

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Thursday, 22 February 2018

(Extract from book 2)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

(from 16 October 2017)

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

**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	Prahan	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	Thorpe, Ms Lidia Alma ¹⁰	Northcote	Greens
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	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

¹⁰ Elected 18 November 2017

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 Noonan 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 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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Thursday, 22 February 2018

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

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Corryong–Wodonga bus service

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of Corryong and the Upper Murray region residents within the electorate of Benambra draws to the attention of the house the urgent need for a public bus service from Corryong to Wodonga-Albury (return) by the most direct route along the Murray Valley Highway, allowing access for residents and students to attend connecting public transport links, health facilities/appointments, business appointments, disability career development (Belvoir Specialist School), sporting events/competitions, shopping, arts and culture performances/exhibitions, access for tourism and visitors to our region, secondary schooling and TAFE, thus supporting access to current state government funded programs in Wodonga designed to enhance further education and professional development for remote Victorians.

The petitioners therefore request that the public transport minister recommend funding to Public Transport Victoria for a daily return bus service from Corryong to Wodonga that meets the needs of school students and residents.

By Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (297 signatures).

Deciduous trees

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

I draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the appearance of main roads canopied by trees and those that are not. Also the difference between living and travelling in a leafy environment and that of non-leafy suburbs. Also the adverse impact of lower property values of non-leafy suburbs.

I request the Legislative Assembly to call on the ministers responsible for roads and local government to promptly ensure the planting of deciduous trees, in favour of natives, capable of over time canopied major roads, and in parks already planted with deciduous trees, adding value to the billions of dollars invested by major stakeholders in residential property by this low-cost method of greening suburbs — also taking full advantage of seasonal changes and hiding multistorey developments occurring on many of such roads.

By Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (2 signatures).

Caulfield Racecourse Reserve

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

I draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to the green corrugated fence surrounding most of the perimeter and blocking substantial visibility of the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve, a \$2 billion public asset set aside as a public park, public recreation and for racing.

I request the Legislative Assembly to call on the ministers responsible for public lands and racing to promptly replace the remainder of the corrugated iron fence with an open metal palisade fence of similar height allowing substantial visibility of the \$2 billion reserve consistent with its designated use for racing, as a public park and for public recreation.

By Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (2 signatures).

Tabled.

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

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Eildon on 8 February be considered next day on motion of Ms McLEISH (Eildon).

MELBOURNE METRO RAIL AUTHORITY

Tunnel and stations public-private partnership

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport), by leave, presented project summary.

Tabled.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Acting Clerk:

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

Boroondara — C280
 Brimbank — C148, GC65
 Casey — GC78
 East Gippsland — C105
 Frankston — C118, GC71
 Greater Dandenong — GC78
 Hobsons Bay — GC65
 Kingston — GC71
 Maribymong — GC65
 Melbourne — GC65
 Moorabool — C89, GC79
 Port of Melbourne — GC65
 Surf Coast — C85, GC79
 Wyndham — GC65
 Yarra — GC79

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under s 16B in relation to the *Gambling Regulation Act 2003* — Determination of Gaming Machine Entitlement Allocation and Transfer Rules.

JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council vacancy

The SPEAKER (09:35) — I have to report that this house met yesterday with the Legislative Council for the purpose of choosing a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of Ms Colleen Hartland and that Ms Huong Truong has been duly chosen to hold the vacant place.

HEALTH AND CHILD WELLBEING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Clerk's amendments

The SPEAKER (09:35) — Under joint standing order 6(1), I have received a report from the Acting Clerk of the Parliaments informing the house that he has made corrections in the Health and Child Wellbeing Legislation Amendment Bill 2017:

New clause 23 of the bill, as inserted by the Council's amendment agreed to by the Assembly, inserts new section 149A into the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. I have inserted the quotation mark at the start of new section 149A and the quotation mark and second full stop at the end of subsection (3) of new section 149A. The grammatical marks inserted are required as the new section 149A is to be inserted into the principal act.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

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

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 6 March 2018.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Melbourne theatre events

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (09:36) — I have always proudly boasted that Melbourne is one of the great theatre capitals of the world, and our amazing theatre companies, producers and performers are proving that to be 100 per cent true. Just look around: *Priscilla: Queen of the Desert; Beautiful*, which opens tonight; *Dream Lover* at Arts Centre Melbourne; and

the riotously funny Broadway smash *Hand to God*, opening tomorrow night at the fabulous Alex Theatre in St Kilda. The Production Company have just launched their amazing 20th anniversary season line-up, Melbourne Theatre Company have *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, which has sold out, and new audiences have been wowed during the sellout series of *Star Wars* movies accompanied by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. To all our talent and those who back them, thank you for making this the most incredible and exciting city to live in.

Our Lady of Lourdes, Bayswater

Ms VICTORIA — I was honoured to attend the golden jubilee of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Bayswater earlier this month. A brand-new, superbly crafted altar was blessed, and we were delighted to have Archbishop Denis Hart leading us for mass. Congratulations to our dear Fr Sebastian Mappilaparambil and all those who made this a very special occasion.

Heathmont Cricket Club

Ms VICTORIA — Heathmont Cricket Club continue to prove that they are a close-knit family club, with a sensational fundraising day last Sunday for one of their own. It was a great community effort, with raffles, silent auctions and plenty of food. Congratulations to Matt Carr and everyone who generously opened their hearts and wallets to make a difference.

Ouzo Festival

Ms VICTORIA — Congratulations to the incredibly vivacious Sofia Vatos, president of the Palesviaki Enosis, and her committee for putting on another fabulous Ouzo Festival. The club is a little slice of Mytilene in Bayswater. The music, food, friendship and laughter made me feel like I was in Greece. And thanks too to Voula for her wonderful hospitality.

St Vincent's Private Hospital Werribee

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (09:38) — I am delighted to inform the house that on 16 February I attended the opening of St Vincent's Private Hospital Werribee. The hospital will employ around 350 staff and provide health services for up to 16 000 people living and working in Wyndham. I am thrilled that this new facility will continue this proud legacy in Werribee.

West Gate tunnel project

Mr PALLAS — Secondly, I would like to quote constituent Sam DiBlasi's views on the West Gate tunnel. Sam writes:

As a long-time resident of Werribee, I've seen the growth of our local community in Wyndham. With this growth comes increased traffic, yet we still have the one river crossing for motorists travelling from the outer west. And it will only get worse. I congratulate the Andrews government for getting it done for residents in Melbourne's outer western suburbs and providing a much-needed alternative in the West Gate tunnel.

The West Gate tunnel is critical for my community. It will slash 20 minutes of travel time, provide 6000 jobs and create the infrastructure Victorians need now and into the future.

Electric bicycles

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (09:39) — I wish to raise a matter regarding e-bikes in the community of Halls Gap. We have an issue where e-bikes are travelling along the shared path for bikes and pedestrians, and there have been a number of bikes which are travelling over 25 kilometres per hour and putting young people's lives at risk. Last Sunday week an eight-year-old girl was hit by one of these bikes.

Unfortunately we have got a situation where the council cannot put in a by-law because state rules regarding bikes overrule it. The police cannot police it because it is not a public road. Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning are also finding it difficult to find a solution. I spoke to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change last night about this, and she agreed that she would work with us to try to find a solution. We are looking forward to trying to get some resolution on this so that we can provide a safe environment for our local community.

Minyip Show and Shine

Ms KEALY — I would like to congratulate the Minyip community for its recent Show and Shine event. Dale Maggs and the Freedom Riders put on a fabulous show. Thank you to everybody for coming and supporting it, including all of the exhibitors.

Powerline Replacement Fund

Ms KEALY — I would also like to put in a call to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to immediately include Northern Grampians Shire Council in the Powerline Replacement Fund. The closing date for applications is 28 February. It is

ridiculous that the Northern Grampians Shire Council cannot apply for this important fund to put powerlines underground in a high-risk bushfire area.

Country Fire Authority Mannerim and Portarlington brigades

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (09:41) — I am always pleased to work with and on behalf of fire brigades on the Bellarine. We have great brigades providing great services, from our volunteers to our career staff, who all work very closely together to protect the local community of Bellarine from fire and other disasters.

It was a pleasure in recent weeks to have had the opportunity to visit both the Mannerim and Portarlington brigades. At Mannerim I handed over the keys to their new 1400-litre tanker to brigade captain Stephen Beasley and brigade manager Andrew Longmore. Funding for the tanker came via the state government program, with an extraordinary \$36 000 raised by the local brigade, just showing the extent of the community's support for this brigade. To all the members of Mannerim, I say thank you for your work on behalf of the Bellarine community.

On Monday in Portarlington I had the pleasure of turning the sod of the new station that will replace the previous station built back in 1959. The new station is thanks to the ongoing hard work and commitment of the local brigade members, together with a \$2.1 million grant from the state government. It will include three drive-through bays, a modern workshop, change rooms, meeting and training rooms and district offices. Now that the construction is underway the brigade will be rehoused in its new premises by July this year. Congratulations to all involved, particularly captain Darren Nisbet and Bellarine operations officer Ian Beswicke. The Country Fire Authority in Portarlington have served the community for 70 years.

Luke Batty Memorial Shield

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (09:42) — It was an honour to attend the annual Luke Batty Memorial Shield T20 cricket match on 25 January between the Tyabb All-Stars and the Victoria Police Cricket Club. It was wonderful to see so many participants and spectators in attendance determined that they will never forget Luke's tragic circumstances or our community's commitment to putting an end to the scourge of domestic violence.

Australia Day

Mr BURGESS — On 26 January I was pleased to be invited to the Frankston City Council to attend an Australia Day citizenship ceremony alongside Christopher Crewther, the federal member for Dunkley, at the Frankston Arts Centre. Congratulations to all new Aussies who took the pledge to become citizens of this beautiful country.

Somerville Rise Primary School

Mr BURGESS — I had the pleasure on 9 February to present the young student leaders at Somerville Rise Primary School with leadership badges. There are many budding young leaders at this school, and I was impressed at how each one of them was able to look me in the eyes as they shook my hand. That is a great sign for the future for them. They will make outstanding ambassadors for their school. I would especially like to thank Mrs Nicky Fammartino, the principal at Somerville Rise Primary School, for her invitation.

Liberal Party election candidates

Mr BURGESS — On 10 February I was pleased to join Ann-Marie Hermans, the local Liberal champion for community needs in Cranbourne and candidate at the next election, to meet Cranbourne residents to talk about the issues they face and how their concerns have been ignored for so long by Labor. Among the many messages of support Ann-Marie received on the day were offers of assistance for her campaign and in other ways.

On 11 February I was pleased to join Liberal candidate in Frankston Michael Lamb to talk to local residents, listening to their needs and concerns. Frankston needs a fresh start with an MP who is prepared to work with residents to achieve needed outcomes. The feeling from those we spoke to was that they want an MP who understands that he or she is there to represent their views and needs and will fight for those good outcomes, not someone who thinks his job is to always explain what the government has got right.

