

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Wednesday, 6 September 2017

(Extract from book 11)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 10 November 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence (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, 6 September 2017

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 9.32 a.m. and read the prayer.

CORRECTIONS LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Introduction and first reading

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Corrections Act 1986 and the Major Crime (Investigative Powers) Act 2004, to make consequential and minor amendments to the Bail Act 1977 and the Victoria Police Act 2013 and for other purposes.

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

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) — The amendments in the bill will strengthen the operation of the corrections system by making the possession or use of serious contraband items such as drugs and mobile phones an offence; improve security at the Adult Parole Board of Victoria; introduce a paid employment scheme for prisoners to work outside prison if the prisoner is assessed as suitable by Corrections Victoria; clarify Victoria Police powers when they are assisting Corrections Victoria at prison emergencies; and allow for efficient custodial arrangements for prisoners required to give evidence about major crimes before the chief examiner.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LONG SERVICE LEAVE BILL 2017

Section 85 statement

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations) gave notice of intention to make a statement, under section 85 of the Constitution Act 1975, of the reasons for altering or varying that section by clause 25 of the Long Service Leave Bill 2017.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of motion

The SPEAKER — Notices of motion 16 to 18 will be removed from the notice paper unless members wishing their notice to remain advise the Acting Clerk in writing before 2.00 p.m. today.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Safe Schools program

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents in the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house their concerns that the Andrews Labor government is failing to give parents with children in state government schools a voice on whether their children participate in Daniel Andrews's controversial Safe Schools program.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the Andrews Labor government to scrap the Safe Schools program and develop a comprehensive anti-bullying program supported by both school communities and parents.

By Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (8 signatures).

Voluntary assisted dying

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents in the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the house their concerns that the Andrews Labor government is introducing a bill to allow euthanasia or voluntary assisted dying in the state of Victoria.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call on the Andrews Labor government to not proceed with the introduction of legislation to allow euthanasia or voluntary assisted dying in Victoria.

By Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (175 signatures).

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. implement 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) (1041 signatures).

Bayside planning

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Hampton and Bayside residents draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the major local community concerns regarding:

- (i) the winding back of the hard-fought-for neighbourhood residential zones in the City of Bayside. The neighbourhood residential zones currently limit development to not more than two dwellings of not more than two storeys per block; and
- (ii) high-rise overdevelopment in the Hampton activity centre on sites without mandatory height limits.

The petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls upon the Victorian government and the Bayside City Council to ensure that the City of Bayside neighbourhood residential zones remain in place to protect the residential amenity of the suburban streets of Bayside and further protect the iconic Hampton Street activity centre to better meet local community amenity aspiration with wider application of mandatory height limits.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (546 signatures).

Beach Road

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of the City of Kingston and Greater Melbourne notes with concern proposed action by Kingston council to reduce the width of Beach Road, which will in turn lead to a reduced number of side-of-road parking spaces, reduce the clearance between bicycles and motorists, and increase the risk of accidents. The plan will also reduce parking spaces available for Mentone Life Saving Club members and other foreshore users.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria call upon the Victorian government to oppose plans by the Kingston council to reduce the width of Beach Road.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (194 signatures).

Cheltenham and Mentone railway stations

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Bayside and Kingston notes the once-in-100-years infrastructure grade separation works at Cheltenham station and Mentone station and notes the projected doubling of Melbourne's population over the next 30 years and the failure for there to be any expanded railway commuter car parking as part of the grade separation works

and further notes the rapidly increasing spillover of railway commuter traffic into the suburban streets of Cheltenham and Mentone, causing massive congestion.

The petitioners therefore urgently call upon the Victorian government to immediately increase railway commuter car parking capacity proximate to Cheltenham and Mentone railway stations as part of the grade separation works.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (44 signatures).

Pedestrian traffic lights

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the state of Victoria notes with grave concern the waste of public money being spent on gender-alternative traffic walk/don't walk signs on pedestrian traffic lights.

The petitioners call upon the Victorian government not to waste one public dollar on any trial as it will represent another unbelievable waste of taxpayer money.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (8 signatures).

Pennydale development, Cheltenham

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of Cheltenham (Pennydale section) notes with concern the density of development projected for their neighbourhood under the City of Bayside housing structure strategy to accommodate the population increase of 48 per cent and the impact that this will have on their family-friendly, low-density, leafy streets and the fact that the Southland station was designed not as a commuter station but as a retail station serving the shopping centre.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Victorian government and Bayside City Council to minimise the density of development and better protect the leafy, low-density residential character of Cheltenham (Pennydale) and provide for future growth on rezoned industrial land.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (11 signatures).

Possums

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the Bayside municipality and metropolitan Melbourne draws to the attention of the minister for environment the large numbers of possums inhabiting the properties of residents within the Bayside municipality and across metropolitan Melbourne.

PRAYER

The petitioners therefore request that the Andrews government instigate immediate action to address the concerns of residents in relation to the large possum population in the City of Bayside and across Metropolitan Melbourne to minimise property damage and disturbance to neighbourhood amenity.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham)
(398 signatures).

Tabled.

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

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

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

ACTING SPEAKERS

The SPEAKER tabled warrant nominating Paul Edbrooke, Tim Richardson, Natalie Suleyman and Gabrielle Williams to preside as Acting Speakers whenever requested to do so by the Speaker or Deputy Speaker.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, in contrast to previous Acting Speakers, can these ones actually read the standing orders before taking the chair?

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Yan Yean! There is no point of order.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 12

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) presented *Alert Digest No. 12 of 2017* on:

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Bill 2017
Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Bill 2017
Local Government (Central Goldfields Shire Council) Bill 2017
Long Service Leave Bill 2017
Major Sporting Events Amendment (AFL Grand Final Tickets) Bill 2017
Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Bill 2017
Residential Tenancies Amendment (Long-term Tenancy Agreements) Bill 2017
Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Governance) Bill 2017

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Acting Clerk:

Auditor-General — Report 2016–17

Land Tax Act 2005 — Report 1 June 2016 to 30 June 2017 of Land Tax Absentee Owner Surcharge Exemptions under s 3B

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:

Banyule — GC72

Boroondara — C250

Brimbank — C150

Casey — GC72

Darebin — GC42

Greater Bendigo — C161 (Part 1)

Manningham — GC42

Melbourne — C245

Monash — GC72

Moreland — GC72

Port Phillip — GC72

Stonnington — GC72

Victoria Planning Provisions — VC139

Wangaratta — C61, C67

Whitehorse — GC72

Yarra — GC72

Road Safety Camera Commissioner — Report 2016–17

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 — SR 87

City of Melbourne Act 2001 — SR 86

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 — SRs 88, 90, 91

County Court Act 1958 — SR 92

Electricity Safety Act 1998 — SR 85

Gas Safety Act 1997 — SR 89

Local Government Act 1989 — SR 86

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 86, 87, 88, 92

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Education and Training Reform Act 2006:

Ministerial Order No 1038 — Teaching Service (Employment Conditions, Salaries, Allowances, Selection and Conduct)

Ministerial Order No 1039 — School Council Employees (Employment Conditions, Salaries, Allowances and Selection)

Radiation Act 2005:

Guidelines for the Verification of Identity

Additional Matters to be Addressed in Security Plans and Transport Security Plans

Security Standards for Security Plans and Transport Security Plans

Water Act 1989 — Amended Groundwater Management Plan for the Katunga Water Supply Protection Area, Amendments 2017.

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent to:

25 August

Local Government (Central Goldfields Shire Council) Bill 2017

29 August

Jury Directions and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2017

Justice Legislation Amendment (Court Security, Juries and Other Matters) Bill 2017

Public Administration Amendment (Public Sector Communication Standards) Bill 2016.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Bill 2017

Long Service Leave Bill 2017

Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Amendment (Governance) Bill 2017.

ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Membership

The SPEAKER — I have received the resignation of Mr Russell Northe from the Electoral Matters Committee effective Monday, 28 August 2017.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Questions without notice

The SPEAKER — On 23 August the manager of opposition business took a point of order in relation to the responsiveness of the Premier's answer to a supplementary question from the member regarding Mr Eideh's travel to Syria. The member for Warrandyte took a point of order about the responsiveness of the answer by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to a supplementary question from the Leader of the Opposition about energy prices. I have reviewed the report and consider that both answers were responsive.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

Membership

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — By leave, I move:

That Ms Hutchins be appointed a member of the Dispute Resolution Committee.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Program

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — I move:

That, under standing order 94(2) —

- (1) the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 6 September 2017:

Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017

Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Bill 2017

Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

Racing Amendment (Modernisation) Bill 2017; and

- (2) the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 7 September 2017:

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Real-time Prescription Monitoring) Bill 2017

Residential Tenancies Amendment (Long-term Tenancy Agreements) Bill 2017.

In speaking to the motion I would just like to make a few points. Obviously the government business program this week is quite different to normal weeks and has been somewhat truncated as a consequence of the tragic death of the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. It means that last sitting week obviously the house did not sit other than for a few moments on Thursday and that yesterday the business of the house was taken up entirely by the condolence motion.

As a consequence, a number of things happened. A number of second-reading debates were concluded last sitting week, but the bills did not go to the guillotine last Thursday, those being the Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Bill 2017, the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 and the Racing Amendment (Modernisation) Bill 2017. The second-reading debates for those bills have been completed, so we will seek to have those dealt with at 6.30 p.m. this evening. For the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017, it is the government's view that it be dealt with and debated today. Obviously today the order of business is somewhat different to the norm, given we have the government business program debate, which will take as long as it takes, and we also have the matter of public importance. That will leave a few hours for debate on that bill. We think it is perfectly appropriate that, given the second-reading debate has been concluded on those other bills, they be dealt with at 6.30 p.m. this evening.

Tomorrow two very important bills will be dealt with: the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Real-time Prescription Monitoring) Bill 2017, which has been second read, and the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Long-term Tenancy Agreements) Bill 2017. We think there will be clearly a substantial amount of time for debate on those two bills tomorrow.

We recognise that having, effectively, two guillotines — one on a Wednesday evening and one on a Thursday evening — is not the norm, but the circumstances this week are far from normal. We do thank the opposition for the consideration they have given both last sitting week and this sitting week to

the unusual circumstances that exist. In those unusual circumstances the normal business of the house has been somewhat disrupted. It is important that these important pieces of legislation — the four today and the two tomorrow — get dealt with by the house. It is equally important that the bills going to the guillotine today be transmitted to the Council tonight, and the government would seek to do that by virtue of the government business program resolution that is before the house this morning. With those few words I commend the government business program to the house. We would seek the support of the opposition for it.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) — The opposition certainly appreciates the unusual and difficult circumstances under which the house and honourable members individually have been in recent times. That has led to some departures from the norm in relation to the structure of the government business program. We do not have any particular disagreement with the number of bills that are proposed to be dealt with. There might be some issues about the actual structure of the program and the timing of the guillotine that others may raise in their contributions, but as I say, we certainly appreciate the unusual and difficult situation under which the government is operating at present.

The one issue relating to the specifics of the program that I would add to what the acting Leader of the House has said is that in our view in particular it would be desirable to make time for consideration in detail of the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Long-term Tenancy Agreements) Bill 2017, which raises a range of new and complex issues that would benefit from consideration in detail in this house. That would perhaps be a more efficient way of handling those matters: to make at least a start and to resolve as many of those as possible in this house rather than leaving it to be dealt with in the other house.

However, the main concern of this side of the house about the government business program is a longstanding one, that yet again there is no provision to deal with the rorting and abuse of office that has occurred according to the allegations relating to the former Speaker and former Deputy Speaker. Without going over and over again the ground that I have covered on previous occasions, this is a matter that needs to be dealt with by this house. Indeed what we read in the newspapers this morning just adds weight to that. There seems to be a culture of rorting and abuse of office that is endemic within the Labor Party and the government side of this house, be it red shirts, be it printing orders, be it the conduct of the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker over residential allowances, be it

dogs being transported in ministerial cars, whatever it might be.

Perhaps what is in the newspapers this morning just reinforces the fact that if you are not prepared to deal with these sorts of things — if you are not prepared to set the standards that ought to be set and hold people to account when they abuse their office — then that culture just continues on and on. The government and the Labor Party now face a choice: are they going to try to restore any element of credibility and of respectability as a party, as an organisation and as a government and do the right thing finally and hold people to account for the serious rotting that has gone on, or are they going to continue with the cover-ups and abuse of office which, from what we read in the newspaper this morning, seems yet again to be going beyond just one or two others?

We have got an Ombudsman's inquiry. We have got the unresolved issues about the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and now we have got these serious issues about further abuses of taxpayer funds through parliamentary allowances. We remain of the view that this government business program is defective unless and until it provides for the referral of the issues about rotting and abuse of office by the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker either to a special select committee or to the Privileges Committee so it can be dealt with.

As I have said, what we read about in the newspapers this morning just reinforces the importance of that being done. Hopefully the more honest and decent members on the government side of the house are saying, 'Enough is enough. We've got to stamp out this culture of rotting and abuse, get to the bottom of it, hold people to account and re-establish the authority, dignity and credibility of this house'. Until that happens, we oppose this government business program.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — I am pleased to make a contribution on the government business program and in doing so also send the regards of the house to the Leader of the House, who is absent this week due to personal matters. We certainly give her our regards in these difficult circumstances.

Those matters aside I certainly acknowledge the manager of opposition business drawing attention to the unique circumstances that have seen the government business program amended and constrained this week. There is the decision around potentially guillotining several bills, including the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017, the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017, the Racing Amendment (Modernisation)

Bill 2017 and the Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Bill 2017. All of those have been discussed and debated at length in this place in previous sitting weeks, and it would seem reasonable to bring those bills to a conclusion and to be able to vote on those bills later this day, as outlined by the acting Leader of the House, the Attorney-General.

Of course the opportunity then to continue debate on other bills as outlined by the Attorney-General would seem most reasonable, and there is also of course the potential to move into consideration in detail, which has been a commitment from the Andrews government to openness, accountability and transparency in this place, which I can also demonstrate we have provided on many occasions.

One that springs to mind in my own portfolio responsibilities has been in the environment portfolio, where we have had consideration in detail on matters of the removal of cows from national parks. That was a bill, and we had consideration in detail on that matter, so I can certainly demonstrate from my perspective that we are meeting our obligations in relation to consideration in detail of bills in this place, and the opportunity to potentially do that in relation to the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Long-term Tenancy Agreements) Bill 2017 will be considered through the course of the week in relation to the way in which the opposition chooses to engage with parliamentary business on a range of other matters that have been presented by the Attorney-General.

The manager of opposition business talks about accountability. Ultimate accountability happens at election time. Ultimate accountability is to the people of Victoria. We saw the previous government held to account at the last election, nearly three years ago, when they were emphatically dispatched from the Treasury benches by the people of Victoria in record time — the first government to be dismissed in one term in over half a century. The previous government like to talk about accountability and what they think they understand to be the expenditure of taxpayers funds, when the very first minister that they appointed to IBAC, the IBAC minister, actually had to fall on his sword and resign because of his own incompetence and his own issues that he raised. He actually had to resign his position. It does not say very much of the previous government that when they actually had a minister responsible for these matters, he actually had to resign his position and is no longer in this Parliament. I think it goes a long way to demonstrating the capacity of those opposite to point the finger in relation to those sorts of matters, given their appalling record when they were in government.

Can I also just add for the record that I think yesterday the way in which members contributed on the condolence motion speaks volumes not only for the former member for Northcote but also of the way in which members of this place have taken a moment to reflect on the contributions that people make in their time in this place. I think the way in which the house conducted its business yesterday was most appropriate.

But in bringing a conclusion to my contribution on the business program can I say that it was most reasonable for the government to seek to conclude several bills that have been debated in this place in the previous sitting week. It is most reasonable to then spend some time potentially in detail on some other bills and matters, because of course we do know there are many, many landlords on the other side of the house who have a particular interest in the residential tenancies amendment bill, a bill that I would say has also been very critical in my electorate. Some of the announcements already made by the government in relation to long-term leases have been significant and critical in addressing the concerns of tenants in Victoria. I commend the business program to the house and look forward to opportunities to work with those opposite on concluding the program this week.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran)— I rise to speak just briefly on the government business program. Normally we would oppose the government business program given the lack of referral of the members for Melton and Tarneit to the Privileges Committee, but in this instance, given the circumstances of the passing of the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and the changes we have had to the sitting program, we are not going to oppose the government business program, although I would encourage the government in future sitting weeks to make that referral of the members for Melton and Tarneit to the Privileges Committee. They might have some friends joining them given the revelations today. Who knows? But it really is important because it does cast a real cloud, a real shadow, over this place and its ability to hold individual members to account. So we will not be opposing the government business program in this instance.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — I would like to commend members for their heartfelt condolences for Fiona Richardson, the late Minister for Women, Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence and member for Northcote, and acknowledge the coalition for its cooperation during these exceptional times. It is these exceptional circumstances that have brought us to the government business program and the propositions that are being put today. There are effectively two guillotines, one today and one

tomorrow, and that is to help the flow of legislation to the other place. The longstanding objection to the government business program has been noted, along with the list of inquiries that are being undertaken into those issues that have been raised. One of the bills is the Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Bill 2017, which fulfils a recommendation of the royal commission. Given the events we have all been put through as a parliament, I think that this is a sensible way of addressing the issues, and with those comments I commend the government business program to the house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise to make a contribution on the government business program. As the manager of opposition business said, the opposition will not be supporting the government business program, chiefly on the basis that the member for Tarneit and the member for Melton, the rorting members, have not been dealt with by this house. We have more rorting allegations today — we have got the printing, we have got the red shirts. It is just one rort after another.

One of the things that I would like to focus on in the government business program is the two guillotines. I do not understand the reason that this house is having two guillotines this week. The Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Bill 2017, the Parks and Crown Land Legislation Amendment Bill 2017 and the Racing Amendment (Modernisation) Bill 2017: there is no urgency in relation to any of these bills. If they were time critical and there was a necessity to get one of those bills to the Legislative Council tomorrow, for example, one could understand the two guillotines.

Quite frankly having two guillotines is a waste of the house's time. The Parliament has already got 20 bills stuck in the upper house, so I cannot comprehend why. I do not know who concocted the proposal of having two guillotines. It would make more sense if we were to have one guillotine tomorrow and push all six bills through tomorrow. That would make eminently more sense. I do not know how the Leader of the House, who is absent at the moment I understand for personal reasons, comes up with these ideas — do not ask me. It is quite unusual.

As I said, there is nothing critical about any of those four bills. If there was some sort of legal imperative or budget imperative to get those bills to the Legislative Council, then one could understand that, but given that there is not, I think it is a ridiculous idea to have two guillotines this week. We are going to waste the

Parliament's time at 6.30 p.m. today when we could simply have the one guillotine tomorrow and push the six bills through then. With that contribution, as I said, the opposition will be opposing the government business program.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 45

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

Noes, 36

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

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Economy

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — Many residents in the Knox community have raised concerns about the way in which this government is managing the Victorian economy. We have seen nine taxes and charges increased or being introduced. Over the past

two years under the government taxes have increased by nearly \$4 billion — an increase in taxation of over 22 per cent. This increases taxes by an average of \$2000 per Victorian household. Land tax surcharges for absentee owners were increased by 0.5 per cent and then by 1.5 per cent. Stamp duty surcharges for foreign buyers have increased as well, as has the fire services property levy. Residents of my community want to know what the government is doing to reduce the impact on the Victorian economy.

Ferntree Gully electorate planning

Mr WAKELING — Residents of Knox have also raised concerns about the impact of development on our local environment. They are concerned about the level of development that is occurring, which is seeing the destruction of local trees, vegetation and native life. The community prides itself on its bushy, leafy environment at the base of the foothills. Residents of my community want to know what the Andrews government is doing to protect and enhance our local environment.

Employment

Mr WAKELING — In terms of employment Victoria faces an uncertain future as employment opportunities in traditional trades and industries, such as car manufacturing, continue to close. The government is not focused on protecting employment, which was evident with the recent closure of the Hazelwood power plant in the Latrobe Valley, resulting in hundreds of employees losing their jobs. Locally many parents have raised concerns with me about their children having difficulty finding employment after they leave school or university.

Eid ul-Adha

Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation) — Last Friday I was delighted to attend the Eid ul-Adha breakfast and morning tea celebration with the Islamic Guidance Society of Australia at the King Khalid Grand Mosque in Albion. Eid ul-Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice, is a deeply spiritual time for Muslims in Victoria and around the world. It marks the end of Hajj, when millions of Muslims take part in the annual Islamic pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The Festival of Sacrifice is followed by a Feast of Sacrifice. In remembrance people sacrifice a lamb, goat or other animal and give the meat to family, friends and relatives and, most importantly, the less fortunate. It is a time for selflessness, humility and generosity. These are all qualities that resonate strongly among members of the

Islamic faith, and personally I see these values displayed every time I engage with Muslim communities. I am proud to be part of a government that recognises and appreciates the important role that our religious communities play in making our state the welcoming, safe and cosmopolitan society we all enjoy today.

Caroline Springs police station

Ms KAIROUZ — Last week the Leader of the Opposition announced that, if elected, he will open Caroline Springs police station for 24 hours a day. It is amazing that the opposition have just woken up to the fact that Melbourne's west does exist after neglecting it for four years. The previous coalition government did not invest in a single new police officer in our community. I want the people of Caroline Springs to be assured that under this government, no matter where you live, Victoria Police provide a 24-hour response. Ultimately police stations do not catch crooks; police on patrol do. In the past 12 months overall offences have decreased in Caroline Springs by 9.85 per cent, or 495 offences. The Liberals have been caught out before, promising to extend the police station hours, but it is not their place to dictate this to police. The opposition leader is full of empty promises, and I will not let him make them to the people of Caroline Springs.

St John's Village, Wangaratta

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — My sincere condolences to the family and friends who have lost loved ones during the flu outbreak at St John's Village in Wangaratta. This has been a tragic outcome for families who have been clients at St John's Village. St John's is an exceptional provider of retirement services, which I can attest to, having visited the property on many occasions. I will be working with the Minister for Health's office to ensure that all protocols are adhered to so that such an outbreak does not occur again.

Wangaratta Kennel and Obedience Dog Club

Mr McCURDY — Congratulations to the Wangaratta Kennel and Obedience Dog Club, which this year is celebrating its 70th year of dog activities in Wangaratta. This Sunday the club is marking the occasion by showcasing some of the activities that club members participate in with their dogs. The club was formed in 1947 and is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the promotion of responsible pet ownership. Well done to current president Kevin Felmingham and his committee on this milestone. Enjoy the celebrations.

Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program

Mr McCURDY — I was delighted to speak to the members of the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program (AVCLP) when they visited Parliament this week. The group of future leaders was engaged and enthusiastic to learn more about the functions of the Victorian Parliament and the work that is done here. Since 1998 the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program has inspired and assisted 300 local people to develop their leadership skills, their knowledge of the region and their network of senior management contacts. AVCLP encourages and develops leaders across north-east Victoria who have the capacity to build and contribute to their communities and industry sectors. AVCLP drives community leadership at a local level and helps create opportunity across the region by strengthening leadership capacity across all industry sectors. I look forward to seeing this year's participants take on leadership roles in their local communities following completion of the 10-month course.

Geelong cricket events

Mr EREN (Minister for Tourism and Major Events) — Last Friday in my home town of Geelong I was pleased to announce a men's and women's T20 blockbuster between Melbourne Renegades and Sydney Sixers at the home of the mighty Cats, Simonds Stadium, on 3 January next year. Local pride will be on show as Molly Strano takes to the field alongside Australian and international superstars, including Dwayne Bravo, Ashleigh Gardner, Nathan Lyon and Cameron White. Broadcast to 147 countries worldwide, all eyes will be on Geelong as the Big Bash League action kicks off in front of the new Brownlow Stand, which has lifted the stadium's capacity to 36 000. The double-header will strengthen Kardinia Park's reputation as Australia's regional home of cricket, having already hosted the Australian, Sri Lankan and West Indies national teams as well as the Melbourne Stars. The Renegades will host a week-long training camp and community activities around Geelong in the lead-up to the clash, with a family day at Kardinia Park on Sunday, 10 December, where fans can meet the players.

The Andrews Labor government is working with Cricket Australia and Cricket Victoria to bring more world-class cricket to regional communities. Events like these give locals the chance to see their heroes live, in their own backyard, and visitors the opportunity to see all this region has to offer. The Labor government is proud to have helped secure this double-header thanks to funding from the Regional Events Fund and the

Significant Sporting Events program. We are also proud that we are turning Kardinia Park into the best regional stadium in Australia so that we can host blockbusters like this. Bringing Big Bash to Geelong will inspire our kids, attract visitors and create an incredible buzz around Geelong.

Hawthorn housing renewal project

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) — I speak today on an issue surrounding the government's proposal for a massive redevelopment of Bills Street in Hawthorn following a public meeting which I attended on 9 August 2017. One of the issues raised by community members at the meeting related to the possibility that the government may not be intending to ensure the social housing provided as part of the renewal program will remain as public housing in perpetuity. The suspicion is that the government is improving the return to itself and the developer by adopting a model allowing the developer to sell the social housing after a period of 10 to 12 years. This is effectively a land bank for the developer and would clearly not satisfy the long-term demand for public housing.

I understand the government is intending to raise funds through this process to create a resource for expenditure on maintenance of public housing which has been allowed to deteriorate over decades. The Minister for Planning needs to provide urgent clarification of the following: one, can the minister guarantee all Victorians that every dwelling built as social housing under the government's public housing renewal program will be retained by the department or its successor in perpetuity as public housing; two, can the minister advise the purpose or purposes for which funds obtained through the public housing renewal program will be used by the government; and, three, is the minister prepared to make available a full copy of the specifications previously published and used by his department in seeking tenders from developers wishing to participate in the public housing renewal program?

There is great concern about what the government is proposing to do in Bills Street, Hawthorn. It is a beautiful area, and its proposals for developments upwards of 12 storeys and 400 apartments risk destroying that beautiful part of Hawthorn.

Keilor Football Club

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — Last weekend the Keilor Football Club added to its rich tapestry of history. Sunday, 20 August, was junior and women's grand final day for the Keilor Football Club. In the inaugural year of the combined Western Region and

Essendon District Women's Football League, Keilor were the standout club, with premierships wins with their senior women's and under-15 girls teams. The club also enjoyed premiership success with their under-15 boys under coach Rob Stafrace and two valiantly fought runners-up with their under-11 boys under coach Mick McGuane and their under-17 boys under coach Adrian Minniti.

A brand-new chapter was written recently for the Keilor Football Club, which has a long and distinguished history dating back to 1894. Keilor can be proud of what they have achieved from humble beginnings with the Keilor and Broadmeadows Football League, winning premierships in 1926 and 1928. With the Essendon District Football League, which they joined in 1932, they have won nine A-grade premierships to date, including a famous three-peat in 1995, 1996 and 1997 and back-to-back wins in 2000 and 2001.

Today it is the girls and women making history and leading with success. The senior women went into the grand final as hot favourites, being undefeated all season, and did not disappoint, led by coach Emma Kerry and courageous captain Emily Law, with standout efforts from Kallyn Gent, named best on ground, and goal success from Jess Atta, Tanay Barbuto and Tenille Cann. What a team effort from the coach down, as well as assistant coach Michael McLean, team manager Anne-Maree Kleimann, trainer John Pace, operations manager Kevin O'Reilly and, most of all, the players that gave their all.

The future looks incredibly bright for women in Keilor, with the under-15 girls also enjoying premiership success under coach Paul Heard, assistant coach and female football club president Warren Grunden, team manager Kylie Barton and assistant and runner Jay Meiers. The success would not have been achieved without the support of the Keilor Football Club executive and the local football community embracing female football and providing opportunity and a chance for females to participate in AFL. Go Keilor! You have a long, proud history that is continuing to be —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Time!

Vermont Secondary College

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) — It was a pleasure to recently attend the Vermont Secondary College annual school production this year, *Honk!*. It was an excellent production, with lots of great acting, singing and dancing and a powerful storyline. I congratulate all the

students, staff and volunteers involved in this production. Well done to all involved.

Voluntary assisted dying

Mr ANGUS — I have been handed a petition to table in Parliament. Unfortunately, because it is not addressed to the Legislative Assembly it cannot be tabled in this house. It has been submitted in good faith by the Holy Saviour Parish, who want to express their concerns regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide. I would like to advise them that I will take their points on board when it comes time for the debate and make sure that their concerns are treated seriously.

Whitehorse United Soccer Club

Mr ANGUS — I congratulate the Whitehorse United Soccer Club, who after a gap of more than 20 years recently secured the championship trophy in the state league 4 east competition. With one game still to play and a lead exceeding that, the senior team will finish on top. I recently had the pleasure of visiting the club, watching some of the junior matches and programs, and catching up with many of the volunteers, including club president Enrico Marrone. The club has a great culture, with over 450 members and teams from juniors to seniors, with male and female teams. I congratulate and thank Enrico and the committee on their leadership and diligence in serving the club and our community over many years and wish the club well for the future.

Freda Miles

Mr ANGUS — I congratulate Forest Hill resident and local identity Freda Miles on reaching her centenary recently. I was pleased to attend Freda's birthday celebrations and hear more about her life and community service, including the fact that she walks almost everywhere she needs to go. Freda is an inspirational person in our community, volunteering five days a week at two local opportunity shops. Freda is an amazing example to all of us of volunteering where we can regardless of our age.

Whitehorse Netball Association

Mr ANGUS — I was pleased to attend the recent Whitehorse netball tournament in Vermont South. I congratulate the Whitehorse Netball Association volunteers and members on organising and running this very successful event.

Kawdar Elsafatli and Ramy Aljalil

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — I had the pleasure of hosting two students from Lalor Secondary College for work experience for five days over July and August. Kawdar Elsafatli and Ramy Aljalil are both year 10 students studying at Lalor Secondary College. Both Kawdar and Ramy are studying politics and legal studies and have a very keen interest in these subjects.

During their time at my office, Kawdar and Ramy showed great enthusiasm and commitment in their positions as electorate officers. I was extremely impressed with their knowledge of Australian and international politics, particularly Middle Eastern politics. I was amazed at Kawdar and Ramy's eagerness to discuss issues ranging from education to health to roads in the Thomastown electorate. They were indeed able to offer a different perspective on these issues. They were very engaged and very community minded.

The Victorian work experience program is an extremely important part of the year 10 curriculum. It helps give students an insight into their future career path and provides them with an opportunity to learn through observation and experience in a real-life work scenario, and although students are limited to certain tasks, it really gives them an idea of what it would be like to work in their chosen industry.

They both made a fantastic contribution during their time at my electorate office and also during their visit to Parliament House. I wish them the very, very best for their future studies. I believe they will both do very well and make their families proud. I look forward to working more closely with local high schools and hosting more students from my electorate for work experience.

Dimboola Boat & Waterski Club

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — On 7 and 8 October the Dimboola Boat & Waterski Club, in conjunction with Barefoot Australia, will run a national barefoot waterski competition in Dimboola. Competitors from across all of Australia will participate in the event, including members of the Australian team awarded gold medals at recent barefoot championships in the USA. The event is being held in memory of long-term Australian Barefoot Water Ski Club and Dimboola waterski club member Peter Taylor, who recently passed away due to cancer. It is disappointing the state government has failed to make any contribution to this national sporting event. I urge the government to reconsider and provide urgent funding so this important event for the region and Victoria can proceed.

Western Highway road safety

Ms KEALY — After a number of near misses and incidents, I urge the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to urgently review the need for three turning lanes on the Western Highway at Dadswells Bridge — at Krause Road to Grampians Edge Caravan Park, Jacksons Road and the Giant Koala public car park.

Horsham Motorcycle Club

Ms KEALY — I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Horsham Motorcycle Club volunteers, led by Laurie Pearson, in building the Dooen motocross circuit and making it Australia's premier motocross destination. Over the years thousands of volunteer hours have gone into running events and improving the site. As a result, the Horsham Motorcycle Club have won the right to host the 2018 junior motocross world championship, with 40 countries from around the world invited to bring a team of five competitors. World motocross officials will be visiting Horsham during the Australian junior motocross championships in October this year to inspect the fabulous site. I thank Laurie and his team of hardworking volunteers for their tireless work and outstanding contribution to our region.

Rupanyup roads

Ms KEALY — Rupanyup residents have observed several near misses on their roads, particularly at the intersection of Wimmera Highway and Stawell-Warracknabeal Road, and on the Wimmera Highway in front of the post office, where the road lines and road camber actually direct traffic coming around the corner and over the railway line directly towards a car parking area. The increased volume of traffic residents have seen following the inclusion of the Rupanyup silos in the Yarriambiack silo art trail and the location of a major grain terminal in the town have exacerbated the risk —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member's time has expired.

Terry Twomey

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — I rise to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made to generations of students by Terry Twomey through his more than 40 years service to the Department of Education and Training. I first met Terry 15 years ago when he was principal of Warrandyte Secondary College and I, a freshly minted member of Parliament. We hit it off immediately. I was struck by his passionate commitment to his students, staff and the wider

community, and also by the regard in which he was obviously held by all of them.

Terry apparently retired in 2008, but to my great delight he popped up to be the acting principal of Whittlesea Secondary College on day one of term one in 2009, with a cohort of 725 students. The following Monday only 180 students attended school; 25 school community members were dead, hundreds were unaccounted for and many more were homeless. Through all this sadness and the worst of all trauma, the shortest school principal I have known stood tall and strong for his students, staff and community. Against all odds he took that role on in a permanent position, and he has been there for eight years since. Terry reminded the hundreds who gathered at his surprise farewell function last month, which was a happy event, that Sue and the welfare team undertook 3000 individual welfare consultations for those students.

Terry has done it with humour. Take a break, mate. Ride that motorcycle. But we need your wise counsel to advocate for those bushfire —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member's time has expired.

Racecourse Road, Flemington, safety

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — I rise today to speak about the dangerous pedestrian crossings and tram stops on Racecourse Road, especially on the corner of Smithfield Road and also outside Newmarket Plaza. Last year a man waiting for a tram outside Newmarket Plaza was killed after a car and ambulance collided on Racecourse Road, and it was a terrible tragedy for everybody involved.

A number of local residents have approached me. They are concerned that because of the dangerous design of these roads it will only be a matter of time before another tragedy occurs. We sorely need these crossings changed to protect pedestrians, cyclists and all motorists.

I have written to the member for Essendon, offering to work together to improve this area given it also borders his electorate, but I have not received any response. Despite my calls for change, we have not seen any action. I would like to ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety when we can expect safety improvements to these crossings that will prioritise pedestrian and cyclist safety. I will continue to work with residents to see this happen.

Kensington Good Karma Network

Ms SANDELL — While I have time I would also like to put on the record my thanks to Amy Churchouse and the wonderful Kensington community who have created the Kensington Good Karma Network. It is a network and Facebook group that is just so wonderfully positive. It has helped countless people in my home suburb of Kensington to solve problems and to work together to make our neighbourhood an even better place to live. From borrowing ladders to starting babysitting groups and finding a good plumber, it is built on the wonderful community that already existed in Kensington and has made it even stronger.

Bentleigh electorate level crossings

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — I recently joined the Premier at Bentleigh station to celebrate the first anniversary of the level crossing removals at Centre Road, McKinnon Road and North Road, as well as the first birthday of the three new stations. Before they were removed the boom gates at the crossings were down for up to 48 minutes during the two-hour morning peak, holding up the more than 60 000 cars that cross through each day. For example, before the North Road level crossing was removed it could take road users up to 12 minutes to travel just 800 metres between Booran Road and Grange Road and pass through the boom gates in the two-hour morning peak. Now this crossing is gone drivers are travelling the same stretch of road in under 5 minutes. Around 7000 local passengers a day are also enjoying the three safer, accessible and more user-friendly new stations.

It was fantastic to mark this milestone by announcing that the vintage steam trains will be coming to the line later in the year. More than 20 000 people attended the steam train event last year, which was very much welcomed by the traders at the three shopping strips.

Georgia Shepherd-Petrocco

Mr STAIKOS — Congratulations to Georgia Shepherd-Petrocco on the completion of her project to provide hampers of personal care items to women in need. Georgia called for donations and organised 40 of her fellow old students from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College, Bentleigh, at their winter sleep-out to put the hampers together for victims of sexual assault and family violence. She worked closely with the Centre Against Sexual Assault and family violence in the south-east, got the job done, and is making a real difference to the lives of vulnerable women. Well done, Georgia.

Electorate office budgets

Mr WATT (Burwood) — I rise with a heavy heart after reading the *Herald Sun* today. I am concerned at the disservice that is done to all of us in this house when certain members — crooks — steal from taxpayers. People who would thieve from the taxpayer for their own political purposes are disgraceful. The electorate does not reward us well on both sides when people rot the system, steal and misuse allowances. Many people would think that as a member of the Liberal Party I would probably revel in knowing there are a number of crooks in the Labor Party, but that is not the case. I do not take any delight in knowing that certain members of this house and the other chamber are criminals that should be thrown in jail.

I do not agree with Philip Dalidakis all that much, but I do agree with what he said today. These people should be thrown in jail with Damien Mantach. What we do on this side is catch the crooks, put them in jail and deal with them appropriately. What the government seems to do every time there is a criminal in its midst is hide them, move them, pretend they do not exist and pretend to put them on the crossbenches and think that they do not belong to them anymore.

Malcolm McIlvena

Ms BLANDTHORN (Pascoe Vale) — I rise to recognise the outstanding contribution that Mr Malcolm McIlvena has made to the Coburg Historical Society for more than a decade. After 11 years as the president of the Coburg Historical Society, Malcolm is passing on the baton to the next generation of volunteers who will be charged with the important task of connecting our local community with the rich history of the area.

For more than a decade Malcolm has done a tremendous job ensuring that our local treasures are kept alive for generations to come. These local treasures take a material form in an impressive array of artefacts and documents, which are located at the Bluestone Cottage Museum on Bell Street in Coburg. The cottage itself is a visual delight. It contains old sets of scales, original doors from Pentridge prison as well as memorabilia from local sporting teams, both past and present. My personal favourite is a reserved parking sign for the former Prime Minister and local member for the federal seat of Wills, the legendary Bob Hawke.

The collection has more than a material value. It helps us to imagine what life was like in times gone by and reminds us of the essential role of our forebears, from the local Indigenous community to our migrant communities, and the role that they played in forging so

much of what we enjoy in the Moreland area today — our social, our cultural, our spiritual and our political tapestry of the rich local community. Running organisations like the Coburg Historical Society takes a lot of effort, and I commend Malcolm McIlvena.

Claude Ullin

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — I rise to mourn the loss of two dear friends of mine who passed away recently, the first being Claude Ullin, AM. Claude was a councillor at the cities of Malvern and Stonington for many years. Claude was first elected as the mayor of Malvern in 1987 and served as the mayor of Stonington on no less than five occasions. Claude was a dear friend and mentor of mine when I was first elected to the City of Stonington in 2008, and Claude's passion was for his local community and the arts, particularly Aboriginal art — and he had an art gallery on High Street, Armadale for many years. He was also a passionate advocate for Caulfield Grammar School, Lauriston Girls School and indeed for the Richmond Football Club, and he served the board of Richmond many years ago. I am sure that Claude will be looking down on the finals series to come and hoping that Richmond does as well as it possibly can.

Paul Fitzgerald

Mr T. SMITH — Paul Fitzgerald, AM, was Australia's most pre-eminent portrait artist for many decades. He painted Her Majesty the Queen on no less than three occasions, numerous prime ministers, including Sir Robert Menzies, and Sir Henry Bolte when he was Premier of Victoria. Paul was an ardent Catholic. He was a branch member of the Canterbury branch, which is my branch of the Liberal Party. He grew up in Kew, he went to Xavier College and he died in Balwyn. He was an outstanding Australian. He was awarded the AM in 1997 for his services to art. He will be sorely missed, and I give my condolences to his wife, Mary, and his extended family.

Equal Pay Day

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) — Monday, 4 September, was Equal Pay Day. Seventy days from the end of the financial year, this period marks the extra number of days women must work to get the same wages as men. Our national gender pay gap is at 15.3 per cent. On average, women receive \$251 less per week or \$13 000 less per year, and by retirement women's superannuation balances are systemically lower than men's — up to half.

A recent report entitled *Not So Super, For Women*, released in July this year, states:

Women's superannuation balances at retirement are 47 per cent lower than men's. As a result, women are far more likely to experience poverty in retirement in their old age. Superannuation is failing women.

Because most people's superannuation balances are almost entirely determined by their compulsory contributions based on a percentage of their salary, the superannuation gap is largely the result of the gender pay gap. So Equal Pay Day is an important and stark reminder of the continuing barriers women face accessing the same financial rewards as men.

The Andrews Labor government, under the guidance of our former Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, recently established a Ministerial Council on Women's Equality. One of the key issues will be closing the gender gap. A pay gap based on gender sends a strong message that treating women differently is okay. Ending the wages gap is acutely linked with ending gender inequality, something the Andrews Labor government has committed to do.

Charles Stewart & Co.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — The achievement of attaining 100 is always a huge milestone, and so it was that I felt honoured to attend the Charles Stewart & Co. centenary celebrations held at the Colac Otway Performing Arts and Cultural Centre in Colac on Saturday night. Almost 200 current and former staff attended a gala ball and book launch to acknowledge the first century of operation of the most well known of Western District land and stock agents.

