Victoria, like they are doing in New South Wales.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

SERVICE VICTORIA BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed from 1 November; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) (17:58) — I rise to lead the coalition's response to the introduction of the Service Victoria Bill 2017. This bill does a number of things around creating a service delivery agency for government. It prescribes Service Victoria as a service delivery agency for government services. It provides that departments and agencies may transfer service delivery functions to Service Victoria. It establishes a mechanism by which, with mutual agreement of the Service Victoria minister and line minister, service functions may be transferred back to line agencies, and I will come back to that later. It establishes a regulatory structure for Service Victoria to undertake an identity verification function to provide a single whole-of-government record for each customer, including standard-setting, and it provides a regulatory framework by which service delivery standards may be established. It was described by the government, as funding was allocated in the 2015–16 budget, as follows:

Service Victoria will create a new whole-of-government service capability to enhance the delivery of government transactions with citizens, enable the delivery of a more effective customer experience and create new distribution channels for simple, high-volume transactions.

In short, the government is creating a new website.

The first thing that comes to mind with this particular bill is the substantial delay that there has been in introducing this piece of legislation and indeed in introducing the service facility for the general public. Funding was announced for this particular initiative back in May 2015. It was announced in the particular budget at the time, the 2015–16 budget, and over the 2016–17 budget, and \$96 million was provided over those two budgets for this initiative. But it is clear through the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearings that the project has fallen well behind schedule with \$58 million carried forward into the 2017–18 budget.

As well as that we can see that back in 2016 the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Chris Eccles, reported to PAEC that an achievement of 2014–15 was that initial work on a Service Victoria model to make it easier for citizens to transact with the Victorian government had begun, but it has been obviously quite some time since that has been progressed.

Under questioning by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee and my colleague and friend the member for Mornington, who was speaking to the department on these particular issues and to the Special Minister of State as well, it was revealed that there had been substantial delays. The member for Mornington said on 23 May 2017, as he was questioning the Department of Premier and Cabinet's secretary:

... it was stated on the government IT strategy website that Service Victoria had been intentionally delayed ...

So there was certainly a delay and it was intentional. Mr Eccles replied that he would not characterise it as a delay so much as:

... the need for substantive preparation for the work of Service Victoria.

With Mr Eccles refusing to say that there had been a delay, the member for Mornington went on to ask the department officials — Service Victoria being a high-value, high-risk project or a project that was being assessed under a 'high-value, high-risk framework' — what 'gateway' it was currently at. Tony Bates, the deputy secretary, governance policy and coordination, responded by saying, and I quote:

I get confused about the gate numbers ...

It is certainly concerning if high-level departmental bureaucrats are not across the way that the high-value, high-risk framework works. Where significant projects from the government are in that process, you would have thought that he would be right across that.

In answer to questions going to the delay Mr Gavin Jennings, the Special Minister of State, refused to say that the project had been delayed. In the new Labor lexicon where lies are labelled as misspeaking and where the closing of police stations is labelled as adjustments of hours, Mr Jennings has brought a new definition in for delays. He said that the project is actually not delayed, but:

... some of the aspects of the work have been cautiously progressed.

Certainly in any other language that would mean that it had been delayed, but he did refuse point-blank to say that it had been delayed. As the *Mandarin* publication said:

... it's not delayed, just ... slower than expected.

They went on to say certainly that there was no way that anyone was going to say that it was delayed; it was just slower than anticipated. We certainly admire the government's imagination in putting forward that this project is not delayed but just being cautiously progressed. The reality is that it is somewhat behind the initial plan.

During questioning from the member for Mornington at those hearings Mr Jennings was asked about the proposed shopfronts that were going to be set up as part of Service Victoria. The response from Mr Jennings was somewhat garbled, and I challenge those opposite in their contributions to explain what Mr Jennings meant when the member for Mornington asked him: were shopfronts going up? Mr Jennings said, and I quote:

I indicated to you that we have not necessarily at any point in time indicated how many shopfronts at what point in time would be a central part of the project.

I am not sure if that was a particularly clear response for the member for Mornington.

It would appear that as Mr Jennings talked about the project being 'cautiously progressed' — giving this sort of gobbledegook in answers to questions posed at the committee — Mr Jennings was certainly not across where this project was going at that point in time, back in May.

One of the things that this project purports to do is obviously make the interaction between the citizens of Victoria and the government easier by presenting that one portal. There has been a significant bloating of the public service over the last three years. That has been reported on at length in the media over the last three years, and indeed today we saw some pronouncements from the Auditor-General alluding to that exact issue — that there has been a significant increase in the public service over the last three years.

Contrary to what those opposite have said over the last three years with regard to the previous coalition government, in fact the public service grew from about 318 000 to just over 332 000 during our period in office. Many of those were frontline operatives, like the protective services officers (PSOs) that were deployed to our railway stations. They have done a magnificent job there, and I think all Victorians, certainly all those in Melbourne, see the PSOs as an integral part of safety at those stations. They were certainly a big part of the growth in the public service that we saw during the period of the coalition government.

As I said the bill is specifically about how the public service services Victorians. Back in May 2015 it was reported just a short while after the Labor government had taken office:

Victoria's public service wage bill will jump 7.1 per cent as the government splurges on services and abandons its spending growth target.

On 26 May 2016, the *Australian* reported:

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

Treasurer Tim Pallas forecast a \$3.6 billion jump in employment costs in the public sector over the four years of the state budget announced on April 27.

However —

curiously —

his office said it was not possible to break down the total between extra staff and wage rises ...

This story goes on to show that the wage deals were far in excess of any other state in Australia and certainly above that of the previous government.

It has been a continuing story. In December 2016 the *Age* reported that:

Victoria's budget surplus has taken a \$1.2 billion hit in just seven months as the Andrews government ramps up spending on public service wages.

It goes on to say:

So-called employee expenses, which soak about 42 per cent of operating expenses, are now expected to jump by 6.9 per cent in 2016–17 to \$24.6 billion ...

That represents a \$600 million increase from the predictions in the April budget —

just a few months before —

which estimated a wages bill of \$24 billion.

Continuing the same theme, just to demonstrate that this has been an ongoing issue for the Labor government, in December 2016 the *Herald Sun* reported that:

Victoria's public sector wage bill has blown out by billions of dollars in the past two years ...

The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed the number of public servants in Victoria jumped by 18 700 in just two years — accounting for more than 80 per cent of bureaucrats hired by state and territory governments —

throughout the country —

since 2013–14.

The article further states:

Victoria's hiring spree has added more than \$2.5 billion to the taxpayer-funded bill since Labor came to power.

Continuing the theme, in April 2017 the *Australian* reported that:

Public sector wages jumped \$3 billion, or 16 per cent, in the first two years of the Andrews government, with the headcount rising far higher behind the scenes in the bureaucracy than in frontline services.

I pick up the member for Yan Yean's interjection at the beginning of my contribution — that they are frontline people. In fact it was shown very clearly that they are not frontline. The bloated public service that has come about as a result of the Andrews government has actually been behind-the-scenes bureaucracy, and that is certainly of some concern because the money that is spent there should be used on frontline services and should be used to support Victorians in a more direct way.