Lyrebird Community Centre

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (09:44) — The Lyrebird Community Centre in Carrum Downs provides engaging and supportive services for the local community. Centre manager Fiona Dannock and her very loyal and dedicated team put so much heart and soul into the Lyrebird centre because they genuinely care about the community. The centre offers occasional care services. With this unique service,

families can book their child in for a single visit or for several weeks. It suits families who only need shorter hours of care when mum or dad have to attend an interview, go to a doctor's appointment, go to TAFE or study, do the grocery shopping or just want a few hours of 'me time'. Occasional care can be the relief a parent needs at the time they most need it. And how important is this?

So what on earth is the Turnbull Liberal government thinking? They have just quietly and secretly cut the program, leaving 50 neighbourhood houses, including the Lyrebird centre, without funding for this incredible service. The Lyrebird centre manager sent me an email this morning saying, 'I had a sleepless night over this ... this is just crazy'.

I will not stand by and just let this happen. I will back the Lyrebird Community Centre and all neighbourhood centres in my electorate. The Liberals need to reverse this. They cannot seriously leave families and children in Carrum Downs and Skye without access to occasional care. These families rely on this service — they really need it. And to the Victorian coalition I say: if you have any heart, any compassion or any understanding about families in need, you cannot in good conscience stand by and watch this happen to Victorian families — certainly not families in my Carrum Downs and Skye electorate. It is time you stood up for Victorian families. Families in Carrum Downs and Skye deserve so much better.

Consulate of the Republic of Slovenia

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (09:45) — I was pleased to acknowledge the appointment of City of Greater Geelong councillor Eddy Kontelj as the first honorary consul in Victoria under the auspice of the Republic of Slovenia. At the official opening of the Victorian consulate of the Slovenian republic in Geelong I had the pleasure of welcoming the ambassador of Slovenia, Helena Drnovšek Zorko. It is the only Victorian consulate that is located outside Melbourne, in Geelong, which is a great vote of confidence in the city of Geelong.

Cr Eddy Kontelj is a current sitting councillor at Geelong, having been re-elected last year after previously serving from 2010 to 2016 in the council. Eddy has a strong passion for Geelong. He is a successful businessman, a strong community advocate and a dedicated family man. I am sure Cr Eddy Kontelj will continue to serve Geelong, Victoria and Slovenian interests well into the future.

Dolyang Namgyal

Mr KATOS — Recently I was able to meet with past Surf Coast Secondary College student Dolyang Namgyal to present her with the 2017 Andrew Katos Student Achievement Award. I was not able to get to the Surf Coast Secondary College when it held its awards evening last year as I had another school commitment that night, and the school arranged for Dolyang to make a special return visit to the school to allow me to make that presentation. Dolyang is a most worthy recipient of the award. She commenced at the school in 2016, after coming from Tibet with her family. She is now studying to be an aged-care worker and in the future hopes to study nursing. Again, congratulations, Dolyang, and I wish you all the best in your future studies.

Holmesglen TAFE

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (09:47) — Over the last few months I have had the pleasure of meeting many of the students undertaking the furniture design and technology certificate IV course at Holmesglen TAFE. They are extraordinary students designing incredible pieces of furniture. In fact I was so impressed by some of the designs that I bought one of the coffee tables. I took my good friend and colleague the member for Bentleigh to the Chadstone campus, where he has been many times, to see this work, and he also committed to buying one of the designs off the students. They are incredible. I want to thank those students; they will become the standard by which furniture design is measured in this country over the next decade or so. I want to thank the staff, Mary Maksemos, Leigh Hill and Chris, for all their dedication and work.

Huntingdale bus interchange

Mr DIMOPOULOS — On Monday I had the pleasure of going to see the Huntingdale bus interchange. It was day 2 of its operation. I am so proud of this commitment we made prior to the election. I was in fact there with the then opposition leader, now Premier, and then shadow Minister for Transport, now Minister for Health, who is in the chamber, and the vice-chancellor of Monash University to see the existing problems at the bus interchange at Huntingdale. Six thousand people a day use that interchange. It has now transformed completely because of our commitment. It is fantastic. It is safer, there are more car parks and it is cleaner.

Meeniyan Garlic Festival

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:48) — It is festival season in Gippsland, and I want to highlight the fantastic success of a couple of events in Gippsland South in the past few weeks. The second Meeniyan Garlic Festival on Saturday was a huge success, with more than 7000 people coming along to celebrate the humble bulb and South Gippsland's wonderful fresh produce and culinary delights. Believe it or not, we enjoyed fantastic garlic beer from Loch Brewery & Distillery, garlic and salted caramel ice cream from Prom Coast Ice Cream & Sorbet, and even garlic milkshakes from Gippsland Jersey. I can report they were all good, even if I was getting no kisses for the rest of the weekend. Well done to David and Kirsten Jones of Mirboo Farm and all their wonderful volunteers for putting on this fantastic event that combined modern foodie delights with old-fashioned family fun like sack races and egg-and-spoon races.

Mirboo North Italian Festa

Mr D. O'BRIEN — An even bigger crowd enjoyed similar food and cultural delights at the Mirboo North Italian Festa the Sunday prior. Celebrating the best of Italian culture and food, it was a credit to St Paul's Catholic Social Club — complimenti to all those wonderful volunteers.

Berrys Creek Gourmet Cheese

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Still on food in Gippsland, well done to Barry Charlton and Cheryl Hulls of Berrys Creek Gourmet Cheese for yet again dominating the Sydney Royal Cheese and Dairy Produce Awards. Barry's Tarwin Blue was awarded Champion Cheese of Show, Champion Cow Milk Cheese and Champion Specialty Cheese and was selected for the Australian Cheese Board. Utilising locally produced milk, including buffalo milk from Giffard West, Berrys Creek Gourmet Cheese has been winning national and international awards by the bagful in the past few years and surely must be one of Australia's greatest cheese producers.

Swaminarayan Nagar festival

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (09:50) — Last week I was joined by the member for Bundoora and had the pleasure of representing the Premier at the Swaminarayan Nagar celebrations in Mill Park, where we welcomed His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj to Melbourne. I was also invited to grace the occasion of Mahila Din. This event was organised by women, for

women, to promote the values of teamwork, respect, family and, most importantly, solidarity. It was great to see these values on display in Mill Park. It is no surprise to see the Andrews Labor government vision aligning with my community. I would like to thank Mr Sitesh Bhojani, Mr Pulin Amin, Mrs Palak Patel and their trustees for putting on an amazing celebration and for all the work they do in embracing Mill Park's diverse community.

North Link

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I would also like to briefly touch on an exciting announcement for businesses across the Mill Park area and more generally in Melbourne's north. Last Wednesday the Minister for Industry and Employment announced that North Link would be receiving \$400 000 from the future industries sector growth program. This funding will go towards the establishment of the North Food Group, designed to bolster Melbourne north's strong food and beverage sector, drive employment growth and enhance skills in my community. Through business reviews and working with the top educational institutions in the state, this funding will reap rewards for everyone in my electorate and the state. I commend the minister for industry on identifying Melbourne's north's business potential, and I thank North Link for their ongoing work in improving our local economy and jobs prospects.

South Yarra development planning

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (09:51) — If South Yarra was to get a helipad built by a private developer to serve a few people who live in penthouse apartments before its overcrowded train station, used by thousands, got an upgrade, it would represent much that is wrong with our state's planning system, where population grows, just like it is doing in the Forrest Hill area and in South Yarra, but critical infrastructure like public transport is not improved, just like we are seeing at Toorak station with the overcrowding there and the failure to include South Yarra in the Melbourne Metro rail project.

We are seeing it where planning ministers either step in to change local planning laws to approve buildings far beyond what was ever imagined for those sites, just like we saw at least twice under the previous government — once on behalf of one of their donor mates. We are seeing planning ministers fail to implement interim height limits, as requested by councils, which let massive overdevelopments go ahead, just like we saw in the last term with Orrong Towers and in this term with St Kilda Road. A strong

planning system is absolutely critical to keep our community livable, where height limits are stuck to, where infrastructure is actually planned and put in place, and where political parties cannot accept donations from property developers.

Altona electorate student leadership

Ms HENNESSY (Altona) (09:53) — I would like to acknowledge some very hardworking and wonderful young people in my electorate who are serving in a student leadership capacity at their schools in 2018. At Altona Green Primary School, Hayley and Pooja have just been appointed as co-captains, and Tiffany and Calum as vice-captains. At St Mary's Primary School, Sofia, Chloe, James and Jacob have been appointed as the student leadership team. Point Cook Senior Secondary College welcomed Logan and Kyla as their co-captains. At Point Cook P-9 College, Skye, Sam, Eli, Hope, Michael, Aiden, Cedere and Brian have been chosen as the student leadership team. At Seabrook Primary School, all of the grade 6s will be working together in a student leadership capacity for 2018. I want to thank these wonderful students for their valuable commitment to their school and to their local communities, and all of the teachers and volunteers who are providing them with a fantastic opportunity to develop and exercise leadership skills.

Sanctuary Lakes South P-9 School

Ms HENNESSY — School provisioning is a really significant issue in the City of Wyndham. I am delighted that site preparation works have now started on Sanctuary Lakes South P-9 School in Point Cook, ahead of its official opening for local students in the 2019 school year. Early works have now started to get the site ready ahead of construction. It cannot come soon enough.

Mooroolbark Soccer Club

Mrs FYFFE (Evelyn) (09:54) — Esther Park is home to the Mooroolbark Soccer Club's Barkers. The club has a rich history and a strong community following, with five senior men's teams and two senior women's teams competing in both the Football Federation Victoria provisional and state leagues and the Bayside Football Association leagues. Esther Park features a pavilion which is ageing and in need of an extension and significant upgrades to bring the facilities in line with those of other soccer clubs.

It has one set of changing rooms, which come off the male toilets, and it is these changing rooms that senior women and visiting women must use. The rooms are

small, there is no toilet access without walking through the men's room and the showers are inadequate. Women prefer to shower in cubicles, not open showers. These rooms are below standard, and in fact I feel embarrassed for the women who are using them. Yarra Ranges Shire Council has identified Esther Park as a priority for pavilion upgrade and expansion. I have raised this in the house before and in 2016 wrote to the minister about the club's needs.

The coalition committed to this worthy project prior to the 2014 state election. This soccer club has ever-increasing participation rates. Its inclusive policies and warm welcome to the valley's new residents, in particular the Chin community, is to be commended. The number of female players is growing, and at the rate it is growing the number of girls will be equalling that of the boys within just a few years. I call on the government to fund these very necessary works.

Apokries dance party

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (09:56) — On Saturday, 17 February, I had the great pleasure of attending an Apokries, or carnival, dance party. This annual event was organised by the Greek Cypriot Cultural and Theatrical Centre. I want to thank the organisers, Anastasia Xenophontos, who is the president, and Helen Emmanuel Pras, who is the secretary, for inviting me to this very exciting and interesting event. I would also like to thank them for their very hard work in organising the Apokries.