Founded in Bromfield Street, Colac, at their first and only head office in 1917, the Charles Stewart & Co. reputation for honesty, integrity and hard work has seen them progress over four generations of the one family, two world wars, countless droughts and floods, and of course the ever unpredictable and fickle nature of Australian agriculture.

Current family patriarch Neil Stewart, representing the third generation, proudly reflected on the history of the firm, and after a year of hard work was able to launch his book telling of the firm's trials and tribulations and the many and various characters who have worked for and with the company over that time. Current managing director Michael Stewart, representing the fourth generation, ever the keen auctioneer and motivator of an audience, MC'd the night and took to the floor to introduce and thank the almost 200-strong crowd.

It is families like the Stewart family who foster and promote enterprise in our regional towns, who year in and year out employ and support hundreds of people across a century of rural progress. It is families like the Stewarts who not only run efficient, ethical and profitable businesses but who are also willing to involve themselves in the civic life of communities. Hospitals, water boards, community groups and local government have all benefited from the time and expertise of this family and their business.

Merri Creek Primary School

Ms GARRETT (Brunswick) — I rise to pay tribute to a wonderful local school in my electorate, its gorgeous student body, dedicated staff and parent community. In May this year I was immensely proud to announce \$3.82 million worth of funding for this great school, Merri Creek Primary School, out of the Andrews Labor government's budget. As part of the celebration of that funding commitment I was pleased to recently attend a full school assembly and meet with the students, staff and parents to delight in this recent announcement.

I would also like to pay tribute to the organisers of the Merri Creek Primary School fete, which I attended with my daughter earlier this year. It is one of the highlights of the calendar in our electorate. The teachers, students, locals and volunteers who help make this school such a great place for students to learn deserve the highest praise, and I am most pleased that our continued support is able to take place.

Malcolm McIlvena

Ms GARRETT — I would also like to echo the very eloquent words of my colleague, the member for Pascoe Vale, regarding the retirement of Malcolm McIlvena of the Coburg Historical Society. As the member for Pascoe Vale said, the contribution of Mr McIlvena has been outstanding and our Coburg community, which both our electorates cover, is far the richer for it.

Macedon Ranges local safety committee

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I am very proud to be a member of the Macedon Ranges local safety committee, which consists of representatives from our local schools, shire, health service providers and others, all working to make the Macedon Ranges a safe place to live.

The committee do excellent work across a number of issues, including a powerful open letter in support of

marriage equality. More recently, they have also been successful in securing a community ice action grant to continue their work of providing support for families and people affected by ice use in our region.

I want to publicly thank the outgoing chair, Inspector Ryan Irwin, for his time and expertise on the committee. Since 2013, Inspector Irwin has been a generous and steady influence, during which time the committee has been particularly active. I also take this opportunity to welcome Inspector Zorka Dunstan to the role and look forward to working with her to keep our community safe.

Country Fire Authority Malmsbury brigade

Ms THOMAS — It was a great pleasure to attend the Malmsbury CFA awards night earlier this month and I give my congratulations to Honni Morris, who was awarded member of the year. This award recognises the significant impact that Honni has made to the brigade in regards to fundraising and general support.

Congratulations also to Ashley Krive on receiving the encouragement award for her enthusiasm and commitment. Honni and Ashley epitomise the commitment, service and selflessness that is evident in so many of our CFA volunteers, and I congratulate the Malmsbury brigade for recognising the significant role that women play in the CFA.

Country Fire Authority Carlsruhe brigade

Ms THOMAS — Congratulations to Carlsruhe CFA brigade on your fourth wine and food festival at the old mill at Carlsruhe.

Bendigo groundwater project

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — Last Friday I was pleased to announce the completion of construction and the commencement of operations for the Bendigo groundwater interim management solution. This milestone completes the construction phase of a \$26.92 million investment towards a solution that will contribute to the ongoing management of groundwater from mine voids beneath Bendigo. The Andrews Labor government is fulfilling its commitment to the people of Bendigo by getting on with this essential project to protect the city and surrounding areas from rising groundwater from Bendigo's historic mines after four years of inaction by the previous government.

This community-led solution not only gives assurances for the future but importantly safeguards our ever-popular Central Deborah Goldmine from rising groundwater. The groundwater will be treated to

remove naturally occurring contaminants and will be available as an alternative source of water for beneficial use. Coliban Water have been able to deliver the construction phase of the project within budget. The groundwater treatment plan has reached the commissioning stage and is producing treated water that meet specifications.

Bendigo's mining history has left us and future generations with a perennial problem, and I am pleased that this interim solution means that Bendigo residents can rest easy that underground water will not impact on our city's amenity.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS

Accountability and Oversight Committee: oversight agencies 2015–16

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — Today I rise to speak on the *Report into Victorian Oversight Agencies 2015–16*. It is the third Accountability and Oversight Committee report. I refer particularly to pages 38 and 39, section 3.4.4, 'Investigations referred from Parliament'. This section talks about the Ombudsman Act 1976 and the referral from the Parliament to the Ombudsman of allegations that Labor Party members of the Victorian Parliament misused members' staff budget entitlements against the provisions of the Parliament of Victoria members guide — that is, that electorate officers are employees of the Parliament and are directly accountable to the member in whose electorate office they work. This issue — the so-called red shirts affair — has now been going on for some years. Of course the Labor Party has taken every opportunity to block the Ombudsman. They appealed her jurisdiction all the way to the High Court, where they lost, and her investigation continues.

I note that today the *Herald Sun* newspaper reports Labor Party MPs misused their entitlements by not employing electorate officers properly. In other words, they employed them to campaign, but there were also people who were signed off as working in electorate offices who did not work there. I note that the Minister for Sport is at the table. He is at the heart of these allegations, as are some other members in the other place. But today we have additional —

Mr Eren — On a point of order, Speaker, I take offence at what the member has said. I ask her to withdraw those allegations that she is making against me.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the member for Ripon to withdraw.

Ms STALEY — I withdraw. Today we have allegations in the *Herald Sun* of further roting of taxpayers funds, this time in relation to printing. We have not only got allegations that staff entitlements have been misused by Labor MPs, but we also now have electorate office budgets being apparently misused to pay for Labor Party memberships. There seems to be no limit to which those on the government benches will not stoop to put their hands into taxpayers funds, where they should not be. I note that Minister Dalidakis from the other place was asked about this at the doors this morning. He rightly said that any MP roting their mail allowance should, in his words, 'share a cell with Damien Mantach'. That is exactly right. When a Liberal steals — and not an MP, I may add — he goes to jail. When a Labor person steals, it gets covered up. They go to the front bench; it all gets covered up.

Whether it is the red shirts, which is a misuse of electorate allowances, whether it is dogs in cars, which is a misuse of parliamentary cars, whether it is a misuse of the second residence allowance, a misuse of MPs salaries and allowances or now printing kickbacks for memberships of the Labor Party, being a misuse of electoral allowances, we just have theft from taxpayers. The Labor Party just finds new ways day in, day out to thieve from the poor, long-suffering taxpayers.

It appears all they will do is stand up and say, 'There was nothing to see here'. Well, there is something to see here. These people have fraudulently come to government by misusing their staff entitlements, and they have tried to cover that up all the way to the High Court. The High Court has quite rightly thrown out that attempt of covering it up, and the Ombudsman continues to investigate these matters. There seems to be a never-ending line of new ways the Labor Party sets out to rip off taxpayers, and today in the *Herald Sun* we have been presented with yet another one. It is well past time that the members opposite actually stop doing this and fess up and that those that need to go to jail go to jail.

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

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — Unlike the member for Ripon, I will speak on a committee report. I wish to make a further contribution to the final report handed down by the Family and Community Development Committee inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This was of course a very long and extensive inquiry. In my last contribution I was remiss in thanking my fellow committee members for their commitment and contributions to this inquiry, which spanned over

18 months. I want to thank them specifically for their work in the development of that report and its 101 recommendations. I was also remiss in congratulating and thanking the dedicated and talented committee secretariat team — our research officer Ms Rachel Macreadie, our inquiry assistant Dr Pamie Fung and our administration officer Ms Helen Ross-Soden — who just worked tirelessly to assist the committee in delivering the report. I also want to say a very special thankyou to executive officer Dr Gregory Gardiner for his knowledge, direction and support to the committee throughout the inquiry.

I want to speak specifically today to a couple of the chapters within the report that I feel need further elaboration. The first of course is chapter 7, which is on gender and autism spectrum disorder. Many people will know that the majority of children and adults diagnosed with ASD are indeed male. Many programs designed for people with ASD are based on the assumption that it is an essentially male condition. However, the committee received a lot of evidence that indicated that girls and young women have been under-represented, particularly in the data that has been made available. We also found that girls and women with ASD have often found accessing diagnosis treatment services to be particularly challenging. We also heard that an understanding of ASD in girls and women could broaden the general understanding of ASD.

We made some specific recommendations in relation to that, including:

... better training to ensure health professionals and teachers have the skills to identify, treat and engage with girls and women with ASD; that the NDIS linkages program fund support groups for girls and women with ASD; a public education campaign to increase awareness of female ASD in the community; and that the state government develop an employment strategy for women with ASD.

I also want to refer to chapter 5, which relates to services for adults with ASD. The committee heard directly from many, many adults with ASD about their experiences. We found that some adults with ASD are being diagnosed very late in life, often after their own children have been diagnosed. These individuals spoke often of their eventual diagnosis in adulthood as being a sense of relief, particularly after a lifetime of confusion. But their journey to that diagnosis was difficult as there are in Victoria no public ASD diagnostic assessment teams for adults. There is also a lack of awareness amongst health and allied health professionals, and there are no targeted intervention therapies for adults with ASD.

Our recommendations in relation to that include that the current age cap of 13 years of age, which is the current cut-off for the Medicare rebate for the diagnosis and assessment of ASD, be removed entirely; that adults have timely access to public ASD diagnostic assessment teams; that training is provided to health professionals in identifying the traits and presentations associated with ASD in adults; and of course an employment strategy for adults with ASD, which I think the Victorian government could take a lead role in.

In relation to the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS), we found that the scheme will hopefully provide support for approximately 460 000 people nationally, but we heard both positive and negative commentary on the scheme, which is due to be fully rolled out in Victoria by 2019–20. We heard that there is a lack of knowledge amongst people with ASD of the scheme in particular and its implications for their family members, so we have made a number of recommendations, many of which are directed to the Victorian government in Victoria's capacity as a participant in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Disability Reform Council meetings. At the national level and among the COAG representatives significant changes to improve the NDIS can be made for people with ASD, and not just for adults but of course for children and their broader family members. I am very pleased to have chaired this committee.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee: control of invasive animals on Crown land

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) — I rise to make a contribution on the inquiry into the control of invasive animals on Crown land, which was tabled in this place on 20 June. I particularly want to talk about section 8.9.2 on page 213, which is about the shooting of deer; and section 2.7.3, 'Impacts on urban environments', on page 47.

Within the Ovens Valley electorate sambar deer are certainly the most invasive species we have. The numbers have grown exponentially in the last five years. If I was to say they are at plague proportions, that would be an exaggeration. However, there are great numbers of sambar deer where most people would never have seen sambar deer in the last few years or preceding 10 years. Now you see them every night that you are out on the road. I travel the road from Harrierville and pass through Bright and Myrtleford a lot, and I seem to dodge sambar every night that I am on that road, and then I dodge kangaroos for the rest of the trip back to Yarrawonga and Cobram. So invasive species are certainly a major issue in my electorate, and

it is the same for the member for Eildon. We have certainly got to do some work there.

I recently heard from Dr Lynelle Osburn. She lives in Harrietville and has concerns with the number of sambar deer but more recently has developed a greater concern with the deer hunters. They use high-powered weapons in close proximity to Harrietville, around homes. She cited a recent example of a sambar deer that was shot next to Harrietville Primary School, which is right in the centre of town, during the middle of the night. The head was removed as a trophy and the body left in the yard. These are the types of examples we are getting in close proximity to towns and our smaller communities. There is another example of four sambar deer being shot at Smoko, another little community along the Great Alpine Road at the foothills of Mount Hotham. Again the heads were removed as trophies and the bodies left to rot.

Many in the community are deer hunters themselves. They certainly understand that deer hunting is one of the ways we can reduce the population of sambar deer, so they do not want to stop recreational hunting; however, they do feel that families and communities need more support because of, for want of a better word, vigilante hunters, who are just illegal hunters breaking all the rules and being quite unreasonable in what they are doing. Finding 18 of the report, on page 97, talks about community concerns regarding irresponsible and illegal hunting. Recommendation 2 that flows on from that asks:

That Victoria Police and the Game Management Authority work collaboratively to better monitor and educate the community on reporting mechanisms for illegal hunting activity.

Mrs Fiona Hammond, Dr Lynelle Osburn and many others, including John Atkins, are particularly keen to see some action on this recommendation. Although as finding 23 states:

In spite of safety concerns with hunting, there was overwhelming support for the use of shooting —

I will certainly be writing to the minister to seek an update on the progress of these recommendations as we move forward. Recommendation 6 is the most pressing, I believe. It asks:

That the government ensure all coordinated recreational hunting programs are appropriately supervised, involve wide consultation, are well advertised, are rigorously evaluated and are transparent to ensure the concerns and needs of communities are addressed.

Clearly there is a major shortfall between the expectation and the reality at the moment, and that is a

concern to those communities. Harrietville and Smoko are examples of these smaller groups, as well as some along the Buffalo River. I am getting contacted by many in that region. They are feeling quite uneasy. To use the word 'unsafe' is not an exaggeration of how they feel. They are concerned about the amount of shooting that is going on, because these weapons are long range and certainly are killing machines. They are weapons that you use for deer, and that is what their concerns are about.

With police resourcing in the region under stress, illegal hunting is a major concern. The laws are in place now for the likes of spotlighting. There have been \$2500 fines issued in previous years, but we need to increase police resources so that illegal hunting can be cracked down on and smaller communities can feel safe while still allowing the hunting to continue. They do not want to stop it, because they know about the \$439 million per year it contributes to the Victorian economy. They do not want to cause any concern for that, but they certainly at the same time want to make sure their communities are supported and feel safe.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: budget estimates 2016–17

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) — I refer to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2016–17 budget estimates, particularly in relation to the contribution by the Minister for Industry and Employment, who referred to how working in a coordinated fashion presents an opportunity to drive strategic advantage. I want to continue my contributions on this vital matter, particularly with regard to the Victorian government but also with regard to how it relates to working with the Australian government in a collaboration to deliver better results.

This goes to the landmark week that we have just celebrated in Broadmeadows where the Andrews Labor government opened the Broadmeadows hospital to provide life-saving surgery and launched the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board to help develop new industries and jobs. This is critical for this community, and it goes to the point of how coordination works. It proves why Labor in power matters. The Premier not only established the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board to provide critical advice on strategic projects and to boost investment and reinvigorate the area but also backed it up with \$14.3 million in funding, including \$4 million to upgrade the Broadmeadows railway station.

I was also delighted to join the Minister for Health in opening the Broadmeadows hospital, which has almost

\$20 million invested for new surgery. More patients in Melbourne's growing northern suburbs will receive the elective surgery they need faster with the completion of a state-of-the-art expansion. This means more patients will have their surgeries sooner and closer to home, with the new surgery giving the Northern Hospital the capacity to perform more than 2500 extra procedures every year.

These are vital investments. The latest Victorian budget includes almost \$430 million for new hospital upgrades and equipment and features almost \$163 million to expand the Northern Hospital to meet the healthcare needs of Melbourne's growing outer northern suburbs. This is critical to my strategy of creating new industries and jobs, *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope*. I was able to present that to federal colleagues, headed by federal shadow minister for employment and workplace relations, Brendan O'Connor, at the ALP's jobs forum in Broadmeadows. A critical aim of Postcodes of Hope is to coordinate the three tiers of government, business and civil society to build on key assets, maximise opportunities and deliver local jobs for local people.

This goes to the next issue. We now have the leader of the Business Council of Australia, Jennifer Westacott, coming out and saying that we need to look at Australian egalitarianism and that it faces serious challenges, chiefly over housing affordability, stagnant wages, regions with persistently high youth unemployment and pockets of entrenched disadvantage. That is what the Postcodes of Hope strategy is absolutely designed to address. It is designed to get opportunity out of adversity and to actually drive this.

The leader of the Business Council of Australia has called for a comprehensive inquiry into entrenched disadvantage. She has suggested that the Productivity Commission would ideally conduct such an inquiry. I just want to put on record that we know where this issue lives. Put simply, we know where inequality in Australia is because they are communities that have been mapped and labelled as postcodes of disadvantage. That is the critical proposition. We have done the research. The evidence is in. It is not contested.

The Victorian Ombudsman has done an analysis that shows that 50 per cent of the state's prisoners come from only 6 per cent of the postcodes, so it is about what we are actually doing to be smart on crime and to address the causes of crime. Entrenched disadvantage, poverty, lack of opportunity and jobs and the social determinants of health — all of these issues — come together in these areas, and Broadmeadows is at the top of the list. So I have reached out to the federal

government. I will reach out to the Business Council of Australia as well, to Jennifer Westacott, to come to Broadmeadows. I will invite the Prime Minister to come to Broadmeadows and address this, because these are the crucial issues. Federal opposition leader Bill Shorten has already come. We have already had Tim Piper from the Australian Industry Group visit.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have highlighted the adverse impact of inequality. To my way of thinking the critical thing now is political will to actually address this. One of the issues that has been a problem has been the reverse Robin Hood strategy we had from the one-term coalition government and that managed decline from the federal government, particularly in areas where we have seen deindustrialisation. These issues are vital and urgent and can no longer be ignored. I want action from the federal government. We do not need another inquiry; we need practical resources.

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

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — I rise to speak on the inquiry into services for people with autism spectrum disorder, which was tabled on 22 June, just before the winter recess. I spoke on that report on 9 August. I think we all know about the diversity of autism and that some people with profound autism really struggle and suffer quite greatly, whereas others are very high-functioning. Certainly what we found is that if you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ABSENCE OF MINISTERS

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I rise to inform the house that the Minister for Public Transport will be absent from question time this week. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety will answer in her place. I further advise that the Minister for Mental Health will be absent from question time today and that the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services will answer in his place.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Electorate office budgets

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Is it a fact that printing firm

F & M Printing, a backyard business located in Keilor East, has been used by your Labor MPs to fraudulently produce invoices for printing they have not done in order to siphon off taxpayer money to pay for Labor Party memberships?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I am asked to confirm a series of events or a pattern of behaviour. I am asked to —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members will assist the smooth running of the house if members can hear the Premier's answer.

Mr ANDREWS — I am asked to confirm a number of matters as fact, and I am in no position to do that.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! the member for Bass has been warned.

Mr ANDREWS — I am in no position to do that. What I would simply say — two points to the Leader of the Opposition beyond the point I have just made — is that if anyone, anybody, has any information about any inappropriate conduct, then —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — It is no laughing matter. They should go to Victoria Police, and I would be 100 per cent confident and I have sufficient confidence and support for Victoria Police to know that they would properly investigate any such matter.

The third and final point I will make is that no-one is taking lectures on probity from this one here. When you take money from organised crime, you eat the food of organised crime and you drink the wine of organised crime, you have got no place lecturing people about crime.

Mr Hodgett — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier was debating the question. I was going to ask that you bring the rorting member for Mulgrave back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Is it a fact that one Labor MP that Labor whistleblowers have named is senior Labor MP — your pick for Deputy

President of the Legislative Council — Khalil Eideh, who has been using F & M Printing to generate false invoices which have defrauded Victorian taxpayers?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Rowville!

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Again the Leader of the Opposition is asking me to confirm matters as facts and I am in no position to confirm that his allegations as to the conduct of anyone are facts. He is rather unreliable, the Leader of the Opposition, when it comes to facts. Here is a hot tip for you: we are not taking lectures on probity or conduct from someone who has now confirmed that he has dinner with the mafia. He has just confirmed it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Premier will come to order. Members on both sides of the house will come to order. I warn all members that I will begin to remove members from the chamber without warning if this level of noise continues.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I ask you to bring the Premier back to answering a question about the Deputy President of the Legislative Council and the conduct of the Premier's crooked government.

The SPEAKER — The Premier has concluded his answer.

Ministers statements: Caulfield–Dandenong line level crossings

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am delighted to rise to update the house about major construction work that is underway to remove every single level crossing between Caulfield and Dandenong. As promised those nine dangerous, congested level crossings — the gates of which at many of them are down for 80 minutes every morning and afternoon peak — are all being removed. In the process of removing those level crossings we are creating 2000 jobs, almost as many as the opposition created across their whole four miserable years, just on this project alone — saving time, saving lives, creating jobs. There are 200 of those 2000 jobs that are apprentices getting the skills that they will use for a lifetime of work and productive input to our economy and our community.

This is also an Australian engineering first with a purpose-built carrier being put in place to move those large concrete structures into place. This is an Australian first, and those opposite stand opposed to it. They are opposed in opposition to removing level crossings just as they were opposed in government to removing level crossings. They had lots to say about it but did not remove level crossings, did not create any jobs, did not create any skills and wasted the precious gift that was given to them, the right to govern our state — not something this government will do, not mistakes this government will make. We are getting it done, creating jobs and saving lives. That is what this government is doing, and we are proud of it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Before calling the opposition leader on another question, I warn the member for Essendon, the member for Warrandyte and the member for Ripon to cease shouting across the chamber.

Electorate office budgets

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is again to the Premier. As well as Mr Eideh, which other of your current or former Labor MPs have used F & M Printing, and can you guarantee that all of their taxpayer-funded invoices paid to this backyard printer are legitimate?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — The Leader of the Opposition seems a bit confused. Perhaps these questions ought to be directed to the Presiding Officers or officers of the Department of Parliamentary Services who are responsible for the administration of these matters. No member of the government, and thankfully no member of the opposition, is in charge of these matters. These are rightly the province of yourself, Speaker, and the President in the other place.

What I am confident of and what I can guarantee is that if any person comes forward to Victoria Police with any information whatsoever as to inappropriate conduct — indeed I would go so far as to guarantee, such is my confidence in Victoria Police — those matters would be properly, fully, appropriately investigated.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Noting the Premier has previously said, ‘I take responsibility for each and every thing that happens under my government’, can the Premier guarantee that his own electorate office has never used F & M Printing for any printing or alleged printing works?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members have already been warned.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Who said you needed a fishing rod to go fishing? What a ridiculous question! I have no knowledge of that printing firm at all.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, we will not be taking lectures on who Sergeant Schultz is from someone who is still yet to explain how he finished up with the staffer and the seat after the taxpayer-funded hush payment was paid — hush money from you!

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier will resume his seat. The member for Malvern and the member for Essendon will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable members for Malvern and Essendon withdrew from chamber.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance again. I asked a very straightforward question about whether the Premier would guarantee whether his own electorate office has never used this printing firm. It is a very straightforward question. If he does not know the answer, he should take it on notice. If he does, sit down.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker, the Premier was being directly responsive to the question in his initial answer. He indicated that he had no knowledge of that firm. And in any case the question was directed to the Premier in his capacity as a local member and it has no relevance to his ministerial responsibilities.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, and in particular in response to the concluding remarks of the Attorney-General, I would have thought that the conduct of the Premier in relation to his own electorate office was completely relevant to the standards he sets as Premier. If he has been using this firm in his own electorate office, that goes to the substance of how he has handled this matter in his capacity as Premier.

The SPEAKER — The Premier was addressing the question responsively.

Mr ANDREWS — I will continue by simply making the point that if anyone has any issue, any information —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — I have answered the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, thanks for your guidance on those matters, those opposite. I have got confidence that Victoria Police would investigate properly any matter of this nature. I have complete confidence that they would do that.

Ministers statements: schools enterprise agreement

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) — I am pleased to inform the house that our hardworking principals, teachers and support staff will this week receive the first of their pay rises under the 2017 enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), and that pay rise will be backdated to 2 April. It is an increase of 3.25 per cent for our teachers and education support staff and 4 per cent for our principals, so better pay and conditions and extra support for our teachers and giving principals the recognition that they deserve. For the first time in almost two decades we have reached a settlement on the EBA without any industrial action.

Speaker, you would recall the broken promise about making our teachers the best paid in the country. That was the promise broken by former Liberal Premier Baillieu, and then they went to war with our teachers. They went to war with our teachers, our nurses, our firefighters and our paramedics.

This EBA means that over 2500 teachers and 5000 education support staff will move from uncertain contracts to permanent positions within our education system. Over 7500 people will have job certainty going forward. The agreement also establishes the learning specialist position and pays for 3000 of them across 1500 government schools. It is a position for our best teachers to remain in a leadership pathway in the classroom, coaching and supporting other colleagues. There is more opportunity for professional development. Principals have been rewarded for their leadership. Extra work that teachers do outside the classroom is finally being acknowledged. This delivers for our principals, our teachers and our education support staff as only a Labor government can do.

Electorate office budgets

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Given that in recent years three Labor MPs have been invoiced by F & M Printing for around \$30 000 a year each, will you now conduct a

full audit of which other Labor MPs have been using F & M Printing, and will you make public exactly how much taxpayers money has been rorted and paid to this backyard printing firm?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I would ask the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Premier to assist in the running of the house.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — The Leader of the Opposition may not be aware, but as I understand it, the Parliament conducts audits in cooperation —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, for those opposite and their benefit, the Auditor-General conducts audits. The Parliament conducts audits and has other compliance arrangements in place. As I said earlier —

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — If the Leader of the Opposition is accusing the Auditor-General of a cover-up, then he ought to get to his feet and make that scurrilous accusation. Of course he will not.

The Parliament is rightly and appropriately in charge of these matters. Audits already occur, and it would be my expectation that all members would cooperate fully with any such audit, and I have no advice to suggest that anyone is not doing that.

As for the rest of the question, apparently the Leader of the Opposition seems to know exactly who has used this printing firm, which rather shows his earlier questions as just throwing mud around, which he is moderately good at when he takes a break from having dinner with the mafia. To come in here and lecture people, desperate —

Mr Guy interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, you were at the fundraising dinner, mate, not me, so who is desperate? You take money from organised crime, so who is desperate?

Mr Hodgett — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is clearly debating the question. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — The Premier, to continue.

Mr ANDREWS — As I was indicating, the Leader of the Opposition is asking about audits, and I am

confirming for him that to the best of my understanding the Presiding Officers and the Department of Parliamentary Services conduct audits, as is appropriate. If the Leader of the Opposition is inviting the government to audit each and every member of Parliament, that would be a break with the longstanding practice of the Parliament being independent from the executive. These really are quite strange policy announcements from the Leader of the Opposition today. For anyone who has got any complaint to make, any information, Victoria Police is the place to go. As far as auditing is concerned, that is a function of the Parliament, as it should be.

Mr R. Smith interjected.

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

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

Mr Burgess interjected.

The SPEAKER — I ask the member for Hastings to cease interjecting. I realise he is at a disadvantage because he is sitting close to me, but I could hear him right through the questions.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — With a culture of rorting in your government, Premier — red shirts, chauffeur-driven dogs, second residence allowances — when will you, your government and the Labor Party stop stealing taxpayers money?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I am indebted to the Leader of the Opposition for giving us a lecture on culture — fancy, of all the people. Organised crime causes untold misery and pain and suffering across our community, and you take their money.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I was asking the Premier a question about Labor MPs and their culture and the organised crime of F & M Printing — by your colleagues, Premier, the organising of crime by your colleagues to rort taxpayers money. I ask you, Speaker, to bring this rorting Premier back to answering the question: when is he going to stop stealing taxpayers money?

Mr ANDREWS — On the point of order, Speaker, the question related to culture, and I am answering in that regard. Can I assure the Leader of the Opposition

that every time the words ‘organised crime’ pass his lips, that is fine by me.

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

Mr ANDREWS — I can answer by confirming for the Leader of the Opposition that no-one is taking lectures on culture, probity, appropriate behaviour or criminality from people who take money from organised crime — take their money, eat their food and drink their wine.

Ministers statements: Health Service Violence Prevention Fund

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) — I rise to update the house on how our government is better supporting our health workforce. Before doing so, I do just want to place on the record how proud we are of the expertise and the professionalism of our nurses, our doctors, our allied health care workers and our paramedics, who work so hard and tirelessly in order to ensure that Victorians get the care when they need it and where they need it. We have reflected that appreciation by securing good enterprise bargaining agreements that reflect the quality and the value of that workforce. I would say that is in stark contrast to the way in which those opposite conducted their industrial approach to our many hardworking healthcare workers.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is now proceeding to debate the issue rather than make a ministers statement. I ask you to bring her back to compliance with sessional orders.

Mr Pakula — On the point of order, Speaker, in making a ministers statement the minister is more than entitled to reflect on the circumstances that were in existence when we came to office — the parlous circumstances in regard to our ambulance and health services — and the sort of culture we inherited.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Health to continue, without attacking the opposition.

Ms HENNESSY — As I was saying, valuing your workforce is a critical part of ensuring that you have a sustainable workforce, as is the health and safety of our workforce. We do not take that for granted by any stretch of the imagination. It is true to say that our workforce has been subjected to violent and aggressive behaviour in our health sector, but our government has made a commitment of \$40 million to the Health

Service Violence Prevention Fund that has funded a range of activities.

I was delighted this week to attend the Alfred hospital to announce that we will be building 16 more behavioural assessment rooms in our emergency departments. The purpose of these rooms is to ensure that when our emergency departments have violent and aggressive patients that we are able to put those patients in a place where they are secure, a place which our health services staff and where a multidisciplinary team are able to assess that patient. This is working very, very well at the Alfred, and we will be rolling that out across 16 more emergency departments. We have already rolled out five behavioural assessment rooms across some other hospitals. We value our health workforce, we want them to be safe and we are going to continue to invest to keep them so.

West Gate tunnel project

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — My question is to the Premier. During 2014 the now Premier was very critical of the fact that documents for the east–west toll road were kept secret. This government promised more transparency and did release the peer review of traffic modelling for the Metro Tunnel that proved that that public transport project did stack up, but now, in an about-face, the government will not release a report by expert John Allard which questions the traffic modelling for the West Gate tunnel toll road. This project will pour thousands of cars into the CBD and inner suburbs, yet the government will not let the public see documents by experts who are critical of it. Premier, is this government keeping the report secret because it knows that the West Gate tunnel is another expensive toll road that does not stack up, just like the east–west toll road?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I do thank the member for Melbourne for her question. The answer is no. Beyond that, though, let me point out that I think the comparison between these two projects is simply not an accurate one, and a comparison between this government and the previous government similarly is an inaccurate comparison. I can well remember literally wheelbarrow loads full of business cases for a project put forward by those opposite that had to be released by this government. What is more, I know, as does I think the member for Melbourne, that a business case and reference design material documentation, the likes of which were never released in relation to that dog of a project, the east–west link, have been released in relation to the West Gate tunnel. It has been released, and that is a stark contrast, might I respectfully submit

to the member, between this government and the previous government.

We are of a view that you need — and not just a view, we are delivering — investments in both road and rail, something that is important and something that was never even talked about by those opposite. I am more than happy to provide a briefing to the member for Melbourne about our level crossing removal program, the Metro Tunnel program, the West Gate tunnel, the Tullamarine widening project, the Monash widening project, the Hurstbridge line upgrade, the Mernda rail extension, our regional rail revival — time is against me, I could list all of the regional lines that are being upgraded — and the Murray Basin freight rail project.

This is the biggest infrastructure boost this state has ever seen, and I would hate to think that the Greens political party are in fact opposed to that infrastructure spend, but it would seem that they are, and you would expect not much more from people who are, frankly, and I say respectfully, people who sit on the sidelines, people who have never so much as laid a brick in terms of building the infrastructure we need, never so much as created one single job, those who are in essence a fraud, those who talk it up and deliver nothing. They talk a good game and deliver nothing except commentary from the sidelines that lifts no-one out of poverty, that empowers nobody and that creates no economic opportunity. They are words, and they ring hollow. This government will continue to deliver in road and rail in record terms, creating jobs and opportunities to keep our state where it belongs — out in front and leading the way.

Supplementary question

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) — If the government is so confident that the West Gate tunnel does stack up, then why will this government not release the peer review of the traffic modelling by John Allard so the public can be confident that it stacks up for more than just Transurban's profits?

Mr Wells interjected.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Thanks for the supplementary question, and I do thank the former Treasurer, the member for Rowville, for his interjection that it does not stack up. Well, you would know about projects that do not stand up, Mr 45 Cents on the Dollar — not a great investment, I would have thought. Let us spend \$20 billion on something that makes traffic worse and delivers 45 cents for every dollar you invest.

The member for Melbourne and her political party are opposed to this road. They are opposed to every road. It

would seem they are opposed to public transport investments as well and the jobs that they create. Therefore can I respectfully submit to the member for Melbourne, given that you are opposed to just about everything, that you have not got much credibility as a critic of any projects led by this government.

Ms Sandell — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was very narrow and very clear. Will the government release the peer review or not? I would like to ask you to direct the Premier to answer that question.

The SPEAKER — The Premier has got 3 seconds left. He has concluded his answer.

Ministers statements: Melbourne Metro rail project

Mr NOONAN (Minister for Industry and Employment) — I am very pleased to follow the Premier to talk about the transformational jobs that are coming in the member for Melbourne's electorate with the Melbourne Metro Tunnel. As we know, it is the biggest public transport project in the state's history, and it will of course free up significant capacity to run more trains more often. Last Saturday I was very privileged to be able to meet some of our best and brightest engineering cadets, who are helping to bring this project to life. They spoke very passionately about the project. They spoke about getting a start on the project. They spoke about the size and complexity of the project and about how the project will transform Melbourne forever.

I did meet both Gabby and James, two young people very determined to succeed as part of this project. Because of our record infrastructure agenda, which the Premier just ran through, many young people are getting a start on some of our major projects right across Victoria. I am very pleased to remind the house that this is happening because of our major project skills guarantee. The guarantee absolutely ensures that where our major projects take place we have 10 per cent of the workforce committed to apprentices, trainees and cadets. That means that across our infrastructure pipeline already we have more than 1500 opportunities for apprentices, trainees and cadets across 30 projects. Already 52 apprentices, trainees and cadets are working on the early works package as part of the Melbourne Metro project. We will have 7000 people work on that project, including 500 apprentices, trainees and cadets, at the peak.

This is Labor's way. This is about giving young people a start. This of course stands in stark contrast to those

opposite, who cut TAFE and left young people on the scrap heap. We will not do that.

Electorate office budgets

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier inform the house whether F & M Printing has ever been awarded any state government printing work and, if so, were these jobs actually completed?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — The Leader of the Opposition asked me a broad question, and I am not in a position to answer that. I am aware of my obligations to the house. I am not in a position to answer that question. I will provide an answer as quickly as possible to the Leader of the Opposition on that question.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) — Can the Premier guarantee that there are no other printing businesses beyond F & M Printing that are being used or have been used by Labor MPs to defraud and rort taxpayers money in order to pay for Labor Party branch memberships?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — All I can guarantee the Leader of the Opposition is that if anybody has any information about any improper conduct, then they ought to go forward to Victoria Police. Again, such is my confidence in Victoria Police and their capacity that I can guarantee that if information was to be brought to Victoria Police, they would investigate it appropriately, as is essential when dealing with such critically important matters.

Ministers statements: regional and rural roads

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) — It is a privilege to rise to update the house on the government's regional road maintenance and surface replacement program. As we all know, roads are the very lifeblood of country communities, and we have very much doubled investment and are making roads safer and stronger. Since coming to office we have actually doubled the maintenance spend. That is factual.

Over the next 12 months the government will be spending approximately \$530 million on regional and country roads. We will update more than 1400 kilometres of roads across the state, and we are not just talking about potholes. If you look at our safety record, we will be investing over \$340 million alone on wire rope barriers on the 20 most dangerous and most

used arterial roads on our network, and that is very much about getting products more safely to the market.

But I always like to look at what other alternative policies are being put forward. We always get this hoary old chestnut of the country roads and bridges program, but I was a little bit surprised when I saw a letter to the editor from the Leader of The National Party — or maybe it should have been the multinational party, because at the end of the day they have got so many other nations in there punting for them. He highlighted that this government was spending \$360 million less than what they delivered. Let me look at the budget outcome figures. I think we need a little bit of truth because they are obviously lying with one of the alternative policies. Last time they were in, on the outcomes for surface replacement and maintenance, it was \$222 million. What are we doing? We are funding \$418 million this year. So obviously the alternative policy of the National Party is too low.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

South Barwon electorate

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — (13 008) My constituency question is to the Minister for Families and Children. When will the minister grant Next Steps Early Learning Centre its licence to operate as an early learning centre located in Pigdons Road, Waurn Ponds? I was recently contacted by Ms Patricia McLean and Mr Chris Bongers, director and business manager of Next Steps Early Learning Centre, who advised me that after more than 80 days from initially lodging their application for a provider approval licence to the Department of Education and Training they are yet to hear a reply, let alone be granted their licence.

As the minister should be aware, early leaning is vital in education, and this centre would offer the Geelong community a much-needed service. It is a \$3.5 million private investment which will provide 50 full-time, part-time and casual jobs and seven classrooms, providing spaces for up to 156 children a day, located next to the Armstrong Creek growth corridor and Waurn Ponds, which is a rapidly expanding area. Minister, I ask again: when will you grant Next Steps Early Learning Centre its licence to operate as an early learning centre?

Sunbury electorate

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — (13 009) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. What are the proposed time lines for design and construction of the shared user path between Sunbury and Diggers

Rest? Last week I had the great privilege to announce \$1.1 million for this project, a project that has been the culmination of three years of incredibly hard work by the Sunbury Bicycle Users Group and the Bike Safe Macedon Ranges group and many local residents. This news was incredibly well received. I join the City of Melton, the City of Hume and project partners, and I ask the minister: what are the construction and design time lines for this incredibly important project?

Gippsland East electorate

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) — (13 010) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the information I seek is: what action is the government taking to notify motorists of the danger of sambar deer on Gippsland East roads? Recent newspaper articles have reported the increased number of accidents caused by these large deer, which are in plague proportions, and the local panel beaters are certainly getting more than their fair share of work. Unfortunately it appears that it is only a matter of time before we have more serious accidents, with some of the worst areas being Princes Highway East, Great Alpine Road and Buchan-Gelantipy Road.

I have been advised that deer signs that were erected in some areas lasted only a matter of weeks due to the fact that, as one local policeman described it, 'They're very popular in man caves'. Given that the signs were removed quickly but the problem remains, I ask the minister if the signage issue can be revisited and whether perhaps a more general wildlife warning, rather than one specifically about deer, may overcome this problem.

Thomastown electorate

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) — (13 011) My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I am aware that the Andrews Labor government is assisting businesses by providing Victorians with discounted energy-efficient products through accredited providers. With this scheme having been in place since last year, participating businesses have already saved approximately \$27 million on their energy bills. Some of these businesses have contacted my office with concerns over their energy costs and are seeking further assistance to reduce these costs. My question to the minister is: what other schemes and programs are available for businesses in the Thomastown electorate to help them keep their energy costs down, and how can they access these programs to ensure they save even more money on their energy bills?

Ferntree Gully electorate

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) — (13 012) My constituency question is for the Minister for Education. The question that has been raised by my community is with regard to the upgrade of infrastructure in schools throughout my electorate. Concerns have been raised with me that over the last three budgets of this government there have been no significant infrastructure upgrades for any schools within the Ferntree Gully electorate. This is causing great angst for many residents throughout my community, and the question has been raised with me as to what the government is doing in regard to upgrading infrastructure. It is important that the government provides an answer to this important question so that my community knows what the government's plans are for improving and upgrading schools within the Ferntree Gully electorate.

Bentleigh electorate

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — (13 013) My question is to the Minister for Suburban Development. The first annual inner south-east metropolitan partnership assembly was held last week. It was well attended by local businesses, community groups and local councils coming together to engage in meaningful conversations about priorities for their region. Priorities decided by the assembly included more green spaces, public safety and social inclusion. How will these priorities be addressed by the government?

Shepparton electorate

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — (13 014) My question is for the Attorney-General. Can the Attorney advise what energy-saving and energy-producing features have been incorporated into the design of the new Shepparton law courts? Constituents in my community have recently had the opportunity to tour the new court and have raised questions with my office about its solar energy generating capacity. Renewable energy is one of the cornerstone policies of this government, and as the Shepparton region enjoys sunshine almost every day of the year, it would make sense to capitalise on this natural resource. The new Shepparton law courts will be an outstanding addition to the city, and they provide an opportunity for state-of-the-art energy conservation features.

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — (13 015) My constituency question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and I ask: how will the

implementation of a single housing register by the Andrews Labor government simplify and improve the process for people applying for public and social housing? In Dandenong the demand for public and social housing is among the greatest in the state, made worse by four years of neglect by those opposite. I regularly receive inquiries from constituents in desperate need of housing assistance and struggling to navigate the system. They recount long delays and of having had to provide the same information over and over again. With so many of these people already facing a complex array of social and economic challenges, it is essential that we provide fair and easy access to a range of housing options.