In May 2017 the *Australian* reported:

The Victorian government's forecast \$8.6 billion in budget surpluses could come under threat from a swelling public sector wage bill, with indications bureaucracy wage costs are tracking ahead of a predicted \$3.6 billion jump unveiled last year.

It went on to say:

... almost 1300 executives received salary increases, almost 50 per cent more than in the previous year.

More recently — in September of this year — the *Herald Sun* said:

Victoria's bulging public sector has packed on hundreds of jobs and cost taxpayers an extra \$1.5 billion in a year.

For \$1.5 billion you could tear up a road project! The article continued:

A hiring spree across four key government departments added an extra 1250 full-time equivalent jobs last financial year.

... driving employee expenses from \$20 billion to \$21.5 billion.

As I said, the Auditor-General came out today and echoed those comments, saying that employee expenses have increased by 20.3 per cent over the last five financial years. You would have thought that with that kind of expenditure, for something like Service Victoria, which is purported to make life easier for the Victorian citizen in their interactions with the government and which proposes to give a better level of service, after the significant wage rises that we have seen and after the significant increases in the public sector over the last three years, the aim would have been during that period to make the interactions between the government and the people of Victoria a lot easier. It clearly has not worked. I do not think there are many people who deal generally with the government who would say that they are getting a better deal than they were four or five years ago.

We want an efficient public service. Having been in government myself I know that the public service is full of many very committed people who do some extraordinary work under some very difficult circumstances. Their role is to deliver the agenda of the government, and there are certainly many in the public service who do that. But it is also true to say that we have seen increases in the public sector, and when we are talking about the last three years we are hearing continuous and consistent stories that outline the many, many billions of dollars that have been spent between when the Labor government took office and now. That money could have been spent in so many other ways.

I go to the issue of the government proposing a new IT system. For those who followed the debate last sitting week on the Victorian Data Sharing Bill 2017, pointed out on many occasions was the Labor government's record when it comes to introducing new IT systems. Of course we have Myki, which is a millstone around the Labor government's neck and has been since it was introduced. It cost many billions of dollars. The

blowouts have been enormous, and the problems that came with Myki have never really been settled.

We can talk about the ultranet, which was supposed to revolutionise the way that schools operated. That was certainly a resounding failure. I want to quote from an article about the ultranet. This article is about when that particular project was brought before the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission. I quote:

In his opening address, counsel assisting the inquiry Ian Hill, QC, said the project was a costly failure.

‘The ultranet never worked’, he said.

‘It was an ill-fated project from the start which has cost far in excess of the conservative estimate of \$180 million and possibly, on the evidence we have, as much as \$240 million.’

I quote from another article. This article is headlined ‘IBAC finds disastrous ultranet project for schools was a “corrupt” shambles’ and says:

... \$240 million of taxpayers money —

was wasted —

during a corrupt tender process ...

It goes on to say:

The ultranet project promised to deliver an online platform that connected teachers, parents and students but was plagued by technical issues and rarely used after its rollout by the former state Labor government in 2010.

I also mention that there was a \$1.4 million launch of this particular project, which was known as the Big Day Out. It certainly was a very, very expensive failure.

There are other IT projects that do not exactly give confidence to anyone who might think that the current Labor government can roll out a new IT project. Regarding the HealthSMART program, the Auditor-General found that the original milestones for the project had proven to be too ambitious; more than half of the project budget had been spent for only a quarter of the services; the project manager did not understand the project’s full cost and could not estimate the budget; the project had no business case to show that the benefits from the program would exceed its costs; there was no internal audit activity; after four years there had been no implementation of the all-important clinical systems project, which was to cost \$96 million and account for 30 per cent of the entire HealthSMART project; HealthSMART had exhausted hospital budgets for any further computer system upgrades; there was no reliable method to estimate implementation costs; and there were inadequate monitoring standards for implementation.

I do draw the house’s attention to who the Minister for Health was under this complete and utter debacle and failure — it was the current Premier, who was health minister at the time. When questioned about these particular issues, he just referred inquiries, including inquiries about the HealthSMART project, to the mental health minister at the time, who then referred them to the health department.

So certainly the now Premier, the former health minister, did not want to deal with the issue because he knew how terribly badly it was going, and he certainly did not want to get involved in it to any great degree. He does carry that with him: overseeing an expensive failure which was basically throwing taxpayers money in the bin, but he has a history of that too with the east-west link project. Taxpayer money does not seem to mean a whole lot to our Premier.

The Auditor-General’s report that came about in relation to Labor IT projects led the Treasurer, on 17 May 2015 — so six months after they took office — to say to business leaders:

... that expensive projects had not only cost Victorians financially, but had also led to ‘graveyards of careers’ being lost when ambitious plans didn’t work out.

He went on to say, interestingly, considering that three years later we are talking about a new IT project and a new portal for Victorians, that:

... the government would ‘tread carefully’ and ‘unless and until we’re satisfied that IT projects stack up, we won’t be heading down the path of entering into new IT projects’.

So it seems like two and a half years ago he was very aware of the shortcomings of the Labor government when it comes to delivering IT projects. He certainly talked about exercising some caution back in 2015, but it seems that caution has been thrown to the wind, because we do have another ambitious project, which after three years of significantly increasing the public service is now the golden bullet to revolutionising interaction between Victorian citizens and the government. This is apparently the project that will do it.

I just want to refer back to clauses 7 and 8 of the bill, which basically give the CEO of Service Victoria the ability to transfer these customer service functions back to the departments and agencies that they are initially going to take them from. It seems to me, very clearly, that there is a built-in fail-safe here to say, ‘Well, if it doesn’t all work we have got legislation, and provisions within that legislation, to actually put it all back to where it was in the beginning’.

So this bill clearly does demonstrate what possibly the Treasurer was alluding to back in May 2015: that we are not very good at doing IT. This will give us the opportunity to back away from it at a great rate of knots if we are so inclined. Those clauses speak directly to that ability, and I have no doubt that the reason why they are there is to, as I said, act as a fail-safe when this particular project does not get off the ground the way it should.

To sum up, as the Special Minister of State in the other place, Gavin Jennings, said, this project, while it seems to be delayed, is only being 'cautiously progressed'. As I said, in the new lexicon it is not a 'delay', it is a 'cautious progression'. The 'shopfront', the way that the Special Minister of State characterised it, is something that I still cannot get my head around. Certainly the way that he has described whether or not we are going to have 'shopfronts' is in a fashion that would leave us none the wiser.

At the time Mr Jennings said that the alternative of actually putting these services through the many, many outlets of Australia Post was not something that was going to be progressed. He has put that on record, although we are hearing anecdotally that quite the opposite is happening. So while the Special Minister of State yesterday said during the debate in the upper house that you cannot always believe what the Premier says, I guess you cannot always believe what the Special Minister of State says either.

We are not sure there is a business case. Again, the member for Mornington in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings asked the Special Minister of State, and I quote:

... is there a business plan for Service Victoria ...