The Apokries is an event which is full of flamboyant fun. Many people were dressed up in very glamorous and comical costumes and doing lots of Greek Cypriot-style dancing, including a number of Pontian dances, from the area formerly known as Pontus where many Greeks lived. I was asked to be on the panel to judge one of the best costumes. I found it a very difficult job because so many of them were so fantastic. There was lots of glitter and Dame Edna Everage as well as funny clown styles and all sorts of other exciting and creatively interesting costumes. It was a great night. Unfortunately I could not dance because of my foot operation, but everybody had a great time.

Monash Chinese Friendship Association

Mr GIDLEY (Mount Waverley) (09:57) — Today in the Parliament I rise to thank the Monash Chinese Friendship Association for hosting wonderful Chinese New Year celebrations. With colourful performances, interesting speakers and lovely food, it was a fitting morning to celebrate such an important occasion in our community. Special thanks to president Dai Hong, the

committee and other volunteers who worked so hard to organise this event.

Chinese Professionals Club of Australia

Mr GIDLEY — I rise in the Parliament to thank the Chinese Professionals Club of Australia for their recent wonderful Chinese New Year celebration evening. With a great lion dance, interesting speakers and a great dinner it was a perfect evening to recognise such an important occasion in our community. Special thanks to outgoing president Jimmy, the committee and other volunteers who worked so hard to organise the event. I also wish the new committee, headed by Mr Li, the very best of success for this year and put on record my support to assist in any way I can.

Melbourne Chinese spring festival gala

Mr GIDLEY — Today in the Parliament I rise to acknowledge the Melbourne Chinese spring festival gala organised by AC Media Group, the Australian Federation of Art Victoria and more than 40 other Victorian Chinese art organisations. It was a great night to see such wonderful performances, and I look forward to attending future events. Special thanks to the performers and the organisers for putting it on.

Waverley Chinese Senior Citizens Club

Mr GIDLEY — I rise in the Parliament today to recognise the Waverley Chinese Senior Citizens Club, which will be hosting its Chinese New Year celebrations next week. I have had the good fortune to be able to support this organisation and its New Year celebrations in the past, and I look forward to being able to do that again. I thank the volunteers and the committee for all of their hard work.

Michael Healy

Ms WARD (Eltham) (09:59) — Congratulations to Michael Healy, who recently celebrated his 50th year of employment at De Neefe Traffic Technologies in Eltham. It was lovely to be a part of Michael's celebratory lunch and present him with a letter of congratulations from our Premier. De Neefe Traffic Technologies is a national company which has been based in Eltham since 1969. Michael has seen the business grow in leaps and bounds in the last 50 years, helping it to become the strong company it is today. Michael's colleagues clearly love and admire this friendly, caring man. A shout-out to Hannah Taouk for organising this day. It was terrific to see how much he has contributed to this outstanding Australian manufacturing company.

Eltham North adventure playground

Ms WARD — I want to acknowledge the resilience and strength of my community. We were all shocked and hurt last December when our much-loved Eltham North adventure playground burnt to the ground. Using words like ‘mourn for a playground’ might seem odd in this place, but those local to my area would know exactly what I mean, for we have indeed mourned this loss. My community has banded together to be positive and enthusiastic about building a new playground. On behalf of my community I thank the Premier for quickly giving Nillumbik council \$50 000 to kickstart the rebuild. I also thank those who have helped bring our community together: Rotary and Eltham Men’s Shed, who have helped with barbecues; Bambi McLean, who helped organise the original playground; Eltham District Historical Society’s Jim Connor for the display; Isabel Nalato for setting up the friend’s group; and all the other community members who have contributed their thoughts and ideas on how the new playground should look and feel.

Red Balloon Day

Ms WARD — Ahead of Red Balloon Day on 28 February, on behalf of my community I thank our career and volunteer firefighters, who have helped keep my community safe this summer. Locals in my area understand that bushfires can be part of life when you live on the edge of the green wedge, and I am very grateful for the leadership of officer-in-charge Paul Elso, first lieutenant for Eltham Steve Riley, captain Neville Stewart and Research brigade secretary Steve Cochrane in ensuring my community is so very well looked after. I encourage all Victorians to fly a red balloon next Wednesday and say thank you to our fireys.

Dairy industry

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (10:00) — The announcement by GOTAFE prior to Christmas that they would withdraw delivery of dairy courses in Warragul without any transition plan in place for current and future students or staff was an absolute disgrace. West Gippsland is a major dairy farming centre, and the skills shortages the industry has been facing over recent years had some chance of being reduced through the delivery of these dairy training packages. Sadly, the Minister for Training and Skills has been missing in action, instead of ensuring that the students are able to complete their course or begin a course in 2018.

There have been rumours that Federation Training will step in and deliver courses for the students left high and

dry by GOTAFE, which is very pleasing. However, there has been no communication with parents or students, as this email I received on Monday, 19 February, from Geoff Guymer from Warragul indicates. I quote:

My son was a student who had nearly completed his cert. III in dairy but has now been left high and dry! Now there has been no communication on what’s happening with his course, we don’t know if another education provider will be taking him on or not. We would like to know what the government is doing for these kids! My son’s class had about 15 students so the local community has lost further education for these young people who will one day be the future of dairy industry and members of the local farming community who will be the young farmers contributing to economy.

I call on the minister to get involved and assist Federation Training to expedite the resumption of delivery of dairy training at the Baw Baw Skill Centre.

Ley family

Mr LIM (Clarinda) (10:01) — I would like to welcome to Australia the family of murdered Cambodian political activist Dr Kem Ley. Dr Ley visited the Parliament in May 2016, and in July he was shot dead in broad daylight in central Phnom Penh. He was Cambodia’s most ardent government critic. Following his death, five United Nations special rapporteurs jointly stated that the circumstances of his death:

have given rise to deep concerns in view of his standing as a critic of the government and his regular comments in the media highlighting governance and human rights concerns.

His murder is widely believed to have been state sponsored, yet no-one from the Hun Sen government has been held to account.

After more than 15 months in hiding in Bangkok, Thailand, Kem Ley’s wife, Ms Bou Rachana, and their five sons were granted special humanitarian visas to Australia. They arrived safely in Melbourne on Saturday. I would like to thank all the members of the Cambodian-Australian community that worked tirelessly on the family’s application, as well as Erskine Rodan & Associates and all of the members of state and federal parliaments that have supported this case. The Cambodian-Australian community will hold a welcome event at the Clarke Road temple in Springvale this Saturday and we hope all of you can join us to celebrate with them.

Polwarth electorate school buses

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (10:03) — It is disappointing to again be raising this year the issues that

are caused by the lack of common sense in our free school bus system in country communities. The Department of Education and Training refuses to intervene and deal with Public Transport Victoria (PTV) bureaucrats who are forcing bizarre and perverse outcomes on families across Polwarth. New policies at PTV have removed common sense and discretion. Families are having their children sent to different schools, unnecessary financial burdens are being forced on families and in one completely crazy act of *Yes Minister*, a school principal has been told he must not put a year 7 student on a bus with her four other siblings but that instead he must deliver this young girl to the police station for pick-up by her parents. Google Maps and the city-centric bureaucrats must immediately start to listen to local schools and families, and stop the unwanted harassment and financial hardship they are forcing on hardworking country families.

Nat Radio

Mr RIORDAN — A big thankyou to Nat and Frank from Nat Radio on 98.3 OCR FM, Colac district community radio. Nat and his dad run a fun-filled couple of hours on a Saturday afternoon, spreading news and interviews across our region. As the youngest guy on air in the district, Nat has done well to attract some big names to his show —

Mr Thompson — The local member.

Mr RIORDAN — Absolutely! Most importantly the volunteers and supporters of community radio do a great job, providing a range of entertainment, views and news to our local region.

Valkstone Primary School

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (10:04) — It was fantastic recently to spend some time at Valkstone Primary School. Firstly, I spent time with more than 100 grade 6 students to talk about the role of a member of Parliament, and it is fair to say the students asked some very sophisticated questions. Secondly, it was great to be back at the school a week later to present leadership badges to the 28 team school leaders, including captains Filip and Kyla, who both demonstrate the key leadership qualities of setting an example and being a role model. Valkstone is a fantastic local school which is currently in the middle of a major upgrade thanks to the Andrews Labor government.

Moorabbin Reserve

Mr STAIKOS — It was a pleasure recently to join the Minister for Industry and Employment on a tour of the \$30 million redevelopment of Moorabbin Reserve, the home of St Kilda footy club. It is fair to say neither the minister nor I are Saints supporters, but we are very enthusiastic supporters of this project. Thanks to the Andrews Labor government's Major Projects Skills Guarantee, this project is giving 18 apprentices and one engineering cadet the opportunity to fine-tune their skills and gain valuable on-the-job experience. Phase 1 will be completed in time for the start of this year's AFL season. Phase 2, which includes new facilities for Southern Football Netball League and South Metro Junior Football League, will be complete by the end of the year.

McKinnon Basketball Association

Mr STAIKOS — Thank you to Jacob, Ollie and Zoe from McKinnon Basketball Association for giving me a lesson in basketball recently. I managed to somewhat handle the dribbling but bombed out when trying to perform a lay-up and free throw. To my surprise I discovered I am not good at basketball, but that is okay because the Andrews government is currently constructing four new indoor courts in my electorate.

Broadmeadows electorate revitalisation

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (10:06) — My call is for the Australian government to back a city deal for Melbourne's north and a smart suburbs initiative for its designated capital, Broadmeadows. These initiatives have been overwhelmingly endorsed by the northern regional assembly, which had community leaders from across six different municipalities, and by the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board, which I chair. The need is critical, with one in 20 Australians predicted to live in Melbourne's north within two decades, and this is the area where we can maximise the resources. We have the best infrastructure in the country in one centralised place. We could have a jobs centre. We could do a redevelopment zone. This would be in the best interests nationally, in the best interests of Victoria and in the best interests of all of these communities, and I call on the Australian government to be a partner.

FEDERAL HEALTH FUNDING

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) (10:07) — I move:

That this house:

- (1) condemns the federal government for a funding proposal that short-changes our hospitals by over \$2 billion;
- (2) condemns the Leader of the Opposition for failing to stand up to Canberra on Victorian hospital funding; and
- (3) notes the federal government owes Victoria \$104 million for hospital services already provided.

Australians, and particularly Victorians, deeply value the concept of universal health. We have certainly experienced the outrage that people right across Australia have felt as federal coalition governments have tried to ebb away and attack our universal healthcare system. Our universal health and Medicare system means that it is not what you earn that determines your access to health care. We have spent a significant amount of time and money over many years across many states and territories building one of the best health systems in the world — one that is the envy of places like the United States and one that seeks to ensure that we keep access to health care as a very mainstream Australian value. All of that is under threat when we see things like the Turnbull government's decision to short-change Victorian hospitals by billions of dollars, proposed by way of a new national health agreement for the years 2020 to 2025.

Here on this side of the chamber we have an unqualified commitment to public health care. That means access to the best nurses, the best doctors, the best treatments and the best facilities for Victorians wherever they may live. We need to continue to invest in that to ensure that we address all the variances that exist in our healthcare system around both health outcomes and access to care. Our commitment has been backed by billions of dollars in additional funding for services and care, and in the building and construction of health services so our patients and healthcare workers have the very best facilities right across Victoria.