Burwood electorate

Mr WATT (Burwood) — (13 016) My question is to the Minister for Health in her capacity representing the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. Recently I had a meeting in my office with a victim of family violence. I was distressed to hear of the physical and psychological abuse this person suffered. A stabbing with a pen brought a visit from the police. Homelessness, parental alienation and emotional abuse ensued following the separation. What specific services and support can the government suggest for this particular resident of Boroondara to assist with the myriad of issues they are faced with as a victim of family violence?

Eltham electorate

Ms WARD (Eltham) — (13 017) My question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness Centre is an important piece of local community infrastructure in my electorate. It plays host to a range of sports, including over 5000 basketball players, and the member for Yan Yean and I are very familiar with it. For too long people with disabilities, particularly those in wheelchairs, have had to endure the uncomfortable, embarrassing and degrading experience of negotiating steps in order to access the stadium's facilities. I am informed that in some instances people in wheelchairs need to be carried into the stadium and downstairs to play their sport and be carried back upstairs to use the toilet. In 2017, Minister, is it acceptable to the government that these facilities operated by local government subject people with disabilities to these terrible conditions?

Ms Ryall — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to question on notice 12815 to the Minister for Health, which was raised on 20 June 2017. On two previous occasions in this house I have raised the fact

that I have not received a response, despite the 30-day time requirement under sessional order 10. I raise this again for urgent attention. I would also ask if you could let me know whether those previous requests have gone through and whether a reason has been provided for the lack of response. I will certainly raise this every single day in this house until I get the response required.

The SPEAKER — I will follow up those matters.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS

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

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) — As part of our inquiry the committee visited the Autism Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) in Brisbane, which is focused on people living with autism and is currently under the direction of Professor Andrew Whitehouse. This national cooperative research effort has received significant funding — \$110 million over eight years. There are currently 39 research projects at the centre, and these projects are coordinated around and targeted to specific areas.

A number of Victorian participants are involved with the CRC's projects. I may have mentioned this last time, but this includes La Trobe University, Amaze and the I CAN network. What the committee noticed was that the CRC's projects are divided into three areas: early years, school years and adulthood. The early years project is about providing a better start through early diagnosis, the school years project is about enhancing teaching and learning and the adult project is about finding a place in society. I think it is fair to say that after we visited the CRC our report started to take shape and we knew we needed to have chapters on those three areas as a bare minimum.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition — it is certainly not a disease — and people with autism have difficulties in two broad areas: social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviours, interests and activities. On top of this there may also be sensory issues such as sensitivity to loud noises and bright lights. We know that autism is a lifelong condition. As I mentioned, the CRC focused on the early years, the school years and the adult years, representing that lifelong period.

It is also fair to say that there is quite a diversity of opinion among people living with autism about how they feel about their condition. On the one hand there are those who feel their condition is one to celebrate, and on the other hand we had people coming to our inquiry describing their life as a living hell. So it is very

important when looking at the balance of the report and recommendations that we understand these differences.

I want to focus for a moment on diagnosis, because diagnosis, as we heard, can occur at any time. Although the condition is usually evident in the early years, a diagnosis may not necessarily happen then; it can actually take years. Many adults are diagnosed with autism, some after their children are diagnosed when they recognise the signs of autism in themselves. Others do not bother about a diagnosis, but the pieces start to fall into place. Regardless of diagnosis it is clear that people with autism need support and community understanding in so many different areas.

We had a lot of issues raised about the diagnosis process. People mentioned getting the run-around, going nowhere and going around in circles, as well as the cost of diagnosis and the waiting list for specialists. Then there is the question of who is in the best position to make a diagnosis. Is it a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a paediatrician, a speech therapist or a combination? If it is a combination, how many of those specialists should there be? There is the issue of the availability of services in country areas. Not getting a diagnosis initially and then years later getting that diagnosis is incredibly frustrating, as well as the uncertainty of not knowing what to do. Once you get the diagnosis, then what?

I was very encouraged by the CRC project in the early years, the developmental surveillance for autism project led by Cheryl Dissanayake at La Trobe University. We met Cheryl as part of our inquiry. The project aims to train a minimum of 400 primary care professionals, including those in maternal and child health, paediatricians, GPs, allied health staff and early childhood educators. This is terrific, and we were very pleased to hear that, but it certainly cannot come soon enough. So we also made a recommendation in this area about training for current maternal and child health nurses and those who are going to be trained that they receive training specifically in the developmental surveillance of children with possible autism and to support those children and families in their referral for diagnosis.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee: budget estimates 2016–17

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) — I rise this morning to make a contribution on the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's (PAEC) inquiry into the 2016–17 budget estimates. My contribution will relate to the Minister for Families and Children's contribution to the inquiry. I would just like to send a quick cheerio because it is Early Childhood Educators Day today, so I wish all those fantastic preschool teachers and assistants

a great day, as it is every day when they put in an enormous effort to make sure that our children get the best education before they start school. I would like to quote from the *Age* of a few years ago now. It is a terrific article that talks about preschool being the key to happier futures. It says:

If you look at some of the societal problems we face like crime, welfare dependency, illiteracy, poor school outcomes, mental health, obesity, heart disease, the list goes on and on ...

It is quite a comprehensive list already; in fact it is a rather alarming list.

they don't suddenly appear in adolescence and adulthood.

Many of those conditions begin in pathways that start early in life.

The minister quite rightly noted in the presentation she gave to members that we know that the first years of life are when brains develop the most and that the early years can set the child up for life. The evidence is completely overwhelming in this space. The early years matter. I must say that in an increasingly complex and fractured world investing in the early years is more needed than ever. Some people are calling this incredible flux that is happening in our society and having an impact on our children a form of society climate change — that we do not actually know what is happening but it is impacting on our children in a very comprehensive and uneducated way. We really do need to make sure that we look at what is happening in our early childhood space and invest in it. It is really vital. If you are out talking to teachers in schools, they can pick the children who have gone to kindergarten or preschool or who have come from a home where reading has been happening and those that have not had that early years preparation.

We as a government in committing to building the Education State have noted that because you may be disadvantaged, because of your home situation, life experience or background or indeed because of some of the developmental delays that come from your own DNA, children really do need not to miss the early years education experience. In fact we need to be totally in this space and making sure that they do have that.

I note that in the inquiry Dr Carling-Jenkins in the other place asked the minister about where Victoria sits in terms of our international ranking. The fact is that it has been quite poor. If I look back to the article that I quoted, which was in 2010, there were a few wasted years when those opposite were in power and when we did not invest in this. In fact we had cutbacks to our kindergarten services. That is why when the minister, Ms Mikakos, answered, she was honest about this. She said, 'Look, our international ranking is not terrific, but

we have to make sure that we improve it. We do well in terms of Australia's situation, but we need to do better'. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Education I am pleased to say that the early childhood reform plan is a landmark strategy. It is not just words; it is words backed with dollars. In her contribution the minister said that our plan is about ensuring that children are ready for kindergarten, ready for school and ready for life. It is about supporting higher quality services, reducing disadvantage, providing more support for parents and improving accessibility and inclusiveness in all the early childhood education services.

That is why this investment which comes with the early childhood reform is really important, because we know that funding and reform, when they come together, are the right things to do. That investment will change lives and help us build a brighter future for our young people. I commend the minister on her contribution at PAEC. Over the three budgets we have more than doubled —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — The member's time has expired.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Fiona Richardson, MP

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Local Government) (*By leave*) — It is with great sadness that I speak to the condolence motion that was on yesterday. It is quite obvious that Fiona died too soon. I thank those opposite for the opportunity to speak today. I was unable to be here yesterday due to having to be in hospital with my husband who is himself battling cancer. I guess that is one of the reasons why this passing has really touched me so much. Not only was Fiona a wonderful member of Parliament but she was also a friend.

I had the opportunity to get to know her a lot better over the last three years due to sitting right next to her. Having known her for almost 25 years I got to see a very different side of her when sitting beside her in Parliament. That was a side of her as a mother. Whenever she told me the everyday stories, in our down time sitting next to each other, about Marcus and Catherine, her eyes would light up and her smile would be from ear to ear. She was so proud of both of them, and clearly they brought much joy to her life.

I know that Fiona had much unfinished business and, perhaps more tragically, a family who will miss her dearly. But I know that her spirit will live on in both of her children. They are very spunky kids and you know what is on their minds; they are very forthright when you get to know them. I know that their mother's love

will live on in them for many years to come. Although Fiona has gone, we will ensure that she lives through our memories and through her legacy.

One particular passion that I shared with Fiona was equal opportunity and gender equity in the Labor Party, in the Parliament and for all Victorians. As ministers we worked together to improve gender equality across many portfolios. One of the first actions was introducing paid family violence leave into the state's enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs). Since making that change we have seen that clause included in over 70 EBAs covering over 216 000 employees in this state, which we know will set a new benchmark for the rights of working families, particularly those who are affected by family violence. We know that family violence affects every aspect of victims' lives. This change means that victims who may need to attend court or medical appointments or need to find a new place to live can do this knowing they will have job security.

The day this policy was signed off was an emotion-filled day, and alongside Fiona as the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence I knew this was an important and necessary step for us to take, and of course it was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We knew that this would be quite a complex issue to tackle in the workplace. In fact taking the step to put a clause into EBAs and offering this protection in the workplace was a major step forward. It made me question why on earth such a thing would be necessary. Why should anyone need to apply for leave in order to deal with violence at the hands of a loved one? But the reality is quite different, and as Fiona explained on a personal level, as the royal commission so clearly spelt out and she so clearly articulated in the days following the recommendations of the royal commission, family violence is an issue that we need to deal with even in our workplaces.

Family violence leave is now a feature of public sector employment conditions. It is one of the things on which I was very grateful to have Fiona's ongoing support. She was a champion for *Safe and Strong*, Victoria's gender equality strategy. She drove its development in her time as the Minister for Women, and through her efforts we had a vehicle to put in place more strategies, more policies and more ideas for gender equity in my portfolios. With the support of Fiona's office we were able to establish in the industrial relations space a ministerial council called the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council. The government has asked that council, through the terms of reference, to advise on how the government can best address the systemic,

cultural and historical factors that have resulted in the gender pay gap and inequity for women at work.

It was only on Monday that we celebrated international Equal Pay Day. As I do every year, I put up a post through social media about what the differences are in the rates of pay for men and women and some of the challenges that women face in the workforce. Yet again it is unfortunate that I have to report back to the house that there were a lot of comments from particular men who like to troll female members of Parliament and make very demeaning comments around the issue of workplace equity, denying that the issue even exists. I discussed the perpetrators of those comments over many years with Fiona because it is the same old people that seem to want to attack equity in the workplace — to attack women basically.

Back to Fiona. She was ambitious and proactive and she supported targets for women in leadership roles as she knew this was the only way to create gender balance in influential and powerful positions. This government committed to gender equity on boards and it was her job to drive and monitor it. Having a target, which was not accepted by all, has completely changed the position of women in the public sector. Creating a baseline requirement of 50-50 men and women has meant that in all matters 50-50 is not negotiable. There were many of us around the cabinet table, when we had appointments on the agenda, that would feel the wrath of Fiona breathing down our necks and saying, 'Is there an equal number of men and women in your nominations, and if there isn't, why isn't there, and what are you going to do to change it?'. Fiona was certainly very committed to ensuring that we met this target.

Great strides were made towards that goal with the 12 per cent increase in the proportion of women councillors that we saw in last year's council elections. Again, Fiona was very supportive of that and was very keen to include in our gender equity strategy a target of 50-50 female councillors at the next set of council elections. I promise Fiona that I will continue to work on this important goal.

Fiona knew that not recognising the value of women in the workforce or in positions of decision-making denies us the intellect, the capability and skills that will drive Victoria to greater things. It is immensely sad that we have lost Fiona; she was taken away too soon. But I can guarantee that we will continue the fight for equity she so deeply pursued.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT (RESTRICTED BREED DOGS) BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed from 9 August; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I rise as the lead speaker for the Liberal-Nationals on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. The legislation before the house implements the key recommendations from the 2016 parliamentary inquiry by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs, specifically in relation to removing the prohibition on the registration and keeping of restricted breed dogs in Victoria. The bill proposed allows councils to register these dogs, subject to strict conditions around the housing and keeping of these dogs, and also includes related miscellaneous amendments to the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

There are five types of restricted breed dogs in Victoria. The only one which is prevalent is the pit bull terrier. The main provision of this legislation and the primary purpose before us is to replace the provision that currently disallows councils to register a restricted breed dog and to replace the provision to allow for its registration, the renewal of registration and the imposition of conditions on the registration or renewal of registration of a restricted breed dog. It also repeals the provisions that prohibit the keeping of a restricted breed dog and introduces some changes around the classification of a guard dog as a dangerous dog. Even after retirement a guard dog is still going to be considered a dangerous dog. The bill also makes some changes to the fees that are collected.

If you think about the Domestic Animals Act and the issue of restricted breeds, it is probably one of the most amended pieces of legislation in the history of the Victorian Parliament, particularly over the last 15 years or so. If you go back to the 2000 to 2006 term of the then Bracks government, minister Bob Cameron introduced legislation around the issue of restricted breeds and amended it a number of times. At that particular time it was mostly about the interstate trade of restricted breeds and desexing to stop the breeding of those dogs. I think at that time there was a view that the dogs would gradually be bred out over time.

That did not happen. In 2009, when John Brumby was Premier, there had been a particularly vicious attack by an American pit bull which killed a small dog and severely injured a man in an attack in Melbourne's

northern suburbs. At that time there was community outrage around dog attacks. John Brumby, as the Premier, indicated that he would be introducing legislation that went further than the current legislation. Joe Helper was the Minister for Agriculture at that particular time and had carriage of that legislation.

At that time RSPCA president Hugh Wirth, who was a very widely respected veterinarian and welfare advocate for animals, told the *Age* newspaper that pit bull dogs were:

... a menace and are not suitable as pets for anyone.

He actually said:

'They are time bombs waiting for the right circumstances ...

'The American pit bull terrier is lethal because it was a breed that was developed purely for dog fighting, in other words killing the opposition.

'They should never have been allowed into the country. They are an absolute menace.'

Joe Helper in that government actually introduced the legislation that we are effectively talking about today. It had an amnesty period of two years, when the owners of pit bull dogs were given notice that they had the opportunity over two years to register their dogs, have them desexed and house them appropriately. That legislation was working through its process over that particular time.

Tragically in 2011 there was a horrific event in Melbourne's west, where four-year-old Ayen Chol was killed in her own home by a pit bull which had escaped from a neighbouring property and chased a number of children that were playing in the front yard of that house into the house. Ayen was sitting there, got attacked and was tragically killed. A number of other members of that family also got severely mauled by that particular dog. At that time Bill Shorten, the federal member for that area and now the opposition leader in Canberra, went on to actually write an opinion piece about that particular event. He started off:

It's every parent's worst nightmare — standing there helpless as a vicious dog — a shark on legs — attacks and kills your child.

Bill did go to visit the family and attend the funeral service for Ayen Chol. He went on to say in that article:

When I met the grieving family two days later one of their relatives came up to me and said: 'In South Sudan, if a man's dog kills another that man must answer for the murder of the victim'.

I think that is very pertinent to other changes that we made in the Crimes Act 1958 after that attack. I think

everyone was horrified by the particular event. So we as a government, with myself as a minister at that particular time, actually introduced legislation to effectively and immediately end the moratorium to allow the registration of those dogs. The major change in that legislation at that time was to close it off at the end of September 2011 rather than running it through to the end of 2012.

That set off a chain of events. One of the issues around restricted breed dogs was always how you actually define a restricted breed dog. I know there was a lot of work done on what is the standard and how you actually determine what is a restricted breed dog — a pit bull versus what is a staffy or some other sort of dog. There was a lot of work done by the department and my local government on how you have a standard for those dogs, because it is very challenging to know which dog is actually a pit bull versus other breeds and crossbreeds. As I understand it, there is no DNA test that can actually determine that, which is what made it very challenging in developing that particular standard. But there was a standard developed to try and help councils and council by-law officers do that.

When the legislation was introduced to end the moratorium, I can remember receiving a call from the now Premier, the then Leader of the Opposition, saying, ‘We are all appalled by what has happened with this dog attack, and we will support anything that is sensible and reasonable to make sure this does not happen in the future’. The member for Bendigo East at that particular time in the debate on 30 August 2011 said:

The opposition has previously indicated that it would support this bill, and we also support its expeditious passage through both houses of Parliament ...

The member for Tarneit said something similar:

We commend the government and indicate from the outset that the opposition, as was indicated by the Leader of the Opposition and various speakers during the course of today, will be supporting the bill.

The member for Tarneit went on further to say:

The current amnesty provisions allow registration of a restricted breed dog until September 2012; the bill will cut back the amnesty period to 29 September 2011. We commend that — it is a good move.

And:

In short and very plainly, the measures that have been brought forward are good ones.

So the amnesty period ended, and that set in place a chain of events where a number of people who had restricted breed dogs viewed that they should not have

to register them. The dogs were being seized, councils were putting them in pounds and there were very long and expensive court cases for councils around those particular dogs.

What we are seeing here today is the result of the fact that it got very, very expensive. Some councils were spending up to \$100 000 at VCAT to argue whether those particular dogs were restricted breeds or not and whether they should be put down. I do understand that people who own a particular dog love their dog and believe their dog will never do any harm, but there is an issue with having those sorts of dogs running loose in the community.

What we have in the bill before us today are the changes that were recommended by that parliamentary committee to allow for the registration of these dogs, to allow for the keeping of the dogs and to allow for the reregistration of the dogs, but it does not change any of the rules around ownership of those dogs. So if you own one of those dogs, you are now entitled to register it and have it reregistered, but it still has to be desexed; it still has to be housed appropriately — and there are now much stricter rules around the housing of those dogs compared to other dogs — it still has to have a special collar affixed so it can be identified, particularly when it is out in public; it has to be muzzled when it is out in public, as I understand it; and it has to be on a lead at all times when it is out.

All the changes to the legislation originally brought in by Joe Helper back in 2010 are still there. The only change this bill makes is to allow for those dogs to be registered and kept. The fact that they still need to be desexed is in line with the intent of the legislation that was originally introduced by Bob Cameron in that 2002 to 2006 parliamentary period. These dogs eventually should be bred out of existence because they will not be able to breed into the future.

At that particular time we as a government also gave a commitment to changing the Crimes Act 1958 and the Domestic Animals Act 1994 so that if a person owns a dangerous or restricted breed dog, they would be responsible for its actions. From memory, if a dog causes grievous injury, there is a maximum of five years jail for the owner of that dog as penalty for the offence that the dog committed, and if the dog actually kills someone, there is a maximum of 10 years jail for that particular offence. I know there was a lot of debate about it at the time, but I think it comes back to the issue that Bill Shorten addressed in his opinion piece in the *Daily Telegraph*. If someone’s dog commits an offence like that, the owner should be responsible for that dog and the grievous harm it causes.

When we debated that particular legislation Steve Herbert, the then member for Eltham, in his contribution said:

It is legislation that we on this side of the house support ...

The member for Preston, who is actually at the table, said:

... I am sure every member of this house hopes that legislation brought to this Parliament to ensure the safety of the community is successful and is enforced.

I thank him for those particular comments.

One thing I did do when these issues were unfolding was go to the Royal Children's Hospital to meet with plastic surgeons to get a better understanding of what happens with dog attacks. I think it is useful for the members of the house to realise that a dog attack actually tears. It does not just cut like when you cut your finger with a knife or like an industrial accident. It actually tears and, even worse, it actually infects. Think about what a dog eats. If a child is attacked, they get nasty tears, particularly if they are attacked in the facial area, and it gets infected. So it is a very serious injury.

When we were at the Children's Hospital we met a couple with two young children, and one of those children had been attacked by a dog while in the pram. This child was so traumatised. It had received such substantial plastic surgery that you almost did not know it had been scarred. The plastic surgeons had done a very good job.

But the child was so traumatised by all dogs that the parents swore they would never own a dog because of what had happened when they were walking down the street. They actually had to buy a small dog to get the child used to having dogs around, otherwise every time they went down the street the child would effectively freak out if there was a dog nearby. It is a horrendously traumatic experience both physically and mentally for children in particular, and for anyone attacked by a dog.

This legislation now enables restricted breed dogs to be registered under very, very strict conditions, but people are still going to have to be responsible for their dogs. I know why the committee reported what it did, because the way these dogs used to be registered was effectively unworkable and very, very expensive for councils. At the end of the day these sorts of dogs should not be running around without a lead and muzzle, because if they do attack a child, it is effectively on the government that introduced these changes and the individual who owns that dog to be responsible for what happens.

I do not wish for any member of Parliament or for any minister to have to go through something like the tragic death of Ayen Chol and the trauma it caused that family. Let us hope this legislation is enforced, that it does actually work and that these dogs are bred out of existence over a period of time. It would be unfortunate if people tried to get around the law to continue breeding these dogs and we find ourselves back in this place in five or 10 years time following another tragic killing and looking at the legislation again.

This legislation also changes the amount of money the government takes from the registration of cats and dogs. Currently the government takes a small amount of money from the registration fees paid to local government. The change is that they will take an additional \$1.50 from cat registrations and an additional 50 cents from dog registrations as of the registration period beginning April 2019. This means that for every cat and for every dog there will be \$4 transferred to the state government from local government, which is approximately an additional \$1.2 million each year. That will be used to help subsidise some responsible pet ownership programs.

There are some very good programs out there that are run in kindergartens for new mums and dads when they have a baby. They are about how you actually manage that in the home if you have a cat or a dog. We have all probably heard of examples where the family pet has been the centre of attention for a number of years and all of a sudden there is an infant in the household that is getting more attention than the pet. There is an excellent program about how you normalise that in the household. Another excellent program is run in kinders about being very careful, particularly around dogs, over that time.

I suppose in some ways this is another new tax by the Andrews government. It is an increase in tax, which they promised not to do. If you remember back to the eve of the last election, the Premier was on the front steps of Parliament being interviewed by Peter Hitchener. He looked the camera in the eye —

Mr Katos — It was Peter Mitchell.

Mr WALSH — It was Peter Mitchell, was it? Sorry, I stand corrected. I thank the member for South Barwon. He looked down the camera and said he promised all Victorians there would be no tax increases and there would be no new taxes in Victoria. We now know there have been 11 new taxes, and this one is a tax increase on the amount of money that is taken out of fees for dogs and cats in the future.

Yes, I do understand why we have to have this legislation. It is unfortunate that there could not be a way found to actually truly identify what is a pit bull dog and make sure they were bred out of existence here in Victoria. I hope that this actually works and, as I said before, that we do not find ourselves back here in five or 10 years time dealing with an absolute tragedy where another child has been killed by one of these dogs.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — The member who spoke before me on behalf of the coalition and The Nationals is correct that this act has been the subject of much amendment. It has been a cause of huge concern. He mentioned the sad death of the child Ayen Chol in Melbourne's western suburbs some years ago. It was an absolute tragedy, and I know that my dear friend the member for Tarneit was very much involved with that family and in supporting them through that absolutely horrific situation.

Of course we are absolutely concerned with the tragedy that occurred, but regarding the idea of restricted breeds, when the restricted breed legislation that would look at restricting breeds rather than at the behaviour and nature of the dog was first brought in, it was something that I was lobbied on very strongly by the dog-breeding community in my electorate, and there are many in that community. In my electorate I probably have some of the highest numbers of kennels in the state. They provide quite a bit of employment in the local area, and people are really passionate about their animals.

You would know, Acting Speaker Ward, that in the Shire of Nillumbik we are really passionate about our animals. The Shire of Nillumbik runs a pet expo in Diamond Creek, which is in my electorate, every year. That is actually coming up next month. It is a major event in Nillumbik. I would say that in Diamond Creek we have got one of the best off-leash parks. I commend ward councillor Peter Perkins for his advocacy on that, because it is a really excellent park. It has a large area, and then it has a smaller area for smaller dogs or dogs that are less sociable. There is a real variety there, and by and large the dog owners that use that park are incredibly responsible.

I have a wonderful rescue dog called Bella. She looks really fierce, but she is as gentle as a little lamb. She is not so good with other creatures, but when she is with human beings she absolutely thinks that she is one. As far as we can work out, and according to the shelter that I got her from in Ararat, she is an amstaff — an American Staffordshire terrier — crossed with something else, perhaps a multiplicity of things. You,

Acting Speaker, have met her on several occasions and seen how loving and affectionate she is.

The Staffordshire terrier, particularly the English Staffordshire terrier, was actually bred as a nanny dog at the time of the industrial revolution, when working-class people, particularly women, were being forced to work in the mines to feed their families. Often older children were working in the mines and the mills in the UK, so the Staffordshire terrier was actually bred as a nanny dog to look after children because of its gentle nature. The American Staffordshire terrier is just a larger version of that, and I am not surprised at all when I see the loving nature of Bella. People are often frightened of her when I take her out publicly. I take her out and socialise her a lot. People who do not know dogs can be immediately very frightened because they are worried that she looks a bit like a pit bull. She is not a pit bull.

But I am glad that we are going down a path of allowing registration, because I think sometimes it is incredibly difficult. The dog-breeding and dog-owning communities came to me when the restriction of breeds was first introduced, and they said, 'Look, it's really, really hard'. They were saying that there could be quite arbitrary decisions made by rangers and by councils around registering dogs and mistaking what their breeding was, rather than actually looking at the nature of the dog. I think that those who have proposed special restrictions on particular breeds have done that with the best will in the world and because of their abhorrence of those that misuse their dogs and do not train them in the appropriate way.

Animal shelters are full of dogs that have been abused and have not been treated well. I have just seen the member for Pascoe Vale come into the house. She received a caucus award, the animal lover award, for government MPs. I really commend the work that she has done around the puppy farming legislation and her passion for animal welfare and for making sure that dogs are looked after appropriately.

The main elements of the legislation before the house allow the registration of restricted breed dogs in Victoria, clarify the dangerous dog status of guard dogs when they are retired to a residential premises and increase the payment for dogs and cats made by councils to the Treasurer under section 69(1)(a) and (aa) of the Domestic Animals Act 1994. Restricted breed dogs are defined as dogs that fall within the approved standard for restricted breed dogs in Victoria. These include pure or crossbred American pit bull terriers or pit bull terriers, perro de presa Canarios or

presa Canarios, dogo Argentinos, Japanese tosas and fila Brasileiros.

There was a parliamentary inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework related to restricted breed dogs, and it recommended enabling the registration of pit bulls. Allowing the registration of restricted breed dogs will improve community safety and benefit councils. The change will encourage responsible ownership of existing dogs by providing a pathway for registration rather than a prohibition on ownership. Community safety is enhanced as owners will not be tempted to hide restricted breed dogs to avoid them being euthanased. They will instead be able to register and appropriately identify and house their dogs, avoiding the significant penalties associated with illegal ownership. Councils will have a better idea of the location of these dogs and be able to ensure compliance with strict housing and ownership requirements. This will in turn improve community safety.

Bella looks fierce but is not — she has occasionally gotten out and she then just licks any human being she sees within an inch of their life. She has made a number of friends within the neighbourhood. My sister-in-law has said to me, ‘She does look really fierce. You have to be careful; she might accidentally get put down’, and I think that has been a concern for some dog owners. It was identified in the restricted breed guidelines and what went before the parliamentary inquiry that it is really difficult. I think the committee has done great work and the department has worked really hard on this, and I would like to thank them for their work. We have a great minister who is passionate about animal welfare and about having good change in this state. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — I rise today to make a contribution on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. As the opposition’s lead speaker, the opposition will not be opposing the bill.

I might just briefly go through the purposes of the bill. It implements the key recommendation of the 2016 parliamentary inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs, and it does that specifically by removing the prohibition on the registration and keeping of restricted breed dogs in Victoria. It allows councils to actually register these dogs subject to strict conditions around the keeping of the dogs and the way they are housed.

The main provision of the bill, I should say, is to replace provisions that currently disallow a council from registering a restricted breed dog. There are other

provisions with regard to classification of a guard dog where a guard dog is a dangerous dog even after its retirement and other subsequent amendments relating to notification requirements for the owners of guard dogs or retired guard dogs. Basically the bill introduces an offence that prohibits the transfer of a dangerous dog without the former owner providing written evidence that it is a dangerous dog. The bill also increases the amount of dog and cat registrations paid by councils to the state. It is a \$1.50 increase for cats — I think we are shorter odds on Friday night — and a 50 cent increase for dogs.

With regard to these — I call them violent animals — pit bulls, it is not often I agree with the federal Leader of the Opposition, but in an op-ed piece from 24 August 2011 he described them as ‘sharks on legs’, and I think that is a very good description of these vicious dogs. I for the life of me do not understand why people want to keep such animals.

I look at your three main types of dog. You have got a guard dog, a gun dog or hunting dog, and a herding or a shepherding dog. Gun dogs and herding or shepherding dogs, particularly the gun dogs, are very placid unless of course you are one of the animals involved. I actually had a gun dog, a German wirehaired pointer. She died, unfortunately, 10 years ago now. She was a very good quail dog. My nieces of the day actually named her Buffy. It was an interesting name for the dog, but I let my young nieces name the dog which I had just purchased. She was a beautiful dog, a very good working dog as far as a hunting dog goes, but around people you could not have had a more gentle or placid animal. If you were a rabbit, it was a different story, but a person — she was a beautiful dog.

I understand why people have these sorts of dogs, whether it is a hunting dog, whether it is, like I said, a shepherding or herding dog, and even some smaller breeds of dog where people have got them for companionship. They are lovely dogs, they are good family dogs and people do keep them as genuine companions and pets, but these pit bulls — for the life of me I just do not understand why anyone would want to keep such an animal.

I turn to the legislation we are debating amendments to today. I think it was in 2010, under the Brumby government, that there was an attack in Melbourne’s north where a small dog was killed and a man was hurt. It was an American pit bull that did that. Then there was legislation introduced in May 2010 which created effectively I believe a two-year amnesty at the time on these pit bulls. Unfortunately in August 2011, when we were in government, four-year-old Ayen Chol was

killed — she died in her own home when a pit bull escaped from a neighbouring home, which is a very tragic thing. We brought in legislation in September of that year that basically strengthened the laws to protect the community from these dangerous and restricted dog breeds and created offences and penalties for people who fail to control their animals, which I think was important.

I think one of the things that the parliamentary inquiry found was that it did create almost quite a perverse outcome for councils where you had people who were doing large, quite significant court challenges which were costing ratepayers money and council officers were then reluctant to actually say that a dog was a pit bull — they probably were pit bulls. I can understand that these people would pull out all the stops to keep their dogs, and probably a lot of them were not pit bulls, but there were question marks around their breeding, so it did produce an effectively perverse outcome with local government. It was tying up a significant number of council resources around the state in defending these cases.

As I said earlier, the opposition are certainly not opposing this bill, and the aim of these bans on pit bulls are to eventually breed them out of Australia, which I think is a good thing. They are a dog that is really bred for one purpose. It is not bred for anything else. It is not like, for example, a German shepherd or a Doberman, which is bred as a legitimate guard dog. If they are trained properly, they are quite beautiful dogs too. But these pit bulls are there for one reason; they are a very vicious animal. As I said earlier, for the life of me, I do not understand why anyone would want to keep one, but we do live in a democracy and a free country, and sometimes people do some weird and wonderful things and keep such animals. As I said, the opposition is not opposing this bill, and I commend it to the house.

Mr LIM (Clarinda) — I am very pleased to rise today to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. It is very, very pleasing also to hear that the opposition is supporting the bill. The overall objective of this bill is to implement recommendation 22 of the parliamentary inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs. The inquiry was established to investigate the arrangements, benefits and challenges of legislation for restricted dog breeds, which include the American pit bull terrier.

Recommendation 22 provides that the Domestic Animals Act 1994 be amended to allow the registration of restricted breeds such as pit bulls while ensuring that protective measures regarding the ownership and management of restricted breed dogs are retained.

These protective measures of course include mandatory signage on properties where restricted breed dogs are kept and requirements that restricted breed dogs are microchipped, are desexed and wear mandatory collars at all times. Restricted breed dogs must also be muzzled and leashed when outside of their properties of course. Further, the prohibition on breeding or transferring the ownership of restricted breed dogs will remain. These protections will ensure that the community continues to be safe. We have just seen so many horrible incidents over previous years.

Dogs are companion animals and are an important part of the Australian lifestyle. This bill is consistent with the need to balance supporting the benefits of dog ownership and protecting the community from dangerous dogs and irresponsible dog owners. Unfortunately I have never had a very pleasant experience with dogs. I need to confess that I have a very unhappy home situation where my two sons are so keen to have dogs but their mum will not allow it. I personally 35 years ago, when we were renting a bungalow just on North Road and I was a student at Monash, was bitten by the landlord's dog. Of course the landlord was just so panicky and the poor dog was put to sleep. My wife has seen her sister savaged by a dog, and we just have no affinity with dogs at all. It is rather unfortunate, and to see all this horrible reportage in the news of little kids or anyone at all being savaged by dogs is just revolting. This legislation really touched a nerve, and I hope, as I said, that we overcome this problem.

The parliamentary inquiry found that there was insufficient and sometimes contradictory evidence on whether restricted breeds pose a greater risk to public safety than other breeds. That is the unfortunate situation that we are facing. However, there is much evidence that other factors, such as a dog's early experiences or living conditions, play a significant role in aggressiveness. While breed may be one risk factor for dog attacks, it is only one factor among many others. As such, the inquiry considered that the resources and energies of local councils would be better devoted to encouraging responsible dog ownership generally rather than focusing on identifying and managing restricted breeds as such.

With this in mind the bill will allow for the collection of an increased payment to be used to promote responsible dog and cat ownership and animal welfare, including educating the public on dog bite prevention, research into domestic animal management and the administration of the act itself. The bill increases the existing payments to the Treasurer to \$4 annually for both dogs and cats. The payment is used to fund a

world-class program to educate parents and preschool and school-aged children on dog safety and responsible dog ownership. This bill of course is timely given that the payment to the Treasurer has not increased since 2010 and the cost of running the responsible pet ownership (RPO) program has increased over time. The RPO program is vital for teaching children to stay away from pets wearing the warning collar.

The inquiry acknowledged that information and education programs are essential in reducing dog attacks and dog-related injuries and examined a number of ways such programs can be implemented. The inquiry of course acknowledged that Victoria is doing good work in this area, and this bill goes to lengths to continue the positive trends in promoting responsible pet ownership and animal welfare.

We also need to keep in mind that the government's moratorium on the euthanasia of restricted breed dogs that were unable to be registered or kept in Victoria ends on 30 September this year, 2017. The government needs to allow for restricted breed dogs to be registered prior to the moratorium ending, as failing to do so may result in the euthanasing of unregistered restricted breed dogs. By allowing registration, community safety will be enhanced as owners will not be tempted to hide restricted breed dogs to avoid them being euthanased. They will instead be able to register and appropriately identify their dogs and house them properly. Further, by allowing registration, councils will know where restricted breed dogs are. Under the current system there are difficulties with identification and management of restricted breeds such as pit bulls. Opening registration will remove these difficulties, while the strict requirements for keeping a restricted breed dog will remain in place and the tough penalties for not doing the right thing will still apply.

The inquiry has outlined the benefits of registration as well as the opportunities. This bill embraces the opportunity to encourage responsible pet ownership and to support education programs and initiatives to improve the welfare of our pets and the safety of our people. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr WATT (Burwood) — I rise to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. I note the comments of the Leader of The Nationals and the member for South Barwon on this particular bill. I want to start by acknowledging the fact that the bill is to an extent the government's response to a report of the Legislative Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to

restricted breed dogs. I make this statement because, as part of the bill, the purpose of proposed clause 1 is:

- (a) to further provide for the keeping and registration of restricted breed dogs; and
- (b) to further provide for the acquisition and identification of dangerous dogs; and
- (c) to further provide for payments to the Treasurer —

that is the one I want to come back to —

and

- (d) to make other minor and related amendments.

Acknowledging the fact that there are serious concerns around certain breeds of dogs, or certain dogs within our community that are dangerous, we need to make sure that we protect people in our community from dangerous dogs. My family has been seriously affected by dog attacks. Unfortunately the incident I am thinking about actually involved a family pet. There was a disagreement between two children, the dog was quite protective of its owner and jumped in and decided to take things into its own paws, so to speak. I myself have been the victim of dog attacks when I was young. When I was around 11 I was attacked by a dog when I was delivering newspapers. It is not the most pleasant thing to happen. I have also been a door-to-door salesman and I have walked into places where I probably should not have been and the guard dog on duty let me know that I should not be there — I had to rush off to a doctor to see to a dog bite to my hand. I can certainly understand the issues around dog attacks.

But the main point I would like to make in my contribution to this particular bill is in regard to proposed clause 1(c), which states:

- (c) to further provide for payments to the Treasurer ...

I can certainly remember, as many people do, the now Premier facing an interview with Peter Mitchell. Peter Mitchell asked a very clear question. He asked:

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

And the member for Mulgrave, the current Premier, said:

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

And what we know is that the current Premier has broken that promise and not once, not twice, not three or four or five or six times. By my count we are up to a dozen, and I may have missed some. I apologise to

the Treasurer if I have missed any of his increases in taxes or any new charges or taxes that he has introduced in direct contradiction of that commitment that the then opposition leader, now Premier, made to 'every single Victorian'.

Some government members may want to argue the point and say, 'Well, the increase in the percentage of dog and cat registrations paid by councils to the Treasurer is not a new tax, and it is not really a tax'. But I would point them to another comment made by the now Premier. In a *Sky News* election forum David Speers asked a very clear question directed to the then opposition leader, now Premier. He asked:

So, any higher taxes, levies?

We can argue over semantics about whether the charge and the increase in this bill is a tax, but I do not think many people would argue that it is a tax or a levy or a charge that is being imposed on councils that was not foreseen. It was not foreseen because it was specifically promised not to happen, because the then opposition leader, now Premier, said this:

Absolutely not ...

'Absolutely not' was his response. He promised every Victorian that he would not increase taxes, and when asked about new taxes and levies, 'Absolutely not' is what he said.

I mentioned the report of the inquiry into the legislative and regulatory relating to restricted breed dogs, and the reason I specifically mentioned it is I had a little bit of a look through the report. Members on the government side might be able to point to the parts in the report that recommend an increase in charges by council to the Treasurer. I could not find it, but I could find recommendation 30. Section 9.6.3 of the report, 'Financial support', talks about exactly the opposite to what we are seeing in this bill — that is, support going from the government to the councils; not money going from councils back up to government, but money going the other way. Recommendation 30 is:

That the taskforce developing a statewide policy for encouraging responsible pet ownership consider what additional funding local councils would require to successfully and consistently implement this policy and how that funding should be provided.

That is not talking about the government sticking their hands in the pockets of councils again or sticking their hands in the pockets of dog owners again for the purposes of consolidated revenue. That particular recommendation is very specifically talking about the government — the current government, the Andrews

Labor government, this state government — providing funding to councils to allow them to do the work that they need to do to protect the residents and the constituents across the state and in their own municipalities.

I have very serious concerns about the fact that this bill is doing exactly the opposite to what that recommendation is also asking. It is doing exactly the opposite to what the then opposition leader, now Premier, promised every single Victorian when he said 'Absolutely not'. We know this is not the first time that the Premier has lied. We know this is not the first time he has made statements or has done things which could specifically —

Mr Pearson — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Burwood just said that the Premier lied. If the member wishes to raise his allegations, he can do so via a substantive motion under standing order 118.

Mr WATT — The opposition leader at the time, now Premier, not the Premier —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Spence) — Is this on the point of order?

Mr WATT — No. I am continuing my contribution.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Spence) — I thought you stood on the point of order. You did not, so I will rule on the point of order, and I will ask the member to refrain from making those remarks.

Mr WATT — No problems. This is not the first bill or action which is completely contradictory to what the Premier, then opposition leader, said, and it is one which the community at large would rightly think is probably a barefaced lie. I would not say that, but the community may say that. I would not.

Mr Scott — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is defying the ruling in a fairly —

Mr WATT — I am not defying the ruling.

Mr Scott — Yes, you are.

Ms Ryan — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Burwood did not actually refer to anyone telling a lie. He referred to a lie in more general terms, which I think would be in accordance with the standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Spence) — The member for Burwood to continue.

Mr WATT — Thank you very much. I could point to, say, other increases, such as tripling the coal royalties or the new taxi tax. That is a really interesting one, because although the taxi tax is a direct contradiction to words that the Premier said before the election, we also know that the whole policy around taxis is a direct contradiction to everything the now government said to taxi licence holders before the election, so we know the government has form in lying to the community. We know they have form. They have introduced land tax surcharges —

Mr Pearson — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member is continuing to defy your ruling. I ask you to bring him back to the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Spence) — I ask the member for Burwood to come back to the bill. The member's time has expired.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. This is a fairly straightforward bill. The legislation before the house implements the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry conducted by the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure. I think it is really important that we have got a committee system that operates well both in this place and in the other place to inform the executive on what appropriate measures are needed.