And Mr Jennings — and I ask if anyone can interpret this — to a very direct question said:

I think there might have been a fledgling business plan in the administration that you might have been associated with, so in terms of a business plan, there was certainly a business plan.

There may well have been a business plan, or not, according to what Mr Jennings said, but the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee asked for that business plan and as yet, from May until November, is still waiting for that business plan to turn up. So I would suggest that although the Special Minister of State seems to suggest there might be a business plan it is not one that he is prepared to give up.

This bill is also an acknowledgement that despite a significant rise in public service numbers it has not been enough to take the interaction between government and

Victorian citizens to where it should be. Again, asking the public to trust a Labor government to introduce an IT system or a new IT portal is probably asking a bit much of people. There are certainly more questions around this bill and the way in which Service Victoria will operate than the government is prepared to give answers to. Victorians are probably going to be left in the dark as to how it is going to work, but I guarantee that Victorians know one thing: it will cost them.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (18:21) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Service Victoria Bill 2017. It is a really important bill. I think it represents in many respects the new approach to public administration and indeed the new way in which technology is employed in terms of business and organisations. It used to be that you would have standalone businesses that were siloed; they built up legacy systems, they managed those legacy systems and they were not really user-friendly. They did not really talk outside the silo in which they operated. I think that what we saw in the 1990s and the 2000s were examples of that but probably on a much larger scale. I know the member for Warrandyte in his contribution talked about some of the projects from the early 2000s. I for one certainly recall the IBM contract that the former Kennett government entered into, which was a complete and utter debacle. It was an extremely expensive contract that really did not do all the things it promised.

Before the house in terms of the establishment of Service Victoria and what we are doing in terms of the rollout of the portal is a very deliberative approach to slowly and carefully plan and proof test the concept and then work out how that goes before we look at rolling it out further. I am reminded of quite a good book I read recently by Larry Downes, which is *Big Bang Disruption*. Downes has hypothesised that what we are seeing at the moment is the end of the traditional bell curve for business life cycles and organisational life cycles, and that we are seeing a rapid growth and then rapid decline. I think to some extent if you look at what we have seen in terms of the rise and growth of the ridesharing market compared to the taxi market, that is an example of that level of disruption occurring. When you are looking at that level of disruption, the old approach of trying to get in a US software company to spend an awful lot of money to build a system from scratch, because we know that this particular department or this administration or this government is unique and we cannot possibly have anything off the shelf — we have to build something bespoke from scratch — is a really flawed concept. It is a very dated concept. It is certainly something from the 1990s.

This is more about trying to find a way where we can look at developing the portal, roll out the portal, refine it, test it and make sure it is right. The member for Warrandyte in his contribution made some comments in relation to clauses 7 and 8. I wish to reassure the member that these clauses are about incentives for high-quality customer service performance. At the end of the day the customer is at the centre of these reforms. In preparing for this contribution I looked at the notion of the chief customer officer, which is an executive office that operates in the C-suites of many organisations. Interestingly, before 2003 there were only 30 such roles being performed in businesses and organisations at a global level. As of 2017 more than 450 executives hold this title. So with the development of Service Victoria we are looking at trying to put the customer at the centre and trying to have a one-stop approach to the way in which the customer is engaged with the state.

I note too the Economist Intelligence Unit put forward a paper in 2015 entitled *Creating a Seamless Retail Customer Experience*. It talks about 'omnichannel', which means:

... a variety of sales platforms, from physical stores to online and smartphone apps, but also ... joined up the various technologies being used, so that customers enjoy a seamless shopping experience wherever and however they buy.

Obviously that is in relation to commerce as opposed to transacting with the government in terms of paying a fine or paying for a licence, but I think it gives you some sense of what the government is trying to achieve. This is about trying to create a seamless customer experience to improve the customer experience as opposed to just dealing with a particular silo with one arm of government that does not really talk to another, as you would well know. Many consumers do not necessarily know the difference between local, state and federal government from time to time, given some of the correspondence that arrives in all of our offices, let alone why it is, for example, that the State Revenue Office does not know what is happening in VicRoads or does not know what is happening in terms of my fishing licence or a shooting licence. This is about making sure that we have got a seamless approach. It is about putting the customer at the centre. It is certainly about making sure that the way we deliver goods and services in this state is as efficient and effective as it can be. Of course you would expect the chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee to say nothing less. On that note, I commend the bill to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (18:26) — It is my pleasure to also rise today to talk on the Service Victoria Bill 2017. The purpose of this bill is to prescribe Service Victoria

as a service delivery agency for government and to provide a regulatory framework for the identification verification activities of Service Victoria. I have to say that I have some concerns about this bill and that the creation of this agency makes me somewhat nervous. The concept of Service Victoria first appeared in Labor's 2015–16 budget, and we saw it funded to the tune of \$96.1 million in that budget. But I suppose I am a little bit concerned that, instead of actually improving service delivery by removing red tape, we are creating another agency, which seems to me to be the ultimate irony in this bill.

I think there is the question that many Victorians are frustrated by state government agencies, and certainly in our role as local members of Parliament we are often at the front line of dealing with those frustrations. In my preparation for debating this bill I was thinking about what some of those are, and I was thinking about how a lot of training organisations under changes that this current government have made have found that they are no longer able to deal directly with the department on issues and on contracts. Instead they are being told that they have to submit any query, no matter how small, through a web-based portal when in reality, if they were able to simply pick up the phone to somebody within the department, they would often be able to resolve those issues. I was also thinking about a little example in my own electorate, where we have issues with motorbikes at Mount Disappointment around Clonbinane. Addressing that issue is just getting bounced between the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria and Victoria Police.

There are lots of examples where there is a failure of state government agencies to just take responsibility for what lies within their remit, and there is no doubt that that creates significant frustrations for Victorians, but I struggle to see that any of those examples or the examples that I see coming through my office would be improved through the creation of another agency. I think that those issues tend to be best tackled by ministers themselves driving change through their own portfolio and through their own department and by endeavouring to make departments more responsive. I am concerned that by actually centralising service delivery through Service Victoria we will give agencies another excuse or another reason to hide behind somebody else rather than just examining their own failures in particular areas and getting on and fixing those. But, as I have acknowledged, there are instances where the primary barrier is more around information sharing and communication.

I was interested to note in doing some background research on this bill that the Special Minister of State —

may I say, with his usual trademark verbosity — described ‘citizens seeking to navigate through a mirror maze in the dark’ when he was talking about this bill. The minister said that Service Victoria apparently means that the government controls the mirrors but Victorians — lucky them — control the light switch. According to the minister, the challenge is how the government configures the mirrors so users can easily get what they want in whatever way they choose whenever they choose. The minister has a vision of lights and mirrors. I have a vision more like Nat in *Utopia* when she is asked, in an episode that I think is called ‘Nation Shapers’, to deal with a minister’s bungled IT project, because my understanding of Service Victoria is that it is primarily going to be a digital platform where people register an account to access services like perhaps paying their car registration or their drivers licence transactions. I understand there was a plan at one point to consider shopfronts, but that was hastily dumped.