That is why it is incredibly disappointing, to say the least, that the federal government is acting to undermine that vision, that commitment and what we have worked so hard to achieve here in Victoria. We should make no mistake, the actions of the Turnbull government would have very dangerous and very serious repercussions for the Victorian health system, and the Victorian health system is actually our patients, our nurses, our doctors, our allied healthcare workers, our scientists, our medical researchers and our volunteers. Whether it is the amount

of time that a parent might spend in an emergency department for their child to be seen or whether a pensioner gets the surgery that they require on time, these are life-changing issues for people. What is at stake has incredibly serious implications for people and their lifestyles.

By chipping away at Victoria's hospital funding, the Turnbull government is telling the Victorian community in very loud, clear and unequivocal terms that they do not consider our health needs to be a first-order priority. The money they are refusing to stump up would go to direct healthcare provision around the state — things like dialysis treatments, hip replacements and employing more nurses, doctors and allied healthcare workers to support and care for us.

There are two recent examples of decisions made by the Turnbull government which clearly demonstrate that Liberal governments are never, ever to be trusted to properly fund health care in this state or indeed in this country. First of all, they have proposed a hospital funding agreement that would sell Victorians down the river. The federal government have never fully restored the drastic cuts imposed by the Abbott-Turnbull government, starting with then Prime Minister Abbott's notorious 2014–15 budget. They effectively took a scalpel to the previous national health reform agreement that was developed over such long and torturous negotiations under the perhaps utopian vision or goal of ending the blame game. Ultimately agreement was sought and agreement was achieved, but essentially that budget sought to bring a scalpel to that. It finally recognised and delivered upon the commonwealth's responsibility to share equally the funding required to meet the growing demands in our hospitals.

The federal government sought to bring a scalpel to the funding formula associated with that agreement, attempting to cut billions of dollars out of our hospitals. They designed a hopelessly inadequate new formula that was all about propping up their budget bottom line and doing what Liberals always do with health — cut, cut and cut to the bone. Forced to retreat somewhat prior to the last federal election, seeing the very mainstream support that universal health care has in our country, they then sought to design another plan, another funding formula that still sold our hospitals short, and what they are proposing now seeks to reimpose this hopelessly inadequate arrangement into the future. Their negotiating position for the next iteration of hospital funding agreements between the states, territories and commonwealth again demonstrates a continuing of their *modus operandi*, which is to squeeze public health care as hard as they can.

This is a federal government that has no commitment to public hospitals or to the public healthcare sector. When states and territories bear responsibility for service provision by hospitals, the federal government shares responsibility for funding them. Yet what we have seen from the Turnbull government demonstrates their attitude, which is to continually shirk their funding responsibilities. The Turnbull government have been very passionate in their commitment to business tax cuts for the top end of town, but we see nowhere near such commitment to, or interest in, providing adequate funding for the healthcare services that Victorians need.

The hospital funding agreement that we are in negotiations over currently is important. It sets the terms upon which the commonwealth, states and territories fund our public hospitals. The deal proposed by the Turnbull government would mean that Victorians are effectively short-changed to the tune of \$113.5 million in the first year of the agreement, which is 2020–21, and \$2.1 billion over its first five years.

Victoria's position is quite simple: the commonwealth should pay its fair share. At the moment, Victoria pays about 60 per cent compared to the commonwealth's 40 per cent of the overall funding of Victorian hospitals. Funding growth is the difference between what hospitals received last year and what they receive this year. We say that the commonwealth and Victoria should share the cost of hospital funding growth equally, with Victoria paying 50 per cent and the commonwealth paying 50 per cent, which is what was originally agreed. This is a fair and commonsense proposal which over time would bring Victorian and commonwealth contributions closer to parity, but the Turnbull government are refusing. The offer put on the table by the Turnbull government also includes an arbitrary cap on the federal contribution to growth funding. We know that the pressures on our hospitals are increasing every year.

We see population growth, we have an ageing community and we see very significant technological advances leading to more and more treatments being available, which is a good thing — more and more people are able to receive care for longer — but all of that means that costs are escalating. But the Turnbull government is saying that irrespective of those pressures that are being placed on our hospitals, irrespective of the community's needs, irrespective of the growth in population, irrespective of the fact that we have an ageing community, which means the burden of health care and the demographics that require health care are absolutely significant, they will not fund growth of more than 6.5 per cent. Bear in mind that over the life of the current agreement growth has been running at 8.5 per

cent. Simply put, the proposed 6.5 per cent will not be enough to meet the growing demand that Victorian hospitals are experiencing.

Our government will fight against a proposal which would see our hospitals struggle to keep up. We on this side of the chamber say that properly resourced hospitals are an investment in our future, rather than something to desperately find a way out of. We on this side of the chamber say that Victorians deserve to have access to life-saving treatments, to reap the benefits of the latest research findings, to be cared for by well-trained nurses and doctors, and to be looked after well into their old age. We on this side of the chamber fundamentally believe in the very best medical care being available to all, irrespective of their means, through the provision of public health care. It is as simple as that.

This is what Victorians expect of our government. We are very proud of what our health system delivers, and we have worked incredibly hard to turn around the very vicious impact of the \$1 billion worth of cuts to our healthcare system experienced under the previous coalition state government. Certainly our proud results are starting to demonstrate the very important and record investments that we have been making. Notwithstanding unprecedented demand as a result of things like the flu season, we continued to smash records last quarter. The highest percentage of patients ever — 91 per cent — received their elective surgery within clinically recommended times. This is 12 per cent better than what the opposition achieved the last time they were in power.

We also shaved a day off the record for timely treatment for the longest waiters, with 90 per cent of elective surgeries having been performed within 140 days. That is the best result on record. We have achieved the two lowest elective surgery waitlists on record. At the close of the 2015–16 reporting year our waitlist sat at a record low of 36 436, and at the end of 2016–17 we beat that record, achieving another record low of 36 398. And these are of course not just numbers; they are human beings — human beings that require health care, human beings that require access to things like hip replacements, knee replacements and all sorts of things that fundamentally go to their quality of life and their ability to age well.

Our ambulances continue to reach the most urgent patients sooner, with 81.4 per cent of code 1 call-outs arriving within 15 minutes, a 7.7 per cent improvement on the results achieved by the last government. In our emergency departments, despite strong demand, performance improved last quarter on every single

indicator. Moreover, we have taken the decision to pay our nurses and paramedics a fair wage. We have legislated for safe nurse-to-patient ratios in our hospitals, and we have employed hundreds more nurses, doctors and paramedics around the state.

But if the federal Liberal government is allowed to get its way by short-changing Victoria in these hospital negotiations, these outstanding results will be increasingly difficult to maintain. Of course we would not expect anything less from our Liberal government; this is how they roll. The federal Liberals have already cut millions of dollars from disease prevention, dental care, subacute care and things like teenage sexual health programs in Victoria. Each and every single one of these cuts has a human impact. Their colleagues in Victoria managed to cut \$1 billion from our healthcare sector during their four years. That is quite a remarkable achievement. You have to work very, very hard to cut that level of funding out of the health system, but they were very committed and very focused to that end, and we have been very committed and very focused on turning those brutal and vicious cuts around.

It is worth reflecting that under the Liberals waitlists skyrocketed to over 50 000 patients and our hospitals were in crisis. On their watch Victorians experienced the worst ambulance response times on the Australian mainland. We had more than 1000 people waiting in emergency departments for more than 24 hours over a three-month period. That is a truly astounding level of neglect. Instead of negotiating fair workplace agreements, they waged war on the healthcare workforce, demonstrating a fundamental lack of respect for the important role that people like nurses and paramedics play in our community. These were important issues to address.

Our healthcare system is not just the buildings, the equipment and the technology; it is in fact the people that deliver health care. Ensuring that they are respected and supported and that we invest in giving people lifelong careers within the health system and supporting them with continuing education and training, supporting them with a decent, fair wage for the work that they do, is absolutely critical to ensure that we do not lose the wonders of their clinical skills. Right now, for example, we are confronting things like a national workforce shortage when it comes to midwives.

We need to continue to try and attract people to the healthcare workforce so we are able to have ready access to a well-trained, well-developed workforce when it comes to things like mental health nurses. We know in some of the very challenging areas of the provision of medicine — and addiction medicine is one

such example — that we have got to be making sure that we are investing in our workforce and ensuring that they feel incentivised and supported, and that we do not lose the great capability that we have by driving them down, either through low wages or a withering public health system being driven into the ground by the lack of commonwealth support. It is absolutely critical. Our investments have been geared towards fixing our health system after four years of cuts and neglects that saw waiting lists blow out and doctors and nurses stretched to the limit.

In addition to the record funding that we provided in the 2017–18 budget, this government put in an additional \$115 million to support hospitals last year in response to one of the worst flu seasons on record. This was a flu season that was almost as serious as the H1N1 flu season that we saw many years ago. We know that people lost their lives in this flu season. As I visited many of our acute hospital services around the state, the story was the same. Every intensive care unit was full. There was a requirement to be able to ensure that patients, particularly those that were infectious, were in rooms by themselves. There was a need to try and support our own medical workforce who are not immune from things such as influenza. There were issues around respiratory wards as well. The incredible impact of having a system that is able to respond to those sorts of issues means you need a well-funded healthcare system, and that is what the Turnbull government do not want to deliver.

On the infrastructure front, we have again worked extraordinarily hard to catch up after the four years of stingy mismanagement by the opposition when they were last in government. In Melbourne we have funded visionary health capital projects such as the Victorian Heart Hospital. We do not have standalone heart capacity or cardiac capacity anywhere in this country. We do not have the sorts of infrastructure that we see in places like the Texas Heart Institute or St Bartholomew's Hospital in the United Kingdom, particularly in London. We know that cardiovascular disease is one of the biggest killers in this country and in fact internationally.

We have some of the most expert clinical capability when it comes to things like cardiovascular disease and cardiac care, yet there has not been the level of investment to ensure that we are able not just to leverage off the provision of that health care but also to use things like our investment in medical research and our incredible competitive advantage here in Victoria when it comes to things like medical devices to provide clinical experiences and to train the cardiac specialists of the future — to be able to bring all of that capability

into one location, to provide bedside-to-bedside provision of health care and to invest in things like regenerative medical engineering, which is essentially how we are going to be treating people with significant cardiovascular disease in the future. It requires investment, and those are the investments that we continue to make.

There are other investments, such as the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, and of course we are seeing enormous and significant growth, particularly in the north-west of Melbourne. I foreshadowed before that there is a significant issue right across Australia in respect of the midwifery workforce and shortages that needs to be adequately addressed. We are making the sorts of investments there that will ensure that we are able to provide proper maternity services and fantastic neonatal intensive care for babies who require it.