As you would appreciate, Acting Speaker, this inquiry came about as a result of a very tragic incident at St Albans, when a young child was attacked by a dog and subsequently lost her life. Where we have instances where we see such traumatic events, it is incumbent upon the legislature to be able to respond. Indeed I think that the committee system works quite effectively when we are able to examine these matters quite closely — to take public submissions, to hear evidence and to have the wideranging views of members to make a contribution — and to then work out what the most appropriate legislative response would be. I think it is really a testament to the fact that this place functions well and the system is working well where you can have a committee system do the work to make those investigations, do those inquiries and come up with a bill like this to try and address these issues.

I know this is an issue that has certainly caused some level of interest, particularly amongst those people who do have a breed of animal which would fall within the category. I am also familiar with the argument that sometimes it is not necessarily the dog itself but its

nature or its owner, as the member for Narre Warren South has indicated.

At the back of my electorate office is a very large dog — some sort of setter; a golden setter, I think — that is a very aggressive dog. That would not fit within the definitions of this act, but it is just a really aggressive animal, so I am familiar with those sorts of arguments in relation to making sure that we do have appropriate responses in place. But clearly there are those breeds of dogs which are far more aggressive in nature, and when they do get aggressive it becomes quite apparent that it is a matter of some concern.

In preparing for this contribution, I did some research. I tried to find out what sort of dog I would be based upon my characteristics. I had hoped I would be a working dog, but apparently Facebook told me that I am a poodle.

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

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Energy policy

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

That this house condemns the Andrews government and their reckless energy policies, which have:

- (a) shut down the Hazelwood power station, which reduced Victoria's electricity generation capacity by 22 per cent;
- (b) increased Victorian household energy bills by an average of \$300 this year, causing hardship to many families;
- (c) seen huge increases for small and medium business, with some paying up to 300 per cent more for electricity;
- (d) caused hundreds of jobs to be lost and companies to leave Victoria; and
- (e) left Victoria at risk of blackouts during peak demand periods, such as summer, as detailed by the Australian Energy Market Operator.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) — Victoria has never seen an energy crisis like the one we have right now. Never in the history of Victoria have we seen such an energy crisis, and there is one group of people that are completely responsible for that, and that is the Labor Party of Victoria, led by the Premier. They are the people who are responsible for this. They, fairly and squarely, are the reason why Victoria is facing an absolute energy

crisis that is looming, that is completely out of their control, that has Victorians paying more than they ever have for their energy bills, that has businesses questioning the future of their security and that has jobs on the line. And what is the answer from this government? Nothing! Absolutely nothing.

We have had a situation in Victoria where under the Premier there has been a closure of a power station — Hazelwood. Let us just go through a little bit of a history lesson here in terms of what has happened in terms of generation.

Ms D'Ambrosio interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — The squealing minister across the table can say what she likes, but at the end of the day what we need to understand is that we have a minister who is focusing on ideology over jobs, ideology over security and ideology over our power future. That is the situation that each and every Victorian faces.

Let us just try to understand, shall we, how we have ended up where we currently are. How have we ended up like this? What we had was the Treasurer in April 2016 introduce a \$252 million coal tax. The royalty rate increased by 7.6 cents to 22.8 cents a gigajoule. This was in fact a tripling of the energy rate here, a tripling of the royalty tax. At the time, the operator of Hazelwood, Engie, said the increase was surprising and disappointing and said in fact that it would have a detrimental impact on the region's energy sector and security. That is what the operator, Engie, said — that in fact this coal tax was going to have huge ramifications.

Not surprisingly, only a few months later, in November, Engie announced that they would be closing the Hazelwood power station and taking 22 per cent of our energy out of the game — off, gone, finished. The government ever since then have been claiming, 'Not our fault, don't look here. Not our problem, don't look here'. Not only did the government introduce the tax that was the nail in the coffin for Hazelwood, but what did they do when Engie gave five months notice? Did they ring Engie and say, 'How about extending it for a few more years until we get more supply? How about doing that?'. What did the minister at the table do? She would not even visit Hazelwood. She would not even go down there. She would not go anywhere near it, because in the minister's eyes the only coal power station that she would like is a closed one. That is what this minister would like. Ideology has captured once again the Labor Party. It has captured the Labor Party, leading it to shut down power stations, to take away jobs in the

valley, to take away energy security and to affect each and every Victorian.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr SOUTHWICK — Let me tell you something, Speaker. The Labor Party can carry on and scream all they like. However, in each and every electorate there would be an example of a business or household that is experiencing the sort of power situation they have never had before. We have seen it in reports from the Victorian Council of Social Service, showing people that are struggling with cost-of-living pressures, people that in the past would have thought the Labor Party represented them. It has now been shown that the Labor Party has abandoned these people for ideology and has left them literally out in the cold, not being able to afford their power bills.

Just look at what the report said. Look at the report we had last week that said that households are experiencing unprecedented debt thanks to this lot, the Labor Party. We have seen debts being accumulated by individuals of up to \$18 000, not being able to afford the power and not being able to keep essential power on. That is what has happened under this mob's watch.

The government did nothing — not one phone call — to keep Hazelwood open, which would have fixed the whole lot. We would not even be having this matter of public importance if Hazelwood was remaining open for a transition to a different power source. We would not be having this conversation, we would not have escalating prices and we would not have, like today, talk of a blackout for Victoria. We would not have those sort of headlines.

In the past the minister has said, 'There'll be no blackouts under my government. There'll be no blackouts over summer. There'll be no power issues over summer'. Well, what does the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) say now, Minister? What does AEMO say now about blackouts and about power shortages? What AEMO says is that we are going to be relying on diesel generators. So much for lowering your emissions. So much for your environment portfolio. You are lowering your emissions with diesel. It is a disgrace, Minister, that you claim that you are the solution for renewable energy and lowering emissions. What do you do? You want to introduce diesel to keep the lights on. You are a disgrace, Minister. That is what you are.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members on both sides of the house will come to order. I ask both the shadow

minister and the minister to direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr SOUTHWICK — We have an incompetent minister that has done nothing. We have an incompetent minister that lied to Victorians when she said, side by side with her Premier, ‘Don’t worry about Hazelwood closing. It won’t have much effect on prices — 85 cents a week, nothing; \$44 a year’. Minister, I challenge you to give me one Victorian that has only seen an 85-cent increase in their power bills. Bring one into the gallery here, because you know what? You are wrong, Minister. You lied, Minister, because I can tell you every Victorian is paying a lot more than 85 cents a week under your watch. That is right, Speaker. The Labor Party has lied when it comes to power prices. Victorians are paying hundreds of dollars — not 85 cents, but hundreds of dollars.

Only last sitting week we heard about the electricity pricing for Joe’s IGA stores in Fitzroy North and Pascoe Vale, which has increased not by 4 per cent, not by 10 per cent or 20 per cent, but by 341 per cent, from \$144 000 to \$494 000. Do you know what? The minister said, ‘That’s all right, just shop around. Tell Joe to shop around, and he’ll find a better price’. That is the solution. In fact what the minister said was, ‘We’ve got a great website. Plug in the figures’.

Minister, should he plug in the figures and get a better deal? The minister is nodding. Let us put this on the record. The minister says he should plug it in. Guess what, minister? Joe plugged it in to get a better deal. Do you know what your website had to say? ‘Error’.

This website does not work for small businesses, so your website is a failure. Your website is an absolute disgrace. You are telling businesses that are facing closure to shop around, and your website does not work. That is what we are dealing with — an incompetent government led in the energy area by an incompetent minister who knows absolutely nothing. The minister has said there will be a minimal increase in price and also that we would have no energy security.

What we are experiencing now with Hazelwood is an auction. All of that equipment is going to be turned into scrap metal. Has the minister rung up Engie to see what we can do about that equipment? Not a word. Has the Premier rung up and said, ‘Maybe we’ve got some generators we could save’? In fact there are three generators. The minister says they are falling apart. Industry tells me there are three generators that could be used for the next three to five years to allow for new generation to come in. But do you think the minister would at least have the decency to ring up

and find out? No, because again the only coal-fired power station this minister cares for is a closed one. That is what this minister cares for — a closed coal-fired power station, no base load, no 24/7. This minister just says, ‘Don’t worry’.

When businesses in Dandenong contacted the minister she went out to the South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance in Dandenong, and around the table they said, ‘We can’t cope. We’re going to have to close facilities. We’re going to shut down facilities and sack people’. Do you know what the minister said? ‘Don’t worry. We’ve got new generation coming in three to five years that will fix the problem. In three to five years we will have new generation and power prices will come down’. Are you serious? Are you telling me that these businesses can wait three to five years? You are dreaming, Minister. You are absolutely dreaming if you think that a business would wait three to five years so they can finally pay their power bills. Do you know what? I reckon this minister would be a great person to get a loan from, because this minister economically has absolutely no idea.

We are facing an absolute mess when it comes to security, to affordability, to blackouts and to jobs. We have had now a number of people that have commented about the disgraceful situation that we are currently in. We have had no leadership from this government — none whatsoever. We have a go-it-alone renewable energy scheme that will close further power stations. We now have Yallourn in jeopardy. Hazelwood was meant to go offline in 2025; it shut early. Yallourn W is set to have an end of life in 2032; that now is in jeopardy with the 40 per cent renewable energy target. It is a 40 per cent go-it-alone renewable energy target.

Even Rod Sims, the chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, said about our energy crisis on 3 August on ABC Melbourne radio that the closure of Hazelwood has meant electricity prices have shot up. He said:

I mean, four generators control 90 per cent of the market, so with the Hazelwood closure ... prices just shot up.

This minister has said time and time again that it is a supply issue. If you bring more generation into the market, you lower prices. This minister has taken generation out of the market; 22 per cent has gone, never to be replaced. It is about to be turned into scrap metal, and this minister is rubbing her hands together and saying, ‘That’s another one gone. Don’t worry about those jobs. Don’t worry about those families. Don’t worry about those people. They are gone’.

We are seeing a situation where this government has no plan. All they care about is themselves. These rorting Labor government members care about themselves. We have seen it with the red shirts and we have seen it today with printing allowances. This government is an absolute disgrace, and while all Victorians are suffering because of the energy crisis, this government helps itself to taxpayers money. That is what this government does. They rort and help themselves to taxpayers money instead of looking after vulnerable Victorians. That is what they do instead of looking after vulnerable Victorians. Shame on this government. Shame on this Premier. Shame on this incompetent minister, who sits there and smiles at jobs losses and who sits there and smiles at generation loss. She should be ashamed of herself.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) — This matter of public importance is nothing but another attempt by those opposite to distract from the fact that they have got no clue, they have got no plan and they have actually got no hope in terms of presenting to Victorians some real energy solutions that they can trust and have confidence in.

It beggars belief. It took almost 1000 days for the member for Caulfield to find a voice in this place. This is how much he cares about energy prices, about energy costs and about our energy future. He does not care, frankly. He is doing this as a stunt. It has been almost three years until anyone on that side of the house has woken up and realised that, thanks to them and their mates in Canberra and their economic vandalism, investment in new energy generation has collapsed. It has collapsed in Australia and it has collapsed in Victoria. Our government is actually bringing it back to life, with new generation being built in the state and new generation delivering much more affordable energy, with more generation coming online and creating the thousands of jobs that Victorians want from a good government — a Labor government — and that is what we are delivering.

So the self-appointed shadow spokesperson for renewables — can we believe he is the opposition spokesperson for renewables? — is happy to talk at rallies and tweet and pose for photos alongside people on the steps of Parliament House and alongside solar panels, all the while being committed to tearing up our renewable energy policies, our policies to grow more generation in this state. On the steps of Parliament on 9 February last year, the shadow minister addressed a rally, saying:

Victoria and Australia are experiencing a renewables revolution, and it is a revolution that is led by the people because the people want it. The voters want it. The community want it, and that's what we need to be focused on.

He went on to say:

If the Andrews government is serious, they will release the plan, show a vision and show how they are going to manage to get to that plan and ensure that more people are able to take up clean energy for the future.

That was his statement on the steps of Parliament House more than a year ago. A few months later he announced that the Liberal-Nationals would scrap what he called the unrealistic Victorian renewable energy target scheme. So he is a man for all seasons and for all circumstances. He will say whatever he wants and pull off any stunt to deliver what he thinks is a message that no-one can make head or tail of.

Our plan is out there. We will deliver it. We will grow more generation for our mix to ensure that with more generation in our mix we are not only creating the jobs that Victorians are so desperately keen to have but also ensuring that with more electricity generation in the mix, more supply will mean lower energy bills, and that is the reality.

Those opposite are a rabble. This latest stunt is that the Victorian government should buy pieces of Hazelwood, but they know full well that Engie decided to close it because it was no longer a viable concern. It was no longer a viable plant. In fact, when the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, their mate, was asked in March this year about keeping Hazelwood open, this is what he said:

Well, the closure of Hazelwood is a decision of the owner, Engie. It's a commercial decision that they have taken.

...

... the responsibility here is fundamentally that of the owners, Engie, and of course they have made a decision about this plant, which is the oldest coal-fired power station in Australia and has been slated to close for a very long time. The cost of keeping it running runs into hundreds of millions, and the cost of rehabilitation, which obviously a new owner would have to take over, is approaching a billion dollars.

...

... the Victorian government I know has had extensive discussions with Engie for some time, and they have shown a complete determination to close the plant.

That is a quote directly from the Prime Minister, so I absolutely reject the false claims and the ludicrous proposals of those opposite, because they are merely a stunt. They know it is a stunt. They know the reasons why Engie made the decision to close Hazelwood. They know the fact that this plant was in a terribly

dilapidated state, with many notices on it from WorkSafe. There were serious health and safety risks as a result, and it was no longer a viable plant. When Engie made the decision to close it down, not one viable business came forward to say to Engie, 'I want to take it off your hands', because everybody who understands the market and who understands business knows that the liabilities of the plant are so extraordinarily prohibitive that it is not a viable plant. So that is the reality of it.

Those opposite are making false claims. They are ludicrous claims, because they have nothing better to say other than to do the bidding of Malcolm Turnbull. When Malcolm Turnbull opens his mouth in Canberra, these people come out and parrot him because they have no plans of their own.

I want to place on the record a number of facts. The energy challenge that we are facing is one of a system undergoing its greatest transition in more than a century. This is happening globally. How energy is supplied is changing and it is changing dramatically. Market forces and a global trend of decarbonisation, whether the opposition like it or not, are driving a complete change in how electricity is generated and stored. This is the reality. What we have here is a challenge of supply — how to grow it, how to do it efficiently and effectively and how to integrate it without disruption to the rest of our network.

This is happening right around the world. Governments that accept it and embrace it and plan and deliver on it will ensure the future welfare and prosperity of their societies and their communities and, importantly, will take advantage of the many job opportunities and economic development opportunities that come along with governments who plan for the future and plan and put in place actions to deliver it. Governments that do not, like the Turnbull government in Canberra, will lead us all to higher energy prices and lower reliability in terms of supply. That is their agenda; that is the only plan they have got.

Our government will make sure that Victoria is a winner in this space. We will deliver for Victoria an energy system that is clean, affordable and secure. It will not be easy of course. Major transitions are never easy, especially with no national leadership at all from the federal government. While we are actually talking about a national electricity market, the federal government are nowhere to be seen. They have no plans because they are absolutely riven by dissension, disruption and division within their own ranks. They have an absolute inability to accept that the science and the economics stack up in favour of them doing

something in terms of a clean energy plan. They have made none of that available to us.

We have a system, of course, which is a national energy market. It will require a great deal of work to be done to ensure that we actually deliver a 21st-century system that everybody needs. We will overcome these obstacles — we absolutely will. Our government will do that.

Mr Southwick interjected.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The member for Caulfield should take a few notes. What are the drivers of energy price rises? If you cannot understand that, you will not be able to come up with any solutions that anyone can believe in, that anyone can have any confidence in. That is what we have from those opposite.

First, there is a shortage of gas. Too much gas is being exported to global markets at the expense of us here in Australia. The policy uncertainty from the federal government is adding to that. Even Malcolm Turnbull told us that on 10 August in Parliament. These people here did not get the note that day and were saying the opposite. Malcolm Turnbull forgot to give them the note when he said:

The largest single factor on energy prices, electricity prices, right now ... is the price of gas.

Two-thirds is being exported to global markets. In fact if you are lucky enough to live and work in Japan, you can get cheaper Australian gas than you can get out here working in a factory in the western suburbs of Melbourne or in regional Victoria. That is the reality we have got here. They cry about being concerned about prices and the pressure on families and businesses. They are clueless. If they really meant that, they would be talking to Malcolm Turnbull and saying some not very pleasant words about his failure to actually deliver sufficient gas for our domestic market — and at an affordable price. I totally reject out of hand their nonsense.

Our government, our Premier, went to a Council of Australian Governments meeting and made it absolutely clear what the plan should be for gas — that is, a cap on exports and a tradeable permit system. It was rejected out of hand. I wonder why. It was because it was not their idea and they do not have the space in their brains to be able to actually think through these issues, understand them and come up with the effective solutions that Victorians need. That is what we are getting from them.

What is Victoria doing? We are working with AGL on a game-changing proposal for a gas import terminal at Crib Point in Western Port Bay. It is early days. This new supply has the potential to be a major game changer in terms of the future of gas prices in Victoria and ensure that we have, of course, the supply that we need for our own domestic purposes.

An honourable member — You had it, but you got rid of it!

Ms D'AMBROSIO — Two-thirds of it is going overseas. And how is your fracking ban going? We will continue to reform the gas market as we need to, but we know, of course, that there are more issues that need to be addressed.

The second factor driving up energy prices is the behaviour of electricity and gas retailers. Our government has been concerned about this for some time. That is why we commissioned an independent, bipartisan review to investigate this. We did not look at the ads on TV or in newspapers. What we actually did was look at the bills of hundreds and hundreds of energy consumers — families and businesses. That is what we did. What we discovered was an absolute failure in the market in relation to competition. On average customers are paying 21 per cent a year more for their electricity than they ought to be paying in terms of the cheapest offer out there. That is what is happening here, and these costs are largely being added to by retailers due to marketing costs and a lack of transparency in retail pricing.

The Victorian Council of Social Service understands this; they have welcomed it. They have thanked the government for this seminal piece of work and for having the guts to actually do it. We understand that competition has not actually delivered the cheaper prices that Victorians deserve, whether they are businesses or families. Those opposite would never do this. We will be responding to that report in coming months, but let me be clear: we are not Malcolm Turnbull, who simply calls in the big energy retailers, gives them a stern word over a cup of tea and says, 'There you go. Get on with it. Go and write a letter to all these consumers'. That is not going to lead to a price reduction in anyone's bill. That is not our way; that is a stunt in place of an energy plan. That is all that is. And this is their mate that they are taking writing instructions from. Is it any wonder these people have got no clue? They do not understand the energy system and they do not understand what the real issues are, and therefore Victorians cannot have any confidence that they will be able to deliver any plan that makes any sense and that actually brings down prices.

Anyone with half an understanding of demand and supply principles knows that the more generation you put into the market the cheaper it will be — pure economics 101. So what do we do as a government? We actually go and facilitate more energy generation. That is what we do — get more energy generation built — and surprise, surprise, those people do not want to accept this. They do not like it because it does not suit their mantra and Malcolm Turnbull's mantra. The cheapest form of new energy generation is renewable energy. If it is backed up with storage and clever new energy technologies which are available right now, we can continue to provide reliability in energy supply for Victorians for today, for tomorrow and for the years ahead. Our government understands this. We understand what the experts are saying about this, and we are getting on with it.

Their solution, if they get elected, is to axe the Victorian renewable energy target. Axing the Victorian renewable energy target when you have got no plan for any other new energy generation to be built is a recipe for higher energy bills for families and businesses, and it is a recipe for absolute disaster when we actually have no new energy generation infrastructure being built in this state. That is their energy plan; that is their stunt because they have failed to understand this. Victorian families and businesses understand that energy is changing. This government understands they want the ability to be able to manage their own energy supply and consumption needs. When you have got a plan, when you understand what the challenges are, you are in a position where you can actually apply the solutions. That is what our government is doing.

My government colleagues on this side of the house will no doubt add a lot of other details to the wide array of services and programs that we have put in place and that those opposite have either threatened to axe or do not support. These services and programs are now, right now today, helping families reduce their energy costs and helping businesses reduce their energy costs. We are not going to be distracted by those opposite. The Australian Energy Market Operator absolutely says that all of the plans are in place for us to have a secure energy supply for this coming summer. We will continue to do that and deliver affordable, secure and reliable energy.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) — I rise to speak on the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Caulfield. This house condemns the Andrews government and its reckless energy policies. I notice that the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change has just said, and I quote, 'More supply means lower energy bills'. I agree with the minister; it does. It

is just such a shame that the minister's policies have removed 1600 megawatts of energy from the Victorian grid and have in the best case planned 930 megawatts in wind energy that is not built yet, but it is planned. So we have already lost 1600 and we have got 930 planned. I am sorry, Minister, but in your own words, if more supply means lower energy bills, then less supply means higher energy bills. Surprise, surprise, that is what we have. As Rod Sims of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said on 3 August:

I mean four generators control 90 per cent of the market so with the Hazelwood closure ... as soon as Hazelwood closes prices just shot up ...

That is Rod Sims, an economist by the way. And why did Hazelwood close? Hazelwood closed because the Premier and his Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change tripled the brown coal royalty in the Victorian budget. That grabbed an extra \$252 million from the Latrobe Valley power stations, including \$87.5 million from Engie, the Hazelwood operator.

There does seem to be some confusion on the other side of the house about the tripling of the brown coal royalty. Victoria only uses brown coal. We do not export it. So when you triple the tax, you only hurt Victorians. It is not about greedy multinationals putting stuff offshore. This is Victorians who pay this tax, and that is what has happened. So what we saw was 22 per cent of Victoria's energy just disappear overnight. That was 1600 megawatts of energy, and we currently have 1400, nearly 1500, megawatts of wind energy installed. But of course wind energy is only 30-something per cent efficient, so we are actually only getting 520 megawatts of energy from wind. And that is a best-case scenario.

We then saw a continuation of these appalling policies, which have been attacked far and wide. I quote Keith Orchison, who is an energy market economist. He started a piece on 28 August by saying:

I would very much like to back our most egregious political players in the east coast energy system — notably but not solely Andrews and co in Victoria ... into a corner and not let them out until they have explained precisely what they are trying to achieve ... and have supported their actions with believable expert assessments.

It is just a fact that expert after expert says the government's policies are flawed and they have caused and continue to cause great pain for Victorians. I note in my own region, in the electorate of Ripon, this week two major employers went into the *Ararat Advertiser* and noted that their energy prices are out of control. I

particularly quote Mr Pye from Gason, a very large manufacturer in Ararat. He said:

... not containing energy prices is going to put employment at risk.

That is employment in Ararat. I would have thought the minister would be a bit focused on that rather than engaged in conversation. I would have thought that employment in Ararat would matter to those on the Labor Party side, but apparently not. Apparently employment in Ararat does not matter. But it does matter to me, and it matters to the people of Ararat. In that same article the CEO of the hospital in Ararat, Nick Bush, noted that his electricity costs are:

... set to increase by \$200 000 in the next financial year to a total of \$400 000.

They are going up 100 per cent. That would not be the 4 per cent that the Premier had previously talked about. That would not be the 85 cents a week that the minister and others have talked about. That would be 100 per cent. So what sort of health services are we going to see cut in Ararat? I hope it is not the birthing service. The women of Ararat very much support their birthing service being local, and it would be an absolute disgrace if this government's poor energy policies led to the removal of the birthing service in Ararat.

Then I turn to the fourth point of this matter of public importance, which is:

Caused hundreds of jobs to be lost and companies to leave Victoria.

On 1 September in the *Australian* there was an article by Adam Creighton and Joe Kelly which noted that:

Taxpayers will have paid more than \$60 billion through federal renewable energy subsidies by 2030, about twice what the crumbling car industry received over 15 years ...

Here it becomes particularly interesting. It is estimated that up to 40 000 people worked in the car industry. However, only 4400 work in the renewable energy industry and we are spending \$60 billion — twice what the car industry got. This government is determined to spend more, and it is not creating jobs. It is in fact part of losing jobs as employers like Gason in my electorate cannot manage and cannot compete with these very, very high power prices.

Clearly the Parliament agrees that the power outlook for the coming summer is not that great. Just today we received an email telling us that our power will be cut over the weekend while a generator is put in at the Parliament. Even the Parliament has worked out that we cannot rely on Victoria's energy policy, so a stand-by

generator will be connected this coming Saturday. I think that is the greatest example closest to home that we have — even the Parliament is saying to the government, ‘Your policies are flawed. You cannot keep the lights on in the Parliament’. That is absolutely where we are at the moment: we are at risk of blackouts.

The Australian Energy Market Operator recently had another go at that. I note that today in the *Australian Financial Review* there is a serious set of calculations showing that across Victoria and South Australia, coming into summer, we will have a supply shortfall of 926 megawatts. We are likely to have blackouts in Victoria. We already know this because AEMO has told us that we are going to be a net importer of power because of this government’s policies, but now they are telling us we are not going to have enough power at all. It is us and South Australia — South Australia with the diesel generators. We are really moving forward there on clean and green energy, are we not? Diesel generators! We will be up there with them, I am sure. If the choice is between diesel and no power at all, I would like to see us trucking them in here.

Once again this government has no answers. They keep saying that more supply is going to lower energy bills. We agree with that, but their policies are taking out supply. They have already done so with Hazelwood, and they will do so with one of the three remaining generators because, quite frankly, if they do not take out supply, they will actually fail on their green targets because the point of a Victorian renewable energy target is to transition from coal to renewables.

You cannot have your cake and eat it too. Either coal use will stop, in which case you will have a supply decline, or coal will remain, in which case you will still have the same emissions. So your entire goal does not pay dividends. It is entirely flawed from beginning to end, as is, I might add, the government’s most recent report into the retailer price charges.

The federal government actually had the retailers in and got some agreement on them mailing their customers. What have you done? You have done the report, but you have not even accepted the recommendations. This is a completely flawed government in relation to energy policy. Victorians are hurting, my people in Ripon are hurting and you do not care. You keep spouting nonsense. It is about time you got with reality.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) — I rise to speak on this matter of public importance (MPI) today. I want to make the point that the diatribe we just heard from the member for Ripon demonstrates quite clearly to all in this house and to those in her electorate that she cares

not one iota for jobs and investment in her electorate of Ripon. She would much rather stand in this place and espouse the views of the Institute of Public Affairs and show no regard for the impacts of those hardline policies on her electorate and her constituents in Ripon. If she did care about her constituents in Ripon, then she might well have quoted an article in today’s edition of the *Weekly Times* headed ‘Wind blows in Lib seats’. I quote from the article:

Wind farm construction in Victoria is powering along.

More than 20 wind farms are being built or are awaiting final approval.

The five farms under construction and 16 awaiting approval will more than double the 18 wind farms already dotting the landscape, mainly in the state’s west.

The construction surge is due to the Victorian government’s renewable energy target of 25 per cent of the state’s power by 2020 and 40 per cent by 2025.

And the irony of the Labor government move is that, according to environment group Friends of the Earth, Liberal-held rural electorates are in the box seat to benefit most from the renewable push.

The constituents in Ripon and those of the very noisy member for South-West Coast are set to benefit from our investments, as are the constituents of the member for Polwarth, because this government will do —

Mr Southwick — Speaker, I call your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms THOMAS — The point I was making before I was so rudely interrupted by the member for Caulfield is that this government, regardless of where those jobs are, will do what is right for Victoria, will do what is necessary to secure energy supply for our state and, what is more, will have a determined focus on creating jobs for now and into the future.

As we have all discussed already in this chamber, we know that energy prices are determined by the supply of energy in this state. I cannot believe the diatribe from the member for Ripon. Let us not forget that there were four years under the failed Napthine-Baillieu-Shaw Liberal coalition governments. What did they do? They killed the wind industry in this state, the very same industry that is creating jobs in Liberal-held seats right here, right now. Those members hold their own electorates in contempt in the way in which they have contributed to this debate and, frankly, it is disgraceful.

Supply of energy requires political leadership, and it requires policy certainty, something I am so glad our Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change here in the chamber has shown and is delivering — something I have to say is sorely missing in the federal arena. If we look to what is happening in Canberra, the Abbott-Turnbull Liberal government is aided and abetted by those on the other side. Despite the fact that it is their own matter of public importance, who is in here? Two of them. Two are here. They are really worried about the price of energy. They are really worried about jobs. They cannot even be bothered to participate and be here for this debate.

Speaker, indulge me for a moment if you will. I want to play a game called ‘Who am I?’. Who am I? I stood at the front of Parliament House less than 18 months ago and said, ‘Victoria and Australia are experiencing a renewables revolution, and it is a revolution that is led by the people because people want it, voters want it, the community want it, and that is what we need to be focused on’.

Ms Ward — Who is it?

Ms THOMAS — No, who am I? My Twitter account features a picture of me in a bike helmet in front of a wind farm. There is more. Who am I? I am the shadow minister for renewables. You would not know it. This is the member for Caulfield, who puts his name to this preposterous, fearmongering MPI before this house today.

I would have so much more respect for you, member for Caulfield, if you came into this place and stayed true to what you know and what you really believe instead of being held hostage to the extreme right wing of your own party. That is what is happening here. You are held hostage by the extreme right wing of your party. You are here on your own in the house today. No-one is backing you in. As I said, I do not believe for a moment that you really believe what you espouse in this house. I have more faith in you than that.

But I did want to reflect again on how we got into this mess that we are in — a mess that, I might say, thankfully our Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change is getting us out of. For a brief moment back in 2009 it looked like the federal Labor government would be able to deliver a real and significant step towards tackling climate change. The carbon pollution reduction scheme, which had been negotiated by Labor and the Liberals was, as we know, a very important pragmatic step towards Australia delivering a climate change policy. It was a position that at the last minute was stymied by a combination of

forces: two obstinate ideologues, Tony Abbott and the Greens party.

Since that time there has been a vacuum in political leadership. But this government has stood ready to take that lead, to take the nation forward, to put pressure on the federal government, to put pressure on the federal Minister for the Environment and Energy, Josh Frydenberg, and to do what the community and business is asking us to do: to provide policy and political certainty.

The climate change debate has been and gone; it is more than a decade old. I quote from the Australian Bankers’ Association — it seems like it is possibly a good time to quote from them — whose position on climate change is quite clear. They say:

... climate change is a global problem that requires a sustainable global solution. Australia’s economy and environment are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Governments, businesses and the community all have a role in driving changes in behaviour and responding to the challenges posed by climate change.

They go on to say:

The ABA and our member banks believe that the following principles should guide Australia’s response to the challenges of climate change:

Leadership — taking early action;

Policy — applying flexible market mechanisms and policy support; and

Practice — building knowledge and capacity.

...

Governments, businesses and the community must take early action to mitigate, abate, prepare and adapt to the consequences of climate and weather related changes due to global warming.

This government, the Andrews Labor government, is very clear. We stand here as the party that represents the people in our community who are the ones that face challenges when their bills arrive. We are the party that represents working people who are paying those bills, and that is why we are totally committed to increasing energy supply in this state with investment in renewables.

We will ensure that we are moving to a renewable future. The rest of the world is headed there. You do not see this ridiculous debate happening in other parts of the world. It is a purely ideological position of those on the other side. They are beholden to the extreme right wing of their party — the extreme right wing who want to fight. Victorians are left to pay the price of their

culture war. They need to sort themselves out. The member for Caulfield needs to stand up, be brave and show some leadership.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) — I am pleased to rise to speak on this matter of public importance. I congratulate the member for Caulfield for putting it forward because this is a critical issue. We have even had the member for Macedon highlight just how critical this issue is and that it is important to households and to businesses that power prices are going through the roof throughout this state. Unfortunately the member for Macedon and the others opposite fail to recognise that it is the policies of this government that have in fact caused that issue to occur.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Now I am hearing that the argument is wrong. This is classic Labor Party ideological thinking: 'We can triple the tax. We can increase the tax by \$252 million, and that will just get absorbed. That has nothing to do with the closure of the Hazelwood power station. No, that was just a decision made by a foreign company'. Funnily enough there were other decisions made by foreign companies like Alcoa in Portland. The government rushed down to make sure that we kept the Portland Alcoa plant open.

What did they do about Engie and Hazelwood? As the member for Caulfield said earlier, absolutely nothing. This was in fact Labor Party policy, as we know, in the 2010 election, and it remains Labor Party policy because they are being pushed to this situation by the Greens. It is the people of Victoria that are now suffering, in particular the people of the Latrobe Valley and the people of my electorate of Gippsland South in the area around the Latrobe Valley, where 750 jobs have gone far earlier than they needed to because this government has seen fit to triple the coal tax royalty and to slug the generators. In doing so it is slugging all Victorians, including households and including businesses.

We have seen what has happened with Hazelwood. It has taken out 22 per cent of the state's supplies, and — surprise, surprise, here is another lesson in economics for the Labor Party — the wholesale price has gone up. That is now flowing through. But they are not done with that. They are going to go even further by establishing this Victorian renewable energy target (VRET). I have no issue with renewables. In fact I support a transition to renewables. But they must be balanced by security and affordability. We have heard those on the other side talk about affordability and the issues of price impacts, but they totally ignore the reality of the price impacts that come from renewables.

They are more expensive. We have heard the minister say, and we just heard the member for Macedon say, 'We're bringing on new supply. That will drive prices down'. New supply does, but new supply that is more expensive and that drives other cheaper generators out of the market when it is government mandated does not bring the price down.

I hear the Greens say quite a bit that renewables — wind and solar — are cheaper than coal. If that is the case, why do they need a subsidy? Why is this government going to spend \$250 million on the auction for renewable energy? Why are we having this Victorian renewable energy target and giving a subsidy to the renewable sector if these wonderful wind farms and the like are actually cheap?

I go to a comment from Matthew Warren from the Australian Energy Council. With respect to the VRET he said:

We are yet to see the modelling that the Victorian government has used for its cost projections.

Surprise, surprise, they are hiding that. We know that. He continued:

We have learnt from South Australia that more renewables initially reduced prices but as they push out traditional, firm generation without equivalent replacement supply, wholesale prices have almost doubled.

That is not us. That is not the member for Caulfield saying it. That is not Josh Frydenberg saying it. That is the Australian Energy Council. And if you do not like that one, you can go with the Grattan Institute. Tony Wood from the Grattan Institute said the VRET policy was a 'nasty dog's breakfast', and he also said:

No-one is debating the future need for more renewable energy in the system, but a national approach would consider the most efficient place to source that from. It appears to me that the lesson from South Australia has been ignored by this policy.

That is the Grattan Institute. That is a respected organisation that actually knows what it is talking about when it comes to power and electricity.

And then there is the one that the Labor Party would like to hear from, I am sure. The Victorian Council of Social Service's Emma King said:

We shouldn't be building a greener Victoria on the backs of people doing it tough.

This is the reality. The government is committed to renewables, and that is fine, but do not try and sell us this furphy that bringing in all this additional renewable generation is going to actually lead to price reductions.

You have caused the increase in prices; you have caused the crisis that is happening across Victoria now. And it is happening right across industries.

In my own electorate I received an email the other day from a dairy farmer who is facing a 150 per cent increase in his next power contract. The energy component of that has gone from something like 2 cents a kilowatt hour to 8 cents a kilowatt hour. That is more like a 400 per cent increase in the energy component. That particular dairy farmer uses most of his power to irrigate. He irrigates at night. What is happening at night? There is no solar power for a start. He is asking me why we are shutting Hazelwood and whether there is a plan for future baseload power so that when he is trying to irrigate at night he is not paying a ridiculous price for his power.

The member for Murray Plains, the Leader of The Nationals, has highlighted that Kyvalley Dairy Group employs 100 local people in Kyabram. The dairy's energy bills rose \$50 000 this year. That is an increase of 23 per cent. That is this year. That is before all these additional price rises are coming through. One of the owners of the factory, Wayne Mulcahy, recently told the *Australian* newspaper:

We either shut the whole factory down and put 100 people out of work, or we just pay it. We have no alternative.

This is the threat that we are facing. We have got others that have been in the media recently, including Victoria Wool Processors, Kagome Foods Australia and Cobram Cold Storage. Burra Foods in my own electorate has talked about an 80 to 90 per cent increase in its energy prices, and there is Patties Foods in the electorate of the member for Gippsland East. There are a number. Lower Murray Water — the member for Mildura will be interested — estimates it faces a 100 per cent hike in its electricity costs. This is going to come through not only to our food prices but also to our exports, because we need to be able to compete with the rest of the world.

As we heard last week in Parliament too, the impact of course is in our health system as well. We have got our hospitals. The Central Gippsland Health Service in Sale is facing a 75 per cent increase. To put that in context that is a \$303 000 increase just in its electricity bill. In Leongatha it is the same, with a 70 to 80 per cent increase in their expected power bill. So this has a massive impact.

I want to go briefly now to some more expert opinion. We know those opposite just do not believe anything we say, so let us listen to the experts. These are the two statements from the Australian Energy Market

Operator (AEMO), and the minister has quoted AEMO extensively in the last couple of months. Here is the *Electricity Statement of Opportunities*, released only yesterday. It says that for the national electricity market (NEM):

... there is a heightened risk of significant unserved energy (USE) over the next 10 years, compared with recent levels.

For those who do not know, unserved energy means blackouts. That means more demand than there is supply. It continues:

The highest forecast USE risk in the 10-year outlook is in 2017–18 in South Australia and Victoria.

That is what AEMO says. Minister, if you have not read that, then you are not doing your job. I hope you have read that, because that is exactly what it says.

I quoted Matthew Warren from the Australian Energy Council earlier. The AEMO report from yesterday also adds:

... if this renewable development was to lead to earlier retirement of existing thermal generation, the risk of USE would increase without additional firming capability.

Again, firming capability is baseload power — that is, the power stations in the Latrobe Valley, for example, in Victoria. There is no doubt that to achieve the VRET target of 40 per cent by 2025 the government will have to see one of the Latrobe Valley power stations close. There is the warning there for you in black and white from AEMO, highlighting the problem. The report from yesterday goes on:

In Victoria, the likelihood of a shortfall is between 39 per cent and 43 per cent ... If USE occurs, it is likely to last for 4 to 5 hours.

What sort of society and country are we living in if we are going to accept that we are just going to go without power for 4 or 5 hours? We have seen that in South Australia; that happened under a Labor government as well.

There are also warnings in there about future supply with respect to dispatchable, or baseload, power. The system is:

... sufficiently tight that the extended unavailability of any further capacity, delays in connection of renewable generation, or failures in generator fuel supplies over the peak summer months would likely lead to further supply shortfalls, well above the reliability standard.

And then in today's report that AEMO has released to the commonwealth they are talking about the need for 1000 megawatts of flexible energy resources. What they are talking about is diesel generators. I note we

have now got one out the back of Parliament House just in case the lights go off. That is an indictment of this government as it is right across the state.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the matter of public importance that is before the house today. There has been much talk about Hazelwood. By way of background, Hazelwood as a power station started construction in 1964, and it had a 1600-megawatt capacity. It was built from 1964 to 1971, and as others have said it made up about 25 per cent of Victoria's baseload capacity.

It is really important to note that Hazelwood was not some super-efficient, well-maintained, well-operational power station. I remember speaking with David White, who was a minister in the former Kirner government. He had responsibility for the State Electricity Commission of Victoria at the time. I seem to recall back in the late 80s or the early 90s Hazelwood operated around about 60 per cent of the time, or 60 per cent of its units were operational. It was far inferior to Loy Yang A. It was far inferior to Loy Yang B. At that stage Loy Yang A had been constructed and Loy Yang B was under construction.

Let us just set this straight. Thirty years ago this was the runt of the litter. This was a dog of an asset 30 years ago. It was just manifestly inadequate 30 years ago.

If you listen to what those opposite are saying, this is a bit like saying —

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I take up the interjection from the member for Gippsland South. What the member for Gippsland South is effectively saying is, 'You know what? Victoria Police — they need police cars. Let's fit them out with EH Holdens. Let's go and find every EH Holden we can find, let's fit them out and let's get them on the road, because that's the way to the future'. That is what they are saying, but these are —

Ms Ward — Let's bring back Bluey!

Mr PEARSON — Let's bring back Bluey, the member for Eltham says. Maybe the member for Gippsland South could be Bluey in another life.

I had a beloved UC Torana that was made in 1978. I loved my Torana. It was lime-green. It was badged as a Sunbird but it had a six-cylinder engine in it. I was driving my beloved Torana home one Saturday afternoon. I was trying to get some cheap petrol and some careless driver ran up my boot. I was going to say something else, but it was into my boot. Into the boot it

went. I thought to myself — I had great hopes — I could salvage the Torana. I could take it to the mechanics and perform a bit of resuscitation. I could bring back my Torana. But do you know what they said? They said, 'Sorry, son. It's a write-off'. And then I went to a Ford Escort, and it was never the same.

But you have got to ask yourself: why was that the case? The reality is that it was determined at the time that it was not cost-effective to put the Torana back on the road because it was old, because the value of the asset had depreciated to such a state.

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Mr PEARSON — The member for Gippsland South interjects in relation to the coal tax. I will try to educate the member for Gippsland South on capital markets and finance. Let us suppose, for example — like my beloved Torana — it is determined that you are going to have to spend \$1 billion to fix up Hazelwood so that it can be operating in the 21st century. So it is a bit like the old EH Holden: 'Let's soup up an EH. Let's get it out on the road. That can be the squad car'.