If this agency is primarily about managing front-end digital services for agencies, then allocating \$96 million to that is quite a staggering amount of money. I understand Deloitte have been awarded the tender to build the project. I did a comparison of the commonwealth government’s platform myGov. Whilst obviously I am not intimately familiar with the details of the government’s planning around Service Victoria, I would have thought that myGov would be an accurate comparison. That project started with a budget of \$29 million, but it tripled to \$86 million. It had three cost blowouts. Even when factoring in the cost increase, the commonwealth still spent less than the Andrews government is proposing to spend on this platform. The other thing that I found of note was that the commonwealth Auditor-General, in reviewing that project, found that the federal department failed to show how the platform made services any more efficient.

This is a high-risk program. It is complex. It is expensive. As we heard from the member for Warrandyte earlier, we still do not even know if the program has a business case. One has not been provided to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. We really have to question whether this is the most effective and responsible use of \$100 million.

Given Labor’s track record in ICT, we have every reason to be nervous, and I know that the member for Warrandyte went through a few of those examples. When you consider the Ombudsman’s 2011 report, he examined 10 projects initiated by the former Labor government and he found that every one of those projects failed to meet expectations. Most failed to meet delivery timetables, and all of them — every single

one — ran over budget. Those bungled ICT projects cost the Victorian taxpayer at least \$1.4 billion in cost blowouts. It is quite an extraordinary sum of money.

Then we also have in the training space the student management system, which in recent years has been subject to heavy writedowns and is a major reason why — though this government does not like to say it — a number of TAFEs turned substantial deficits.

I do not think the current government has addressed a number of the key factors that the Ombudsman pointed to in the failure of those projects. The absence of a business case is certainly one reason to be very nervous, but I am further concerned because I cannot see any evidence that this project has actually been subject to the high-value, high-risk framework within Treasury, which is an additional mechanism for controlling risky projects. It may very well have been, but there has certainly been nothing from the government to indicate that it has. We know that that framework was developed to provide additional scrutiny to major infrastructure projects and to ICT projects to make sure that they are delivered on time and on budget, and I think that Victorian taxpayers have a very real expectation that that will happen.

Among the key things that the Ombudsman spoke about that were failures of those 10 previous ICT projects was the fact that key roles and responsibilities for ICT-enabled projects were often not clearly defined, acknowledged or accepted. Again there seems to be a great deal of confusion amongst the government around what this project is actually intended to deliver. It seems that the parameters for the project have changed a number of times, it seems that the project is running behind schedule and we do not appear to have a business case for it.

The Ombudsman also said that senior officers appeared reluctant to make critical decisions about projects; that many of the project steering committees did not have the requisite expertise; that the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) could have taken a more proactive role in many of the projects — again, one of the reasons why I would argue this project should actually be exposed to the high-value, high-risk framework within Treasury; that the effectiveness of DTF’s gateway review process is limited by its reliance on agencies engaging in and being supportive of the process, which often was not the case; and that DTF failed to implement the government’s high-value, high-risk process in a timely manner.

So I do remain sceptical about this process. I hope that the government provides a greater level of detail about

some of those key financial aspects of the case, and I am grateful for the opportunity to make a contribution on this bill.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) (18:36) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Service Victoria Bill 2017. Better service, faster service and more accessible and reliable service — that is what this bill is all about. The Andrews Labor government is focused on getting things done to ensure that Victorians have the best opportunities in the country as we get on and deliver those important projects, those landmark projects, that make our state the best in the nation. This bill will assist Victorians in going about their lives better in a safer and more secure manner.

It is very fair to say that the world is becoming increasingly more complex. If you just look over the last 10 years and sit back and take note of the evolution of technology — the advance of smartphones, for example, the advance of ICT and the significant advances in all of those technologies that we use each and every day — it is very fair to say that we are moving at a rapid rate. We know of course that many of these technologies do wonderful things for our community. They do wonderful things in the areas of health, science and medical research, and they can assist in a whole range of other ways. There are of course, though, examples of where these systems can overlap and at times become more confusing. We know that our services and infrastructure can be somewhat confusing for end users.

This bill is effectively a measure for bringing together many of those government services. If you take hotlines, for example, we know that there are literally hundreds of hotlines that are currently available to clients along with over 500 different websites, which of course can cause unnecessary delays and frustration to hardworking Victorians. What people need, at the end of the day, is for information to be protected, for information to be accessible and for information to be usable through a transparent process. Community consultation demonstrated in this bill process that 61 per cent of a selection of Victorians under a Service Victoria inquiry preferred a one-stop shop platform that would let them amalgamate all prior and future government transactions. We know that this is sound research, and certainly speaking to people in my community it is fair to say that people would be supportive of that.

There are a whole range of services that Victorians use each and every day, and they speak to us as local members of Parliament about ways that we could improve such services. The research examined

1500 Victorians from across the state, both in rural and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are elderly, those with disabilities and those of non-English-speaking backgrounds. As I have outlined, the development of the bill has been a reflection of what the personal experience is. It is a set of guidelines and effectively a platform that makes information more accessible, more transparent and easier to use. We know that the bill creates a whole range of measures for the one-stop shop platform, and people can also expect their privacy and personal information submitted through this process to be protected.

There are a whole range of benefits that I will outline very briefly. I am certainly conscious of time this evening. As I have mentioned, the bill will establish Service Victoria as a central access point for government transactions — faster, simpler, easier ways for people to complete basic transactions with government departments and agencies, such as paying for car registration. On car registration, the ability of people to now pay for car registration in instalments has been an outstanding announcement — and how well it was received in my community. The other examples include applying for a fishing licence and a whole range of other government services that are available and able to be used. The bill will enable Service Victoria to provide a standardised and centralised approach to identity verification, and it will allow Victorians to transact securely and easily without the inconvenience of providing identity information on multiple occasions to those different agencies.

Having a flexible service that is able to perform a number of functions is critically important for the end user, and it is important for the Victorians I mentioned before who have difficulties, whether it be with a disability or whether it be that they are elderly. It is far more complex for both of these groups to manage and effectively navigate the range of government services.

The bill allows the Victorian government to provide customers with convenience and with a whole set of new standards in customer service best practice. This is yet another example of the Andrews Labor government getting the job done. I am very proud that this bill and its amendment fulfil our election commitment to address digital technology and ensure that modern, safe, streamlined services are available for all Victorians. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (18:41) — The bill that we have in front of us, which is the Service Victoria Bill 2017, is a very interesting one. If you speak to most Victorians and ask them about their interaction with government, they would say that it is quite poor.

They would say that when they pick up the phone, when they call somebody at a government department, they are passed around in different ways, shapes and forms, or they would say that they go to a website and are not able to get the information they need. Ultimately our service delivery is pretty low at best.

You would think that this would present a really good opportunity for a government to say, 'This is what we should be doing. We should make sure that every single Victorian, when they interact with a government department, gets the best service that is possible'. In fact we have a great opportunity in Victoria to be known as the innovation state, a state that gives the best customer service to our taxpayers. I would love to see that. If there is anything as the shadow minister for innovation that I would love to do, it is to make sure that when taxpayers interact with government they get the service that they need.