These kind of projects also deliver when it comes to jobs as well — not just construction jobs but healthcare jobs. We know that health care is one of the fastest growing employment opportunities right across the country. We have a booming population here in Victoria. People are having beautiful babies, and we need to ensure that those women and those children are being provided not with substandard health care and substandard maternity provision but with high-quality maternity provision that is safe and that gives every child the best chance they can possibly have in life. We need to support women to be able to elect to make different choices around the maternity services model that they most prefer.

We also see a greater and growing complexity in birthing and pregnancies. That requires investment in expertise in order to ensure that we are able to support those women while they are pregnant and that we are able to support those babies when they are born. The Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital is a shining example of this and is a very, very welcome addition to the fantastic services provided at health services such as the Mercy, both in Werribee and in Heidelberg — a place I know is close to your heart, Acting Speaker Carbinas — and the wonderful services being provided at the Royal Women's Hospital. These are the services that deal with very, very complex pregnancies, and right across the state we have GP obstetricians and wonderful expert facilities that are supporting these women and children. But we need to continue to invest. If we do not, we put at risk the provision of the best maternity and paediatric care to these women and these babies, which they deserve. That is at risk when you cut funding from health funding agreements.

In regions right across the state, country hospitals are finally getting the attention they need through critical investments — things like our commitment to rebuild the Goulburn Valley Health hospital in Shepparton, a very important health service. It is incredibly important for a whole range of reasons. We have actually got growth in some parts of the population in that region, and it is absolutely important that that health service, which is in desperate need of a capital rebuild, is supported. Our government put its hand up and made that commitment. It is a very important source of employment for people locally. There are of course all sorts of issues around road trauma given its location, and the seasonality of things like farming and the different peaks and troughs in the agricultural seasons see peaks and troughs in the sort of workplace accidents which we wish did not occur but which require immediate trauma care — and Goulburn Valley Health wants to provide that.

Similarly, I know the paediatric ward at Goulburn Valley Health is much loved by the local community. They have raised funds and made really significant investments up there, and they are very ambitious to ensure that they get the hospital they deserve. But it is only under a Labor government that Shepparton will get a rebuilt hospital. Investing in these kinds of things means that you have got to invest in health care, and it is absolutely critical that the federal government stumps up its fair share.

We have also made the biggest investment in the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund — \$200 million. Under the former coalition government it was \$56 million. That means we have been in a position to try and work with rural and regional health services to identify their infrastructure needs and make those kind of investments. It has been a game changer for many of those health services, and we have got a lot more work to do. Making those investments — investing in capital and investing in equipment — is absolutely essential.

I was delighted to join the Premier at the Alfred hospital this morning — another \$60 million investment to provide world-class cutting-edge equipment to our healthcare services to ensure that they are able to provide the care that their patients deserve. Is there anything from the commonwealth government on this front? Not a cracker. There is not a cracker to introduce fantastic new scanning equipment, mammography equipment, cardiac equipment, CT scanners, PET scanners — all of the things that are absolutely essential to ensure that we are able to diagnose and treat patients and that they are able to have the wonderful opportunities and the dignity of a

healthy life and a quality life as well. But there is nothing from the federal government.

Contributions from the commonwealth to health capital have been embarrassingly small. Given our status as the fastest growing state in the country, to be ignored — to get not a cracker, not a significant investment when it comes to healthcare capital — is an incredible shame and a reflection upon where and how the Turnbull government sees and values health care. Malcolm Turnbull is the Prime Minister of Sydney. It would be humorous if it were not so disastrous. But the Prime Minister waltzed into Victoria last week and dropped by Frankston railway station —

Mr Foley — Which he doesn't put a cent into.

Ms HENNESSY — Which he doesn't put a cent into. Frankston Hospital, down the road, is really a fantastic health service. It could have been a great opportunity for the commonwealth government to make a commitment — nothing. The Victorian Heart Hospital could have been a wonderful opportunity for the commonwealth government to make a commitment — nothing. Goulburn Valley hospital could have been a wonderful opportunity for the Turnbull government to make a contribution — nothing. The Victorian Heart Hospital, something that will be important not just in terms of jobs but also medical research and devices — absolutely nothing. You can tell what people value by what they invest in, and the Turnbull government and the Liberal coalition do not value public health care because they continue to try to put the Victorian healthcare system in a position where it risks withering on the vine. They do absolutely nothing when it comes to the provision of health care. The funding agreement is further evidence of that. Their failure to invest in capital is further evidence of that. The deep disrespect they have had for the clinical and medical workforce is further evidence of that.

The Turnbull government's attempt to try and drive our health system into an era of slow decline by their paltry health funding offer is not in line with community expectations. It is far less than what Victorians deserve. What they are proposing is not fair on our hospitals, it is not fair on our communities, it is not fair on their families and it is absolutely not fair on the medical workforce that each and every day turn up to save lives and turn up to try and give families and patients the support that they deserve.

As I mentioned earlier, over the first five years of this agreement, if agreed to, Victoria would be short-changed by \$2.1 billion. That would have a dramatic impact on local hospitals, resulting, for

example, in a \$99.6 million cut to Barwon Health, including University Hospital Geelong. That is equivalent to more than 16 000 elective surgeries. Under Malcolm Turnbull's agreement Frankston Hospital would have a \$90.2 million cut. That is equivalent to 14 554 elective surgeries. Perhaps we should not be surprised that he did not want to show his face at Frankston Hospital when he cruised into town last week. At Bass Coast, including Wonthaggi Hospital, it would be an \$8.6 million cut. That is the equivalent of 1383 elective surgeries. At the Royal Children's Hospital this would result in a cut of \$84.3 million. That is equivalent to 13 582 elective surgeries or 674 hardworking nurses. At the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital it would be a \$16.5 million cut, equivalent to 2652 elective surgeries or perhaps 55 additional doctors.

We would not expect anything less from a Liberal government, but it is very disappointing to see that Malcolm Turnbull has seen fit once again to sell Victoria short. It is reminiscent of the great infrastructure debates that we have seen playing out — the fact that Malcolm Turnbull is the Prime Minister for Sydney and he does not give a hoot about Victoria. He certainly does not give a hoot about health care. We have seen that demonstrated time and time again, whether it was their attempted attack on the primary healthcare system, whether it was their attempted attack on things like cutting up \$90 million from preventative health here in Victoria or whether it was their recent decision to cut adult public health dental care by 30 per cent. It is those that are the most economically vulnerable that absolutely rely upon public dental care.

Ms Kealy — I bring your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms HENNESSY — With a minute to go, I will emphasise one of the very key points, and that is that if you do not invest in a healthcare system, the healthcare system withers on the vine. It is in the DNA of the federal coalition government. They do not support public health care. They have used every opportunity to try to ensure that they run down our Medicare system. They want to take \$2.1 billion out of our healthcare system. They have put no significant investment into health capital in this state. They owe us \$104 million that the independent umpire had arbitrated only last year. They have cut \$90 million out of preventative health. They have cut access to things like public adult dental care by 30 per cent — very important projects that very, very economically vulnerable people absolutely rely upon. They do not care about health

care. They do not invest in it. We have a Prime Minister for Sydney who would like to try and destroy public health care and ensure that we do not have good universal public health care in our country.

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (10:37) — What a stunning political stunt we have got going on today: all talk about the federal government rather than focusing on the Andrews Labor government at a state level cutting funding and ignoring the health services right across the state. How disappointing it would be for the minister, who has not had the numbers of support in the chamber for the entire debate. This is the Minister for Health who is obviously raising such an important issue that, rather than getting some legislation in here, rather than getting enough of a business program together that we actually have enough content to discuss important legislation for the state of Victoria —

An honourable member — Bailing it.

Ms KEALY — They are now bailing it and going back to talking about federal matters rather than worrying about running the state. Wouldn't it be nice if we had a state government that was focused on actually running the health system in Victoria? Wouldn't it be fantastic? Everybody has disappeared again, and it is not really a surprise. I understand that, rather than running the state, the Andrews Labor government has a certain few issues going on. I think there was a bit of an altercation — a physical altercation — between the Minister for Sport and an upper house member. I think that is clearly what has been going on. They are running a tote at the moment —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — The member for Lowan will resume her seat. There is a point of order from the member for Albert Park. The minister, on the point of order.

Mr Foley — On a point of order —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! I need to hear the point of order from the minister in silence, thank you.

Mr Foley — My point of order goes to relevance, Acting Speaker, and I ask that you bring the honourable member back to the point in debate. She has strayed so far from the debating framework that her contribution should be ruled out of order if she continues down that path, and I would urge you, if she does not take in good faith the point of order, to ask her to return to the subject of debate forthwith.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — I thank the minister. Does the member for Lowan wish to speak on the point of order?

Ms KEALY — No, I will continue.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — In a moment. I will just rule on the point of order. The member for Lowan is the lead speaker for the opposition in relation to this matter, and there is a degree of latitude in relation to the matters that can be covered. I would ask the member to work for the good of the house in terms of speaking broadly to the matter at hand that is the subject of the motion, bearing in mind that there is some latitude for the leader speaker in relation to the context of the motion. The member for Lowan to continue.

Ms KEALY — Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. Obviously in relation to workplace health and safety we do need to make sure there is no violence in the workplace, and this is something that was spoken about by the Minister for Health. Again, I would like to go back to the motion as put in terms of the federal government's funding of health and also how important it is that we have a state government that provides sufficient funding to health care.

Health care is much more about the health outcomes for our community. People deserve to know that when they are not feeling well they have somewhere they can go to where they are cared for to ensure that they are made well as soon as possible. In addition we should have good preventative health measures to make sure we keep people out of our hospital system and fit and healthy in the community. We want them to be able to turn up to work. We want them to be able to care for their families. We want them to be the best Victorians they possibly can be. That is why, certainly on our side of the chamber, we will always support and fight for our fair share of funding. It will not matter if it is about federal funding, it does not matter if it is about state funding — we will always fight for our fair share.

This is something that I look at at a state level on an ongoing basis. It is eternally frustrating to me that Victoria's country population — the rural and regional Victorian population — is 25 per cent of the state's population, and yet a year ago in the state budget we received less than 3 per cent of the infrastructure funding for this state. This is disgraceful. When you are talking about our fair share of funding for anywhere, this is something that the government needs to take a little bit of notice of, rather than just throwing stones and blaming someone else for their financial problems and their mismanagement of money — which happens

in every single Labor government in every single state they are in, or at a federal level whenever they are in.

This is the problem we have: Labor always mismanages money. We end up with a worse health system because of it. We have the worst record when it comes to infrastructure, with cost blowouts everywhere, and this is what we are seeing yet again, under the Andrews Labor government ruling Victoria. We can look at short-changing hospitals in Victoria and what the Andrews Labor government has done. Last year we had skyrocketing electricity prices right across the state. The government knew about this, because of course it was its policy to close Hazelwood through a super tax which resulted in its closure, and electricity prices have since gone through the roof. This is not just hitting domestic users. It is not just hitting small businesses in the state of Victoria that are looking at cutting back their staff. It has hit every single public hospital in this state — and the government has not put in a cent of additional money to help hospitals pay for that. They did put in —

Mr Pesutto — They've cut funding.