Let us say it is \$1 billion. What would be the loan term of that? You would say, for argument's sake, it was 30 years. I know you could sort of say 40 years because of the life cycle of the asset, but it is 30 years. Now let us look at the current interest rate. Let us say we will use a low interest rate. We will not use a higher interest rate to reflect the risk; let us say we use 4.51 per cent. What would be the repayment required to repay that debt? It would be \$5 million a month every month for 30 years. There is not a banker in the world that would write that loan — not one. You cannot build baseload coal-fired power assets these days because you cannot get the return. And why cannot you get the return? You cannot get the return because the technology is changing so rapidly. That is what is happening. No-one will write a loan.

Let us say the member for Caulfield realises that he cannot write a loan. What is the answer? Is the member for Caulfield seriously suggesting that the taxpayers of Victoria should open a Hazelwood and put the taxpayers on the hook for \$1 billion? We can rebuild the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) and we can again be the leader of last resort. Is that —

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I know that is what the National Party want. They believe in this sort of hocus-pocus weirdo economics from the 1970s. It just does not make sense.

The question, I suppose, for the member for Caulfield, who is not here for his own MPI and, I will make the point, could not see out his 15 minutes talking about his own policy portfolio area, is: is this the face of the modern Liberal Party? Is that they want? Is their policy agenda going to be like what I would have liked to have done with my 1978 Torana — revive the State Electricity Commission of Victoria? Is that their policy agenda? Are they seriously suggesting that what we should do is go down to the gates of Hazelwood, open it up and say, ‘No, we’ll run it. We’ll guarantee security of supply. We will turn around and we will loan it. We’ll go to the Treasury Corporation of Victoria, we’ll go to the Victorian Funds Management Corporation, we will ask for \$1 billion and we’ll revive this asset to bring it to life’?

It is just nonsense. If you wanted any evidence to suggest those opposite are absolute policy vandals, economic hobos — these people do not deserve to be in government. They are economic hobos of the highest order. Why would you say this? Why would you say that you would go down this path of trying to rebuild the SECV and revive something like Hazelwood? It was a dog in 1989, for goodness sake. It was a dog then, it is a dog now. I am sorry, but technology has changed, and there is no-one, not a banker in the world, that would write the loan.

Engie made the choice. They decided to close it. They are getting out of fossil-fuelled assets around the world. It is not just here; it is in Western Australia and I believe it is in Europe as well. They made the call. They determined that it was in their own best interests as a company to withdraw from these assets. That is an entirely appropriate thing to do. Business make these decisions all the time.

Mr D. O’Brien interjected.

Mr PEARSON — The reality is that there comes a point where you look at it and you say, ‘We have to make sure we operate a safe working environment. We have to make sure we are compliant with occupational health and safety. We have to therefore spend the money’. Well, why would you spend hundreds of millions of dollars if the asset is past its use-by date? That is the reality. That is just a simple fact. What you have to do of course is make sure you have got proactive industry policy in place to soften the cushion while we are transitioning to a cleaner, greener economy.

Listening to the member for Gippsland South —

Mr D. O’Brien interjected.

Mr PEARSON — We have to have a diverse range of energy supplies, both base load and renewables, into the future because we believe the scientists. We believe that climate change is happening. We recognise the fact that this is the reality and we have to transition the economy. What those opposite would do is they would have a series of stranded assets built and constructed — expensive white elephants — around the state which would become completely and utterly surplus to requirement. If you follow their policy views to their logical conclusions, that is exactly what would happen: you would have stranded assets. That is a misuse of company funds and stakeholder funds. If you followed those opposite to their logical conclusion and they were asking the taxpayer of Victoria to pick up the bill to keep Hazelwood open, that would be a complete misuse of resources.

The reality is that we are becoming far more efficient in Victoria in terms of energy consumption. I asked the parliamentary library to look at our per capita consumption, and we are declining year on year. On the latest figures, which are for 2014–15, our energy consumption is 237 gigajoules per person on a per capita basis, which is a drop since 2005–06. The reality is that if you want to tackle climate change you need a market-based mechanism. You need to find a way in which you can encourage people to recognise that they have got to change their pattern of behaviour. You have got to try to get people to shop around.

I commend the minister for the Switch On Victorian Energy Compare website, because I made the call last year that I would look at this and shop around. If I look at my account for 31 August 2016, I had an energy bill for \$412.97. I shopped around, and my bill which I just paid this week, for the same period, was \$414.72. So yes, my bill has increased by \$1.75, and that is for a seven-person household, and my consumption has dropped. You need to use the tools that are available to you. I commend the minister for having produced that excellent website.

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) — I rise to make a contribution on the matter of public importance and in particular the importance of energy pricing. You will not hear from this side, like we have from the other side, trips down memory lane about old motor vehicles. You will not hear from this side stories that no-one is interested in of members such as the member for Essendon being a part of failed Labor governments in the past. And you will certainly not hear about loan analysis. What you will hear is about jobs, you will hear about cost of living and you will hear about this side of the house being prepared to stand up for small and

medium-sized businesses, families and households to ensure that they receive lower and fairer power prices.

We have a crisis in Victoria of energy supply and a crisis of energy pricing under this government. It probably should not surprise us, because an energy crisis of supply is not new to the Victorian branch of the Labor Party. Many of us on this side of the house remember the crisis during the Bracks government when we had blackouts and brownouts in the early 2000s, once again because the Victorian branch of the Labor Party just refused to acknowledge the essential service that electricity is. It seems that unfortunately history is repeating itself. The Victorian branch of the Labor Party is again just not recognising the essential and important aspect that electricity supply plays — both pricing and the reliability of supply for Victorian households, for Victorian families and for Victorian small and medium-sized businesses.

You only have to have a look at the track record of this government. If you look in relation to Hazelwood power station, of course the government made the decision to triple the brown coal royalty in the previous budget and grab an extra \$250 million from Latrobe Valley power generators. That has a flow-on effect to the cost of doing business for those generators in the Latrobe Valley. It is a cost that unfortunately we have paid a dear price for. Hazelwood represented 22 per cent of Victoria's energy supplies. Seven hundred and fifty people lost their jobs with the closure in March. That is all as a consequence of the policy settings of this government and of the increase of the brown coal royalty. Of course the Latrobe Valley could not afford to have another mistake made by this government in energy policy, because it has just contributed to unemployment in that area.

On energy pricing, once again the government has misread the market. The government has failed to understand the importance of energy pricing for Victorian families, households and small and medium-sized businesses. I note that on the Neil Mitchell program of 3 November 2016 the Premier, the member for Mulgrave, said in relation to the impact of Hazelwood closing on Victorian households, and I quote:

Any increase will cause pressure on household budgets, I acknowledge that. But the numbers are more in the order of 4 per cent, or 85 cents a week ...

I will just repeat that, Speaker, and I quote:

Any increase will cause pressure on household budgets, I acknowledge that. But the numbers are more in the order of 4 per cent, or 85 cents a week ...

That is just living in fairyland, because the reality is the decisions of this government, which has forced the Hazelwood closure, have meant that we have skyrocketing electricity prices in Victoria as a consequence of this government. Of course the reality that has been confirmed is that households are already paying \$300 extra on their energy bills this year because of this government's rush to shut Hazelwood down. That has come from the St Vincent de Paul Society. It has not come from the Liberal Party. It is out there from an independent third party.

The human consequence of that \$300 increase is that families and households have to find the money for that increase. This is an essential service which they utilise to keep the fridges on, where they may be keeping medication, to keep the lights on, to keep the electricity going, to keep the heaters going and to keep the air conditioning going, and many of them do not have a choice. They do not have a choice particularly in the middle of the day if they are in their senior years and they need to have climate control. But under this government they are being forced to make decisions which are dangerous to their health, which are dangerous to their household and which are blatantly just unfair.

Indeed the latest report from the ESC — the Essential Services Commission — is showing the soaring price of energy and the consequences of that leading to record disconnections. Families are going into debt and households are going into debt. Why is that the case? Why is that the case when Victoria has had an abundance of capacity to supply cheap energy, which has fired businesses and which has kept households warm? The reason we are in this situation is that it is an ideological war that the Victorian branch of the Labor Party is inflicting on the people of Victoria. This ideological war, which is a result of their policy settings of increases in taxes and charges and a result of their policy settings of putting a go-it-alone state Victorian renewable energy target of 40 per cent by 2025, is having an impact on those households and on those small and medium-sized businesses.

It is not only unfair; it is not only dangerous; it is just plain stupid. It stands in stark contrast to what we are proposing on this side of the house. We will abolish the Victorian renewable energy target to ensure that downward pressure is put on energy pricing. We will not go and triple brown coal royalties and put direct pressure on increasing electricity prices as a result of tax decisions like that. We will ease the pressure on households and families by putting downward pressure on the cost of living. We will not undertake those massive increases in taxes and charges, because we do

not have an ideological war. We do not have a hatred of the Victorian electricity industry. We acknowledge the role that it plays in supporting small and medium-sized businesses, and we acknowledge the role that it plays in supporting households.

Of course the track record of this government should not surprise us in relation to cost of living increases. This is the government led by the member for Mulgrave, who looked down the camera at the people of Victoria and gave them a solemn promise that he would not introduce new taxes and charges. It is the same member for Mulgrave and Premier who looked down the camera at the Sky News forum and said he would not impose higher taxes and charges.

And what have we got? We have got a taxi tax, the Uber tax, and we have got the tripling of the brown coal royalties. We have got the massive increases in land tax surcharges. We have got the massive increases in the fire services property levy. We have got increases on the cost of owning a motor vehicle in our state. For every household or small and medium-sized business that undertakes and has a motor vehicle, it costs more to buy a car in the state of Victoria under this government.

You can only imagine the consequences of that for people who might have two vehicles in a household. It may not be because they want to but because they need to, because the public transport options are not there under this government. As a consequence of that, there is less in the household budget to be able to spend on recreational activities, to be able to spend at the local shopping centre and to be able to fire up the economy.

As a consequence of that, we have got Victorian households and families that are worse off because they have never had the cost increases and the increase in the cost of living that they are experiencing under this government. Victorian small businesses are worse off because the disposable income that households and families have under this government is significantly less as a result of the reduction in the growth of wages under this government and, importantly, as a consequence of the essentials that a household needs to spend its household budget on.

In addition to that you have got the crisis in our democracy because, again, the Premier said one thing before the election, making those firm commitments to households, to families, to small and medium-sized businesses. He made the unequivocal commitment of supposedly putting downward pressure on the cost of living, but that just has not occurred. In fact we have seen massive increases.

What I cannot understand is why it is that we have members on the other side of the house that just do not seem to be prepared to stand up for households and families against this Premier and his war on increasing costs of living. Where was the member for Bentleigh, for example, on electricity pricing when this government tripled the royalties on brown coal? Where was the member for Bentleigh standing in the party room? I will acknowledge some on the other side have done that at times, but where was the member for Bentleigh? Where were some of the other members? The very clear signal from that is that those members opposite are not only happy to allow for energy pricing increases, but they are complicit in those increases and they are complicit in the job losses that will come as a consequence of these massive increases in energy supply. They should be condemned for their actions and their inaction, as should this government.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) — It is my pleasure to rise and speak on this matter of public importance (MPI). In looking at the wording of the MPI, I find it to be quite revealing. It reveals one thing in particular, and that is that the opposition does not understand our energy market at all. What is worse is that they have been corrected multiple times on many of the mistruths that are included in the MPI before the Parliament today, but they just do not seem to get it, so let me work through some of them. It appears that some of those on the opposite side of this chamber are a little bit bad at understanding, so we will work through these once again.

Let us reiterate a fact. The closure of Hazelwood was a commercial decision. It was a commercial decision of the plant's owner, Engie. The company made it clear that it was exiting all of its coal investments worldwide. Now, if you think Victorian state policy influences the global decisions of a global company, good on you, but I am a little bit worried about your capacity to govern if you think that is the case.

It is one thing for the shadow minister to ignore the government on this matter, but it is another thing completely for him to ignore his own Prime Minister, who has stated — and I am going to quote him in full:

... the closure of Hazelwood is a decision of the owner Engie. It's a commercial decision that they have taken —

...

... the responsibility here is fundamentally that of the owners, Engie, and of course they have made a decision about this plant, which is the oldest coal-fired power station Australia and has been slated to close for a very long time.

The cost of keeping it running runs into hundreds of millions and the cost of rehabilitation, which obviously a new owner would have to take over, is approaching a billion dollars.

And —

... the Victorian government I know has had extensive discussions with Engie over some time and they have shown a complete determination to close the plant.

That was the Prime Minister. Now, if they are not prepared to believe us, you would think they might be prepared to take the word of their own Prime Minister.

But I have also got to say the Prime Minister in that quote said something interesting. He said Hazelwood 'has been slated to close for a very long time'. Do you know what is interesting about that? Those opposite were in government for four years. You would reckon if Hazelwood had been slated to close for a very, very long time and those opposite were oh-so concerned about it and they are oh-so supportive of a new coal-fired generator, which is what they have kept telling us today, you would reckon they might have built one in that four years. Did they? No. Did they plan one? No. We will let that rest right there. I think that rests nicely just where it is.

Indeed, as the Prime Minister said, we did speak to Engie — we did advocate for the community in the valley. Engie advised that a staged shutdown was not commercially viable — that is fact. Let us deal in facts, not nonsense. They also told us that they investigated all options before making the decision to retire the plant, but did not receive any credible proposals to keep the plant operating.

One of the issues facing Hazelwood concerned the safety of the workers — let us not forget that, the safety of the workforce. They estimated that it would cost about \$400 million to repair the plant to keep it safe and the workers operating it safe. These are the facts. Those opposite can play in a world of factual inaccuracy and spin, but we prefer to deal in facts. That is what governing is all about. What those opposite are doing is just theatre, and it is bad theatre at that. It is horrible theatre. We have the shadow arts minister sitting at the table. Even she must agree that it was awful theatre.

And here are some more facts. The Liberals and Nationals have long failed the valley. Let us talk about the Hazelwood mine fire. Let us talk about that, hey? What did the coalition do while that fire burned for 45 days? Where were you? Nowhere to be seen. This was an event that had significant health implications for the community, and you all buried your heads in the sand — you ran scared, and you ran fast. That was an event of significant proportions, and no-one was

talking about the valley then on your benches. No-one was talking about the valley, but all of a sudden you are interested.

Then there is the constant flow of mistruths by both those opposite and their federal counterparts. I could get into those, but I want to allow some time to get into the impacts on business.

Quite frankly, those opposite have time to fuff around with university-style political campaigns. They have never been interested in policy, especially energy policy. But on this side of the chamber we are in the business of delivering. We are in the business of making meaningful change, and that is exactly what we are doing. One of the mechanisms through which we are doing this is the Victorian renewable energy target. This target will bring forward significant investment in renewable energy projects in Victoria, it will create thousands of jobs and it will put downward pressure on electricity prices and secure Victoria's electricity supply. This is in stark contrast to those opposite, who effectively did everything in their power to ban renewable energy and, as a consequence, we saw investment in renewables dry up during their four years in office. We saw the jobs attached to those industries, particularly the wind industry, dry up.

It was interesting to hear the member for Ripon say that our renewables investment is planned capacity, not current capacity. Well, it would be current capacity if you guys had invested in renewable energy. It would be current. It is only planned because you did nothing, so look at yourselves occasionally.

In contrast, we are delivering up to 650 megawatts of capacity, which will drive up to \$1.3 billion of additional renewable energy investment. This investment will create about 1250 jobs in regional Victoria during the construction phase and another 90 ongoing jobs. This is real action, not meaningless fearmongering.

Before I run out of time — I think I have got about 45 minutes of material and, sadly, only 10 minutes to get it out — I want to discuss the impact of wholesale energy prices on business. This is an issue close to my heart because Dandenong, my electorate, is the biggest manufacturing precinct in the country. I recently had the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change come to my electorate to talk to a large group of industry representatives about rising energy costs. I did not actually see the shadow minister in the room at the time — apparently he knows everything that went on in that room, but in reality he does not, because his comments earlier were quite inaccurate.

There is absolutely no doubt that these businesses are under significant pressure, but what was interesting is that the understanding of local business far surpasses the understanding of those opposite. They know what is causing these pressures. They know. I have had many businesses saying to me, 'We know this isn't about Hazelwood'. I have also had them saying to me, 'We know this isn't caused by the state government'. In fact in an email a very prominent local business representative said to me he knew it was a federal issue in the main but it has state consequences and it has a state impact. He is right; of course it has an impact.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms WILLIAMS — Absolutely true. Businesses are openly acknowledging that the lack of policy certainty federally is hurting them. That came out loud and clear during the minister's visit to my electorate. They acknowledge that policy uncertainty makes it difficult for them to get stability in their contracts. They are well across the detail relating to the impact of the sale of two-thirds of Australia's gas onto the global market. They know it is driving up prices and creating a domestic shortfall. They know all that. They have also been clear in their view, put to me across many discussions, that Kennett's model of privatisation was flawed — and I think I am being very polite in saying that — and many of them have been blunt in their assessment that the federal Liberal-National government bears the brunt of the blame for many of the issues we are now dealing with.

We could spend hours and hours allocating blame, but here in Victoria the Andrews government believes in action. We believe in doing our bit, and so we are. We are delivering a wide range of incentives to encourage and support businesses to manage energy costs and become more efficient. This includes the \$6.1 million Boosting Business Productivity program delivered by Sustainability Victoria, which helps businesses to cut energy and material costs. We have got the Sustainable Finance service. We have got the Better Commercial Buildings program, the Victorian Energy Upgrades program, the investment assistance and attraction program and programs that target rural and regional businesses as well through the Regional Jobs Fund.

These are just some of the ways we are seeking to directly assist businesses, but we do not shy away from the fact that these are difficult and challenging times. I know the minister has been proactive in listening to businesses, hearing their suggestions and ensuring that they are as well supported as possible. The minister, through Sustainability Victoria, has also arranged for a gas efficiency masterclass to be held in Dandenong in a

few weeks time. I look forward to being present at that and to again talk to businesses about what we can do, but our challenge is now to convince the commonwealth that it too needs to be a part of the solution. Beyond that, we also need those opposite to do their bit and give certainty to business by confirming that they will support our initiatives to drive down prices. This means supporting renewable technologies.

Finally, in the few seconds I have left, I cannot believe that those opposite dare to talk about jobs when you delivered to us the highest unemployment rate in mainland Australia. Meanwhile we have delivered 250 000 jobs.

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

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) — My God, I would not have minded being at that meeting with the member for Dandenong and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change out there in Dandenong, talking about local businesses. What a fly on the wall experience that would have been to listen to the minister for energy and the member for Dandenong explain to her local businesses why they have seen their power prices increase by 300 per cent. I would not have minded being at that meeting and listening to the member and the minister explain, say, for example, to Gerry Ryan, who owns Jayco, why his energy prices have risen by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

I would not have minded being at the meeting with the member's local abattoir owner to hear what he has got to say about his power prices going up hundreds of thousands of dollars and possibly laying off hundreds and hundreds of workers because he cannot afford the power prices that the minister has imposed on these businesses. I would not have minded being at the meeting with the local supermarket owners who run the coolrooms, listening to them talk about power prices and the fact that they do not know where their businesses are going to be in three, four or five years. That would have been a very interesting meeting with the member for Dandenong and the minister for energy, trying to explain why people are going to have their businesses and livelihoods threatened and why thousands of thousands of jobs in and around Dandenong have been put under threat by this minister and this local member and these members who support this minister and the Premier, who have put Victoria's energy supplies at risk not only for today but for tomorrow and future generations because of this nonsense of a policy and nonsense of an approach that they are imposing on the Victorian public.

We spoke yesterday about legacies. Let me talk about the legacy that this minister for energy is leaving the Victorian people from the most damaging four years that we will see in Victoria's history in terms of solid and secure power supply. Let us talk about this minister's legacy, and what a shocking legacy it will be. She will go down as one of the most incompetent ministers that this Victorian Parliament has ever seen. We talk about being out of our depth. This minister will be proven to be out of her depth, but I do not mind her going down; her going down is no problem at all. If she did not have a job tomorrow, I could not really care less, but it is the jobs of the Victorian public, the jobs of the Victorian people, that I care about, in particular the people in Bass, because of this minister's decisions.

Let us just talk to the matter of public importance for just a moment and talk about the legacy that this minister is leaving. I think some of the businesses in the member for Broadmeadows's electorate would like to have a chat to him too, if he can make his way over there from wherever he resides. If he made his way over to Broadmeadows and had a bit of a chat to some of his businesses —

Mr McGuire interjected.

Mr PAYNTER — Make an appointment and have a cup of tea, member for Broadmeadows, and talk to some of your businesses over there in Broadmeadows, if you ever find your way over there, because they would be interested in having a chat to you too, no doubt. There are a few other members over there too who I am sure some of their constituents and some of the businesses in their electorates would not mind having a little bit of a chat with about power prices. I have spoken to mine. I am not sure if they have made appointments and organised a cup of tea, put the kettle on and sat down with some of the business owners.

Mr Nardella interjected.

Mr PAYNTER — I will completely disregard any comment from the member for Melton, who actually should not be in this chamber because he is a rotting cheat. He should not be here. The Premier should have shown some leadership and thrown him out a long time ago. He is under investigation by the police, so he will be dealt with accordingly.

But let us talk about this minister and the legacy that she is leaving the Victorian people, and let us talk about the shutdown of the Hazelwood power station. They might say, 'Oh, no. Nothing to do with the state government — something to do with the federal government; something to do with old power supply.

Don't worry about the coal. We've got coal there under the ground for hundreds of years but don't worry about that. We'll put in a couple of wind farms'. Let us talk about the Macarthur wind farm. It is running at about 20 per cent capacity. That is a wind farm out there in the Western District. Let us talk about that one.

This minister here has presided over an increase in coal taxes, so they have had to shut the doors. Do not worry about the secure power supply of Hazelwood. No, she has decided to shut the doors. Twenty-two per cent of Victorians' power supply has been lost. That is the legacy this minister is leaving the Victorian people, and those opposite make a joke about it. The member for Essendon was up there and the kids in the public gallery were having to listen to his nonsense. I heard one of them ask, 'What's he talking about?'. Another said, 'He's trying to make a joke about an old Torana to explain why Mum and Dad's power bills have gone up \$300'. Here is the member for Essendon talking to the schoolkids about his old Torana. What a joke.

Those opposite make a joke about it: 'We'll fix it with a couple of wind turbines. No problems at all'. Yes, that will fix Victoria's power supplies, like you have shut down Hazelwood — 22 per cent solid, reliable supply into our electricity grid from Hazelwood. 'Don't worry about that. We'll close that down. We'll not stop there though — no, no, no — because that is not going to fix the problem. We need to reach 40 per cent renewable energy by 2025, so another power station will have to go. We'll close another one down'. Who is lining up to close down the next power station?

Next thing we will have blackouts. It says here in the local paper today that we will have blackouts in summer. There goes mum and dad. There goes my father, who is sitting in a nursing home. He will not be able to put on the air conditioner. The nursing home will not be able to put on the air conditioner. Dad will not be able to have a meal because there will not be any power supply. Oh, hang on, they are bringing in the generators.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass is not to use props. I remind you there is no use of props in the house.

Mr PAYNTER — Deputy Speaker, I think you are deliberately trying to distract me. I was on a roll there.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — I ask you not to pass reflection on the Chair.

Mr PAYNTER — Further disruptions, Deputy Speaker. It extends further than the nursing homes. What about our hospitals? Let us tell them to bring in

the diesel generators as well. You tried to bring in the diesel generators down at the Wonthaggi desalination plant. Now by the sounds of it you want to bring them to the Wonthaggi hospital — just load up the diesel generators. I do not know where you are going to get them from, because everyone is going to need their diesel generators next summer. That will reduce emissions — good thinking, Minister! Another legacy.

Let us talk about the health services, and hospitals in particular. The cost of electricity will increase by \$44 million. Who is laughing now, member for Essendon, about your old Torana? You cannot convince anyone that closing power stations is a good idea, because now they are going to have to bring in diesel generators because they cannot afford the cost of the additional \$44 million in electricity. That is the hospitals, and there are many examples of hospitals.

Cobden District Health Services are talking about having to close down their pool. Laugh at that, member for Essendon. Have a good laugh about closing the pool until we talk about it offering physiotherapy and rehabilitation for people with injuries. Do not worry about that — have another joke about that. Have another joke when your elderly father is sitting in a nursing home in the middle of summer while his diesel generator is going out his back window because he cannot put the air conditioner on.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr PAYNTER — Have a joke about that, member for Mordialloc, as you talk to the other mums and dads who have had their power supply cut off because they cannot afford the bills. We are not just talking about one or two households that cannot afford the power bills anymore. Houses are being shut off on a daily basis because of your incompetent minister, who is going to leave a legacy like no other. She is damaging our power supply, she is damaging businesses and she is damaging families who cannot afford to pay their household bills.

Average energy bills for households have gone up \$300, and that is just a start. In fact the power bills for small to medium-size businesses have gone up over 300 per cent. There are many, many examples of that. I have already given examples to the member for Dandenong, who had a meeting with businesses but no doubt did not ask the hard questions. This minister does not want to know the answers, because we know the legacies that she is leaving — hundreds of thousands of jobs lost, people out of jobs, businesses put out of business, and mums and dads having to turn off the power because they cannot afford the bills.

Talk to St Vinnies and ask them how families are going with the increase in prices of power because of your power supply issues and your policy of closing down these coal-fired power stations with no transition. There is no modelling that you are prepared to release that says renewable energy is cheaper. If it is, table your modelling and show some leadership.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member's time has expired. I ask members to refer to other members by their correct titles.

Ms WARD (Eltham) — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I will indeed follow your instructions. I tell you what, the hot air coming off the compost opposite would be enough to power this whole state and possibly even the whole country, because there is a lot of hot air coming from those opposite that is actually not generating much at all. Please, those opposite — come on, call quorum, call relevance as soon as I get up and start talking, as you like to do, because we know that you like to interrupt us speaking as soon as we start getting towards the truth. When we start telling you the true facts of the matter, that is when you all start freaking out and demanding quorums.

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Members who are not in their correct seats should not be commenting.

Ms WARD — Proponents opposite of the fake news should be ashamed of themselves. They should be absolutely ashamed of themselves. I tell you what: nothing is going to make the Liberals great again, not even a baseball cap, because they are appalling. They cannot get their facts straight. They could not lay straight in bed. They refuse to say what is happening in this state and what is happening with our energy industry. Instead they want to construct a web of fake news that suits the ideology of the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) — not of the people of this state, of the businesses of this state or of the families of this state but of their overlords, the IPA.

Let me read something that those opposite could have found out for themselves if they had done a bit of work and research. What it says on Engie's website is:

The closure of Hazelwood is in line with Engie's strategy to gradually end its coal activities ...

It did not take me too long to google this and find information about what might have caused Engie concern around Hazelwood.

Let us talk about WorkCover. Let us talk about dangerous steam leaks from split tubes. I quote:

Inspectors attended the power station after a big burst of pressurised steam escaped from a 50-centimetre split in a wall on boiler one on July 25th, 2016.

The tube split under pressure in a barricaded area and no-one was injured.

Steam leaks from boilers were also reported in January, May and June this year.

Inspectors also noted corroded brackets and cracked welding, which they said put workers at risk of injury from the dislodgement of insulation and cladding.

Workplace accidents revealed

The Worksafe Victoria documents detail a series of accidents and near misses at the power station and coalmine.

On November 25, 2015 a large piece of refractory fell 6 metres near two employees.

A 4-kilogram bar fell from 5 metres height to within 5 metres of an employee on January 10, 2013 and a worker received an electric shock while attempting to join fluorescent lighting on December 7, 2012.

We have heard time and again from those opposite about how little they care about workers, how little they care about worker safety, how little they care about jobs and how little they actually care about the economy of the state, and the Hazelwood mine is a case in point. It demonstrates their fake news, their inability to get their facts straight and their inability to understand and recognise what is going in this state, in this economy and with energy.

A couple of years ago Engie estimated that it would cost at least \$400 million to completely revamp the Hazelwood power station, which was not economically viable. It was not economically viable because it was ageing infrastructure. For those people opposite to keep bleating on about taxes just shows how ignorant they are. They need to pull back from their rhetoric and from their inability to understand what is going on and look at the facts. I know it does not suit their world view, but it would really help them out if they did. It is fake news from a fake opposition. We are playing catch-up now after four years of being behind in energy investment. More than that we actually went backwards, thanks to those opposite when they were in government. I quote:

The clean energy industry has warned it will invest away from Victoria, potentially costing the state \$3 billion, after the Baillieu government announced Australia's most restrictive planning laws for wind farms.

An analysis that the Clean Energy Council conducted showed that this decision by those opposite would cost

hundreds of new jobs in regional areas and billions of dollars of investment. Pacific Hydro, which in 2011 was building three wind farms thanks to the previous Labor government, said that:

Unfortunately these new wind farm rules will hold Victoria back while other states power ahead ...

Those opposite should be hanging their heads in shame. In May 2014 Keppel Prince workers wrote to the then Premier, Dr Naphthine, saying that the cut to the renewable energy target would devastate the local community. Do you know what happened, Deputy Speaker? One hundred thousand people in the former Premier's electorate lost their jobs. Keppel Prince was the second biggest employer in that electorate.

We have now got the Liberal Prime Minister, who would not know up or down — who would not know his bottom from his head — saying that AGL needs to hold back on closing the Liddell power station in 2022. We then had the CEO of AGL, Andy Vesey, respond by tweet to the Prime Minister, who obviously has not had a really sensible conversation with him, 'We're getting out of coal. We committed to the closure of the Liddell power station in 2022, the end of its operating life'.

He also tweeted, 'Offering 25 displaced Hazelwood workers a job at Loy Yang is about supporting the local community and economy'. I would suggest to those opposite that they get on board with AGL, with this government and with the Minister for Industry and Employment, who is here now, and support their local communities and economies and encourage the displaced Hazelwood workers to work at Loy Yang. Mr Vesey also went on to say, 'Keeping old coal plants open won't deliver the reliable, affordable energy our customers need'. That is what the CEO of AGL said — and there is deafening silence over on the other side now.

There is no leadership from the Liberals on this issue at all — none at all. We have got chaos and uncertainty over energy from the Turnbull government. That is all we have got. That is what their energy is going into. They are going around in circles like a mad Tasmanian devil chasing its tail, not actually knowing what is going on in this state and not knowing the energy issues that we are confronting. This government is doing something about it. This government is investing heavily in other energy supplies to ensure that there is affordable energy in this state.

I also quote from the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS), who said:

This is bold, ambitious and important policymaking. It's what leadership looks like.

They also go on to say that concerns around power prices ‘shouldn’t be used by opponents of clean energy to keep Victoria locked in the past’ and that:

Those calling for the abandonment of the VRET because of any hardship it might cause to vulnerable people are missing the point.

This government will look after people, and do you know why? It is because that is what Labor governments do. Labor governments look after people, and they look after vulnerable people. We have created 250 000 jobs in this state since coming to power. Those opposite can say, ‘You don’t like jobs’. I will tell you what: we have created more jobs in a month than you lot created in four years. We have got runs on the board. Our actions speak far louder than your words. Our actions are the proof of the pudding. Our actions are the things that are going to help this state to grow, to have affordable energy and to have a future, as opposed to those opposite, who would not know the future if it stared at them.

I would like to know: since when did those opposite decide it was time for the Liberal Party to start interfering in the business decisions of corporations? Since when did they decide that they need to interfere with corporate decisions? I would like to know from those opposite what taxes they are going to enact to repair the Hazelwood mine. What money are they going to put in? What schools are they going to cut money from? What hospitals are they going to cut money from? What roads are they going to cut money from?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member’s time has expired.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — It is my pleasure to join this matter of public importance as moved by the member for Caulfield. It is apt that I follow the member for Eltham, who made some extraordinary claims in her less than, shall we say, accurate oration of some note this afternoon. I remind the member for Eltham, and indeed the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, who is doing such a wonderful job on behalf of, I suppose, inner-urban lefties — no-one else — that the head of a major Labor-aligned union said that:

... some Andrews government ministers still have their ‘heads in the sand’ about Hazelwood power station’s closure.

State secretary of the CFMEU’s Victorian mining division, Geoff Dyke, is pushing for new lower emission brown coal generators to be built, or for government to invest in research so one of Victoria’s abundant resources can be used in other ways.

With regard to baseload power, Mr Dyke went on to say that it ‘depends on what minister you talk to’ as to what they see as baseload energy for Victoria’s future.

This whole issue is essentially an ideological quest by this Labor government to move to renewable energy at the cost of baseload power, at the cost of Victorian consumers and indeed industry. Why, I ask you? Because they are paranoid about losing inner-urban votes to the Greens. It is that simple. None of this makes any sense with regard to the policy settings of this government. There is a simple matter of cause and effect here. If you close down a power plant, prices will rise. It is that simple. You have not replaced the 22 per cent that has been lost with the closure of Hazelwood with anything else. This is just simple economics, it is simple supply and demand, yet they are trying to have us believe that their inability to keep Hazelwood open has not added to the cost of electricity in this state.

The CFMEU are not, can I say, the natural friends of the Liberal Party, but with regard to baseload energy that keeps people in jobs in the Latrobe Valley and in paper mills in Gippsland, the CFMEU and the Liberal Party would appear to be in agreement with one another that you need baseload power, that windmills and solar panels are not the answer to the malaise afflicting our baseload power industry in this state.

We are facing great challenges this summer. The energy market operator has made it very clear that we have a 10 per cent higher chance of blackout than South Australia — 43 per cent, they would say. There is a 43 per cent chance that we will have a massive blackout this summer. Where are we living? Are we living in Victoria, the great home state of Sir John Monash who gave this state abundant, cheap and reliable energy? No, what we have now is an energy sector and indeed a state government that quite frankly, to quote the CFMEU of all people, have their heads in the sand.

This minister, quite frankly, is completely out of her depth and does not understand these issues. She seems to be of the view that we will increase energy supply because of a legislated renewable energy target. That bears no resemblance to fact. We have lost 22 per cent of the sector. What is she doing to replace that 22 per cent? She is saying that we have to have 40 per cent of energy being generated by renewables by 2025. Well, when I was in Gippsland recently GHD told me that the only way they will reach their renewable energy target by 2025 is by closing the Yallourn power plant. If we lose Yallourn, that is another 20 per cent of our energy grid gone.

I say to the government: what are you doing? Silly Lily, please listen to us. I know you go and talk to businesses, but do you listen to them? Do you listen to what they have to say, listen to them about their energy bills, listen to consumers? There was a 7 per cent rise in consumer energy bills in the March quarter. These are the issues that matter to mainstream Victorians. It may well be fine in Fitzroy North to sip a latte and not really care about your energy bill because you can afford it. But for all of us who are not climate change warriors, who just want to have the lights kept on and not have them go off in the peak of summer or in the depths of winter, who just want to pay our energy bills at the lowest possible price, who want industry to survive in its current form and not have to lay off staff because it cannot afford its energy bills, these are the issues that Victorians want answers to.

At the moment the response from this government is threefold. It is to, one, blame Canberra; two, say 'Trust us because we are going to have more wind turbines', and three, just hope for the best because there is not really a problem here. There is a fourth — we might import energy from Tasmania. Victoria has been a net energy exporter for the best part of 50 years and the fact that this once-proud state that has 400 years worth of brown coal left in reserve is going to be reliant on states like Tasmania for its energy future I think is pretty embarrassing.

The Labor Party was once the party of workers. It was once the party of cheap, free, reliable, accessible energy that would keep people in manufacturing jobs and would allow working families to keep the lights on. I am afraid that the modern Labor Party has moved away from its industrial core and indeed its mission to advocate the issues of lower socio-economic areas. It is those people, as the Victorian Council of Social Service observed recently, who are bearing the brunt of the rise in energy prices.

The fundamental contention for modern Labor is: does it chase the inner-urban green vote that is consistently concerned about climate change and interrelated environmental issues or does it return to its working-class core for cheap energy that will drive manufacturing jobs, cheap energy that will enable working families to pay energy bills? We have had 2000 disconnections in recent times of people who simply cannot pay their bills because their bills have exploded out of control since Hazelwood closed down.

We hear commentary from the government that it is not their fault that Hazelwood closed, that it was a commercial decision by a foreign-owned company. There are a couple of points that have to be made about

that and the point about the coal royalty being increased substantially has been well made by other speakers. I simply make this observation: it is the government's job at the end of the day to keep the lights on. You can blame companies as much as you like, you can blame the operator, you can do whatever you like, but you made absolutely no effort, whether by government investment or by any other mechanism, to keep the doors of Hazelwood open.

The member for Caulfield made the correct observation that there were at least three turbines at Hazelwood that had a substantial amount of life left in them but no effort was made to keep them operating. I think it is to the government's eternal shame that 22 per cent of our energy grid disappeared on their watch. The simple fact is that come election time they can make as many excuses as they like. They can blame the French, they can blame the feds, but they will never blame themselves. The simple fact will be that the Victorian people will blame them because it happened on their watch. Twenty-two per cent of our grid evaporated overnight and of course energy prices went up. Their excuse, in fact their response, to fix that is that we are going to have a few more wind turbines down on the south coast. Well, that is not going to cut the mustard at all because we have a baseload energy crisis in Victoria that this government does not know how to fix.

I think the government will be severely punished by its mainstream voter base in the outer suburbs and indeed regional Victoria, because it is these people who are on the front foot — indeed the front line — of having to deal with this massive increase in energy prices. I can assure you that it will be the Liberal and National parties who will be reminding Victorians every single day between now and the next election that this happened on the Labor Party's watch and that only the Liberal and National parties believe in baseload power by fossil fuels, by coal and by natural gas, and we are the only people that can get downward pressure on energy prices, put baseload power back into Victorian energy policy and get rid of that ridiculous renewable energy target.

DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT (RESTRICTED BREED DOGS) BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) — I was making a contribution before the luncheon break on this important bill, and I started my remarks by talking about the importance of the committee system — the

fact that you can have a committee system in place where you can examine an issue, the committee best endeavours to identify a pathway forward and therefore you create legislation that comes before the house, which is what is before the house today. I think it demonstrates the fact that the committee system works very effectively.

I also made an observation — a somewhat embarrassing observation — before the lunchbreak that I did a test on BuzzFeed to try and work out, ‘if you were a dog, what dog would you be?’. Sadly for me it turned out that I am a poodle, which I found somewhat embarrassing. I had great aspirations that I would be a working dog. I thought maybe a border collie would be nice — maybe something with a bit of get up and go. A kelpie would have been nice. But no, sadly according to BuzzFeed — and I would encourage all members to take the test — I am a poodle.

I also looked at the notion that the sort of pet you have is the sort of person you are. I had a delightful Jack Russell terrier many years ago, and I talked about the characteristics of a Jack Russell terrier — barking, mouthiness, needing plenty of exercise and interesting things to do, all this trouble. So I thought that was probably a fair epithet in relation to my own temperament and disposition.

This is an important bill. I note also that there was discussion about the payment and the fact that it has been hypothecated to educate expectant parents, preschoolers, school-aged students and adults on safe and responsible dog ownership. I think that is a really important issue. We know that sometimes younger children can be a bit exuberant with animals, and they do not necessarily know the risks or dangers, particularly if an animal or dog is not used to young children. As I understand it, in this particular program they have been looking at working with preschools, schools, hospitals and maternal and child health centres in Victoria. I think that is a very worthy cause. I think it is an important initiative.

As I have said on numerous occasions, I think the early childhood space is a really important space to play. I think that when we are able to look at encouraging children to grow and nurture, it is really important. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that today is also national Early Childhood Educators Day, so I think it is a wonderful opportunity to recognise the great contribution that early childhood educators make in educating our children. Apart from that earlier confession — I did not want to take up much of the house’s time — I think it is a good bill. It is an important piece of legislation. It emphasises the

important role the committee system plays in making sure that this house works and works effectively and that we have good legislation as a result. On that note, I commend the bill to the house.

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — It is a pleasure to rise today to speak on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. The bill that is before the house is really quite a serious one. The issue around trying to balance this legislation has been difficult for many, many years, and this is the latest iteration of it. The bill removes the prohibition on the registration of keeping restricted breed dogs, and it allows councils to actually register those dogs. In Victoria there are five breeds of dogs that are restricted. We have the fila Brasileiro, the Japanese tosa, the dogo Argentino, which is also known as the Argentinian fighting dog, the perro de presa Canario and of course the one that causes perhaps the most contention in Victoria, the American pit bull.

I have to say at the outset that I do not believe pit bulls in particular should be allowed in our state. That is the view that this legislation has traditionally supported. When the act was amended back in 2010 by the then Brumby government, the purpose of those amendments was to ensure that the pit bull breed in particular would be bred out of existence in Victoria. That is a position that the coalition government continued to support. When Joe Helper removed those amendments back in 2010 after yet another horrific dog attack, the government put in place a two-year amnesty to enable people to actually register their restricted breed dogs. That was done in light of the fact that the government recognised that people already did own these dogs, but they wanted them to be housed under appropriate conditions and to be controlled in a manner where they would not present a danger to society. So I think those amendments which were introduced in 2010 really reflected the fact that we understood that pit bulls in particular had become too much of a risk to society.