Why would you not expect me to stand up here and say that an idea like Service Victoria is fantastic and that we should all get behind it and all support it? I will tell you why, Deputy Speaker.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — The member for Essendon interjects, but he knows very well why, and that is because we are experiencing an episode of the ABC TV series *Utopia*. That is what we get with this government. We get a government that has these brainwaves to do things. They say, 'You know what? Let's create this Service Victoria thing. We reckon we can do it well'. Well, I tell you what: go and have a bit of a look —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Member for Caulfield, through the Chair!

Mr SOUTHWICK — Deputy Speaker, I suggest the member for Essendon goes and has a look at the Ombudsman's *Own Motion Investigation into ICT-enabled Projects* report, which talks very well about 10 ICT projects done by Labor governments of the past. They are the ghost of Christmas past. This is the sort of thing that you hide away in your closet and that no-one would want to get their hands on. Thank God we have the Ombudsman. Let us see the list of the 10 projects that haunt this government. Let us see what we have here, because they are quite interesting. We have these kinds of things, like LINK. This was a project that was meant to link the police database to ensure —

Mr Noonan interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — The previous Labor government, we hear from the back bench. You know, let's not blame the current Labor government; let's just talk about a previous Labor government. You know what? You're all as bad as one another. No-one believes that you can deliver one thing.

Mr Noonan interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — Have a look at the energy crisis we have. Have a look at why you're sitting up there in the first place. Have a look at resources. Have a look at energy. It's a complete mess. Why? Because you could not deliver a chook raffle.

That LINK database is an absolute disgrace. You know why? With that and with LEAP, when that was all trying to be done under the police to try and reform the police force to be able to use technology, in fact what was the first thing that happened? All of the data was released to the public. Does everyone remember the front page of the *Herald Sun*? You would pick it up and you would say, 'Oh, I wonder whether my personal details have now been released to the public?'. What a great secure system that was.

You want to trust this government with secure information. I would not trust them with anything at all — nothing at all, not one thing. The list goes on.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — The member for Essendon can interject because he knows what a disgrace HealthSMART was. I tell you what: HealthSMART was such a disaster that they got the 10 hospitals together and they said, 'You know what we're going to do? We're going to all cooperate. We're going to share the databases and work together and have one system that can cooperate'. Guess what happened? Each hospital said, 'You know what? This isn't working for us', and they bailed. All of a sudden it was left with just two hospitals and then one hospital. What happened? It collapsed — another failed project.

Does anyone remember how Myki was delivered by the previous Labor government?

Mr Noonan interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — You know what? Thank God we salvaged what we did. Remember the minister? The minister was proud of Myki, went up there and said, 'Have a look at my new Myki card; let me show you how this works', hit the button on the thing and the thing fell apart. That is what it did: it fell apart. And you want this government to create Service Victoria, giving

them the keys to the whole technology. Seriously, we do not want to give them the keys to anything.

The list goes on. We had the court system that was going to bring all the court databases together, all in one system. Guess what the courts said? 'Thank you very much. No, we're not worrying about that. We'll give it a miss'. We had ultranet, the school system. We had 10 of these projects. You know what the Ombudsman said about Labor's 10 ICT projects? The report says:

Each of the 10 projects I examined failed to meet expectations and all ran over budget.

Surprise, surprise! That was by the disgraceful government of the past, and they want us to trust this government with the keys to the technology door. The report says:

Two of the projects will have more than tripled their original budgets in order to reach completion.

We had one project, estimated at \$22 million, cost \$70 million. The LINK project, originally budgeted at \$59 million, would cost \$187 million. These are individual projects, with one at \$59 million that cost \$187 million. This government wants another \$100 million to do the whole lot. You know what? Each one of these projects was for millions of dollars. Originally Myki was \$999 million and an additional \$350 million to complete. HealthSMART, originally budgeted for \$323 million, required another \$243 million.

Mr Gidley — How much?

Mr SOUTHWICK — Another \$243 million. I mean, seriously, these are like popcorn; they just keep going off. Look at the total figure. Each of these projects failed, as I said; they all ran over time.

Importantly the original budget for these projects totalled \$1.3 billion. Guess what? The latest estimated cost is \$2.74 billion, not \$1.3 billion — an additional \$1.44 billion cost to government. This mob over here, this bunch of losers over here, want another \$100 million. That is what they want. The Labor Party wants another \$100 million because, you know what, they could not fix it with \$1.3 billion. It cost them \$2.74 billion and they could not fix 10 projects. How are they going to fix the state's ICT with \$100 million when they could not do it with billions of dollars? It is a joke. It is an absolute joke. It is a press release. All it is is a press release to be able to say they are going to get out there and create a great gateway, as the previous speaker said, a one-stop shop into government — well, if only.

I tell you what, I am a very proud Victorian, but I am really disappointed when you look at New South Wales and they have — guess what? — Service NSW. Do you think that works? It does work. Why? It is because they have a dedicated team, in fact a Liberal team, that have been able to deliver it because they know how to run a project. I suggest the minister gets himself over to New South Wales, goes and treats himself, and has a look at how it is done, because I bet my bottom dollar that you lot are going to just waste taxpayers money again.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Through the Chair, member for Caulfield.

Mr SOUTHWICK — That is what they are going to do, Deputy Speaker. This minister and others will waste taxpayers money again, and we cannot trust them one bit. I would not be giving them one dollar — not one dollar — let alone \$100 million. No way, Jose. I would not give them one dollar, because every dollar that this government is going to get is a wasted taxpayer dollar and a failed project that we continue to expect.

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (18:52) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the Service Victoria Bill 2017 because I have to say there are a lot of concerns that we have with the ability — or the capability, more to the point — of this government to deliver IT projects on time or on budget. The member for Caulfield has listed a litany of problems that we have seen with Labor projects in the past. I was out of the chamber briefly, so I am not sure if he got to one that I was particularly involved with when I was shadow energy minister and then had to deal with when I was energy minister, and that is, of course, the smart meters.

Mr Southwick interjected.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — The shadow energy minister is appalled that he missed the smart meters. Let me tell this house a story about smart meters. The smart meter was the brainchild of the then Minister for Energy and Resources, Peter Batchelor, the then member for Thomastown in this place. He thought it would be a terrific idea to force every single Victorian household and every single Victorian business to have to change over from the old metering system, where somebody would come along and read the meter, to this whiz-bang new smart meter. He even called it 'smart meter' because it must be so smart, and he said it was going to cost \$800 million.

He said that was a pretty good deal, we would get all this great new technology and we could sack all the meter readers. They could all be read electronically, and we would get all this great information that people could

use. Of course what happens between the idea and the execution is really the moral of Labor governments when it comes to IT projects. The smart meter project turned out to be an absolute mess. You do not have to take my word for it; you can ask the Auditor-General, because the Auditor-General's report showed that the smart meter project led to a massive cost to energy users, one we are still paying for to this day.