Ms KEALY — Yes, they have cut funding, if nothing else. They are certainly not putting into each and every hospital the 6.8 per cent funding growth that they have purported needs to be there. Now if that was the case, we would have seen that every single hospital last year would have had a 6.8 per cent growth, but in fact in some areas of Victoria our hospitals received a paltry funding increase of 1.8 per cent from the Andrews Labor government. If the Andrews Labor government was serious, it would at least take into account CPI rates and it would take into account enterprise bargaining agreement increases for salary and wages. They are certainly not able to stand up here today and say that they are appropriately funding health services in Victoria. The Premier is simply not looking after our hospitals in the way that he would like you to believe he is.

I can say this quite strongly and proudly because I have looked through the figures. The hospital of which I was formerly the CEO, Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital, is one of those hospitals that only had a 1.8 per cent increase in their state funding last year. I do not know whether many people on that side of the chamber have actually had a real job outside of working as a political hack or in the union system, but I certainly know how to deal with a budget and I understand that if you do not get enough funding from the state, then you have to look at what services you have to cut. It is people who miss out in all of this, and this is what has been forgotten in all of this political grandstanding over

the federal government's health funding and all of the problems around it. The Andrews Labor government are short-changing our public hospitals.

I know from my experience at Edenhope hospital that they would have to be looking at their staffing numbers and they would have to be looking at reducing or closing some services. That is simply unacceptable for any CEO; for any nursing unit manager; for anybody who works in nursing administration; for the people looking after general services, ensuring there are fresh meals prepared for people; and for the people looking after linen services, making sure there are fresh sheets on the beds so that there is a beautiful, clean hospital prepared for their patients. That is the problem. That is what gets lost when you have any funding cuts, and that is what the Andrews Labor government is failing to see. They are contributing to some of the pressures that are being placed on these hospitals. While they continue to fail to acknowledge that and fail to see that, then we will continue to have hospitals that struggle every single day to provide the health services that their communities need, which has an enormous impact on the health outcomes of people in our local communities.

Edenhope hospital was not the only hospital which was significantly underfunded by the state government last year. It is not just our smaller hospitals; it is our bigger hospitals as well. The Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital had an increase of just 2 per cent last year thanks to the Andrews Labor government; and the Royal Women's Hospital had a 2.2 per cent increase. That does not cover the enterprise bargaining agreement increases, the CPI increases, and it certainly does not cover the astronomical increase in costs to hospitals due to the increase in electricity costs, which is Labor's own doing. We are simply putting our health system under enormous pressure and that is due to the Andrews Labor government not providing an appropriate amount of funding for our hospitals. This is what they need to step up and do. This is where you guys can actually make a difference when you are configuring the budget, but you are not doing that.

Let us look at the other elements of what this government is doing. They turn a blind eye to so many elements of health care when it comes to Victoria. Who can forget the cuts to cancer beds, which was an absolute disgrace for the state of Victoria. Thirty-two public beds have been cut from the Royal Melbourne Hospital, which was built as part of the 160-bed Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. They were axed by the Andrews Labor government. We lost 32 beds for public patients to receive cancer treatment. Now this is not the total story because we had the 13th floor of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre not

being fitted out, not being finalised, for Peter MacCallum private and so 42 cancer beds were lost. So in Victoria we have lost 74 beds that were built or should have been built for cancer treatment. They are not available.

I do not know anybody in the community who has not been touched by cancer. Many of the people in this place have been touched by cancer, and of course many people have family members, friends, loved ones and people in the community who have had cancer. The worst thing we could possibly do is have people not able to access the cancer treatment they need when they need it. This is of great concern to the state of Victoria when the priority of this government is actually scrapping those cancer beds rather than building public beds to care for cancer patients. This is entirely wrong and is the wrong direction for this government to be taking. To say that they are doing more for health than anybody else when they are scrapping beds for cancer treatment is an absolute disgrace and gross hypocrisy. It is completely wrong.

We know this government and the Minister for Health have a history of crying wolf when it comes to hospital funding. We can all remember when the minister was saying that cuts were going to result in the Sandringham Hospital emergency department no longer being a 24-hour service and that the Williamstown Hospital emergency department could possibly close. This really concerns local people. It is just so wrong politically to try to threaten people who are looking to improve their health care by saying that these services will not be available.

The minister even took the huge step of saying, 'We're going to take this to the High Court'. Well, guess what? She never did. It is all words, it is all talk and it is all about trying to scare patients into thinking they are not going to be able to access the services they need when in fact it is going to happen anyway. There are good strategies around it and this political gesticulating is, quite frankly, just ridiculous. It is wrong to use patients and people who are concerned that they will not be able to get the health care they need when they need it, to put their emotions in play and then escalate it by saying, 'We're going to take it to the High Court', when it never eventuates. It is just ridiculous. It does not make any sense at all.

We have also had some fantastic announcements made by the Liberals and The Nationals in the lead-up to the next election, because there is a choice; there is a choice when it comes to what we want to see in Victorian health care into the future. Something we are very, very proud of that we have announced is that we want to

make sure that people who are nearing the end stages of their life have the support they need. For me, working in a hospital system and having family members who have been through palliative care, I think the palliative care nurses are the most caring, generous and amazing people who work in the healthcare system. The support they provide during those last days — not just to the patient but to family members — is absolutely amazing, and I take my hat off to them.

With respect to this, we know that palliative care is significantly underfunded, which is why the coalition has made a commitment to inject \$140 million to improve palliative care services in Victoria. This is something that will make a huge difference to the palliative care sector, whether it is the employees or whether it is the people who go through palliative care and their families and friends. This is something that will make a real difference to the lives of so many Victorians, and I am very, very proud to be part of a coalition that is willing to deliver on that.

We did see a paltry contribution, less than one-quarter of the \$140 million, committed by the Andrews Labor government. It just does not go far enough. Palliative care is so important that we need to get it right. We do not want a piecemeal attempt at trying to do a little bit when you just need to put a lot of money into it. It deserves it. It has been waiting for it for a long time. We need to make sure that it is a full program and that we expand community-based services so that if people want to die at home rather than dying in a clinical environment, they can have that choice. They can choose to be in their favourite chair, in their bed or wherever it might be, and to have their familiar belongings and their loved ones around them in an environment that they know and are comfortable with. That is respecting Victorians from cradle to coffin. We need to look after them. I think it is very disappointing that the Premier has failed to acknowledge that this what Victorians want to see.

We have also made a fantastic announcement about free flu vaccinations for children under five years in Victoria. This is something that the New South Wales government has also committed to. Of course it would make it much easier for all families and make sure we get the herd immunity that we are looking for in the state of Victoria. Flu can be absolutely debilitating — and fatal — for people who have not got a good immune system or who are not fit and healthy, and of course kids under five are the ones that are most vulnerable. They also go into environments that are prone to having lots of bugs and diseases, whether they are at child care, kindergarten or just starting school. That is why we really do need to make sure that there is

no barrier to any family wanting to immunise their young ones. We need to make sure that we have free vaccination. Again, I am very, very proud that the Liberal-Nationals have committed to do that, should we be elected in November.

It is disappointing, with all the talk about vaccinations by the Andrews Labor government, that it will not match this commitment. You would think that if the government was serious about vaccination, it would certainly look at supporting people who can least afford the flu vaccination to have it. If we are looking at people who may not be able to afford flu vaccination — if we listen to the rhetoric — it would be the people that Labor say they stand up for, but they turn their eyes away when it comes to the crunch and to making proper contributions to our healthcare system, which is absolutely wrong.

Going back to the funding split, and that is what we are really concerned about, I would like to see from Labor an across-the-board 6.8 per cent for all of our hospitals across the state. I see so many hospitals that received, essentially, a funding cut in the last budget under Labor. They will have to ask questions about what services they cut or what staff they put off. This is not something we want to see, because our health system is made up of absolutely brilliant people who care about what they do. It does not matter whether they are cleaners, nurses, doctors or administrators; they do an absolutely brilliant job in caring for people. But we need to make sure that hospitals are getting all the funding they need from the Victorian state Labor government.

A huge issue for Victorian hospitals is around our workforce. On numerous occasions it has been raised that we have a shortage of doctors in Victoria, and it is worse further from the city, in country areas, such as the area I represent. It is so disappointing that this government has failed to acknowledge that it is even an issue, let alone to take any action. It has an enormous impact on our local people and their health outcomes. Last week I was told the story of somebody in a local hospital where there is no doctor currently; they were in hospital for 10 days because they could not get a doctor to come to the hospital to sign the discharge summary.

We have had nine doctors out of 15 go from one clinic in Horsham, which has resulted in people not being able to get a prescription when they need it. Of course what people do is present to the local emergency department, where presentations have gone up by something like 150 per cent. This is having an impact on our public health system, but it is an area that the government has failed to acknowledge or even attempt to address.

The Andrews Labor government is turning its eyes away. It is not just GPs. We have also got a critical shortage of allied health workers, whether it be social workers, psychologists or dentists. We have shortages right across the board, including with our nursing staff. But apparently the Andrews Labor government does not care where the next wave of staff will come from. It has no strategy for how we are going to deal with the workforce in the future; it has no idea how we are going to deal with the increasing number of older people in Victoria; it has no plan or strategy to deal with the population increase in Victoria; and it particularly has no plan for how to decentralise population in Victoria so that we have balanced population growth across the state.

If the Andrews Labor government does not take this seriously, we will face an enormous health crisis in this state. If we simply do not have enough people to work, if we do not have the people available to do the jobs to care for Victorians, then we will end up with a critical problem in terms of health outcomes into the future. I wish the government would look at this, but instead it goes down the track of trying to blame somebody else and of political grandstanding rather than getting to the table and negotiating a good agreement for Victoria. This is an agreement, mind you, that Western Australia and New South Wales have already signed up to, because they say that it is a good deal.

I would like to know from the Andrews Labor government why it is not a good deal, why it is putting Victorian funding at risk, why it continues to neglect its own contributions towards state hospitals and why it thinks it is okay that the state increases hospital funding by a mere 1.8 per cent in some instances, which does not cover CPI, which does not cover any enterprise bargaining agreement increases and which does not cover the skyrocketing electricity costs. If this government were serious about funding health care in Victoria, it would step up and put its money where its mouth is, and it would provide each and every hospital in this state with the funding they deserve to make sure Victorians have the health outcomes that are appropriate for our population.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health) (10:59) — In the short time before question time rolls around and I get my opportunity to continue this debate, I would just note that the honourable member for Lowan has made it clear that opposition members are Liberals and Nationals first and Victorians second, and that they do not stand up for Victoria's health system.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! The minister will have the call when these matters resume.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (11:01) — Before calling for questions, I would like to welcome in the gallery Mr David Edginton, deputy consul general of the United States here in Melbourne. Welcome to the Parliament.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

The SPEAKER — Members, I would also like to advise that there have been media reports of a heated exchange between two members in the precinct last night. The President and I have met this morning with the three department heads and agreed to conduct an internal parliamentary investigation to ascertain the facts of that matter.

Minister for Sport

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:01) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, have you asked your Minister for Sport, former boxer John Eren, how much —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members will come to order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to use correct titles.