I go back to Hugh Wirth’s comments at the time of that attack, and I know that the Leader of the Opposition also mentioned them. At the time when a small dog was killed and a man was injured — the attack that precipitated those 2010 changes — Hugh Wirth actually described pit bulls as ‘time bombs waiting for the right circumstances’. He said:

The American pit bull terrier is lethal because it was a breed that was developed purely for dog fighting, in other words killing the opposition. They should never have been allowed into the country. They are an absolute menace.

I will come back to his quote that is around the fact that they are a breed developed purely for dog fighting. This

issue has been at the crux of this debate and of the effectiveness of this legislation, but it is important to understand the context around the many amendments that have been made to this legislation.

In 2011, as other speakers have said, we had the tragic death of Ayen Chol. I was working as a senior media adviser for the then minister for agriculture at that point in time. Receiving the phone call about Ayen Chol's death is something I will never forget. It was one of those moments where you feel quite shaken, and it was the most tragic set of circumstances. That little girl should never, ever have been put in the situation where her own home was invaded by a pit bull. She was clinging to her mother's leg and fatally mauled to death. It was absolutely horrific and sparked further action from the government of the day. We then made changes to the Crimes Act 1958, to drastically increase the penalties surrounding dog attacks and to ensure that owners would be held accountable under the Crimes Act if their dog attacked people. As part of that we also drastically shortened the two-year amnesty to ensure that anybody who had a restricted breed dog that was not registered and desexed would face having their dog put down.

The Leader of The Nationals in his contribution mentioned that this is one of the most amended pieces of legislation we have. That is because governments have tried over many years to strike the right balance. That was again acknowledged by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, which undertook the investigation that actually precipitated the legislation that we have before us today. Its report notes that:

... during the course of the inquiry there were differing, and sometimes conflicting, viewpoints presented by various stakeholders.

I have to say that that sums up the many years of this debate. In short, it is a very vexed issue, and people fundamentally have different views about whether or not restricted breed legislation works. One of the reasons why opinion is so divided is that it is very difficult to determine the identity of a pit bull through genetic testing.

This is where I return to the comments of Hugh Wirth when he said that the pit bull was bred for dog fighting. In other words, the pit bull is a mongrel. It is not actually a defined breed, which means that when you undertake genetic testing you cannot conclusively say that the dog is a pit bull. As a consequence of that we now have a scenario where it is quite open for people to contest council rulings about whether or not a dog is a pit bull. We attempted to resolve that issue through the introduction of the restricted breed standard which gives

physical classifications for pit bulls for councils to use and say, 'This dog meets a certain percentage of those physical characteristics, and therefore it is a pit bull'. Fundamentally the pit bull is not a breed; it is a dog that has been bred to have particular physical characteristics of various other breeds, and it has been bred specifically with the purpose of fighting. It is for that reason I firmly believe the pit bull does not have a place in Victoria and should not have a place in Victoria, because it has been bred for a very, very specific purpose.

I note that a number of members in the house today have talked about the merits of responsible dog ownership versus restricted breed legislation and the difficulties in finding the balance, because from many people's perspectives it is often the owner and not the dog that is at fault. I think in many cases there is a lot of truth in that, but I have to say that when it comes to pit bulls I do not believe it is about the owner. I believe the dog has inherent characteristics for which it is bred which are about fighting and attacking. We do not need to see any more lives lost in this state as a result of those dogs being on the loose.

I do appreciate the difficulties the government is trying to resolve. The committee recommended this change to legislation to enable councils to overcome what has presented them with significant difficulties in terms of being dragged to VCAT and the cost burden on ratepayers and the like. At the end of the day I think when it comes to these dogs, as Hugh Wirth said, they should not have been allowed into the country. We now need to make sure that this legislation is enforced properly so that the standards which still exist around the keeping of these dogs are properly policed and properly maintained to ensure we do not see any more tragic loss of life. With those comments, the opposition is not opposing this bill, but I do put on the record that I think this legislation needs to be dealt with very carefully. It is not a joke. I appreciate that dogs can be a fertile field for jokes, but this legislation really is very important, and it is important to make sure we get that balance right.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) — I am pleased to add my comments to the debate on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. As we have heard from other speakers, we know about the issues surrounding dangerous dogs, issues like when dogs have been out in public areas and have attacked young children or adults, or in domestic situations when dogs have attacked visitors to properties or even the owners themselves. It is a very concerning matter and one that a government needs to do all it can to address.

We know this is initially a matter of owners taking responsibility for their dogs and ensuring that their dogs are properly trained when they are young so that they are not likely to threaten other individuals. I looked at this issue over many years when I was Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture — I was closely involved for a number of years while working with former Minister for Agriculture Joe Helper and former members Bob Cameron and Keith Hamilton in trying to find a way of ensuring the public could feel safe.

It was clear that there are some dogs that have the potential to be more dangerous than others. Eventually we identified five breeds of dog that people have noted before — including the Japanese tosa, the fila Brasileiro, the dogo Argentino and the presa Canario — as dogs that are pretty rare here but that are clearly bred for fighting. We indicated that those dogs should not be able to be brought into the country or bred here. The dog breed that has attracted the most attention is the American pit bull terrier. As a result of a number of very awful dog attacks involving pit bulls the government was clearly called to act.

It is difficult to outlaw a breed of dog because, as we have heard, there is no easy way to determine whether a dog is a pit bull terrier, just looks like a pit bull terrier or is a similar terrier. So we have had to put a series of descriptors in place to try to identify these dogs, but we are clear that these dogs should no longer be bred and no longer brought into the country. But there is the question of what you do with the dogs that are already here. I heard from a number of owners of pit bull terriers who told me that they have been much maligned and that, really, they are lovely dogs to have as pets. Some of the owners of these dogs swear they are terrific pets to have and should not be declared dangerous.

The issue, however, is that we know that many dogs did get out as the result of the carelessness of their owners. We know that owners can be careless, and so we have put in place a series of restrictions, particularly through the legislation in 2010, whereby we have enabled councils to determine these particular breeds as dangerous dogs. It also may be that other dogs come to the attention of councils when they have attacked or threatened to attack individuals, and the councils have determined that those dogs be noted as dangerous too.

When a dog is determined as dangerous, it has to be housed appropriately in very restrictive conditions. We know that the owners of restricted breed dogs such as pit bulls are required to have appropriate signage on their property to identify that there is a pit bull on the site. They have to have the dog clearly microchipped and desexed so that we do not have the issue of new

dogs being bred. It is mandatory for the dog to wear a collar and, if it is out in public, it has to be on a leash with a muzzle.

We have set in place very clear guidelines. If owners do not follow those guidelines, then it does result in a threat to their dog, so the dog could be taken and may have to be destroyed if it attacks again. We do not want that to happen. We do not want people to be harmed by dogs. We want everybody to feel safe on the streets, whether it be from dogs or whether it be from a whole range of other potential dangers out there. The government takes a whole range of actions to try to ensure people can feel comfortable.

This legislation particularly addresses that issue that was still unclear regarding what you do with those dogs that are out there in the community that are identified as restricted breeds. We do not want them put down unnecessarily, but we want to ensure that we do not increase their number. As these dogs die we will eventually have none of these dog breeds about, but in the meantime we have allowed them to be kept under clear registration guidelines, as indicated by the recommendations of the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure that looked at this issue.

We have also noted that there are other issues with dogs such as guard dogs that have been used on non-residential properties. We know that there are dogs that people train to be aggressive so that if anybody does threaten those particular properties that have nobody living on them over weekends or at night, these dogs will help to keep those properties protected. But when those guard dogs are retired, there needs to be a clear strategy in place to again recognise that these dogs should be deemed dangerous. They need to be housed appropriately so that the community continues to be safe. It sets in place the clear guidelines the councils will follow in instructing people in regard to that.

The bill also notes that there is a payment system for registering cats and dogs. With the first adjustment since 2010 the cost to be contributed back to the state government will be \$4 per dog or cat. That money will be going towards a fund that supports world-class education programs to ensure that, for example, expectant parents know how best to treat a dog that may be a pet, because once a child comes into the family, the dog may act differently. Expectant parents need to be aware of these training issues or the potential threats so they can plan accordingly. Preschool and school-aged children can also be educated about safety with dogs, and we can have programs in regard to responsible dog ownership further enhanced with this funding that can be collected from these registration fees.

This is very sensible legislation. It ensures that we are clear about these restricted breeds. We do not want them to exist in our state after a period of time. But we want to ensure that those that are here do not need to be put down unnecessarily. If the owners want to keep them, they need to have them registered and housed appropriately under appropriate conditions so that community can feel safe. It always behoves anybody who owns a dog to understand the issues and the responsibilities that go with dog ownership.

Dogs can be fantastic pets, as we know. Certainly my son loves his dog, and our whole family loves the dog also — it is a great member of our family. You need to know that when you have a dog, you need to treat it well. You need to understand how dogs operate so you can treat behaviour that may be inappropriate at times. So it is important that we provide a range of training programs or education programs for dog owners to ensure that they understand these things and in a range of ways ensure that message gets out there to the community.

I am pleased that the opposition is supportive of this legislation. It is very sensible. It is not life-changing, but clearly it ties down issues that were still uncertain around restricted breed dogs.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) — I am very pleased to contribute to the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. I note the comment of a former Australian Prime Minister who suggested that if you wanted a friend in politics, buy a dog. Outside the political arena there are numbers of people who have taken the choice to buy a companion animal and to raise them. The role of dogs in the welfare and wellbeing of many people in the community is of the highest importance.

The bill before the house implements a recommendation of the parliamentary inquiry into legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs to remove the prohibition on the keeping of restricted breed dogs in Victoria and to allow councils to register these dogs and to make related miscellaneous amendments to the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

I do note areas of concern in relation to the bill, and the coalition have cracked down on pit bulls since the 2011 death of toddler Ayen Chol. The coalition government ended an amnesty which the previous Brumby government had commenced and began enforcing laws which prevented registration of restricted breed dogs. This bill winds back the tough laws in response to pressure from groups and owners opposed to the prohibition on registering restricted breed dogs and the

subsequent destruction of seized unregistered restricted breed dogs.

Another area of concern relates to the increase in the amount collected from dog and cat registrations, which will result in an additional \$1.2 million, approximately, being received by the state. Under existing legislative arrangements this funding must be directed to responsible animal ownership programs. The opposition calls on the Andrews government to ensure that this funding goes to where it is intended and not into Treasury coffers.

In 2010 I made representations to the City of Bayside on behalf of a local constituent who lived in Morley Crescent in Highett. She was the owner of a seven-year-old female beagle-cocker cross named Ruby who at the time was very well loved by the neighbours in the unit complex and visited the owner of the front unit daily. Other neighbours in the complex regularly took the dog for walks, and the dog was regarded as a communal dog within the body corporate precinct. My constituent was not aware at the time that her dog could not move freely within the confines of the unit development without being on a lead. The other unit owners I represented to the council at the time were happy to confirm that the dog was friendly, well cared for and loved by other residents. The local council officer had also met the dog.

On a Sunday shortly before Christmas in 2010 the dog, Ruby, made her usual visit to the front unit to greet their neighbour and went outside the confines of the property. Sadly, unfortunately, she was observed by a neighbour who was fearful of the dog and subsequently made a complaint to the council. The complaining neighbour apparently shouted, 'Get that ferocious dog off the street ... it's going to attack me', as Ruby was in fact performing, as described by my constituent, circles of joy for around 30 seconds.

My constituent claims the dog was under her control the whole time and kept stressing that the dog, which had always been registered, was obedient and that the apprehension of the neighbour was due to concerns that were not well grounded and not well founded. My constituent ended up being fined heavily under the circumstances, being on a pension income.

Representations were made to the local council and, as I recall, a constructive outcome was achieved for this dog owner who loved her companion animal to a very high degree.

On another occasion my office had occasion to make representations on behalf of another Highett resident who had been fined in circumstances where her dog,

one of three dogs, had escaped from a well-fenced property. The dogs had never escaped previously. This particular lady had worked at the local veterinary hospital for over 10 years in charge of new owner puppy classes, and this work involved training owners and their dogs in a range of disciplines, including basic dog obedience, caring and training, exercise and dog walking, responsible dog ownership and council by-laws, and what is expected of dog owners in the community environment. So this lady had a very comprehensive understanding of dog welfare, dog wellbeing, dog obedience, dog fitness and even council by-laws. We have some well-informed dog owners in Highett. This lady was supported in fact by Dr Sherlock, a respected vet in the district who noted that she was well versed in all the issues, having been a dog owner all her life, that her animals were well cared for and well fed, and that she promoted the principles of responsible dog ownership to many new owners and practised what she preached.

She had been fined heavily for having a dog on the street. On this particular day she had the care of a friend's dog, a fox terrier. The owner regularly left his dog with her when he went on holiday and when strong winds and thunderstorms were forecast, which was the reason the dog had been left with her on this occasion. Unfortunately on this occasion the dog had taken fright, pushed his way through the trellis fence and then made his way under a small gap under the second gate which enabled him to exit the property.

There were representations on the part of my office that consideration be given in relation to leniency regarding penalties that might otherwise be applied, taking into account over 40 years of responsible dog ownership in Bayside and her level of care and responsibility in the area of dog ownership. It was sought on her behalf that the fine might be waived. Unfortunately in that particular instance the council, whilst they acknowledged that she was a dedicated and responsible pet owner with many years of experience caring for pets, indicated it was her responsibility to provide a situation from which the dog could not escape, and they therefore decided to decline to withdraw the fine. In law there is a matter of equity and there is also the element of chancery. Unfortunately in this particular case of my constituent the strict letter of the law was applied.

There are numbers of other keen dog owners and dog groups in the Sandringham electorate as well. One constituent, Ms Hourigan, has been a very strong advocate for improving facilities for dog owners and dog walkers, and there are good things that can be undertaken on behalf of responsible dog owners to improve the environment. Under the Bayside council's open space

strategy and the domestic animal management plan (DAMP), local residents had sought the construction of additional facilities for dog walkers in the local area. Unfortunately the council had not seen their way forward to provide those facilities. But according to a particular source under the acronym DAMP:

Research undertaken for the publication *Australians and Their Pets: The Facts* highlights the considerable body of research that demonstrates the significant health and wellbeing benefits associated with owning a pet:

people who own pets typically visit the doctor less often and use less medication —

they have 'lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure' and they 'recover more quickly from illness and surgery' —

pet owners show lower levels of the risk factors associated with heart disease;

pets have been shown to greatly increase quality of life for the elderly including reduced tension, fatigue and confusion and increased feelings of enthusiasm, interest and inspiration; and

self-esteem has been shown to be higher in children or adolescents who have had a pet.

On the basis of their advocacy they are keen to ensure both that there is responsible dog ownership and that dog owners have the chance to look after their breed.

I have got another constituent, by the name of Bronwyn Casey, who has been an outstanding advocate for the care of animals and reduced regulatory compliance on the part of dog owners in relation to particular breeds. They exercise a highly diligent level of skilled care, attention and responsibility and do not wish to be burdened by undue government compliance.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) — Thank you, Speaker, for being in the chair on my behalf. I am pleased to make a contribution on the Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Bill 2017. I recall speaking on a similar amendment bill to this one back in 2015. I note the comments from the member for Mornington in relation to the importance of owning a dog and how that can actually save millions of dollars in the annual health budget in Australia, because there has been research that shows that if people actually own pets, there are enormous benefits from that. As the member for Mornington mentioned, some of those include a decrease in blood pressure and cholesterol. After sitting through the matter of public importance this afternoon, I think some members of Parliament definitely need to own a dog.

I think that this particular bill before us today is an important one. I remember when the terrible events of 2011 happened and we had the terrible instance of a young child being killed by an unregistered pit bull terrier. That of course instigated the initial Domestic Animals Act 1994 to be changed, and there were a lot of emotions around at the time in relation to that. No-one wants to see a child killed by a dog; no-one wants to see a child killed at all.

So the bill that was originally passed when this event happened was a little bit of a kneejerk reaction in a sense, and it did have some serious problems. Some of those problems were relayed to me by some of my constituents who owned particular breeds of dogs that were not necessarily purebred pit bull terriers but did have the resemblance of pit bull terriers and were being seized by local council officers because they bore that resemblance, despite in fact being very much loved family pets that had shown no signs of aggression or indeed of wandering at large.

We needed to make some changes, and the bill of course in 2015 was referred to a parliamentary committee, which was an important step. The parliamentary inquiry that was conducted by the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure made some recommendations to keep other restrictions related to the ownership and management of restricted breed dogs. This bill before us today actually fulfils a commitment that this government made to allow for the registration of restricted breed dogs in Victoria, including the American pit bull terrier and others that have been named, while also retaining other protective measures.

This is important because there was absolutely a need, as I mentioned, to balance the benefit of owning a dog, which we know is significant, with protecting the community from dangerous dogs and indeed from irresponsible dog owners. There is also a significant need to protect some of those dogs that may be in danger of being euthanased when the moratorium ends on 30 September this year.

As a mother of four children and having owned dogs throughout my life and indeed throughout their lives and still being the owner of two very naughty little dogs — one not so little — Dora and Jesse, I think it is important that we teach our children from a very early age to respect dogs, to be responsible owners and to train our dogs to actually understand and socialise with young children and indeed with adults. Those early days of a puppy's life are just like a human baby's life in those early days. They learn so much. They learn about interacting with people. They learn about what is

appropriate behaviour and what is inappropriate behaviour. I think I said in my speech back in 2015 that dogs are a little bit like humans in that respect. They can bear a very similar family resemblance to each other and to their breed but may have completely different personalities, and I think that is an important point to make because I know that restricted breed dogs may look mean and may look aggressive, but their personalities may not be that way.

This is an important piece of legislation particularly in relation to the retirement of guard dogs. We know that guard dogs are trained for that purpose of being aggressive when it needs to happen, but they still have that status of dangerous dogs. Under the Domestic Animals Act a guard dog refers to a dog kept 'for the purpose of guarding non-residential premises'. It is the intention of this bill that, once deemed dangerous, the dog will always be deemed dangerous, but it also clarifies this by ensuring that owners of guard dogs who have retired their dog from guard duties must continue to register their dog as dangerous for its lifetime.

It also increases the existing payment to the Treasurer in relation to dogs and cats. This payment has not been increased since 2010. This is important because that money actually goes to the education of parents and children, particularly preschool and school-aged children, on dog safety and responsible dog ownership. I think there is nothing more important that we can do as a community than to educate our young children about how to respect, understand and appreciate, but also love, their dogs.

This bill is making sure that we keep our community safe, but at the same time we have in place measures that protect families. It is also about making sure that we still have those measures in place to make absolutely certain that we do not have dangerous dogs on our streets. Determining whether a dog is a pit bull is a tricky thing. If a dog is declared a pit bull, then only the moratorium that is currently in place has prevented it from being euthanased by councils, which administer and operate this. As I said, the moratorium ends in September this year. This amendment is important because it means that a restricted breed dog will not be euthanased but needs to be kept under strict conditions. That means that councils will not be put in a position where they have to seize and euthanase a dog which is declared a pit bull but might also be a well-trained dog and a very much loved family pet. It also makes the point that anyone found breeding or importing pit bulls or other restricted breeds faces significant fines and potentially jail.

Community safety is a high priority for this government. We do not want dangerous dogs and

restricted breeds threatening or attacking other pets or people. We do not want these vicious dogs in Victoria. I know that with time the ban on breeding, trading and importing restricted breeds like pit bulls means there will be fewer of these dogs in Victoria. But educating our children about dogs is also crucial. Responsible pet ownership programs in our kindergartens and schools are the appropriate way to educate our young people around dog ownership, and expanding those programs is an important part of this legislation.

Growing up with a dog is an important part of family life. There is no doubt about that. I have owned dogs that have lived to 17 and 18 years of age. Having them for that long, particularly when they are growing up with your children, means that they do very much become part of your family, and it is heartbreaking when you lose them. It is also the same with any other pets as well, whether it be a cat, and indeed at the moment we have a pig called Derek, and it will be very sad when Derek leaves the farm.

In considering these amendments, it is important to note the difference between the definitions of a dangerous dog and a restricted breed dog. Dangerous dogs are dogs of any breed and are ones that have been involved in a serious attack and declared dangerous by a local council. Restricted breed dogs are dogs of specific breeds. Restricted breed dogs that have been involved in an attack can also be declared a dangerous dog. So it is a very fine line. Any dog can be aggressive. I know that my little Jack Russell, Jessie, is far more aggressive than my Rhodesian ridgeback, Dora, who is about five or six times her size. I am often mindful of the fact that when people come to the door it is Jessie that makes more noise and looks more aggressive than Dora.

I am very pleased that this bill is before the house. I think these amendments will make a big difference. It is important to educate our children as they grow up to learn about dogs. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

GAME MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Introduction and first reading

Received from Council.

Read first time on motion of Mr WALSH (Murray Plains).

BUDGET PAPERS 2017–18

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport):

That this house takes note of the 2017–18 budget papers.

Mr SCOTT (Minister for Finance) — I think I have already used up some of my 15 minutes. I note to the deputy chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that I have had some significant discussion on these areas, so, I think mercifully for the house, I will be relatively brief on the highlights of the budget.

When I was interrupted in my previous contribution I was discussing the multicultural affairs portfolio, but I would now like to turn my attention to the impact that this budget has on my local community. All of us in this place are truly fortunate to have the honour of representing the community who elect us to this place, and we all have a duty to ensure the best representation and the best allocation of resources. My own communities have a number of significant initiatives in this budget, and particularly I would make note of the investment in a new high school for Preston. This is at the site of the former Preston Girls Secondary College, which closed under the former government. There were some complex reasons why it closed, but the school did close. There is a \$5 million investment to allow this school to reopen, and this is very welcomed by the community. I would particularly like to pay tribute to the High School for Preston group, a group that has been tirelessly advocating for the return of education at the site and is particularly interested, as its name would suggest, in creating a co-ed high school, which is a change from the tradition of the site but I think is one that has been embraced by the community.

There is also funding for Newlands Primary School in West Preston. Newlands lies on the western edge of my electorate, on Elizabeth Street, where there is a small sliver of North Coburg and West Preston that is serviced by that community. There is \$754 000 to be spent in the next financial year to refurbish that school, a badly needed investment. I would note that as a school it is achieving excellent results for students and has a very dedicated group of staff and parents who serve the community well. There is also a major upgrade for the Reservoir police station.

I will briefly return to multicultural affairs, because, as I was saying previously, the proportion of persons born overseas has increased. When I appeared before the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee I was discussing how the proportion of overseas-born Victorians was increasing. In fact it has increased by over 28 per cent; I think the previous number was

26.2 per cent. A very significant period of migration is being undertaken, and this poses significant challenges for any society. It is important to emphasise the strength of multiculturalism and diversity and how the values of inclusiveness have served our community well. The budget supports the *Victorian. And Proud of It* multicultural statement and campaign, which is about promoting the Victorian values statement and the shared sense of belonging, respect, acceptance and contribution which underpins multiculturalism. That work which was previously announced is supported by initiatives within the budget.

There is also, as I was referring to, \$21.8 million for interpreting services. I will admit a bias because my wife, although not practising as a translator/interpreter, is in fact a qualified interpreter and translator. Those who work in this area provide a vital conduit between people, particularly between newly arrived migrants and those who are more elderly. One of the facts of life for all of us is that cognitive capacity will decline with age. Elderly persons who have come to Australia with a different language will often revert to their mother tongue, even if they have learnt English subsequently within Australia and in other jurisdictions. This creates fundamental issues about equality of access to services.

Interpreting services have had a long history in Victoria, but the view of the government — and I think it is a well-formed view — is that a significant investment in interpreting services will be advantageous for the ability of our diverse, and increasingly more diverse, society to access services across government, and that the quality of those services is improved. I do not want to get into a discussion about the various qualifications of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters, but there are people who are not professionally qualified but para-professionally qualified by circumstance of who is available are providing services where the consequences can be very severe. I note the Minister for Health is sitting beside me, and within health services this is a significant issue.

Although it is something that is not encouraged by the government, there are examples where those who are not qualified — the medical staff — will be used as temporary interpreters, often in circumstances that are fundamentally risky for the clinical outcomes of the persons involved. I think we should all be cognisant that this is a serious matter and that there are a series of ethical issues, particularly in relation to health, that arise about the utilisation often of family members as well to provide interpreting services when in other circumstances we would not provide those medical details as of right to family members without the

express permission of the person who has been receiving treatment.

In relation to someone who comes from a non-English-speaking background and has limited ability in English — often, as I said, either because they are a newly arrived migrant or they are someone of more elderly years who is reverting to the use of their mother tongue as their primary means of communication — we should be ensuring that they have fair access to services. There are also ethical considerations, particularly in justice and in medical services, that need to be maintained and improved.

There is also \$2 million for a new Migrant Workers Centre, which is addressing issues. I will not name companies, but there have been significant issues in the media about areas of exploitation and vulnerable workers, particularly from migrant backgrounds. That is something the government is significantly concerned about. I think it is a fundamental tenet. I know we often disagree about areas of industrial relations and employment law, but those opposite and the government share the idea that there should not be subcultures of persons who effectively exist outside the regulatory norms. That is something I would hope we would all agree should not be the case. We might fight about what those norms are, but these people should have fundamental access to the same rights and understanding of those rights as everyone else in the society.

It is also important to note there are large numbers of persons coming from overseas who are here temporarily, and that creates issues within a multicultural and diverse community about the exercising of people's rights. Australian rights can often be significantly more fulsome than the rights in the jurisdictions from which people have come.

As I mentioned earlier, there is also funding to implement the *Victorian. And Proud of It* multicultural policy statement. There is also importantly — and I know this has been picked up by many speakers, particularly in the debate we had in relation to the former member for Northcote — \$9 million in funding over four years to strengthen and build capacity in family violence services for culturally diverse communities.

I will briefly say that this is also a very important area, because there is significant over-representation from certain communities. It is something that we want to handle carefully, but we have to address the fact as a society that for some of our diverse multicultural communities there is an over-representation in family violence. For example, there is very strong advocacy within the Indian community to seek to address family

violence. There is a very strong culture, particularly within Indian women's groups, to work towards improving goodwill in those communities.

We are keen to support those working in multicultural communities and service providers, inTouch being a primary service provider for multicultural communities, to ensure that services exist to address family violence, but more importantly that we change and confront cultural attitudes which fundamentally give licence to family violence. There is no excuse within a society for a cultural construct to fuel violence against women, children or other vulnerable people within the family. There is no leave pass to anyone in the society from the rule of law. In this community — and I think this is shared across the table — we do not accept in any cultural context that family violence has a legitimate place in our society.

In terms of finance, I will make a couple of brief comments. These matters were canvassed significantly in the hearings of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, but I would note at a high level a couple of important elements of investments which have been made from WorkSafe. These are not investments in the general government sector but they have an effect on the state. I take the view that the budget is really the state of Victoria as a whole. We can make an accounting standards argument about the elements of it, but the whole state as a more general concept exists and expends funds on behalf of the community, particularly funding like the rebate that is being provided for quad bikes.

Quad bikes, as members may be aware, are greatly over-represented in accidents, particularly on farms, where their utilisation has been found to kill and injure both the young and the elderly. These people are not statistics. I know as Minister for Finance and members across the aisle would know that when you have these responsibilities you are confronted with the real-life stories of people who have been killed or seriously injured.

Quad bike tales are particularly tragic and often involve children. The nature of quad bikes without effective safety protection is that there is a very significant chance on uneven ground of quad bikes effectively rolling over. Quad bikes often weigh more than 500 kilos, and the impact on the human body of such a rollover is devastating. We have unambiguously had a view — and we have worked with the Victorian Farmers Federation — that we need to ensure that there are fewer quad bike accidents. I would like to pay tribute to WorkSafe for the work that they have undertaken and the leadership that they have shown on quad bikes.

With the Minister for Health here, I would also note that there is an expanded WorkHealth program.

Ms Hennessy — There is.

Mr SCOTT — WorkHealth was effectively wound down under the former government. This is a different program than was announced under the former Labor government, during which WorkHealth was first rolled out. It was particularly focused on preventative health checks. That was a successful program, but had been effectively a very large-scale rollout.

The view that was formed — and there was a very successful working group established under the leadership of Todd Harper, which involved unions and business, particularly people such as the Australian Industry Group and others — was to focus on mental injury and the risk posed by mental injury in the workplace, particularly on what supports could be provided to business and employees to ensure that people do not become injured, because once a mental injury has occurred in a workplace it is very difficult. In fact statistically it is very difficult, compared to other forms of injury, to return to work. Preventive work focusing on reducing mental injuries, I think, is a very wise investment, and it is certainly an area of strong focus for WorkSafe and strong focus for the government as a public sector employer, because it is a significant issue for the public sector.

I will finalise by saying that another element — and I could go one further — is in the return of the Greener Government Buildings program. This is effectively investments, often as part of refurbishments, in infrastructure to ensure lower energy costs. The return on investment can literally be 12 to 20 per cent for these investments. One of my duties as Minister for Finance is responsibility for the state's insurers and superannuation funds. In other areas of investment we would love to get those sorts of returns, so these are good returns.

There is a small short-term hit on the balance sheet, but the returns are fantastic, and there is another spin-off benefit, which is that, of course, the investments reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So it has an environmental benefit, but from a strict financial perspective these are very sound investments which return very high returns for the invested funds. There is a small impact. We invested both in the general government sector in this budget and previously outside the general government sector within government. In previous budgets we made an investment in this program, and in this budget we are making an investment in it, which again will benefit the community and ensure that our energy usage

is more efficient, and there will also be a significant financial return. I will leave it at that.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — I am pleased to have this opportunity to make some comments on the take-note motion on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017. Indeed it is probably better late than never because it seems like a very long time ago that the Treasurer stood up in this place. It is ironic that the Minister for Finance, who of course has a significant role in the preparation of the budget, and I are speaking at the very tail end of the process, having spent certainly hundreds and potentially 1000 hours involved. Indeed after budget week and after the estimates hearings, which this year extended beyond the passage of the bill in this house, there was certainly a degree of process fatigue, but I am pleased to have the opportunity to make some comments now.

As a local member there is not really a whole lot to be said about this budget. As I have done for most of the time I have been in the Parliament, one of the first things I did when the budget went online was to get all the PDFs and roll them into one big PDF. Then I started searching for ‘Mornington’, and yes, there are a couple of appearances, mostly with ‘Peninsula’ added after it — sewage treatment works at Somers, for example, which is well outside my electorate. In terms of the Mornington electorate, nothing — not a cracker. So I thought I would try ‘Mount Martha’ — nothing. I tried ‘Mount Eliza’ — nothing. I tried ‘Moorooduc’ — a remote chance of that, but I thought it was worth a try. Unfortunately all those searches were in vain because there is not one new initiative, not one new project, in this budget for the Mornington electorate — no improvement in services, no improvement in infrastructure. In that respect it is a typical Labor budget — plenty of noise and a plethora of self-serving claims but no substance and certainly no contribution to my local community at all.

Despite the sympathetic words of the Minister for Education — somewhat empty sympathy, unfortunately — there is no money for Osborne Primary School. There is no money for Mornington Special Developmental School (SDS), and I think the plans for, originally, the relocation of Mornington SDS, which we hope will no longer proceed, go back to former Minister Pike. They have been expecting something to happen every budget now for a very, very long time. As I say, I am pleased the Minister for Education is sympathetic — he makes the right noises — but unfortunately he does not do very much to actually deal with the issues that require sympathy in the first place.

From the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, I have got to say we got neither funding nor sympathy. There was no funding for urgently needed works or safety upgrades needed for the corner of Bungower Road and Nepean Highway in Mornington, no funding for works on Uralla Road and Nepean Highway in Mount Martha, near the Balcombe Creek bridge, and no funding for works for Forest Drive and Nepean Highway — that is an intersection that I know has been on the minister’s radar since 2015; I know because I put it there, and we still have no funding for that intersection.

There is no funding for the much-needed pedestrian crossing on Main Street. Some figures have 14 000 vehicles a day using Main Street, but there is still no pedestrian crossing. At the southern end of Main Street people are expected to race across between the cars. There is no money for speed reduction devices outside Balcombe Grammar School. Of course this minister claimed that Balcombe Grammar School is not on the Nepean Highway. If he looked up the school — if he looked it up in the phone book or looked it up on the internet — he would find that in fact the street address is Nepean Highway, Mount Martha, and Nepean Highway, Mount Martha, at that point is 80 kilometres an hour. He expects schoolkids to dash across the road to the buses on the other side without the protection of a school speed limit zone in the area.

Of course this is the minister who does seem incapable of funding any works anywhere in the state unless someone else is paying for it, so I am not surprised. His signature project, indeed his sole project, as we will recall, is the western distributor, which was supposed to be shovel ready — remember that? — in December 2014.

Two and half years later, almost three years later, not much has happened. The whole thing is yet to start. There has been a lot of noise — we are now on the third title for the project — but absolutely nothing has happened. The only thing we know for sure is that the government will not be paying for it. It will be the long-suffering commuters from the south-east, the long-suffering commuters on the Monash, people from my electorate and indeed people from the minister’s electorate that will be paying for this piece of infrastructure, which is intended to serve the people of the western suburbs. I make no comment about the need to serve the people of the western suburbs — that is beyond doubt — but to expect the people of the south-east to pay for it is of course an entirely different matter.

It is perhaps no surprise that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is also the Minister for Ports, because not

only do we have no money for roads in the Mornington electorate, we have no money for the Mornington pier either. We are now running into the second summer season since the pier was severely damaged: wave screens were dislodged — significant damage, the harbour now subject to the swells coming through the gap. This is a basic government responsibility. It is about maintaining assets. Two years on we have yet another safety issue in Mornington harbour.

This is not exactly a fantastic budget for the Mornington electorate. There is not a single cent for new capital works, there is not a single cent for new infrastructure and indeed there is not even a single cent to undertake necessary and urgent works to rectify areas of significant safety concern.

I think that is probably the story of the budget across the state, because this is a budget in which the Treasurer and indeed the Premier are pushing taxes up and pushing services down. As I mentioned, that is the story of Mornington, and it is the story across the state. In just over two and half years this government has increased taxes by nearly \$4 billion. Taxation revenue is up by 22 per cent — \$4 billion. It is a record tax take, yet despite that record tax take, violent crime is increasing. Road congestion is getting worse, and it seems it is getting worse by the week. Our public transport is more crowded — if you are lucky, you will get a seat — and it is less reliable; you might get a seat, but you may not get to your destination. And of course the standard of education, and particularly the education of Victorians children, is declining.

Since the 2014 election, taxes for every Victorian household have increased by some \$2000. Never in the history of the state have we had so much money going to government and never have we had government delivering so little. Victorians are struggling with higher taxes, and they are struggling with soaring electricity bills and soaring gas bills. Indeed we have just had a matter of public importance on that subject. Water costs continue to go up significantly faster than CPI. Transport fares go up every year, even though the standard of service goes down, as I mentioned.

This is the highest taxing government in Victoria's history, but perhaps even worse, this is the highest taxing government in the nation. Despite the port of Melbourne windfall, despite that \$10 billion, we have got the highest taxing state in the nation, we have got a crime tsunami and there is no money for police stations and there is no money to reopen police stations. I will not make the obvious comment, Acting Speaker. But while the state struggles with those cost of living

pressures, this government seems to think Victorians can pay even more taxes.

Indeed on that subject we saw in this budget a host of new taxes — we now have 10. There is the energy tax on coal royalties; the Uber tax; the land tax surcharge for absentee owners, which was 0.5 per cent and has been jacked up to 1.5 per cent. The stamp duty surcharge for foreign buyers started at 3 per cent and now is up to 7 per cent; the fire services property levy has been jacked up; we have had an increase in stamp duty on new cars; we have had new stamp duties imposed on off-the-plan purchases; we have had new stamp duties imposed on property transfers between spouses; we have got new annual property valuations linked to land tax for no reason other than that it will increase the take; and of course we have got the beach house tax — the vacant property tax.

As has been said repeatedly — and so it should be said repeatedly in this house — we are reminded of the promise of the Premier while talking to Peter Mitchell on 28 November 2014. I remember that interview only too well. 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?

Of course the Premier, with an expression that we are only too familiar with in question time, looked straight down the barrel of the camera and said:

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

Mr Gidley — Just words — just weasel words.

Mr MORRIS — Exactly as the member says, just words, and the evidence is there — 10 new taxes that the Premier promised the night before the election that he would not introduce.

We are also of course frequently treated, or were frequently treated, to expositions by the now Treasurer, talking about how awful the level of debt was back in 2013 and 2014. He talked about the integrity of his costings. On 774 ABC on 27 November 2014, talking about the 2014 election costings, he said:

Now, this is a serious piece of work, aimed at ensuring four things: we will retain the AAA stable credit rating, our election commitments will not lead to an increase in debt ...

On the same day in the *Age* the now Treasurer promised that there would be no impact on budget surplus predictions, no increase in net debt, no increase in taxes — and we know about that — and no impact on Victoria's AAA credit rating. The last one, thankfully, has not happened yet.

With respect to debt, the 2017–18 forecast in the pre-election budget update was that debt in this financial year would be 4.5 per cent of gross state product (GSP). In this budget debt is forecast to be 5.8 per cent of GSP. You might say, ‘What is the difference — 4.5 to 5.8 is pretty close; it’s not too bad’. The fact is that that means that debt is 28 per cent higher than was forecast in November 2014. This Treasurer has clearly not kept the commitment to lower debt.

If we compare ourselves with New South Wales, we see clearly that the infrastructure investment in New South Wales is almost twice that in Victoria. For the current year it is \$10.1 billion in Victoria and \$20 billion in New South Wales, but net debt, coming back to the debt argument, to GSP is 1.3 per cent in New South Wales and 5.8 per cent in Victoria.

We are also faced unfortunately with soaring public sector wage costs. That might be okay if it was being spread across the board, but we see public sector wage costs soaring, yet in the pre-election budget update wages were expected to increase this year by 3.5 per cent in the private sector. This government anticipates that they will increase by only 1.9 per cent, almost half. So it is one rule for union mates — they get the increases — while everyone else is left to carry the can. We have at this stage record taxes, soaring crime, soaring congestion, declining educational standards and skyrocketing public sector wages. All in all it is a typical Labor budget.

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) — I am pleased to speak on the 2017–18 budget. The Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017 benefits residents in Cranbourne and surroundings. It is a very different story to Mornington, if the member were honest. Appropriation bills are not just about financial management; they are also an indication of the government’s policy direction and budget priorities, indicating what sort of government it is. In essence they showcase the government’s vision. Just to give an example, when the Victorian government is committing \$1.3 billion to continue the revitalisation of our education system, in return we see the federal government ripping over \$22 billion from the education system.

The opposition attacks this budget for raising taxes; however, it conveniently forgets that the federal budget raised taxes for low to middle-income people and, in return, saw fit to give tax cuts and concessions to high-income earners. There are over \$65 billion in tax cuts to big businesses. Governments may need to raise taxes to provide services in areas like health, education, roads, public transport et cetera. The fairness in raising

taxes is the major difference between Labor’s tax policies and Liberal coalition tax policies.

As a citizen of Victoria, I am very disappointed about the contributions made by opposition speakers. About 14 months ahead of an election as the alternative government this is an opportunity for the opposition to articulate their tax policy for the prosperity of Victoria. They have unfortunately chosen rather to make hollow statements against Labor’s tax policies and against the wages policy for our hardworking public servants. For the opposition to be taken seriously they should state which taxes they wish to reduce, if they have any plans at all, and as a result what infrastructure projects and services they wish to scrap. If they are against Labor’s public service wages policy, what is the coalition’s alternative policy? Would they reduce or freeze the wages of public servants?

In this budget debate those opposite have come up with no new ideas and no alternative policy positions. The opposition only believe in their neoliberal ideological myth that fair taxes on the wealthy hinder economic growth. Their misguided belief is that by giving the mega wealthy huge tax cuts the economy will thrive and fix everything else. The Liberal and National parties’ ideologically driven policy is to go strong on the weak and go weak on the strong.

Let me present to you a historical example to show taxing the wealthy does not adversely affect economic growth. All over the world, including in the USA, in the late 1930s, at the time of the depression, economies were shrinking and workers were losing jobs and hence struggling for survival. The US President Franklin Roosevelt took the bold step of bringing in his New Deal programs. Under New Deal he launched one of the biggest infrastructure programs in US history, funded the biggest arts program in the history of the US and pump primed many sectors of the economy, making New Deal the biggest job creation initiative.

To fund this he increased taxes by 94 per cent on everybody earning more than US\$25 000 — in today’s money, about US\$400 000. The high taxes did not result in economic downturn; on the contrary, the country was thriving. However, over a period of time the wealthy class managed to reverse those taxation initiatives. The US economy started deteriorating by about the 1970s as a result of greedy businesspeople taking businesses overseas in pursuit of cheaper labour. This is not very dissimilar to the Australian situation.