If you look at the energy bills and you look at the breakdown of energy bills, they say, 'Here's the cost of the generation of electricity, here's the cost of the poles and wires, here's the cost of the retail and here's the cost of the green schemes'. But in the network charge it is not just poles and wires; it is also metering. So you have seen one project that went from a budget of \$800 million to \$2.3 billion, nearly three times the original estimate.

How can a project go so badly wrong? How can it be so badly messed up? How can the numbers blow out as badly as they did? The fact is the Labor government at the time just said, 'You know what? This sounds like a great idea. We're not going to control this. We're just going to let a bunch of monopolists run it for their benefit'. The distribution businesses, who have monopolies in their geographic areas, decided to run it. They had their own technology, and of course the more that these distribution businesses invest, the greater their return. These distribution businesses have regulated rates of return, so the more they invest, the more their profit is. So of course it was in their interest to gold-plate the smart meter project. That is why the costs blew out, in part, from \$800 million to \$2.3 billion.

These costs have not been paid for by the Labor government. It was not the Labor government who had to pay for them; it was actually the electricity user. They pay for them through their bills, and they still pay for them through their bills. It was one of the biggest wastes of money this Parliament has ever seen. When I was the shadow minister I said that smart meters will be the Myki of metering, and they were. How many other states have followed Victorian Labor's lead and imposed mandatory smart meters in every home and every business? None. Absolutely zero. Every other state had a look at what the Labor Party did to electricity users in this state, looked at the costs they imposed on them and looked at the technology, which does not work properly, and said, 'We actually want to get re-elected. We're not going to do this to our people'.

We saw the Labor government make a complete hash of this. It is a project which does not work properly, a project which blew out in cost by over \$1.5 billion, a

project which is still adding to the electricity bills of Victorians today and a project initiated by and put in place entirely by Labor. The Auditor-General slammed it, as he should have. It was appalling.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — I am glad the member for Essendon raises the Deloitte report. The Deloitte report was commissioned by the incoming Liberal government. Do you know what the Deloitte report said? It said that this project was a dog, that Labor had wasted so much money on it that it would cost more to rip out all of the smart meters than it would to finish the project.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — The member for Essendon may try to speak more loudly than his suit, but the fact is I have got the microphone. The Deloitte report said that it would cost more money to undo the project and to undo all of the waste that had occurred than it would to actually finish it. So we made changes to the project. We tried to reduce the level of waste and we reduced the level of cost, but it still remains an absolute dog of a project, one imposed by the Labor government on the people of Victoria. That is one of the reasons why our electricity bills are so high today. It is because every single household has got a smart meter that does not work the way it was supposed to work, that was not necessary and that came out at three times the cost Labor promised. In this bill they are saying, 'Trust us. Give us more power to deliver services to you, because our track record has been so good so far'.

Who is the minister responsible for Service Victoria? It is the Special Minister of State, Gavin Jennings. We all know that Mr Jennings's real job in this government is to act as a factional bodyguard for the Premier. He is so busy trying to keep the knives out of the Premier's back that he does not have time to do his day job. This is why this bill has been so delayed. It has been delayed and delayed and delayed. Here we are, three years in and this is all Mr Jennings can come up with.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr M. O'BRIEN — The Attorney-General might laugh. He wants the bodyguard to turn his attention to something else so he can slip the shiv in. We know that. We absolutely know that. This is a minister who has already sought to sack the commissioner for data protection.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Rehabilitation support

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (19:00) — (13 599) I raise a matter for the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and the action I seek is for the minister to intervene to assist a young constituent who cannot yet access the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) but is in desperate need of help now. His name is Will Cookesley. On 1 January 2016 Will had a tragic accident, falling 4 metres from a balcony directly onto his head. He suffered severe brain trauma and required many hours of surgery, after which he had a 50-50 chance of surviving. Three weeks in intensive care led to nine months in a vegetative state in the neurological ward at the Alfred hospital. Will lost the sight in one eye completely and has only 40 per cent vision in his other eye. His severely damaged skull was replaced with titanium.

The brief time permitted to me cannot do justice to the severity of Will's injuries, or to the courage that has seen him slowly step back from the brink of death or to his daily struggle to regain his life. In that struggle Will has enjoyed the unwavering loyalty and love of his family, especially his mother, Jane; father, Richard; and sisters, Luci and Madeline. Will moved from 10 months in the acquired brain injury unit at Caulfield Hospital to a transitional living service. He is making slow, but real, progress. Will's brain is being slowly retrained — to wake up, to shower, to dress himself and to eat. Will is still in that window after an acquired brain injury where progress is possible, but that window will not stay open forever.

The Victorian government can provide the support that Will desperately needs to enable his recovery to continue. Despite Will's inclusion on the disability support register and his eligibility for the Acquired Brain Injury Slow to Recover program, he is still waiting for support. The NDIS will not be rolled out in Stonnington until next year, and Will's family cannot even access an early care plan meeting date.

Will needs rehabilitation and personal support in an environment which will aid his recovery. Will's mum, Jane, has fought to save her son's life, and these are her words:

My son has defied death. He has fought for over 700 days with our constant love and support, and we are not about to give up now or ever. Imagine receiving the phone call I did at 3 in the morning, being told, 'Your son has been involved in

an accident and he is in an ambulance and it's bad'. He has made a miraculous recovery so far from a horrendous head injury, and all we ask is that his recovery continues with the appropriate housing care from the funding he deserves.

Minister, we cannot afford to let this young man fall between the cracks in the transition to the NDIS. Will's catastrophic injuries did not follow a bureaucratic timetable, nor should his recovery be held hostage to one. On behalf of Will Cookesley's family and friends, I ask the minister to please help Will to access the support he needs today, not next year.

Eltham Central Park

Ms WARD (Eltham) (19:03) — (13 600) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Local Government, and the action I seek is for the minister to bring Christmas to Eltham Central Park through the Growing Suburbs Fund. Eltham Central Park is an important local sport and community facility, being the home of the Eltham Football Club, Eltham Junior Football Club and Eltham Cricket Club as well as Nillumbik U3A, among others.

For over five years these clubs have worked very, very hard to lobby for improvements to their pavilion and oval. The away rooms are disgusting, with leaking ceilings, feral bathrooms and possum refuse. The social room is too small, as is the canteen. New toilets and change rooms are also needed, especially for the growing number of girls playing football and the emerging women's team. I ask the minister to look favourably on this application and invest in Eltham Central Park to bring Christmas to my community.

Whiteheads Creek

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (19:04) — (13 601) The adjournment matter that I raise this evening is for the Minister for Water. The action I seek is for the minister to instruct Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority to clean out Whiteheads Creek at Seymour, particularly between Delatite Road and the Goulburn River. There is about 40 years of debris in Whiteheads Creek. It has been building up since Seymour flooded in 1973, and local residents are extremely concerned about the impact that that might have on the town.

I recently went with a local resident, Peter Chapman, to have a look at the creek and observed firsthand the amount of debris in the creek. Not only is it a visual blight on the amenity of Seymour, but there is no doubt that it acts as a trap for water when Whiteheads Creek is in flood. It also hits the railway line, which acts as a second barrier.