Mr GUY — Premier, have you asked your Minister for Sport how much and for how long had he been drinking before he assaulted Labor colleague Adem Somyurek, who is a teetotaler, in the parliamentary dining room last night?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members will be removed without warning if they continue to shout across the chamber at the start of question time.

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, I put it to you very simply that this is not a matter of government administration. I think it is very clear that the Leader of the Opposition knows that in the way that he has framed the question, and I would ask you to rule it immediately out of order.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, this relates to the conduct of a minister of the Crown. If there is a place where the conduct of a minister of the Crown could be held to account, it is this Parliament. He can hardly pretend that the minister was acting in a private capacity when he was present in this building on his official duties. As the Premier has made clear, he is responsible for what happens under his government and for the conduct of the members of his government. There has been time and time again when, properly, questions have been asked of the government of the day about the conduct of ministers of the government in their capacity as ministers. It is entirely in order for the Premier to be asked to account to this house, in a Westminster democracy, for the conduct of his ministers and what he has done about that conduct.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order raised by the Leader of the House, but I do have concerns with the question, which contains clear imputations against a member of this place. I will offer the opportunity to the Leader of the Opposition to rephrase his question.

Mr Clark — On a further point of order, Speaker, I would submit that asking a question does not make an imputation; it is asking a question of fact. It is open to the Premier, if he disagrees with what is put in the question, to refute it, to dispute it. The Leader of the Opposition is asking a question. He should be allowed to ask that question, and then it should be a matter for the Premier to respond as the Premier thinks fit.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am not going to allow imputations to be made against members by the vehicle of it being suggested in a question. I will offer the Leader of the Opposition a chance to ask that question again.

Mr GUY — No imputation, Speaker, I am asking the Premier very directly. Premier, noting that you had said that you would bring in breathalysers to this Parliament, have you spoken to your Minister for Sport about how much and how long, if he had been drinking, before he assaulted Adem Somyurek, or allegedly assaulted Adem Somyurek, in the bar last night?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Just about everybody in this chamber is shouting across the chamber, including the Leader of the Opposition. I have warned members I will remove members from the chamber.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members should come to order. The Leader of the Opposition's question again contained an imputation —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr Guy — Then what are you investigating?

The SPEAKER — Order! I am not in a position to answer questions from members of this place. I have already informed the house that there is an investigation underway into the matter that the member refers to. The Leader of the Opposition's question contains an imputation —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not have a debate on this matter. I rule the question out of order.

Mr Morris interjected.

The SPEAKER (11:07) — Order! The member for Mornington will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Mornington withdrew from chamber.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I am not sure if you heard fully the question as rephrased by the Leader of the Opposition, but he was very careful to say 'if' the minister had been drinking, and he referred to an alleged assault. I submit to you that because he had made a condition on whether or not the minister had been drinking, he was not making an imputation. He was very careful to refer to an alleged assault. I submit that when you fully consider the words that he used, the question is in order and does not contain an imputation.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am prepared to allow the question.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:07) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. There were a number of imputations in the question, and I reject each and every one of those.

Mr Guy — Which one?

Mr ANDREWS — Each and every one of them, each and every one of them. What I would say in answer, beyond that —

Mr Katos interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for South Barwon is warned.

Mr ANDREWS — Beyond refuting the clear imputations in the Leader of the Opposition's question, I would simply say, Speaker, as you have made clear, that these matters are being examined by yourself and the President in the other place. That is appropriate, and I have absolutely nothing to add beyond that.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Ringwood and the member for Bentleigh.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:08) — Premier, given you have previously said, 'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept' —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:08) — Order! The member for Bentleigh will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Bentleigh withdrew from chamber.

Mr GUY — Given, Premier, you have previously said, 'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept', will you now stand down the Minister for Sport until these allegations of assault have been fully investigated?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — I warn members that many members will be leaving the chamber if this level of shouting continues.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:09) — Again the Leader of the Opposition draws conclusions, makes inferences, makes imputations. The answer to your question, riddled with imputations and allegations, is no.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, my question was simply, 'Will you now stand down the minister?', and I referred to an alleged assault. There was no imputation. There was nothing referred to otherwise. It is a simple question for the Premier to

answer, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it rather than being so gutless as to avoid it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Lowan. Honourable members at the table!

Ministers statements: Fishermans Bend

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) (11:10) — I rise to update the house about the urgent and unprecedented action I have taken to protect Fishermans Bend from a swathe of inappropriate developments. Fishermans Bend is the largest urban renewal project in Australia — the largest in Australia — right on the doorstep of the CBD. We have to act now to protect this unique opportunity, which will one day become home to 80 000 Victorian residents and 80 000 workers within the precinct, from becoming a concrete jungle.

I have moved to call in 26 development applications for towers that were submitted after Fishermans Bend was so curiously rezoned overnight. We are putting an end to an era where developers could build whatever they wanted, wherever they wanted at Fishermans Bend. This unprecedented move will be an inconvenience for developers, but we make no apology for putting a stop to a free-for-all approach to tower approvals, because we want Fishermans Bend to be more than just a postcode. It will be a thriving community that Victorians can be proud of.

We will put all 26 live permits to an independent advisory committee, and they will not make any determinations until permanent controls are in place. This is a significant move, but it is the right one, because under the former planning minister it was only developers who were lining up for a big payday, and the community was left behind. I invite members to go down to Elizabeth Street and just take a look around at the sea of towers that have been built, with densities higher than Singapore or Hong Kong. That is the handiwork of the bloke sitting opposite, the Leader of the Opposition. Is this the city we want?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:12) — Order! The member for Warrandyte will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House! The member for Bass is warned.

Ministerial code of conduct

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:12) — My question is for the Minister for Veterans. Minister, given you have previously been accused of intimidation, as evidenced by statutory declarations signed by your own local Country Fire Authority brigade at Lara alleging bullying, will you now apologise to your colleague in the Council, Mr Somyurek, and to parliamentary staff that had to witness yet another example of appalling behaviour from a minister in the Andrews government?

Mr EREN (Minister for Veterans) (11:13) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. There was an incident that took place last night, and I have reported that to the Presiding Officer. As he indicated earlier, there will be an ongoing investigation into that incident, and accordingly it would be totally inappropriate for me to make any comments in relation to that investigation.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Lowan has already been warned. The member for Lowan cannot see me, but I can hear her voice.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:14) — By way of supplementary, Minister, when you allegedly assaulted your colleague Labor MLC Adem Somyurek last night in the parliamentary dining room, how much had you been drinking?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Eltham is warned. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to assist in the running of the house.

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Speaker, the question from the Leader of the Opposition threw around a number of allegations and hypotheticals that do not have any basis of fact or evidence and which are, as you indicated to the house earlier, subject to further work that is being done by the Presiding Officers of this Parliament, and I ask you to rule the question out of order.

Mr Clark — On the point of order, Speaker, the fact that you and the President are investigating this matter in no way pre-empts the accountability of ministers to

this house in accordance with Westminster traditions. The Leader of the Opposition was clear in referring to the allegation of assault. As to the question of quantity of drinking, if the minister had not been drinking he is in a position to deny that he had been drinking, but it is perfectly appropriate that he be asked to account to this house for his conduct last night.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. I ask the minister to answer the question.

Mr EREN (Minister for Veterans) (11:15) — I absolutely refute the allegations that have been made by the Leader of the Opposition — all of those allegations that have been made. I have nothing further to add, and I refer to the initial answer that I gave you earlier, Speaker.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:16) — I ask the member for Eltham to leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Eltham withdrew from chamber.

Ministers statements: South Melbourne Primary School

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) (11:16) — I rise to update the house on the new South Melbourne Primary School, which sits within the Montague precinct of Fishermans Bend. There are now around 159 students enrolled at this wonderful school — students who would have otherwise been crammed into other local schools in the inner city.

The opening of this school was a major milestone in our government's transformation of Fishermans Bend. This vertical school has world-class learning facilities. It has more than 900 square metres of outdoor learning space and play space and competition-standard basketball and netball courts. But just because it is a vertical school does not mean that the kids should not have grass to run around on. So to complement this new school we have co-purchased land for a community park across the road, and I was pleased to see works on the park progressing. This park, diagonally opposite the school, is vitally important in supporting a healthy lifestyle and physical activity for students and the local community.

Prior to the former planning minister's reckless rezoning decision, this land would have cost around \$6 million to \$7 million. Unfortunately overnight the price more than doubled. This much-needed park cost taxpayers \$19 million. Why did it cost so much, you

might ask? The cost more than doubled overnight — \$12 million extra that could have been used for other vital projects like school upgrades. We are all paying the Matthew Guy premium in Fishermans Bend — taxpayers dollars funnelled into the pockets of the Leader of the Opposition's dodgy mates. It was an obscene decision by that man —

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier will resume his seat. The member for Box Hill on a point of order.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is departing from making a ministers statement and is proceeding to debate the issue. I ask you to bring him back to making a ministers statement.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier will come back to making a ministers statement.

Mr MERLINO — Only Labor will plan properly in Fishermans Bend, including delivering new schools.

Wire rope barriers

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (11:18) — My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The VicRoads roadside grass-cutting program is critical in reducing the fire risk along our freeway and highway network. Due to the placement of wire rope barriers too close to the side of the road and in contravention of your own protocols, on the Hume Freeway grass-cutting tractors now do not have enough room to do this task. Minister, is it not a fact that your botched placement of these wire rope barriers along the Hume Freeway means that kilometres of grass cutting will now have to be completed by workers pushing lawnmowers?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (11:19) — No.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, I am very happy to provide photographic evidence to the minister to demonstrate that he is misleading the house.

The SPEAKER — Order! I have not called the minister to answer the question. I call the minister to answer the question.

Ms Ryan — He answered and he said no.

The SPEAKER — I apologise.

Supplementary question

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (11:20) — On a supplementary question, page 3 of the minister's 2016 wire rope barrier guidelines states clearly that the ongoing maintenance on both sides of these barriers needs to comply with occupational health and safety requirements. Minister, before you approved the botched placement of wire rope barriers close to fast-moving traffic, did you get any advice that forcing workers to push lawnmowers alongside a major freeway in any way complies with section 28 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004?

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (11:20) — I thank the member for her question. But there are a couple of things. I would like to actually inform the member that they are working off an old road design note, which is from 2016. It was actually updated in 2017. What we had yesterday was the shadow minister and these other geese out there handing around a wrong, old document. In other words, they got it wrong on every count. That is the first thing.

Let me be very clear: there were updated guidelines done in 2017. I would encourage those on that other side to have a look at those guidelines, because they incorporate —

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

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Polwarth!

Ms Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was about whether the minister's guidelines comply with section 28 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. He is arguing that the guidelines have been updated. Is he seriously suggesting that his guidelines direct workers not to comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act?