Let me give some specific examples of how the Andrews Labor government is making good use of the taxes raised fairly by getting those who can afford it to

pay a little bit more. Locally in my electorate of Cranbourne there are many winners. There is \$2 million for the construction of a much-needed State Emergency Service unit for Cranbourne. The Cranbourne community will have its very own State Emergency Service unit with the construction of new local headquarters. Local volunteers are currently working out of the Narre Warren depot, which is about 30 minutes away from the southern parts of the City of Casey. Delivered by the Andrews government, the new Cranbourne unit will mean volunteers are closer to the action and able to get to an emergency sooner.

Families in Botanic Ridge and its surrounds are a step closer to a new school, thanks to the Andrews government's funding for land acquisition at Botanic Ridge Estate. This includes funding for land acquisition, which will lead to a project that the entire community can be proud of.

The Andrews government's funding will allow planning to be undertaken to create a new arterial link between Frankston-Dandenong Road in Dandenong South and the South Gippsland Highway in Lynbrook. Planning for this new link will follow Glasscocks Road, which is currently a dirt road in Dandenong South, and will include a grade separation of the Cranbourne railway line while linking it with the South Gippsland Highway. This announcement complements the current \$175 million duplication of Thompsons Road, with the removal of the level crossing along Thompsons Road near Merinda Park railway station.

My local area of Casey will begin to see the first 31 frontline police officers on the streets of the Casey council area. These are the first of the 3135 police that the Andrew's government is delivering over five years to make communities safer and drive down crime. In addition to the record boost to police, the government is addressing the safety of our communities at all levels, from crime prevention and neighbourhood policing through to the criminal justice, prison and rehabilitation systems.

The Victorian coroner reported on 24 family violence deaths last year — 15 women and nine children. The federal government has only allocated \$119.5 million over four years for family violence initiatives. Compare this with the Victorian government's budget allocation of \$1.91 billion for family violence initiatives. This clearly indicates the difference in priorities for two different governments — \$1.91 billion is the single largest allocation of money in a single budget anywhere in Australia, larger than all Victorian budget allocations for family violence initiatives put together.

Another baseless attack from the opposition is that the government is relying on federal funding for major projects. Is Victoria not part of Australia, or are they putting Liberals ahead of Victoria? A senior bureaucrat has confirmed that the Turnbull government is ripping off Victorians. Victoria is receiving a paltry 7.7 per cent of the commonwealth's infrastructure budget, despite being home to 25 per cent of the Australian population. When the federal coalition took office in 2013, it inherited an infrastructure budget that included commonwealth support for the Melbourne metropolitan public transport project. It cancelled the allocation and transferred it to the east–west link with a toll road, which only had an estimated 45 cents in economic benefit for every dollar invested and had to be cancelled.

A strong economy is vital for the prosperity of all Victorians because it means more jobs. Since the government's election in 2014, over 216 000 jobs have been created, more than 250 new jobs every day. The budgeted operating surplus sits at \$2.9 billion and surpluses are set to average \$2.1 billion a year over the forward estimates. These surpluses will be delivered by ensuring average revenue growth of 3.4 per cent, which is a greater than average expenditure growth of 3.3 per cent.

This budget maintains Victoria's AAA credit rating, with net debt forecast to fall from 5.9 per cent of GSP this year to 4.8 per cent by June 2020. The average government infrastructure investment is \$7.5 billion each year for the next four years, compared to an average of \$4.9 billion over the preceding eleven years. The Master Builders Association has given a tick to the government's infrastructure program.

Victoria's population is growing faster than any other state or territory, increasing by 1.7 per cent in 2014–15, which equates to more than 1700 people each week. The Andrews government's pump priming of infrastructure programs in this budget is expected to generate more than 50 000 jobs. Victorian employment grew by an annual average of 3.4 per cent, the strongest of all states, while the rest of Australia averaged only 0.6 per cent.

It is great to see there is money in the budget to make the 24-hour weekend public transport service permanent. This is an exciting initiative for young people, especially those living in low to middle-income outer suburban electorates like Cranbourne. Over the last twelve months the Victorian government has assisted 120 companies to establish or grow their business. This will result in the direct employment of about 4100 full-time new employees and see \$1.5 billion in new capital investment. These important

arrangements are done on their merit and each represents value for the Victorian taxpayer. Yes, they are business deals and they are confidential. I am surprised that those opposite did not realise that.

To boost jobs and investment in a primarily private capital-driven economy, these are the measures governments can take to create more and more jobs. It is premature for the opposition to state that these investments failed to deliver results. If that is the case, it is not the fault of the government of the day, it is the bankruptcy of the about 300-year-old economic system that gives us a recession every four to seven years. This has proven to be the case globally. In a private capital-driven economy, businesses are there to make big profits and when they find they cannot make big profits, irrespective of government support, they will fold up and move away. We have seen Toyota close its Altona production plant; our all-Australian motor vehicle icon, Holden, went a long time ago; Ford shut down its Broadmeadows and Geelong factories in October 2016; and recently there have been issues with the Heyfield timber mill and the Murray Goulburn milk factory.

Although no government was able to stop clothing and footwear industries moving to cheaper labour countries, in this space in Australia the unique party that can affect real change is the Australian Labor Party. Corbyn Labour in the United Kingdom announced the right policy mix. The solution is reorganising the production system to provide ownership for those who produce the goods and services. This is the worker cooperative concept. Mondragon is the model. In Europe, most government and political parties across the political spectrum are already supporting worker cooperatives by passing complementary legislation. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) — I rise to respond on the motion to take note of the 2017–18 budget, and I am very pleased to be doing so. After years of neglect by consecutive governments I am happy to finally see some investment and attention being given to the Shepparton district. I can assure you, Acting Speaker Carbines, that the people of my electorate are very pleased. In 2014 I stood for election because I, along with many others who are now my constituents, were frustrated. We were frustrated because we were being forgotten. We watched as our neighbouring communities of Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and the Latrobe Valley shared in the wealth that came with being marginal seats and being considered the four major regional centres.

Shepparton is the fifth largest regional city in Victoria. I am pleased to see some of the government's

beneficence now appears to be extending to our area. It was fantastic news for our community last year to hear the budget announcement of close to \$170 million for the redevelopment of Goulburn Valley Health. It appeared a big ask for this government to follow up additional significant investment in the Shepparton district in the 2017–18 Victorian state budget, but I am very pleased to see that this is what they have done.

It is good news to see a commitment to an upgrade of the Shepparton rail line between Shepparton and Seymour. With \$43.5 million announced for this work, which includes the stabling of trains at Shepparton and a passing loop near Murchison or Nagambie, we will be well on our way to being ready for further increased services.

Build it and they will come. No city knows this better than Bendigo, which used to have a train service similar to that of Shepparton. The increased services, speed and provision of V/Locity trains saw a dramatic increase in rail patronage, which continues to grow in Bendigo. The extension of the 4.31 p.m. Seymour service through to Shepparton, introduced in January this year, has been very popular, with up to 70 people remaining on the train through to Shepparton daily. This month an additional return service to and from Melbourne has been introduced on Saturdays and Sundays. Additional services on those two days are also welcome.

With the introduction of more faster and better train services between Shepparton and Melbourne we are confident that our region can grow and prosper. I am pleased this government has heard my advocacy on behalf of the Shepparton district, particularly our All Aboard campaign, and has seen fit to fund a tranche of works for rail that will form part of a much larger project. Planning commenced over a year ago following on from the earlier work of the regional network development plan.

Moving on from rail to other transport needs, I welcome the \$10.2 million announced in the state budget for the Shepparton bypass project. This is another longstanding project for the Greater Shepparton community, one which my constituents have been lobbying for for more than 20 years. Residents have done everything asked of them by governments, even going back to the drawing board and breaking the project down into smaller, manageable chunks just to fit budget plans. But year after year their proposals have been left on the cutting room floor, until now. In his take-note speech on the budget recently the Minister for Roads and Road Safety acknowledged the importance of this project — our region is a major centre for good agricultural production and roads are an important

conduit for produce through to the port of Melbourne. This funding will likely be used for planning, land acquisition and preconstruction.

Unfortunately there was no funding for this project in the federal budget, but it is clear that the construction of the Shepparton bypass will only be achieved with joint federal and state funding. We will continue to lobby our federal colleagues for their share of this road funding to ensure the project is seen through to completion. That means right through to the New South Wales border. The entire project, mainly in my electorate, will ultimately require funding for two river crossings and approximately 36 kilometres of duplicated highway to take it through to the north of Shepparton. These works are part of the duplication of the Goulburn Valley Highway through to the New South Wales border that will include removing the notorious Tocumwal bends as the final stage after the Shepparton work is completed.

I am also pleased to say that planning approval has just come through for the Shepparton Art Museum. This is going to be a state-of-the-art museum built on the banks of our local Lake Victoria, and it will be an amazing contribution to our arts and cultural precinct. I welcome the funding that will get these major projects going. We now want to see action and shovels in the ground.

But there is much more to be done. In the 2014 election I also stood for the need to improve opportunities for our young people. A cursory look at education figures for the Shepparton district shows a stark mismatch in outcomes for our young people. We have students who do all that is required of them to complete their secondary education yet who somehow are not job ready when they leave the school grounds for the first time. It has been a discussion point for some time, and our community has been seeking ways to address this. I am making every effort during my current term in Parliament to visit most of our primary and secondary schools and to advocate on their behalf.

I used my contribution to the grievance debate in March 2016 to talk about the disparity in educational outcomes for students in rural areas compared to their metropolitan counterparts. I also drew attention to the falling enrolments and the below-average outcomes that our four senior secondary colleges in Shepparton and Mooroopna were attaining. I was therefore very pleased when the Minister for Education took up my invitation to visit Shepparton and announced the government's intention to develop a strong plan for the future of education in the Shepparton district, something which I believe has never been more important.

The \$1 million for the development of the 10-year Shepparton education plan will be used wisely by a team invested in creating the best possible outcomes for our children. We are now working on this important issue and visiting other schools. We have been to the Bendigo secondary college, Templestowe secondary college and recently to Dandenong High School. They all indicate very different models of education, so we are taking the opportunity to really consider hard what will be best for community. With a focus on local input, we look forward to this plan addressing our region's particular issues and attracting substantial funding for rollout in future budgets.

While the secondary schools will be the initial focus of the 10-year plan, our primary schools were not forgotten in this budget, with six to share in more than \$4.5 million worth of capital funding. Ardmona Primary School received \$90 000. This is a little country school in the centre of the Ardmona fruit farming community on the outskirts of Mooroopna. It faces its fair share of challenges, and many of the children who attend the school have special needs. The school is in need of basic repairs and upgrades, and this funding will go a long way in improving the physical environment for teachers and students alike.

It was also clear to me when I visited Bouchier Street Primary School, again with the Minister for Education, in April that several of the buildings were in need of substantial repairs. The principal was keen to undertake renovations to enable a very old-fashioned block to be renovated to provide open-plan teaching areas that would enable the adoption of more modern teaching methods for the children. The allocation of \$1.407 million should go a long way in allowing the school to achieve its ambitions.

I could say similar things about the other schools which received funding, but time really does not allow it. It has been such a long time since the schools in my electorate have seen this kind of investment. In fact in the six years prior to this only \$600 000 had been allocated to schools in the Shepparton district, and half of that funding was last year. There is no doubt that school buildings are important. A comfortable and attractive environment will not only promote pride in the school but also attract good teachers and contribute to the children's overall positive experience of school and learning.

The Shepparton district has many valuable organisations providing services to its community. The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project was established in recent years and undertook 1000 conversations with members of the local community for the purpose of

pinpointing issues facing our young people and identifying where resources might be best spent. In this budget \$3 million has been allocated to fund the lighthouse project over three years. The project is a collective impact initiative using advocacy, partnership and collaboration to address educational, social and economic disadvantage. It already has about 340 volunteers, with many going into the schools as mentors for our children, often doing the most basic tasks like reading to them. Many of the children come to school with practically no language skills. We expect to see some innovative and substantial work from the lighthouse project.

The budget announcements also include a specialist family violence court in Shepparton as well as free public wi-fi in the main area of town. More generally, our regional businesses will benefit from the 25 per cent reduction in the payroll tax rate across regional Victoria. I am grateful for the support demonstrated for the Shepparton district in the 2017–18 budget. It has been an honour to represent my electorate and advocate and receive funding for the projects I have outlined.

The Shepparton district started from a very low base, and there is still so much more investment our community needs, but this government investment has proven to be a stimulus for reinvigorating private investment in our town. It is great to see so many buildings going up and so much confidence now in private industry. In this week's *Shepparton News* there is an article about a business that remodels and restores old cars which moved from Deniliquin to Shepparton. It is a really large business that does this for people right across the country. Similarly, a small piping company that has existed in Shepparton for a very long time has now expanded dramatically to provide all the pipes for the Connections Project. It has also manufactured pipes and sent them to the Ord River where another major irrigation scheme is underway. It is great to see these local businesses having the confidence now to invest and move forward.

We still need funding for many projects like passenger rail services, the bypass and the second stage of Goulburn Valley Health. Shepparton also needs a dedicated mother-baby unit, it needs a cancer centre and it needs funding for the Munarra Centre of Regional Excellence. The Shepparton district has the highest Indigenous population outside Melbourne. The Rumbalara Football Netball Club was an initiative of the local Indigenous community led by elder Paul Briggs. It has been the home not only of the sporting teams but also of many broader projects supporting the Aboriginal community, including transition programs for young people as they move into employment.

Funding for the Munarra Centre of Regional Excellence would allow the community to capitalise on the social and cultural commitment that has already been demonstrated. The vision is a bold one: to have a purpose-built centre in Shepparton to foster the sporting excellence of Indigenous people from across Australia. The \$200 000 announced in this budget contributes towards a business case for this venture and is a welcome first step.

We need a drug rehabilitation centre in our region. Odyssey House has a proposal currently before government. I am pleased to say that a planning permit has now been granted via VCAT for a proposal such as this on a farming property out of town. There is a great need in our region — like all regional centres — for drug rehabilitation centres to be provided and often to be provided in local communities and close to people's homes.

Regional communities across the country are facing continual challenges to their survival. In my electorate and the surrounding areas security of water supply is a major issue. Recent studies have shown that the rollout of the Murray-Darling Basin plan is having a devastating impact on our local communities. The Goulburn-Murray irrigation district alone is losing up to \$500 million a year in production due to the loss of water from the consumptive irrigation pool. The socio-economic studies that we have done show that up to 1000 jobs have been lost, and we anticipate that up to 2000 could be lost by the time the plan is rolled out in full. We appreciate the government's support for advocacy on water issues to ensure our ongoing economic security.

Some people said that the experiment of having an Independent would be a failure and that it would not work, but I am pleased to say that I have been able to work with the government of the day to achieve some amazing investments in our region, and I intend to continue doing so. I commend the budget to the house.

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) — It is my pleasure to rise and speak on the motion to take note of the 2017–18 budget and to follow the member for Shepparton, who made an outstanding contribution.

Out in Niddrie it really is time to pull out the hard hats after three years of the Andrews Labor government. I will say it right here, right now: since the electorate was created in 1976 there has never been such a significant investment in the Niddrie electorate. There are three schools being rebuilt. The Buckley Street, Essendon, level crossing is going. There is the CityLink Tulla widening project and the new English Street bridge.

The Keilor Stadium is being doubled in size, there is a record investment of \$5 million for the Keilor Road-Newman Street intersection upgrade and there are new traffic lights at the Centreway shopping centre. Residents from literally generation to generation have been calling for some of these investments, and as the member that was elected in 2012, it has been my real pleasure to be able to deliver to the community and to deliver under a Labor government.

I want to begin by acknowledging Essendon Keilor College. Students at Essendon Keilor College, as the member for Sydenham knows very well, are a step closer to having the facilities they deserve. Building Engineering Pty Ltd has been awarded the construction contract, with construction on a \$10 million upgrade due to get underway very shortly. In fact I am just finalising dates now for the sod turning, and I hope to have a very important guest there on that day. The \$10 million project includes redeveloping the school facilities at both the Essendon and Niddrie campuses. There will be a complete rebuild of the Niddrie campus, formerly Niddrie High School. Since March 2012 I have fought every day for Essendon Keilor College. In fact in my inaugural speech back on 18 April 2012 I rose to say that:

My immediate task is the implementation of the Essendon Keilor College master plan.

However, I came in when we were in opposition. We had four Liberal budgets and it was literally four strikes for Essendon Keilor College. What got me, though, was that the former Liberal Minister for Education visited the school. On 6 April 2011 he told the *Age*:

... the conditions out at that school are disgusting, they are not safe for teachers, they are not good for those students.

That came from the then Liberal education minister. What did he do? He saw the conditions at the school — he visited it — but did not give it one cracker. It was not until the return of a Labor government that Essendon Keilor College got the funding that it had so deserved. And it is not as if this was an unheard story. More than 1600 local residents signed a petition which was tabled in the Parliament calling on the Baillieu-Napthine-Shaw governments to rebuild the school. On 3 November 2011 the *Herald Sun* published a report based on documents obtained through freedom of information laws which asserted that:

Essendon Keilor College ... is the state's most run-down, with 1341 items requiring attention ...

Hence Essendon Keilor College has been my number one priority since I was elected. It was an uphill battle until the Andrews government was elected to power. I

am very honoured that the Premier himself has visited the school. I am also very honoured that the Deputy Premier has visited the school, and I continue to go there regularly to work with the principal, David Adamson, who is doing an outstanding job. An architect and a builder have both been appointed. A sod turning will occur very quickly. The Niddrie campus will see the construction of a new science, technology, engineering and maths learning centre and significant landscaping works to best use the space that is there. The Essendon campus will also see an extension of the assembly hall, which the member for Essendon has been a strong advocate for. That will be used as a performing arts space, with over 200 seats. There will also be opportunities for the new space to be shared with the local community.

We are in the design phase. The Victorian School Building Authority has recently released photographs, which I can assure you, Acting Speaker, and the member for Sydenham have gone down very well with the local community. In fact they lit up my Facebook page when I put them there.

I am also very proud. It is a little-known fact that former Premier Joan Kirner went to Aberfeldie Primary School, which is in my electorate. In her name and honour I fought very hard for that school too. The Andrews Labor government has committed \$1 million to a school upgrade of Aberfeldie primary to get rid of some of its dilapidated buildings and to give the students there the school that they deserve. I visited the school only recently and met with assistant principal Heather Golder, and I was very excited to see that the students there will soon be enjoying the workspaces that they so richly deserve. I have a meeting coming up this Friday with the principal, Brett Millott, and the new school council where the plans for Aberfeldie Primary School and what we plan to do with the funding there will be very much at the forefront of our discussions.

But it does not end there. There have been three budgets and three school upgrades. The third school upgrade is Keilor Heights Primary School. I very much had the pleasure on 19 June to visit the school to meet with the principal, Ann Turner-Calleri, who wrote to me before the last budget advocating for it. She had run a very successful spring fair and local fundraising efforts. The school were very keen to see that they get an upgrade that they so richly deserve. On 19 June I was very pleased to be able to announce \$522 000 for this fantastic school to get upgraded grounds and sporting facilities, including two new netball courts. There is a very big shortage of netball courts in the Moonee Valley community.

The infrastructure does not end with education. I want to put on record that education and investing in education is the number one policy area and focus that I have. You literally cannot go wrong as a local member investing in your schools. During the condolence motion yesterday for the late Honourable Fiona Richardson, like many members I had cause to read her inaugural speech, and what struck me in her inaugural speech was the quote she used from Tony Blair — that when he came to be Prime Minister he had three priorities: education, education and education. As a local member, in my view that needs to be my number one priority too, because as we all know education is the great lifter.

I want to touch on the \$5 million for the Keilor Road–Newman Street–Grange Road intersection. This is another item that I have been advocating for very hard. It is literally the most dangerous intersection in the Niddrie electorate. I had a look at the open source data which the government provides to the public on crash fatalities. It provided a handy visualisation of the location of the crashes across Victoria since 2010, and according to this data there have been approximately nine accidents requiring police call-outs in the vicinity of this intersection, two of which involved serious injury. And these were just the accidents and incidents that have been recorded.

Often driving to my electorate office or driving in the community I see glass on the road at the Keilor Road–Newman Street intersection. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who has been a strong advocate of this project from opposition, in government and every step along the way, came out. He announced more than \$5 million. Again, this was a community-led initiative.

I lodged in October 2014 a petition of 1000 signatures in this place calling on the minister to take action to improve road safety. Obviously that was under the former government. No surprise that it fell on deaf ears. With the election of the Andrews Labor government we get the funding we so richly deserve. I met with the roads minister regularly on this project, and with VicRoads regional directors, some three of them. We held a community forum attended by over 80 local residents, and I want to congratulate VicRoads for the way they held that information session. It was done in a world cafe-type of format, and it allowed residents to have their say on the route, the treatment options and the work of the engineers and VicRoads. We are going to see a vastly great improvement for locals' commutes on this incredibly dangerous and unsafe intersection.

I want to touch on the Buckley Street level crossing. It is one of our 50 most dangerous level crossings. We

went to the last election, and I was at the pre-poll booth with my posters on the Buckley Street level crossing. Everyone said to me, 'You won't do that. You won't get it done. It will be down on the list'. I explained to them that this will not be like New Street, Brighton, where the Liberal government did a crossing that was not even needed. We are actually doing the 50 level crossings that are the most dangerous, and we are ahead of time and schedule on this groundbreaking project. We are getting rid of the Buckley Street level crossing, and the member for Essendon and I are both on the stakeholder liaison group. We are working, we are consulting and we are getting the job done.

I can assure you that from Aberfeldie to Avondale Heights to Airport West to Keilor, nothing impacts my local community more than the Buckley Street level crossing. The boom gates of this dangerous and congested crossing are down from nearly 80 minutes during the morning peak, turning Buckley Street into a traffic bottleneck. On 20 September last year the Acting Premier, the Minister for Public Transport and I, along with the member for Essendon, announced this project. We went and visited it. We are doing it in a sustainable way too. It is amazing how many Liberals stop me in the street to say, 'Good on you, Ben. You're getting rid of the Buckley Street level crossing, but you're doing it in the most financially sound way. You're actually keeping the heritage-listed station. You're doing the road solution that lends itself to Buckley Street'. And we are getting on with the job. I cannot wait. Literally as we speak this week —

Ms Hutchins interjected.

Mr CARROLL — Exactly. There will be no compulsory acquisitions. It is an outstanding project, and I have seen the plans and I have seen the designs. Everyone says, whether it be on Facebook, email or letter, to just get on with it. Get rid of them. I am sick of those traffic lights. It is an outstanding project that is really going to change people's lives for the better — more time with their family helping kids get to school, helping our buses run better and meeting the trains. I cannot wait to get it done, and I am really proud to be delivering this project with the member for Essendon, who campaigned very heavily on it. We are getting it done.

I also want to talk about the CityLink Tulla widening project and the creation of the new English Street bridge. I am very proud that right on the edge of my electorate I have what is probably the most famous supermarket in Australia, if not in the world, LaManna. We are building a whole new bridge to make it easier for locals to get to that perfect, most beautiful

supermarket that the member for Sydenham knows very well. A whole new English Street bridge has been built as part of the CityLink Tulla widening project. There is \$1.28 billion for the CityLink Tulla project. It has been done. It has been completed. It will increase the roads capacity by up to 30 per cent, easing congestion, cutting travel times and improving safety.

The English Street bridge joining Airport West with Essendon Fields was closed, but VicRoads did a remarkable job, and I want to congratulate the work they did in partnership with Lendlease. It has literally changed the dynamic out at Essendon Fields and Essendon Airport, where the Premier himself only recently opened up the new Hyatt Place hotel. It is going gangbusters. I went with you, Acting Speaker Carbin, to the MPs for Tourism breakfast this morning, and I was very happy to see Chris Cowan, the CEO of Essendon Fields. He is doing an outstandingly good job with the investment that is going on there, but we as a government are also making sure that the Tullamarine Freeway and the Calder Freeway are getting the upgrades and widening that they need so people can get to Essendon Airport, making their lives better.

We have also got tram routes in my electorate. We want to deliver solar powered trams. I am working very hard to get new trams on these routes, because trams and buses — and I was very pleased to meet with Pat Ryan from Ryans Bus Service yesterday in this place — need the investment that they so richly deserve.

I want to touch very briefly on my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Justice. The Minister for Police, the Attorney-General and the Minister for Corrections are all doing an outstanding job. I have had the police minister out in my electorate only recently; 3135 police are being delivered. I was out on Monday night at the Niddrie shopping precinct with local police having a good chat with local business owners. Moonee Valley is seeing an increase in police resources. I want to congratulate the Attorney-General for the laws he is making in this place and implementing. We have carjacking reform, the fixing up of the baseline sentencing regime and reforms in relation to home invasions. As the chief law officer of this state the Attorney-General is leaving no stone unturned in making sure our laws reflect the community's expectations.

And then at the other end of that we have the Minister for Police literally delivering record investments in police resources. Four-hundred police custody officers are going to see more police on the beat, walking down places like Keilor Road, Niddrie. As the parliamentary secretary to the minister I spend a lot of time — and I

have been out there with you, Acting Speaker, in your capacity as the member for Oakleigh — out at the police academy. We are seeing more police being recruited than have been in a generation, but we are also giving them the infrastructure they need, whether it be the laws needed to prevent carjacking and home invasion or whether it be the equipment they need.

One thing the police minister did when she came out to my electorate was to visit the police air wing out at Essendon Airport. We are literally putting new choppers and a new fleet of the best resources from the air to the ground for arguably Australia's best police force. The Chief Commissioner of Police, Graham Ashton, is leading from the front, very well supported by a hardworking police minister who is leaving no stone unturned.

Before I finish I want to commend the Premier on the update to the *Ice Action Plan*. I was part of the parliamentary inquiry dealing with that issue. A new drug court in Melbourne is needed.

Finally, it would be remiss of me if I did not just comment on how proud I am to have been able to call Fiona Richardson a colleague and a friend. I want to end this contribution on the budget recognising everything she did on the number one law and order issue, family violence. She has left her mark and has overseen more than \$570 million in funding to implement every recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. As a Labor government we are very proud. In our three budgets we have record investments in the Niddrie electorate, from roads and rail to education. You name it; we are delivering it. I am very proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) — I rise with a melancholy gloominess compared to those speakers before me. I have been sitting here listening to the excited rantings of the member for Niddrie and the joyful whoopees from the member for Shepparton, who has spouted about all the goodness that the government has thrown her way. I think there has been more money thrown at kindergartens in Niddrie than at the whole of my electorate. We have heard of bridges being built and air wings. I think there have been lollies for children. At the rate they are going they are probably funding overseas holidays for schools in some of those Labor seats. But not down in the good seat of Polwarth, not in the seat that produces 80 per cent of the state's dairy product, not in the seat that now has more tourists visiting it than the Great Barrier Reef, not in the area that was devastated most recently by bushfires, not in the seat that carries the can for the production of grain

and all sorts of agriculture, not in the seat that supplies 80 per cent of Australia's ice cream and cream products, not in the seat that produces all the lamb and other meat products that go into our supermarkets around Australia — no, not from this government.

No, they have just thrown us titbits. Absolute titbits is what we have had in Polwarth. In fact I have had my whole staff sitting down for days trawling through the documents to find any reference to Polwarth. We did find a couple of little things. I think they have replaced some windows in a school, which I am sure the school is most grateful for, but they probably needed whole classrooms rather than glass.

We had a long discussion in our community and in the state generally about the need to coordinate what is going on with the Great Ocean Road, the need to combine the government resources that are going into maintaining such an iconic piece of Victorian real estate and Victorian infrastructure. But no, what did this budget do? This budget found \$1.3 million. And that is not even a printing bill for some of these Labor backbenchers — and we know what they do with their printing bills. We saw a small amount of money thrown across three shires and across numerous government departments to try to coordinate that — not nearly enough. That was a great disappointment to the Shipwreck Coast master plan. It has been a great disappointment to the three shires who to date have not only not been invited to be part of that but have not been asked to contribute to it, have not been briefed on it and do not know what it is about. And yet the government told us in this budget that they were spending that money to help coordinate and make a more concerted effort on the Great Ocean Road. Sadly that is not the case.

We have seen an announcement about doctors in schools, and I guess that was one thing that came our way, but of course the government did not deal with the central issue, which is doctors in communities. In an electorate like Polwarth we have got seven hospitals, and all of them struggle on a day-to-day basis to get doctors. I toured the Camperdown College only last week and saw that the largesse from this budget has decked out a wonderful new consulting room at the school, and they are rightly very proud of it, but actually no-one knows where the doctor is, no-one knows when the doctor is coming and no-one knows if there is going to be a doctor. We have whole communities that cannot get a doctor to look after the sick, the frail, the elderly and those who need urgent care. Of course in country towns we do not have accident and emergency departments; we have urgent care facilities. The largesse that is thrown around health

services in inner-city seats is something that we do not see in the country; we do not have that advantage. We have funded rooms in schools for doctors but not the doctors. Of course that is something that we are going to have to keep a close eye on as this budget unfolds.

This government is prepared to alter the budget and change direction as it goes along, and we have seen that with the Victorian renewable energy target discussions over the past days. An electorate like mine is going to be greatly affected by this policy, and we are seeing state money thrown predominantly at overseas companies to run around my electorate spending taxpayers money on the whim of providing energy. We do not know how much energy they are going to provide, we do not know where they are going to provide it and we do not know when they are going to provide it.

In fact I had a very distressing phone call only an hour or so before speaking today from a constituent who had retired from Melbourne, moved to a quieter life in the country, bought an old church and converted it, and only found out last week that he is shortly to be surrounded by literally tens of wind turbines 200-odd metres tall. For those who want to translate that, that is roughly the size of the Rialto building and twice the height of the West Gate Bridge. He is going to be surrounded by these. He has not been told about them. He does not get compensated. His quiet country retirement has been thrown into turmoil. That is being funded by this budget.

The government has been quick to appease inner-city seats and inner-city voters who think it is marvellous that their trams will be solar powered or wind powered. That is great, but we have not seen too much of an incentive in this budget for putting wind turbines along the St Kilda foreshore. I am sure the wind blows down at St Kilda just as much as it does at Berrybank, Dundonald, Mortlake South or Mount Gellibrand, so there is no shortage of places we could identify here in Melbourne that would be just as suitable for wind turbines. In fact there seems to be a lot of green space around the MCG and no shortage of pocket parks in Fitzroy, Brunswick, Richmond and other inner-city suburbs that cherish these things.

I think that many in my electorate would be glad if the government were to divert some of its sponsoring of overseas companies to build wind turbines if they actually spent some of that money in Melbourne and popped wind turbines up there. I am sure some of these apartment blocks in Collingwood and other spots would look rather grand with a big wind turbine popped on top. Let us see how people like their televisions,

internet and other things being interfered with and whether they find that there is nothing wrong with them and that they are all lovely, quiet and, as many people will say, beautiful things on the horizon. So that is one of the concerns we have.

Another thing that happened in this budget is the government made a grand announcement of paying hospital board members. The government also trumpeted in recent weeks the fact that they have now got over 50 per cent of women on boards. That is a great achievement, but it has come at the expense of country communities. I know, having served 16 years on my health board in Colac at Colac Area Health, that in that time we had a band of local committed people who had a great understanding of the health needs of their community and were prepared to volunteer their time.

I do not really have an objection to funding health boards, but I do have an objection to the thrust, in order to meet the government's objectives, of bussing people in from Melbourne and beyond. They have decided now to pay people who, by and large, have CVs and live outside of the communities they are serving. They are quite happy to pay them. It might be interesting to see where some of the allegiances lie for some of these people being nominated on to many of these country health boards. The distressing thing of course is for the already very stressed health services —

Ms Thomas — What about skills? Skills are good on boards.

Mr RIORDAN — Yes, there are skilled people in the country. It might come as a surprise to the member for Macedon to realise that we do actually have competent, capable country board members and in that time they have been able to run very successful health services without doctors employed and other things. They have done quite a good job actually for about 150 years, so we thank those volunteer local community health services very much. Now that we are seeing a clear attempt by the government to sort of use them as another nesting place for their future operatives, that is something we can look forward to.

The issue of course arises that these health boards are already under a lot of financial stress. We have seen, in this current round, new enterprise bargaining agreements that are costing health budgets at least 3.5 to 5 per cent and that are unfunded.

Ms Thomas — Why do you hate workers?

Mr RIORDAN — It is not that we hate workers at all, but we do want our hospitals to stay open. We certainly want our hospitals to provide services that the

community expects. Hospitals in my electorate will be coming to me with power bills that are not budgeted for and have not been provided for in this budget.

We have a situation in Cobden with the indoor swimming pool that the community paid for; they raised the money themselves. It did not come from government handouts; they worked hard to do that. The community has paid for that through their health service, and now they are under real threat of having to close that service because they just cannot afford the rising energy costs, which have doubled in the last six months. On top of that, they are now going to be footing the bill for paying board members to drive up from Melbourne and other far-flung places rather than using local resources to man the board. With these authorities we will probably be looking at costs of at least \$500 000 extra for administering hospitals because of this change that the government has not yet funded.

Last year's budget, the 2016–17 budget, announced what was seen as a long overdue decision by the government, and that was to look at closing the Colanda Centre in Colac. I think most people welcomed that change in government policy, but we still have not yet had funded or announced how the government plans to rehouse and support those people. It was after a prolonged discussion that the workers and the staff at that institution were at last given a decent payout and a relocation allowance, which we must be grateful for. At the same time the government still have not announced to the community more generally where these people will call home in the future. That is something that definitely needs to be sorted and announced.

Of course roads are often the most important thing in a country community. Once again, while we have heard today of multiple bridges built in Shepparton and all sorts of overpasses and sky rails and heaven knows what funded in Niddrie and other places, we have still got many, many well-known and dangerous intersections in our area for which there has not been any improvement flagged.

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr RIORDAN — He effectively advocates very well and the community knows about it, but I guess when the government has its other objectives they do not fund them. So my community has made very well known the need for work on areas of the Cape Otway Road and the Princes Highway, and of course there is the much-talked about need for funding for a bypass study for Colac.

It is handy to have the Minister for Roads and Road Safety sitting here; I am sure he is listening to me. His reply to my office and the local paper and the local media was that we did not need a bypass around Colac because 80 per cent of vehicles stopped in the town. Well, that was one of the most laughable documents ever produced to the public to explain why a bypass was not required. It is clearly not the case, and until we can get some change there the community will not be satisfied with where the issue is going.

The government trumpeted much about increasing police numbers. That is certainly not the case in western Victoria, where most stations are either closed, non-existent or down to part-time hours.

With crime rates across Corangamite shire rising by many tens of per cents — close to 100 per cent in the case of Corangamite shire and others — it is a real issue. That is combined with the fact that we still have not got a full understanding of the funding and the allowance made for the Colac police station redevelopment. Early reports have seen that blow out in its budget by some 50 per cent, which has led to the clear decision by the powers that be that they will be cutting back what they have provided for the planned Colac police station and courthouse precinct redevelopment.

This is a great disappointment because one of the well-known facts in the Western District at the moment is that many criminal activities happen in multiple figures because criminals know that when the police are tied up in one area they will be gone for hours. If an arrest or a bail application is required, the one or two police who are on board at the 24-hour station in Colac will be tied up indefinitely, providing free rein for anyone else who wants to commit a crime or go on a crazed spree. We have seen that on many, many occasions. That is because police numbers and the police rostering have just not been sufficient.

There was also talk in the last budget, which we welcomed in our area, of an increase in the Warrnambool train line service, but sadly there is still much to be done there, with rail crossings listed in the tens that are still not properly lit with either warning bells or boom gates. What comes as a surprise is the priority that the public transport sector has given to some of the roads they have decided to make safe. There are some dead-end gravel roads with full bells and boom gates, while other busy asphalt roads on the way to football clubs and other things are still completely unguarded. We look forward to further funding for that.

In concluding, while there may be joy and whoopeeing going on in some of the pork-barrelled seats the government wants to save around Melbourne and in Shepparton, it is disappointing that seats that contribute, do their bit and pay their fair share to this state have been sadly neglected in this rather dull and uninteresting budget.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) — It is my pleasure to rise to speak on the Appropriation (2017–2018) Bill 2017 take-note motion and talk a little bit about how Frankston is changing, how Frankston is evolving, how you can feel the energy in Frankston these days, how we are basking in the sunshine of a government that gives a damn about Frankston and how we are full of faith because we have a government that has injected more capital and more passion into our suburb than ever before.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr EDBROOKE — There is plenty of passion from the member too, let me tell you. We have had more investment in Frankston over the last two and a half years than we have had in the last 40 years. I do not know what some of these Liberal members have been doing. We have plenty of needs and we have plenty of wants, but nothing seems to have happened. The previous four years would be an example of that. I remember standing in this very chamber for the debate on the last budget, and I challenged some of the members opposite to tell us something they did in Frankston during the Shaw-Napthine-Baillieu governments. Not one person could tell me anything at all.

The Liberal budgets of those four years had very little to show. It seems like a lot of the Liberal members on the peninsula now, all bar one Liberal member, have been named as having been involved in spending more time fundraising with alleged mafia kingpins than actually delivering for their community. They would rather throw hand grenades at progress instead of actually doing something for their own communities. In fact I think the federal electorate of Dunkley at the moment is probably the state Liberal hotbed for fundraising from organised criminals, sadly enough.

If I start in the sector of police and community safety, of course in Frankston we have a large issue with family violence. It is an issue that has been ignored for many years, and this government has tackled it. For the last couple of days I have been keen to let some of Fiona Richardson's closer colleagues have the time to make their condolence speeches, but now I want it known that she was a person who had my deep respect.

She was definitely a friend of Frankston. She was a fearless Minister for Women and of course the nation's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, which is something in itself. Along with our government, Fiona also initiated the first Royal Commission into Family Violence and the world's most comprehensive investigation into this issue, I believe. Like I said, she was a great friend of Frankston. She visited regularly to check how our family violence service providers were going with their investments, which I will talk about shortly, and she and her staff supported my office with any need we had. In Frankston, as I said, we do have fairly consistent family violence requirements. In our area she certainly ensured that a very, very dark issue had a bright light shone on it, no matter how bad it looked, so we could act on it. Of course that is the first thing we need to do with any problem: define the problem, find out what it is and then commit to it and act on it.

Much of her work, I understand, involved some of the nitty-gritty and really hard policy-making, and she was relentless on the journey towards cultural change. I believe the result of this will not be fully known for many, many years, until possibly the next generation. In the meantime we have Fiona Richardson to thank for our bayside support and safety hub coming sometime soon, the Frankston specialist family violence court as well as a raft of other projects in our community. I will finish speaking about the minister by saying that Fiona had my respect because she not only lived her values but she expected the same of all of us and she kept that bar very, very high, as we have heard in the last couple of days. I am very, very sad when I hear her close friends talk about the fun times they had together and the loss of the minister and about Fiona as a person and a family person, but I am very proud to carry on her work in the Frankston community.

On the police and community safety sector, we have just heard that 80 new police out of the 3135 new police graduated last week. The academy is at its capacity. In saying that, we have also experienced a 40 per cent reduction in petty crime and petty kinds of assault in the Frankston CBD. That is because of having a government that is willing to work with our police officers and their command to look at what they need and what resources they need. We have got aircraft. We have got different technologies coming out, including body-worn cameras — everything our police need. This is in stark contrast to a government that did not employ one extra police officer above the rate of attrition in four years, which is quite unbelievable.

In the sports area of our Frankston community we have got defibrillator grants going out to clubs currently. The

Frankston Baseball Club, the Long Island Cricket Club and the Mornington Peninsula Triathlon Club are all recipients of these grants. We obviously saved the Frankston Dolphins, and that was a huge project and a massive undertaking for our community, which took so much passion from so many people. I can never thank some of our community members and members of that club enough. We also had the Peninsula Strikers soccer club redevelopment, which we just opened as well and which has just been fantastic.

People are noticing Frankston. As I said, there is more confidence and investment in Frankston than ever, but you can see the change, even in the papers. The local member is not on the front page defining what Frankston is these days, talking about situations of ill repute — I guess that would be one way of putting it. As the current member for Frankston, I am very much embedded in the community, but you have got to work with the community instead of stepping out in front and being the clown that the community knows you for. I am glad that situation is behind us.

As I said before, in Frankston generally you can feel a different energy. People can see things are happening — things that people have wanted to happen for so long. I have got a long, long list of commitments we have made. In the health sector we have got the behavioural assessment rooms that have been announced. One will be at Peninsula Health, Frankston Hospital, which will no doubt be welcomed by our staff members at the hospital. We have got the release of body-worn cameras for police and the trial going on at the moment with the paramedics. We also had \$1.7 million worth of commitment for a primary assessment psych unit at Peninsula Health, which was also very, very much welcomed by our community.

As far as roads and public transport go, I think Frankston has been left behind for a number of years, and we are just catching up. In two and half years we have made massive strides. We have heard that we are starting our level crossing removal at Overton Road quite soon. That coincides with the new national competition winning station design, which will be built for the new Frankston train station soon as well.

I note that we have had a couple of people come out and say that they either do not want the Eel Race Road level crossing dealt with or they do not want Overton Road dealt with. The question I would ask a couple of councillors at Frankston Council is: what engineering data do you have, what have you paid for and what community consultation have you done? If they do not know, I can fill in the blanks for them. They have done zero. So how does a group of nine people make decisions

for a community based on one or two emails? It does not happen. We have done the community consultation, we know what the community wants and there is overwhelming support for the removal of this dangerous and deadly level crossing at Overton Road. It is very, very hard to take a picture of the Overton Road level crossing and keep some of the flowers out of it from the bereaved families. It is a spot that holds fairly deep significance for many, many families.