Whiteheads Creek is particularly problematic when the Goulburn River is running at high levels and when you have a rain event in the Whiteheads Creek catchment. It tends to hit the Goulburn River and wash back onto Seymour, creating extensive damage. When we were in government we funded a levee for Seymour. That levee still has not been built. We funded a bit over \$500 000 for the first two stages of the levee, which included detailed design and identification of those mitigation works. We then provided a further \$833 000 to progress the project, and after that the federal government, through the federal Nationals, also came on board along with Mitchell Shire Council.

Progress on that project has been at a snail's pace, and there is actually a discussion amongst some members of the community whether the levee is the right way to progress. I actually support them being able to explore some other options. There is real concern among the community that the levee, as designed by the catchment management authority, will not achieve the aim of lifting the flood overlay in the town. That flood overlay is stymieing development and is holding Seymour back from its potential.

If the government was to proceed in building that levee solely as a mechanism for achieving environmental flows through the Murray-Darling Basin Authority plan, through its constraints management, I would be deeply concerned. If the levee does progress, it has to address the issue of the flood overlay and lift the flood overlay, otherwise other options should be explored, and I support that happening. In the meantime, getting Whiteheads Creek cleaned out is important.

Marngrook Oval upgrade

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (19:07) — (13 602)

Tonight I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, and I ask that she bring Christmas to Diamond Creek by approving funding for the Marngrook Oval pavilion development and lighting project, which seeks to build a new multipurpose pavilion and upgrade the lighting there. Such an upgrade would extend the use of the ground for evening training, increase access for local schools, enhance local community events such as the Diamond Creek town fair and be beneficial to the broader Diamond Creek community.

I ask for this important consideration despite the concerns I have about the quality of Nillumbik Shire Council's written formal application to the Victorian government, including most recently its application to Sport and Recreation Victoria (SRV), which was knocked back by SRV. The application was to the

female change room program. The council had said that there were only six or seven female players that would use the pavilion, but they forgot to mention that one of the most successful women's football clubs had had to move from the area. They would certainly have got the funding, I think, if they had included this fact.

Nillumbik council's ability to apply for funding successfully has diminished of late. I believe it is because they have let a lot of staff go who had long-term memory and they have been using external consultants and moving in a hasty way. I think they focus too much on the tinsel and the tree and not enough on the gifts under the tree.

The Diamond Creek Football Club will celebrate its 130th anniversary next year. They made three grand finals in the Northern Football League this year for the first time in the seniors, the reserves and the under-19s. They did very well in the juniors, and at netball they won both the first and second divisions. They need new facilities, and I ask the minister to look very kindly at giving a gift to the Diamond Creek community by upgrading the Marngrook pavilion.

St Francis Xavier College road safety

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (19:09) — (13 603) This matter is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is for him to come down and meet with Charlize James, who is a year 8 student at the Officer campus of St Francis Xavier College, which opened in 2012. The college has 594 students and covers year 7 to year 9. St Clare's Primary School is also attached. When they opened they had four classes and 92 students. They now have a total of 320 students, with 400 enrolments for 2018. There is also a kindergarten located close by.

Charlize approached us around safety for students crossing the road in the area. There is one crossing, which is located in quite a poor position for students who are coming from the main estate due to the growth throughout the Officer corridor. Charlize raised this concern herself, not because of any pressure from the school or anybody else but because she was considering the safety issues for her younger brothers and sisters who cross at those intersections.

Charlize went one step further than somebody else who just writes to their local member of Parliament; she got her own hi-vis vest — we normally get photos in those, not the students — and went down and did her own surveys. She got her grandparents involved and she got her parents involved. Charlize would like to discuss with the minister the number of truck movements, car

movements and student movements — who crosses the road where, students who are crossing the road in positions that are unsafe and students who are walking out from between cars. She has all the facts and figures written down. It is an amazing little survey that Charlize has put forward with the help of her parents and with the school obviously now endorsing it.

Going to school is important. We need to make sure that children can arrive safely. With the growth throughout Officer we need to make sure that we are working with councils and governments to deliver safe outcomes for students to get across the roads. I ask the minister to come down and meet with Charlize. Obviously we would organise for the council to do so as well, as they are delivering a project in that area.

Parkdale Secondary College

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (19:11) — (13 604) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the minister to join me at Parkdale Secondary College to have a tour of the school to understand its future needs and priorities. The Labor government believes that every child, no matter their circumstances, deserves the very best education. With the Minister for Education and all government MPs we have set about creating the Education State and making Victoria an example of excellence in our schools, because Labor will always put students and teachers first and will invest in the necessary resources for our children's future.

Parkdale Secondary College is an example of a school that has a wonderful ethos and a wonderful culture which has seen that school grow and develop to nearly 1700 students. It has been the beneficiary of funding from both the former Brumby Labor government and the Baillieu-Napthine governments.

The school has grown to be a leader in our community — in excellence in education and in sport — and is setting up the leaders of the future. I have had the privilege of meeting two of the former school captains who are in the gallery today — Kynen Teesdale and Kelly Bramble. They are just an example of some of the people that Parkdale Secondary College is mentoring and developing into tomorrow's leaders. They were both school captains in 2016.

Parkdale Secondary College, though, with its continued growth and development needs to look to the future. It has teamed up with the City of Kingston on site in the maternal and child health area, but there is also a need to look at their longer term vision and planning and at how we can better improve those facilities on site.

This investment goes along with some other substantial investments in our community, including in Beaumaris Secondary College, which will be led by former Parkdale Secondary School principal Debby Chaves. We have a \$20 million investment there. We are saving that school; we are saving that site after the former government turned their back on that community, walking away from the Beaumaris campus of Sandringham College.

Then, of course, there is the wonderful investment in Yarrabah Specialist School, a specialist development school in our area that has become a portable city. It will now be completely rebuilt. For the nearly 300 students, this is an extraordinary outcome.

All these major investments have been spearheaded by this government. There has been a lot of teamwork with the local community and an education minister who understands the needs of investing in students no matter their circumstances or needs. The next step that I am asking for is for the Minister for Education to join me at Parkdale Secondary College to meet the new principal, David Russell, who comes from Mentone Girls Secondary College and who has been a wonderful contributor to our community. He is embarking on a new journey at Parkdale Secondary College. I ask the minister to join me on that visit.

Gippsland rail services

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (19:14) — (13 605) My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek from the minister is that she review the current compensation arrangements that are available for Gippsland V/Line commuters. The reason I ask this is that commuters on the Gippsland line have had to continually contend with either delayed or cancelled services over a long period of time, and the impact on them, on their daily lives and on their travels is significant. I guess we are all sick of hearing stories about local constituents in our area being late for work, having to cancel medical appointments or missing connecting transport options. It is simply unacceptable that in 2017 we are talking about these types of incidents on a major regional rail network.