Of course we saved the PenBus — the route 887 bus — which was cut by the federal Liberal government. From a state perspective, it was not good enough for the previous state government to actually put their money where their mouth was and save it. They put a couple of petitions up, but not much else.

We have got the fully funded Young Street redevelopment, which will open next month. Just off the top of my head, I think nine previously vacant shops have opened or are planning to open since we started construction, which is just huge for Frankston. These shops have been battling for so long to see that kind of life. That is that energy I am talking about. There are so many people walking down the street now, and they are looking at new things happening in Frankston — investment in Frankston — and it is certainly reflected in the commercial and residential real estate numbers as well.

As well as the Young Street redevelopment, we have also got a couple of other surprises up our sleeve there. We will be releasing kerbside dining grants for traders to be able to buy furniture for the newly extended street on Young Street, and we have also got the Eat Street grants for Station Street, which runs perpendicular to Young Street. We want it to be a place where people go to enjoy a great meal and fine dining and a place that is safe and they know they can take their family, and we will achieve that.

As far as education goes, in Frankston when we came to power there really was not much to talk about. There were no ribbons to cut in any area in Frankston, unfortunately. We had to create our own luck and work very, very hard, and now we are picking the fruits of that labour. It was great to have the Premier come down and accompany me to open the fantastic new prep building for Frankston Primary School. It was designed by the primary school themselves — by the people at the coalface. They knew what they wanted, and they designed it. It is a fantastic design and it was a beautiful ribbon cutting at which the choir sang. These are people that have wanted something off their state government for years, and they got nothing over the four years of the previous government.

We have also got the Frankston North education precinct plan. That started with Aldercourt Primary School, Mahogany Rise Primary School and Monterey Secondary College all taking a role. In fact at this time more than two-thirds of state schools in Frankston are actually funded for capital projects. I think that is history making. I do not think that has ever been done before, and we have still got work to do.

As I have said, you can feel this energy. It is in the CBD, it is at schools and it is in places where people have been lobbying for improvements in Frankston for so long. You can hear the passion in my voice. It is very exciting to get some things actually happening.

When we were elected, we came after a government that had had the highest unemployment on the mainland. Now we have got a government that has created more full-time jobs in the month of June this year than in the previous government's four-year term, which is quite amazing. My hat goes off to the Treasurer for his achievements in this. We have got Melbourne Metro creating 7000 jobs and using 88 per cent local materials, 93 per cent local steel and apprentices, and it will free up the city loop for the Frankston line, which is going to be fantastic when it happens.

Not everyone in Frankston might back Labor, but one thing they can be assured of is that Labor backs everyone in Frankston. That is without a doubt. We made massive commitments at the election, and we have moved on all of them. We have carried them all out. The people voted Labor in, and we are delivering. I want them to know that we are not going to stop delivering. I am going to be the strongest advocate for Frankston that this state has ever seen.

In conclusion I would like to say that we had an office dog called Denzel, who was the pet of one of my staffers. Denzel was a great help. We have some people with some fairly complex needs who visit our office at times, and we would often bring Denzel in. He would do things that I guess humans in our office could not do. He would break down barriers, and we could then move on to help people and their issues. Unfortunately Denzel passed away a week and a half ago, which really rocked my office. Obviously we have had quite a few things happen in the past couple of weeks which have been very sad, but it was very sad to lose Denzel. I am sure there will be some people in the Frankston community that will visit us over the next couple of months, looking to see how Denzel is and probably bringing him some treats. He became a very well loved rescue dog, and it has been very sad to see him go. As some people said during debate on the last bill in regard to dogs, they are magnificent creatures, and Denzel certainly broke down some barriers that came up from

time to time. Whether they were autistic children or people with fairly complex drug, psychological or mental needs, Denzel was there. It was fantastic to have him on board, and we are going to miss him.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — I am pleased to rise to speak on the budget. This budget is taxing Victorians more but giving Victorians less. In just over two years this government has increased taxes by nearly \$4 billion. This is an increase in taxation revenue of over 22 per cent.

The SPEAKER — Order! I apologise for interrupting the member for Evelyn so quickly, but the time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business. The member may continue her speech when this matter is next before the Chair.

Business interrupted under resolution of the house.

**PARKS AND CROWN LAND
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**RACING AMENDMENT
(MODERNISATION) BILL 2017**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Mr PAKULA (Minister for Racing).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
(BODY-WORN CAMERAS AND OTHER
MATTERS) BILL 2017**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 23 August; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**DOMESTIC ANIMALS AMENDMENT
(RESTRICTED BREED DOGS) BILL 2017**

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

BUDGET PAPERS 2017–18

Debate resumed.

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) — Since the 2014 election the Andrews government has increased taxes by an average of \$2000 for every Victorian household. Before the election, promises were made that no new taxes would be introduced. In each of these three budgets that promise has been broken. This government is not only the highest taxing government in Victoria's history; it is also the highest taxing government in Australia. In spite of being the highest taxing state and with a \$10 billion windfall from the port of Melbourne lease, debt has risen sharply and now exceeds the level from when Labor came to office.

There is a \$252 million energy tax on coal royalties. There are the taxi and Uber tax, a land tax surcharge for

absentee owners, a stamp duty surcharge, the fire services property levy hike, increases in stamp duty on new cars, new stamp duties on off-the-plan purchases, new stamp duties on property transfers between spouses and new annual property valuations to increase land and council rates. In this budget Labor will increase taxation revenue by \$174.8 million in 2017–18 and by \$1.4 billion over four years.

From 1 July 2017 stamp duty on property transfers between spouses and effective partners will raise \$20 million per year. They are going to make buying a new car more expensive for Victorians. The duty on new passenger vehicles will increase from \$6.40 per \$200 of the market value to \$8.40 per \$200. This will increase the price of new vehicles by 1 per cent, raising \$391.4 million over four years. The vacant residential property tax will increase revenue by \$80 million, raising \$10 million in 2017–18. Removing the off-the-plan stamp duty concession will raise \$51 million in 2017–18 and \$841.2 million over four years. The property valuations being done annually rather than every two years is also bringing a windfall.

With law and order, despite a soaring crime rate of over 20 per cent and an acknowledgement by the Minister for Police that Victorians do not feel safe in their own homes, there is no funding for new police stations or to reopen those that this government has closed. The first of the promised new police will not be deployed until March next year, well into the fourth year of the Andrews government. Victoria's population has grown by over 300 000 and the crime rate has increased by over 20 per cent, yet police numbers have only increased by 374. In the Yarra Ranges sexual offences are up 19.2 per cent, burglary and breaking and entering are up 31 per cent and theft is up 24.6 per cent.

Public sector wages have increased by 24.4 per cent, or \$4.5 billion, since Labor came to office. The pre-election budget update forecast employee expenses of \$18.5 billion for the 2014–15 financial year. This year's budget puts employee expenses at \$23 billion for the 2017–18 financial year. The public sector wage bill has increased substantially under this government, and in part it is owing to deals done to appease their union mates. At the same time the wages of ordinary Victorians have been revised down in every budget and budget update.

The biggest cut in this year's budget which affects my area is the halving of the Growing Suburbs Fund, which represents a massive cut of \$50 million to growth councils in particular over this year and next year. Yarra Ranges Shire Council has been informed about a reduction in allocated funds for the Growing Suburbs

Fund in the 2017–18 Victorian budget, according to the CEO, Glenn Patterson. The funds have been vital in helping to establish major infrastructure projects in my district of Evelyn, like Lillydale Lake Playspace. This government's attitude that funding for councils is the low-hanging fruit for budget cuts is evident for all to see. In the first budget of this government they abolished the highly successful \$40 million per annum country roads and bridges program, and in this budget they have cut \$50 million from Victoria's growth councils.

There has been no real state money to improve educational outcomes. They have now announced 10 new taxes, with an overall tax increase of 20 per cent, but have not found the money to improve educational standards and outcomes.

With family violence, all political parties are on a unity ticket on eliminating family violence and they support the needed investment to see a dramatic fall in its prevalence. What is not clear from the budget is how much money will actually be spent on the ground on preventing family violence and helping those victims affected by it. Spending large amounts of money on training costs, planning, strategy development and agency coordination is clearly important, but they have to deliver results. The only measurement of success is safer communities and a reduction in those cowardly crimes. In the Yarra Ranges district from 2015 to 2016 there were 1632 family incidents recorded. This data shows an increase of 18.6 per cent in incidents from the previous year.

The spending on health care has not grown, according to the percentage increase in the budget, with an increase of 300 000 in the population. Many of our hospitals need to be upgraded to meet increasing demand, but despite that the money has not been put into healthcare funding. The Royal Melbourne Hospital has not even received planning funding for its urgently needed redevelopment. The \$135 million promised to the Victorian Heart Hospital last year but only delivered in contingency has disappeared from this budget. The promised completion date of 2018 will pass before a sod is even turned.

There are cuts to mental health funding. The government's own budget papers show that the Premier is failing Victorians struggling with mental illness by cutting the number of mental health beds. Buried away on page 244 of budget paper 3 is the disclosure that the government fell around 16 000 short on residential bed days this year and has wound back the target for next year by a further 12 000 bed days.

The increased number of taxes and the higher electricity costs for small businesses are crippling them. There are many more small businesses that are having to lay off staff. These are staff — decent, hardworking people — who have probably worked for them for a number of years but the owners cannot pay these vast electricity bills and the extra taxes and keep the people on. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, employing hundreds of thousands of Victorians, and they are neglected by this government year after year.

There has been \$45 million cut from the state's training budget, while thousands of young people have dropped out of vocational education in Victoria. Under the Premier there are now 122 597 fewer students enrolled in government-subsidised training and 168 402 fewer government-subsidised course enrolments, and 56 million fewer student hours have been delivered. The participation of young people in training has also declined by 6.6 per cent. Labor is so desperate to hide its failed TAFE Rescue Fund that it plans to stop publishing training enrolment numbers and other key performance measures.

The support for our Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers, the presumptive legislation that was promised before the last election — promised to be delivered within 100 days — has not been delivered. It was tied to the now failed fire services legislation. It should have been introduced as a separate bill, as promised, and delivered within the 100 days.

Apparently this budget has got a shortfall of \$76 000, being the money the former Deputy Speaker is now refusing to pay back. That is taxpayers money, and he should be made to pay that back.

In my local area, there is an urgent need for a pedestrian crossing on the Warburton Highway in Wandin North, but there has been no commitment for that. It is needed for people using the rail trail, it is needed for schoolchildren being dropped off by the school buses and it is needed for people living on the other side of what is a very busy highway to get over to the shopping centre.

There is also Esther Park pavilion, which is the home of the soccer club in Mooroolbark. The number of female teams has grown, and there are a number of people from the Chin community now playing soccer there, yet we do not have changing rooms for the women and we do not have a ground that is really suitable. Games often have to be left unplayed because of the ground's condition. This is an urgent requirement for an area that desperately needs a facility like that.

At the intersection of Killara Road and Maroondah Highway, Coldstream, the heavy traffic makes it very difficult for residents to safely navigate out, and they are virtually trapped in the township on weekends. The Yarra Valley is booming for tourism and that is fantastic, but these people are finding it almost impossible to get out onto Maroondah Highway from Killara Road. It is also exceedingly dangerous for our CFA when they receive a call, because although they might have flashing lights and sirens, the traffic does not seem to stop for them, and they are having to pull out and put themselves at risk in a high-speed area.

We are looking at many things that could have been done with the extra money this government has got. They are not spending it in the interface areas, and it is certainly not being spent in the seat of Evelyn.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

DRUGS, POISONS AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AMENDMENT (REAL-TIME PRESCRIPTION MONITORING) BILL 2017

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 9 August; motion of
Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health).**

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — It is a great privilege and honour to rise today to add my contribution to the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Real-time Prescription Monitoring) Bill 2017. This bill will provide the legislative framework to introduce a real-time prescription monitoring system in the state of Victoria. This system will require doctors and pharmacists to view patients' records of access to high-risk addictive medicines before prescribing or dispensing. The information will help doctors and pharmacists make better informed, safer clinical decisions for patients, and it may provide opportunities for counselling and intervention where necessary.

The concept of introducing a real-time prescription monitoring system in Victoria has been debated for some period of time. From 2012 to early 2016, 20 coronial findings have called for the implementation of a real-time prescription monitoring scheme. Further, in 2014 the coalition — the Liberals and The Nationals — made an election commitment to deliver a real-time drug prescription monitoring system for schedule 8 drugs. This commitment was not met by Labor at the time. However, in 2014, the now Premier

said the then Minister for Health was receiving advice on the matter and thought that real-time prescription monitoring required a nationally coordinated response. Fortunately there was a change in position and the government has now put funding aside to make real-time prescription monitoring a reality in Victoria, and of course we have come further in Australia with the Turnbull government announcing in July of this year that it will invest over \$16 million to deliver the national rollout of real-time prescription monitoring. The Andrews government has advised that the Victorian scheme is more advanced than the federal scheme and therefore has opted for Victoria to go ahead alone. There are some concerns about that, but I will go into further detail about that later in my contribution.

Of course this is the political history of how we came to debate real-time prescription monitoring and the introduction of legislation around that in this place. There is no doubt that this would not be occurring if it were not for the hard work of some families who have been deeply affected by the impacts of pharmaceutical drug use and drug abuse, particularly the families who have experienced a fatal overdose.

I would like to mention the Millington family. John and Marg Millington from Nhill, who I know personally very, very well, have been amazing campaigners to make real-time prescription monitoring a reality in this state. The Millingtons have shared the story of their son, Simon, who battled with his own addictions after a very, very tragic accident back in 1994. Simon was in hospital, and I recall hearing Marg tell her story for the first time of Simon's being in hospital and, as his mother, asking the doctors to give him more pain relief because he was in pain. That is what of course a caring parent would do, not knowing where that may lead to in the future. If we had had clinical professionals who were better educated and more aware of the impacts of the use of high-risk pain relief medications, perhaps that scenario would not have played out in the same way.

I would like to acknowledge that in no way should the Millingtons take any responsibility for Simon's challenges with addiction over the years. We can only hold them in high esteem for the work they have done in being brave enough to share their story over and over again. If it were not for them and other families who have seen the difficulties of prescription medicine addiction, and individuals who are addicts and who have seen how the system has failed them over the years, then we certainly would not be at the point we are at today, having this legislation before the house.

I would like to greatly thank the Millingtons, and I would like to take the opportunity to read a letter that was sent to me by John, Marg, Laura, Sallie and little Maddie, the daughter of Simon. It states:

The Premier of Victoria, the Hon. Daniel Andrews MP, Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Matthew Guy, and all present today.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a statement on this, a most memorable and emotional day not only for us, the Millington Family, John, Sallie, Laura, Maddie and myself, but for all who have campaigned with us, because they too have lost loved ones as a result of a pharmaceutical overdose. To the Andrews government, following the announcement made on Anzac Day 2016 by the health minister, the Hon. Jill Hennessy, to proceed with the implementation of a real-time pharmaceutical system, we are overwhelmed to reach this point and we thank you. To those who believed and encouraged us in what we were trying to achieve, including the retired member for Lowan, Mr Hugh Delahunty, and his successor, Ms Emma Kealy, MP, and the federal member for Mallee, Mr Andrew Broad, MP, we thank you so much.

As you now know, our 34-year-old son Simon died of an accidental overdose of OxyContin in 2010 after battling his pharmaceutical addiction for 16 years. He suffered life-threatening injuries in a single car accident and his ongoing treatments led him to becoming dependent on pharmaceuticals.

Whilst struggling to keep Simon alive, we were dismayed that doctors prescribing copious amounts of medications for him had no way of knowing what he was taking, how often, how much or from where he was receiving the scripts. How could this happen in the 21st century, with the technology already available? I was amazed and at times angered, to receive emails from supermarkets telling me when my favourite products were on sale. They must have had a national database recording my buying habits but I could not convince anyone of the necessity for something similar for pharmaceuticals, something with the potential to save lives. Meanwhile I knew we were losing our Simon.

We had to do something. I vowed never to give up until this was achieved. We were not going to be deterred because I believed in what we were trying to do. There were gaping holes in the pharmaceutical system; it was broken and out of date with the number of prescriptions being dispensed. I was worried about lives but what were the inadequacies of such a system costing the governments in financial terms? The more I advocated the more aware I became of how many families were living our nightmare.

We officially commenced our campaign for a 'real-time database' in 2007 at a joint parliamentary inquiry into the use and misuse of pharmaceuticals, particularly benzos. Those present were shocked to hear Simon's story and the sadness of our situation trying to save him from an inadequate system.

Living in the remote rural town of Nhill, my biggest weapon has been the postage stamp, as I have written hundreds of letters, even to many of you here present, your predecessors, and I have also written to most federal members of Parliament, and there have been many, over many years, telling them our story whilst urging them to act.

Sadly, it is not our Simon who will benefit from this legislation today but it will certainly go a long way in the prevention of 'future Simons'.

I am sure, due to the many talks we have given, not only in Victoria but in other parts of Australia, doctors are more aware of the harmful effects of some medications and exercise vigilance when prescribing. This new system will prevent lethal interactions of various medications by providing a complete picture of what a person is taking. Coroners see this all too often and wonder why. They too are on our side. With this in place, responsible doctors will now be able to prescribe appropriately. It will also assist in helping those already caught in the web of pharmaceutical dependence, allowing doctors to discontinue certain drugs and offer counselling and alternate ways of pain management or treatments. This is imperative.

Most importantly, though, we must give those already affected by pharmaceutical dependence hope, hope for a drug-free future! We must advertise that there is help for those who really want it! Thank you to Matthew McCrone, director, real-time prescription monitoring taskforce and your hardworking team who are making this happen and have led us to this point today! We appreciate the inclusion and the consideration shown to us throughout this journey. I admit it certainly hasn't been as simple as I first thought. It has been a complex, complicated and expensive process.

Whilst it was heartening to hear the federal health minister, Greg Hunt, commit \$16 million for a national response to prescription drug misuse in August, I hope all states and territories can see the urgency of following Victoria's example by implementing an RTPM, which in turn would be connected to a nationwide 'freeway'. It is imperative that this should be mandatory in all states as our borders are porous; Simon crossed them often. We will simply have a leaking bucket if all don't follow the Victorian example! I also urge governments to provide more treatment facilities for drug users rather than building more jails with their ever-revolving doors. They are not the solution! We always struggled to find one at the appropriate time.

Simon didn't want to die, nor did Heath Ledger or the hundreds of other Australians probably; it was an accident, partly due to an inadequate system. Despite trying and succeeding many times, sustained recovery was so hard. He, like us, was powerless over his addiction, even though he had every reason to live. He was our son, Maddie's father, a brother to Sallie and Laura and a friend to many. This can happen to anyone and it is happening today as I write.

As I said earlier, today is filled with emotion. I never wanted to go on this journey but our lives sometimes take us to places we may never want to travel, but in our hearts we know we must.

In conclusion may I say it is seven years since Simon died; it never gets any easier. Days like today remind me of what we lost to drugs, to legal drugs. I still miss the warmth of Simon's smile, his caring manner, his sense of humour, even the smell of his favourite aftershave but mostly, I miss his love. He was a real person and his life mattered!

We, who have lost loved ones to pharmaceutical overdose, thank all here present for committing to change through this legislation, for finally listening to our cries for help, when to

us, it was obvious. We have acted in Simon's memory so his death will not have been in vain.

As I try to write this I am distracted by my beautiful little one-year-old grandson, Oskar. I am reminded that we cannot change the past but we must look to the future with hope. Simon would want us to do that. After today I feel I finally can; this has given me permission to do so.

We all have a purpose in life. Perhaps this was his and ours. Simon would be proud to know we have achieved this in his memory. Rest in peace, Simon, knowing how much you are loved and missed by so many.

Our sincere thanks and gratitude to all who have helped this legislation become a reality.

Margaret Millington, OAM
John Millington, OAM
Sallie, Laura and Maddie

I would like to thank the Millingtons for that very moving contribution. It is a great privilege to be able to read it into *Hansard* today.

To move on to the main provisions of this bill, it does require a prescriber or dispenser of high-risk drugs to review a patient's previous use of high-risk drugs and requires prescribers and dispensers to update records of a patient's access to high-risk drugs on a database. This of course puts a lot of pressure on doctors to enter data into the system. It means that they have to do what we expect them to do anyway, and that is to review a patient's clinical history to make sure that the first time they prescribe pain medication for a new patient they actually consider what other alternatives may be available. In many ways this is holding doctors and pharmacists to account for doing what they should be doing in any case.

The bill allows exemptions from the requirement to review a patient's previous use of high-risk drugs — for example, for hospital inpatients, residential aged-care patients, palliative care patients and prisoners, for whom prescription shopping would be difficult and unlikely. Patients in emergency departments who are being discharged are included in the scheme, so there is a requirement for doctors and pharmacists to review the database for patients who present to an emergency department.

The bill includes penalties for the misuse of the database or failure to properly maintain the database. There are also arrangements in place for schedule 8 treatment permits, which will be reviewed and streamlined and will remove some other administrative burdens. These will be rolled out from 1 August 2018 over an 18-month period via selected geography. They will not be put in place across the state in one go; they will be slowly rolled out across different regions. For the two to three months

preceding 1 August 2018 and throughout the 18-month grace period it is envisaged that the database will achieve a critical mass of information so as to be valuable to the prescribers and dispensers.

Of course we do need to make sure that we provide additional support. We need to educate our medical professionals, we need to ensure that the public is aware of how this system will work and we need to ensure that people are trained so that they can use the database. This is essential, particularly when you consider some of the challenges that face our doctors when somebody who has an addiction comes to a new clinic. These people can be extremely aggressive and unpredictable when demanding medication, particularly if a doctor refuses to prescribe in that instance.

There are some concerns around this legislation. Firstly, we are looking at rolling out a national scheme in the near future. Areas such as Nhill, where the Millingtons are from, are very close to the South Australian border. It would be very straightforward for somebody to visit either a GP or a pharmacy simply by travelling for an hour or so and gaining access to a whole new range of drugs, so it is essential that we move to a national scheme but most importantly that there are seamless linkages between the Victorian scheme and the national scheme.

I again note that there was a shift by Labor to supporting a national scheme before a Victorian scheme was put in place. We need to make sure that Victoria puts in a true effort and that politics do not play a part in putting barriers in place. We also need to ensure that these schemes are absolutely seamless and that a real-time prescription monitoring scheme can in fact be national to avoid those cross-border challenges.

We also need to make sure that we have got appropriate support services in place. Somebody who is addicted to certain pharmaceutical medications should be referred to an alcohol or other drug service to help them get off those drugs. It is simply inappropriate not to provide those additional supports and just force somebody into being unable to access the medications they are addicted to. That is a huge risk when we have already got a drug treatment system which is completely overburdened and the demand is far too great.

There are a number of other concerns I have, including access to the software and ensuring there is training in place. There is the fact that codeine is not included even though it will be declared a prescription-only drug as early as February next year. We have no detail around the exemptions, which have not been detailed in the bill and are likely to appear in regulations. We also have concerns around disqualification for doctors —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I apologise to the member for Lowan and to our guests in the gallery. The time appointed for me to interrupt business has now arrived. The member for Lowan may take the call when the bill is next before the house.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Energy prices

Ms RYAN (Euroa) — (13 018) The adjournment matter I raise this evening is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The action I seek is that she immediately put in place measures to assist those who are struggling with the extreme and unreasonable increases in energy prices and to help them meet those costs. I am very concerned about the actions the government is taking which are currently driving up power prices. The Grattan Institute has pointed out that Labor's decision to unilaterally introduce the Victorian renewable energy target (VRET) will increase costs without any net environmental benefit. Tony Wood from the Grattan Institute has described the policy as a nasty dog's breakfast with dodgy modelling.

Labor has also lied about the impact of the closure of the Hazelwood power plant. On 3 November last year the Premier said on radio that the closure of Hazelwood would see power prices rise by 4 per cent or \$0.85 a week. What we now know is that the average Victorian household is paying an extra \$300 on their annual energy bills this year, and some businesses are facing power price increases of 250 per cent to 300 per cent. They are figures from the St Vincent de Paul Society. The Victorian Council of Social Service has also expressed concern about the policy, saying that we should not pretend that the VRET will magically drive down power prices. Its CEO, Emma King, has said that we should not be building a greener Victoria on the backs of people who are doing it tough.

I have heard in recent days from a number of people who are doing it tough. Today I was contacted by Gerry Rigg and his partner, Judith Worsfold, from Girgarre after they received a power bill of \$770. That is a staggering increase on their last bill, which was \$166. Gerry and Judith are age pensioners, and in Judith's words they are now being forced to choose between eating or heating their house.

David Wicker from Baddaginnie contacted me last week on behalf of his mother, whose energy bill has increased by \$1000 in just one year. That is despite her usage being less this year than in the same period last year. Eric Christian, an elderly man who lives in the Currie Park retirement village in Euroa, is at the point where he is limiting the use of his heater because he cannot afford to pay his energy and gas bills.

The examples are pouring in, and I believe they are indicative of a crisis which our state is facing. It is clear that the crisis is being borne by the most vulnerable. I am also deeply concerned about the downstream effects this is likely to have on employment in regional economies as businesses try to tighten their margins in order to meet the huge increases that we have been seeing. Energy in this state has become completely unaffordable, and it is due to the policies that those opposite are introducing.

Reconciliation Banyule

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) — (13 019) My adjournment item is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the action I seek is for the minister to visit the Ivanhoe electorate to meet with Reconciliation Banyule. In the course of her visit I think it would also be appropriate, if we could manage it, to catch up with Banyule Community Health Service and some of the Indigenous interactions and programs that they run.

Reconciliation Banyule meets monthly to discuss the improvement and awareness of Indigenous issues and progress towards reconciliation in Banyule and Melbourne. Their vision is for all Australians to live together in justice and harmony and with respect for one another, that all Australians acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the traditional owners of the land and that the wrongs of the past will be acknowledged and corrections made where possible.

They have a monthly film night, and I was a guest speaker at one of those film nights recently. There was a great discussion about the government's work in progressing treaty negotiations and discussions with traditional owners. I have had the pleasure of learning a lot over many years from Reconciliation Banyule, firstly as a Banyule city councillor. Certainly since 2005 they have been a constant in the advocacy and awareness that they bring to Indigenous issues. I want to pay tribute to their work and thank them for what I have learned from them as well as the accountability they put on governments of all persuasions to do what they can to advance the interests and protect and advocate on behalf of the traditional owners of the land.

A key driver of the film nights at the Uniting Church hall in Seddon Street is to bring about discussion on a range of Indigenous issues. The opportunity to provide, through film, a discussion point and collaboration with people is critical. I know that the minister would benefit and the government would benefit, just as Reconciliation Banyule would benefit, from an opportunity to have some discussions and update the community on where we are at with a lot of the progress we are making in terms of those treaty issues and, in relation to Banyule Community Health Service, the significant programs that they run with Indigenous Australians in my community.

More broadly in my role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Water and also the Parliamentary Secretary for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, I commend the government on its work to include traditional cultural water rights in our *Water for Victoria* policy work and also on the drive from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to make sure that we increase the employment of Indigenous Australians well above the government's set standards and targets.

Kaniva Community Hub

Ms KEALY (Lowan) — (13 020) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Regional Development. The action that I seek is for the government to provide further drought relief funding for Kaniva Community Hub to clear the \$371 000 debt now passed to the Kaniva-Leeor United Football Club as a result of a significant shortfall in state government funding. There is no doubt the Kaniva Community Hub is a fabulous facility. I was honoured to recently tour the building with members of the football and netball clubs. These people are extremely proud of their new facility. They have worked exceptionally hard to make it a reality, but they are extremely troubled that this unexpected debt which the Kaniva-Leeor United Club has now inherited as a result of this project may wipe out the club within five years.

Kaniva-Leeor United Football Club, as the main users of the hub, are liable for any excesses on the build. The football club, netball club, hockey club, racecourse reserve, the A & P Society and community fundraising efforts have raised in excess of \$207 000, surpassing their original financial commitment to the project — a truly amazing effort for a small community experiencing financial hardship. Community members have also contributed thousands of hours of in-kind support to help make the hub a reality, and I thank them for their commitment and tireless contribution to the project. However, there remains a funding shortfall of

\$371 000. The state drought response funding provided was less than half of the total build cost and was simply not enough to support such a significant building project in a community ravaged by drought for consecutive years.

The original state funding for the project was provided as part of the drought response package. As recently as 10 August the minister stated:

The drought has had a huge impact on communities right across Victoria and this new community hub in Kaniva will be a huge boost for all in the region.

Community members are deeply concerned that this project may not in fact be a boost and that the weight of the residual debt may in fact wipe out the football club. This would be a disaster for a community already struggling to get back on their feet after years of drought. I therefore ask the minister to save the Kaniva-Leeor United Football Club and provide further drought support funding so that the community is relieved from the financial stress of being left with a debt that could break some of the most important community sporting clubs and community organisations in the district.

Consumer Policy Research Centre

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) — (13 021) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and the action I am seeking is for the minister to provide an update to Yuroke residents on how the newly announced Consumer Policy Research Centre will improve fairness and protection for consumers in my community. In a marketplace where it can sometimes feel like buyers have little power, I welcome any initiative that protects and extends consumer rights and helps people to exercise them. Too often many of us in this place are visited by concerned constituents who believe they have been taken advantage of by sellers and who do not feel they have adequate assistance, support or access to information. That is why I was delighted by the announcement of the new research centre as well as the appointment of the CEO. I look forward to sharing the minister's update with residents of the Yuroke electorate.

Ghazepore Road, Waurn Ponds, level crossing

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) — (13 022) My adjournment matter this evening is to the Minister for Public Transport. The action I seek is that the minister investigate and fix the operation of the boom gates on the Ghazepore Road level crossing in Waurn Ponds, adjacent to the Waurn Ponds railway station, which can

cause delays of up to 15 minutes on a regular basis. I have been contacted by numerous constituents, both train and road users, who advise me that this set of boom gates can get stuck down for lengthy periods — often for 10 to 15 minutes — and despite their complaints nothing has been done to rectify the situation. The level crossing is situated on a busy road that is west of the station, and just further west is where the trains are stabled before they leave from Waurn Ponds station.

I would imagine that V/Line and Public Transport Victoria (PTV) know that this level crossing is causing delays, especially as the station further along the line, Marshall station, has level crossings over Marshalltown Road. The gates there are lowered for a maximum of 3 minutes and quickly raised again — a train sitting at the station does not mean there need to be lengthy delays to the traffic waiting to pass. In fact it seems that this crossing is well known to V/Line, and upon inquiries by one of my constituents, Olivia from Torquay, V/Line admitted that:

Certain train movements may mean that boom gate downtimes are longer at some crossings more than others.

V/Line went on to advise Olivia that they:

... regret to advise no changes can be made at the current time.

Upon speaking to another constituent, Dr Paul Egan, I learnt that he was advised by V/Line that Waurn Ponds station staff know that the problem exists but can offer no solutions. My office has made further contact with V/Line, speaking with staff at both Waurn Ponds and Geelong stations. Staff at both these stations have stated that the level crossing boom gates can get stuck on occasions when a train is delayed, when a freight train comes through or when a train is stabling before leaving Waurn Ponds station. This is unacceptable, as it causes the road traffic to build up and there is no alternative route.

Another constituent, Jeff Dans of Connewarre, highlighted to me that not only does he get caught at the gates but it happens so regularly when he takes his daughter to school that she has requested they leave home earlier to factor in the regular delays. Mr Dans has tried to speak to V/Line and PTV. Not only was he on hold for over 20 minutes but again no solution was offered to him. A delay of 15 minutes is something that gets many drivers frustrated. According to another constituent who contacted me, it causes anxiety and it causes drivers to make dangerous U-turns or even dangerous attempts to cross the closed level crossing. Furthermore, for those who are forced to wait, they

often end up missing the train and have to race to Marshall station.

Minister, I know that fixing level crossings outside marginal seats in metropolitan Melbourne is not the priority of your government, but I ask you to immediately investigate this level crossing before a tragic accident happens.

Bentleigh Moorabbin Central Rotary Club

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) — (13 023) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Treasurer. The action I seek is for the Treasurer to engage with Bentleigh Moorabbin Central Rotary Club regarding stamp duty relief following their recent purchase of a property. Bentleigh Moorabbin Central Rotary Club is probably best known for the market they run every Sunday and have run every Sunday since 1977. They celebrated their 40-year anniversary this year, and in that time they have raised a lot of money — millions of dollars in fact — for countless causes. They did something very special this year in that they purchased a property which they have given up for the use of Launch Housing to accommodate victims of family violence, which is something that this government absolutely supports. The stamp duty came to more than \$27 000. I think it would be worth the Treasurer looking closely at that and considering whether such a good cause warrants some stamp duty relief.

Norwood Secondary College

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) — (13 024) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Education. My request is that the minister urgently appoint architects to develop the master plan for Norwood Secondary College. On 24 November 2015 I raised a constituency question for the Minister for Education regarding the fact that Norwood had already gone through the probity process for selecting an architect to conduct its master plan. In that question I asked the minister to intervene promptly to ensure that Norwood Secondary College could use its selected architect to get on with the job of developing its master plan to upgrade the school. The minister's response to that question did not address the master plan at all.

The last allocation for capital works that Norwood Secondary College received for its classrooms and study activities was in the 1970s, and this was in fact for a library. The school is soon to celebrate its 60th birthday. The school classrooms have had no work done, no upgrades and no rebuilds. With the schools in the minister's electorate receiving \$17.6 million for upgrades during this term and with the marginal Labor

seat of Bentleigh, according to the member's own budget speech, having seen a whopping \$45 million in the last two budgets for Bentleigh electorate schools, the Norwood school community has clearly been shunned and ignored by the minister.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms RYALL — I note for the benefit of those reading *Hansard* that those opposite are saying, 'Hear, hear!' about their own schools. Norwood desperately needs its master plan and a future plan for renewal. The students and families do not want to be treated like second-class citizens compared to other students and families in Victoria. The Labor Party has been in power for approximately 14 of the last 18 years, and yet Norwood has been ignored. Much has been said by the minister and the Premier about our kids needing 21st-century learning spaces and the best education facilities. Why does that not apply to Norwood Secondary College?

I have asked the Minister for Education during this Parliament to advise how much of the current budget allocation for Maroondah schools is going to schools in the Ringwood electorate. His first answer directed me to a website which did not have the information. The Speaker ruled that answer unresponsive. When the question was re-opened, the same response was given. Twice the minister has refused to release this information, and it is now clear why. Not a single dollar from this year's budget is going to schools for capital works in my electorate. We constantly hear in this Parliament about the fabulous new and upgraded schools in Labor electorates. What about Norwood students? The Norwood school community implores the minister to prioritise them too, to give their education the same level of priority and importance as the students in his own electorate, as the students in the Bentleigh electorate and as the students in all marginal Labor seats.

Sunbury Downs College and Sunbury Heights Primary School

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) — (13 025) The matter I raise is also for the attention of the Minister for Education. The action I seek is that the minister approve funding for a shared facility between Hume City Council, Sunbury Downs College and Sunbury Heights Primary School in my electorate. As a former student of Sunbury Heights Primary School I do understand how hard staff and the school community have worked for many years to try to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Sunbury Heights and Sunbury Downs share a border. The schools work to improve

educational opportunities for their students, and they work closely in supporting one another. That is why this opportunity is too hard to pass up.

Last year whilst I was principal for a day at Sunbury Downs I had the opportunity to sit down with Hume City Council and the school to discuss ways we could improve facilities and get better equipment to enhance those learning opportunities. Many of the buildings have not been upgraded since the late 1980s, when Sunbury Downs was built. Fast forward to a couple of months ago, and I understand through the Andrews Labor government's Shared Facilities Fund the application has gone in signed by both schools and the City of Hume for a shared facility. I am told by Sunbury Heights school principal Kaye Mills and Sunbury Downs school principal Maria Oddo that this facility will be of great benefit to their students. It is a proposed hub to be jointly constructed on the sites of Sunbury Heights Primary School and Sunbury Downs College that will deliver a new modern facility for the benefit and enjoyment of generations to come and of course local residents.

Proposed facility elements include a flexible multipurpose community and activity meeting space, a commercial kitchen, spaces for government and non-government organisations to run training and offer employment support, and space for council-run satellite services. The co-location of community services and programs and voluntary, community and local government service providers is certainly something I support, and tonight I ask the minister to approve the application to the Shared Facilities Fund.

Walmer Street, Kew, bridge

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) — (13 026) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister fund an upgrade of the Walmer Street bridge, which crosses the Yarra River between the City of Yarra and City of Boroondara in Kew. The Walmer Street bridge is a historic bridge that is currently falling to pieces. It is a hazard to both cyclists and pedestrians who use it regularly. I have frequented that bridge —

Mr Pakula interjected.

Mr T. SMITH — I advise the Attorney-General it is Walmer. I noticed that he is diligently taking notes, which I greatly appreciate.

Mr Pakula — Speak more clearly.

Mr T. SMITH — You cannot be criticising someone in their adjournment speech, my friend. I have

been criticised on my pronunciation. That does not often happen here, but anyway, we will move on.

The key point is that the bridge is falling to pieces. It was built by the state government many years ago, and there are planks of wood that are out of place. There are holes in it. The council has threatened to essentially close it down if there is not an urgent upgrade. Boroondara council have suggested that quite frankly it is not their responsibility. The City of Yarra are in, shall we say, constrained fiscal circumstances. They probably ought not be putting so much money into cancelling Australia Day and protesting on federal issues.

This bridge is frequented by a good number of cyclists every single day and also by runners, by pedestrians and by folk walking their dogs in both the City of Yarra and the City of Boroondara. I would ask that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety investigate how much money is required to improve it and that he look at funding and an urgent upgrade.

Laurimar Primary School

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) — (13 027) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education, specifically in his role as the responsible planning authority for any building works undertaken on any government school property in Victoria. The action I seek is that he assist Laurimar Primary School in Doreen and the local RSL sub-branch to recoup building and planning fees charged to them by the City of Whittlesea prior to the 2014 election.

As the minister and Premier have both observed in recent separate visits to Laurimar Primary School, this fabulous school hosts within its grounds a beautiful cenotaph, complete with an eternal flame and reflection pond. This was unveiled in time for Remembrance Day in November 2014. As far as anyone can identify, this cenotaph is the only one built on school grounds not only in Victoria but in fact in Australia. This outstanding project was the brainchild of principal Jason McBean, a longstanding member of the RSL sub-branch at Montmorency.

The school has a solemn connection to current serving military personnel, as many parents at the school are serving our country, both here and overseas. Veterans and those who have fallen serving our country are honoured each day at Laurimar primary as each of the six houses is named after a Victoria Cross awardee. Mr McBean worked closely with the then Diamond Creek-Doreen RSL sub-branch and John Murphy from the Whiteman property group. Many tradespeople donated their labour and reduced their rates, and many

companies, including Winslow, supplied materials at reduced rates. This Doreen cenotaph has been a labour of love for so many.

Sadly this love and support has not extended to the local council. It is not surprising that the school and the RSL sought advice from council about this project. What is surprising is that the council charged them fees for this advice when the council should know full well that the responsible planning authority for any work undertaken on school grounds is in fact the Minister for Education. I urge the minister to get to the bottom of this to see whether or not it was the previous Minister for Education, the member for Nepean, who dropped the ball on this and failed to make a decision or whether it was simply a cash grab by council.

The mayor, Cr Ricky Kirkham, is a member of the local sub-branch. He was the mayor at the time. He was the ward councillor at the time. He should have known better. He should have supported that school community in a much better way. I urge the minister to get to the bottom of what occurred and to get this money back for the school community so that they can improve this memorial for the future enjoyment of the Doreen community.

Responses

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) — The member for Euroa raised a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change regarding measures to assist those dealing with energy price rises, and I will pass that on.

The member for Ivanhoe raised a matter for the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs regarding a meeting with Reconciliation Banyule. I will pass that on.

The member for Lowan raised a matter for the Minister for Regional Development regarding funding for the Kaniva Community Hub. I will pass that on.

The member for Yuroke raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation regarding an update on the Consumer Policy Research Centre. I will pass that on.

The member for South Barwon raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport regarding boom gates adjacent to Waurin Ponds station. I will pass that on.

The member for Bentleigh raised a matter for the Treasurer seeking that he engage with the Bentleigh Moorabbin Central Rotary Club regarding stamp duty relief. I will pass that on.

The member for Ringwood raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding the appointment of architects for Norwood Secondary College. I will pass that on.

The member for Sunbury raised a matter for the Minister for Education regarding funding for a shared facility between Sunbury Heights Primary School and Sunbury Downs College. I will pass that on.

The member for Kew raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding an upgrade to the Walmer Street bridge. I will pass that on.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Education asking that the minister look into the recouping of planning fees charged by the City of Whittlesea to Laurimar Primary School in Doreen. I will pass that on.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.25 p.m.