The reality is that the performance of V/Line trains on the Gippsland line has deteriorated to a point where commuters are absolutely fed up and frustrated. Indeed if you have a look at the V/Line Gippsland Twitter feed from just this afternoon, which I checked earlier, there are messages such as:

20:21 Traralgon–Pakenham is delayed approximately 33 minutes due to a track fault on lines shared with Metro Trains.

19:38 SCS—Traralgon is delayed 40 minutes due to a track fault causing delays on track shared with Metro trains.

18:34 SCS—Traralgon is now delayed approximately 90 minutes due to a track fault causing congestion on tracks shared with Metro Trains.

This seems to be a daily occurrence, and whilst we have been advocating for a dedicated line and an improvement to rail infrastructure, in the meantime one has to really have a look at the compensation arrangements that are available to Gippsland commuters. We know that if V/Line does not meet their performance targets within a monthly period there may be compensation available to commuters who meet the criteria, which include having a Myki pass that is valid for 28 days or more. The Myki pass must also record at least 10 days on which the pass has been touched on and off on V/Line services and have a valid Myki pass number. Also interesting is the fact that compensation may be available to V/Line customers who experience a delay of 60 minutes or more in a single journey. Unfortunately this is happening far too frequently on this line. I just wonder how well that information is being conveyed to commuters, because they do deserve something.

I also pose the question to the minister — and this is a real-case scenario — of a situation where a person has arrived late to their place of work because of the train service and had their pay docked. This person is suggesting that the government should provide compensation in this case. I ask the minister to review compensation arrangements.

Riverside netball courts, Ascot Vale

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (19:17) — (13 606) I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Sport, and the action I seek is that a meeting be convened between representatives of Sport and Recreation Victoria, Moonee Valley City Council, the Essendon District Netball Association and Netball Victoria to discuss the upgrade of the netball courts at Riverside in Ascot Vale. For far too long netball has been treated as a second-class sport in our community. While it is commendable that many of the football sporting pavilions have been upgraded, the facility at Riverside has no change rooms or toilets and inadequate seating and shade for spectators, and the courts themselves are non-compliant.

The Essendon District Netball Association is a fantastic club, and our community is well-served by Richard Randall, who is the president of the association, as well as Amanda Basu, who works for Netball Victoria as general manager of government relations. Netball Victoria is fully supportive of the project proceeding as

it will support local participation in this great sport. I also know that there is strong support amongst the councillors of Moonee Valley to examine how netball can be supported in our community, including the new deputy mayor of the City of Moonee Valley, Cr Samantha Byrne, and of course my wife, Cr Nicole Marshall. In conclusion, I think that a meeting to discuss these issues in more detail so that we can build better facilities would be most welcome.

Miners Rest school bus service

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (19:18) — (13 607) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education and concerns the school bus service from Miners Rest to Ballarat. The action I seek is that he ensure there is no reduction in the number of school buses from Miners Rest or in the safety of the children on those buses.

A number of parents from Miners Rest Primary School have contacted me, concerned that the rural bus which goes to the Mount Rowan campus of Ballarat Secondary College and the interchange in Ballarat will be cancelled from first term next year, as will the final stop on the Gold Bus Ballarat route that services Miners Rest. I have been told there are additional services being added into the Geelong-Barwon region at the expense of Ballarat schools. This is unacceptable.

Miners Rest is a fast-growing area. The two public transport buses that go to Ballarat High School are overfull and cannot take additional capacity. In fact it may be that they are already carrying more students standing than is allowed. These buses have no seatbelts and are open to the public. There is also a rural bus run by a private company that goes to the Mount Rowan secondary college and the bus interchange in Ballarat and services the private schools — Damascus College et cetera. This bus is also at capacity, with 57 children seated and a total of 65 children on the bus. As a private bus route, only schoolchildren are permitted and are fully supervised. This is a bus with seatbelts — a safe bus for the children of Miners Rest. If anything, this bus service should be expanded to two buses, not cancelled.

No consultation with Miners Rest Primary School or the wider Miners Rest community has occurred. This is a disgraceful lack of process by the Andrews Labor government. Under the Andrews government, Miners Rest is being stuck with overloaded buses with no seatbelts that do not go to the high school Miners Rest is now zoned for. How is this anything other than a total betrayal of the children and parents of Miners Rest?

Sunbury youth advisory council

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) (19:20) — (13 608) My adjournment is for the Minister for Youth Affairs in the other place, and the action I seek is for the minister to meet with me and representatives of her department to discuss ways the Andrews Labor government is supporting young people in Sunbury and right across the state. My electorate is home to many outstanding young people, those with terrific ideas on ways to make our society stronger and fairer. I am certainly a believer in encouraging and fostering greater participation in the political process, which is fundamental to supporting our youth.

That is why I committed to forming a Sunbury youth advisory council (YAC). In 2015 I wrote to the four secondary schools in my electorate asking for nominations, and I very warmly welcomed Jason, Josh, Keeley, Natasha, Nathan, Orkan and Zoe as inaugural members. The youth advisory council held meetings on 18 November 2015 and joined the member for Yuroke and her youth advisory council to meet the Minister for Youth Affairs. Members of the youth advisory council showed extraordinary passion and dedication to local youth issues, and I was extremely proud of them and thankful to the minister for her time.

You can only imagine my surprise then when I learned that today in the upper house the Liberal member for Western Metropolitan Region, Mr Finn, claimed this commitment was not delivered. So despite the fact that YAC members attended meetings and came to Parliament and that there were numerous posts on Facebook and letters written to schools, Mr Finn claimed that this somehow did not happen. This is an insult to members of the youth advisory council and the young people of Sunbury. I am astounded that these comments were made.

When in government they decimated TAFE, and in 2017 the federal Liberal government cut all funding for National Youth Week. Compare that to the Andrews Labor government, which made a 30 per cent increase in the 2014–15 state budget for youth affairs. We doubled our investment for Victorian Youth Week, underpinned by a \$200 000 investment, not to mention our *Youth Policy: Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria*. The list goes on. To those opposite: do not play politics with our wonderful people. Do your research; learn the facts. I commend the minister for her outstanding work, and I thank my youth advisory council for their incredible work.

Responses

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) (19:23) — The member for Malvern raised a matter for the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing regarding assistance for a young constituent of his by the name of Will Cookesley; the member for Eltham raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government regarding bringing Christmas to Eltham Central Park; the member for Euroa raised a matter for the Minister for Water regarding the cleaning out of Whiteheads Creek; the member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government regarding bringing Christmas to Diamond Creek; the member for Gembrook raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding a meeting with a young constituent in Officer about crossing safety; the member for Mordialloc raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding joining him at Parkdale Secondary College; the member for Morwell raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport regarding compensation arrangements for Gippsland V/Line customers; the member for Essendon raised a matter for the Minister for Sport regarding a meeting between Sport and Recreation Victoria, Moonee Valley City Council, Netball Victoria and the Essendon District Netball Association; the member for Ripon raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding school buses from Miners Rest to Ballarat; and the member for Sunbury raised a matter for the minister for Youth Affairs regarding a meeting in relation to support for young people in his electorate. I will pass them all on.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.24 p.m.