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

Mr DONNELLAN — Thank you very much. I again thank the member for her clarification and her road safety expertise and obviously her occupational health and safety expertise, but it would not be a bad idea to get the updated guidelines, done in 2017.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr DONNELLAN — Let me be very clear: it would be of great benefit to the member for Polwarth as well, who also seems to be getting it wrong on so many fronts. So let us be very clear: the 2017 guidelines accommodate —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:22) — Order! The member for Polwarth had been warned. I ask the member for Polwarth to leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

Ministers statements: Fishermans Bend

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (11:23) — I rise to inform the house about the government's ongoing actions to secure a positive economic outcome in Fishermans Bend. The Minister for Planning, a great planning minister, has called in 26 planning applications pending a final planning strategy for the area. Of course the greatest gift that a government can be given is the opportunity to shape the future of our great state. Every single person on this side of the house takes that responsibility seriously; those opposite are prepared to trade it off for a lobster dinner.

Last year the Minister for Planning released the draft planning controls for Fishermans Bend. Those controls outline a vision for social and economic development of the precinct, including creating space for 80 000 new jobs, five new schools, four AFL ovals and six soccer pitches. We are already taking concrete steps towards delivery of that vision. In December I announced with the also great Minister for Industry and Employment an agreement with the University of Melbourne for the development of a \$1 billion engineering campus in Fishermans Bend. Today we announced the final step in unwinding the dodgy leftovers from the Leader of the Opposition.

This has been a disgraceful episode. It is possibly the greatest heist ever perpetrated on the people of Victoria, stealing from our future in order to favour fortunate and friendly developer mates.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Treasurer is departing from making a ministers statement and is proceeding to debate the issue. I ask you to bring him back to making a ministers statement.

The SPEAKER — The Treasurer is departing from his statement, and I ask the Treasurer to come back to making a ministers statement.

Mr PALLAS — We are serious about developing upon a vision that will assure the economic vitality of this area, but also recognising a community will build in it, so a Gold Coast on the Yarra that would have made Joh Bjelke-Petersen blush is not part of that vision. A vision needs to be more than a competition about who can plan and build the biggest apartment blocks.

Murray-Darling Basin plan

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (11:25) — My question is to the Minister for Water. Minister, what will the Victorian government do to ensure that the Murray-Darling Basin plan is delivered as the 2750-gigalitre plan it was designed to be and that a deal is not done in Canberra to satisfy the demands of those now wrongly insisting it is a 3200-gigalitre plan?

Recent events in the Senate have again created enormous uncertainty for irrigation farmers in my electorate and indeed about the plan itself. We and the plan are now at risk not only from federal Labor and the Greens but also the federal Nationals water minister, David Littleproud, all of whom are saying that the Murray-Darling Basin plan is a 3200-gigalitre plan and should be delivered as such. Mr Littleproud's current position represents an extraordinary departure from the views of his government to date and is at odds with both your government and with the original signatory to the agreement, all of whom agreed in Victoria that the 450 gigalitres could only be delivered if it did not hurt rural communities.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Water) (11:26) — Can I thank the member for Shepparton for her question, a really critical question and a very important issue for many communities in Victoria. I also want to thank the member for her strong advocacy and voice on this issue. She has not been a silent voice on this, unlike others.

We are at a very critical stage in the plan. I just want to make it clear: Victoria has delivered everything we have been required to deliver under the plan and we are committed to deliver our full contribution of the 2750 gigalitres that was our obligation. Firstly, last week unfortunately the Senate decided to basically put the plan at risk and attempt to renege on the plan. Last year every state, including South Australia, voted to support the northern basin review and the sustainable diversion limit (SDL) projects — two key parts of the plan that were always there. These two disallowance motions, one of which, on the northern basin review,

was unfortunately supported last week in the Senate, have put the plan at risk, with New South Wales indicating that they will walk away from the project. The future of the SDL projects is also absolutely critical.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Kew!

Ms NEVILLE — Seriously, this is so important — yes, you are yelling it — and let me quote for you, member for Kew. As a Mooroopna irrigator said last week in the *Weekly Times*:

It's a bewildering scenario: a federal Nationals minister strongarming his base, federal Labor wanting to ram through the 450 gigalitres, and state Nationals completely silent.

Our communities have never felt so abandoned by those who traditionally ... see us as their heartland. Ironically, Lisa Neville, a state Labor minister, seems to be a lone voice standing up for Victorian irrigators.

I can tell you right now we have got two issues. Do we have an SDL project? And if that is voted down, we have the potential for the commonwealth to come in and buy water. My message is, we will not allow them to come in and buy further water.

The second issue is we have got the federal minister — and I have got quote after quote — talking about a 3200 plan. It is not a 3200 plan. This is a 2750 plan, with the additional water to be delivered only in a scenario where it is done in a neutral or better socio-economic way. It cannot be done, as the member for Shepparton knows. It will kill off these communities. I will not allow either federal Labor or the federal National Party to do a deal to tie these two together. We will not stand for that. We will back our irrigation communities as we have, and we will back in the member for Shepparton in her strong voice on this issue as well.

Supplementary question

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (11:29) — With New South Wales already making moves to pull out of the Murray-Darling Basin agreement, what are Victoria's options to ensure it has access to sufficient irrigation water to continue production of its high-quality, sought-after food if the plan falls apart?

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Water) (11:30) — Thank you, member for Shepparton, for that supplementary. As I said, we have already done a lot of the heavy lifting. We had to deliver 1075 gigalitres under this plan. We have already delivered 800 of those gigalitres — high-reliability water — way ahead of any other state. We want the SDL projects. We want to continue with the connection projects — the nine

projects under the SDL — to ensure we meet our obligations under the signed plan, the 2750 plan, and we will continue to do that. If the disallowance motion gets up, we will negotiate with the commonwealth in order to deliver those projects and deliver what we said we would. But I am making it clear again that we will not allow anyone to tie the 450 gigalitres to the 605 gigalitres in any deal.

Can I just point out again that the *Shepparton News* said this week:

... apart from Ms Neville and the state member for Shepparton, Suzanna Sheed, irrigators have precious few friends in state and federal politics right now.

On this side, member for Shepparton, we are your friend in the irrigation community.

Ministers statements: Fishermans Bend

Mr Paynter — Watch your language, Luke.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Bass!

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (11:31) — Thank you, Brian. Greatly appreciated. It is good to see you are still here today.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The minister will ignore interjections.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Bass is warned.

Mr DONNELLAN — I am very much here to update the house on the futureproofing work that we are doing to protect the strategic freight routes at Fishermans Bend. We are also obviously doing that with the Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects. It is great work that we are doing. There is no government that has actually been a better friend to the freight industry. We know that Victoria is very much a leader in freight and logistics, whether it be our West Gate tunnel or whether it be the enormous work we are doing on the duplications in the western suburbs, our status as the number one container port in Victoria or our leading role in facilitating —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Mr DONNELLAN — Victoria only represents about 3 per cent of the landmass but very much represents 25 per cent of our total exports. Freight

volumes are predicted to increase from 360 million tonnes per annum in 2014 to 900 million tonnes in 2051, so it is very much critical that we protect these freight routes so that we can actually get goods in and out to ensure that we protect industry and so forth.

We know that planning has not been particularly good down at Fishermans Bend, because the last lot that undertook that very simply forgot the very basics, whether it be just basic schools or parks. You would have to be an absolute dodo of the highest level if you could not even think that kids might need schools and parks and things like that to attend. What we had was an absolute free-for-all, but I can assure you that this government on this side of the house is doing the work that we need to do to ensure that we protect the freight industry.

Taxi and hire car industry

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (11:33) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. I refer to the situation of Ms Irene Smirnis, whose husband passed away from cancer, leaving her with two taxi licences and a debt which she was managing from the income of these licences. Once this income ceased due to your taxi changes, Ms Smirnis could no longer survive and had to place her family home for sale. Astoundingly, she was rejected by your so-called Fairness Fund, which could have assisted her to keep her family home. She was rejected, with no reason given. Her home has not sold, and she is facing bankruptcy. Minister, will you meet with Ms Smirnis to advise her what her next step should be given you have stripped her of her only income and will not pay her any compensation?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (11:34) — I will follow up the matter that the member referred to. I will follow up with the —

Ms Ryall interjected.

The SPEAKER — The member for Ringwood!

Ms ALLAN — I will be following up directly with Irene Smirnis, who the member referred to in his question. He has made a number of claims that need to be, frankly, fact-checked, because it is not correct. I am happy to say that to her. I am very happy to say to Mrs Smirnis that you have to fact-check everything this mob says — everything this mob says.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the lady in the gallery to stop waving. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has asked a question about a very sensitive

matter, I would have thought, and I would think that this house deserves to hear the answer in silence.

Ms ALLAN — The lady, as the member indicated, had two taxi licences, so because of our significant transitional payment she would have received \$150 000 for those two licences as a result of the levy that was put in through the legislation that was opposed by those opposite. When it was proposed the member described this as a slush fund. He told the *Neos Kosmos* paper that this was nothing more than a slush fund. They opposed the levy, they opposed the fund and now they are running around telling untruths to members of the community.

Mr Hodgett — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is lying and misleading the house, and I would ask that you bring her back to answering the question.

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, I would like the member to identify what of what I said to the house was lying.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is no point of order. The use of that word is inappropriate in the house. The minister to continue answering the question.

Ms ALLAN — The reason why I say you have to fact-check everything this mob claim in this house is that the last time the member raised a personal matter about a different taxi licence holder in this Parliament, this person had received significant support from our program — significant financial assistance. I will not disclose that amount out of respect to the individual involved, but I say to any member and to any former taxi licence holder: you should believe nothing these people say. You should believe nothing these people say. They lie to you. They lie to you and mislead you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am going to ask the house to pause for a moment.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister's response was being disrespectful to members of the community, and it was also debating the issue. I ask you to bring her back to answering the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, Speaker, everything I have said in this chamber is entirely

accurate. You opposed the Fairness Fund, you opposed the levy, you are hanging out with Uber.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the House knows that it is inappropriate to wave documents around in this house and use them as props. The Leader of the House has concluded her answer.

Mr Burgess — On a point of order, Speaker, it is not very long ago that I held up a piece of paper like that and you immediately ejected me from the house. I ask that you do the same thing to that person.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Roads and Road Safety is warned. I do allow a degree of latitude to those members sitting at the table in question time. I think members sitting at the table would agree with that statement, but I do ask the minister not to do that again.

Ms ALLAN — Can I provide to the house an update on the financial assistance that has gone to the taxi industry. So far over 300 —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — They are not interested, Speaker.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ferntree Gully is warned. The member for Gembrook is warned.

Ms ALLAN — So \$350 million has already been paid to 4000 licence-holders under the Fairness Fund that the member referred to. Over 560 payments have been made and over \$46 million has been paid out.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Caulfield is warned.

Ms ALLAN — This was the money that those opposite called a slush fund. This was the funding that they told those opposite they did not support. The opposition is an absolute disgrace when it comes to this issue.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:40) — Order! The member for Caulfield was warned and continued to shout. I ask the

member for Caulfield to leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Caulfield withdrew from chamber.

Supplementary question

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (11:40) — I note the minister clearly does not care about Ms Smirmis's bankruptcy. Your taxi industry Fairness Fund rejected any support without explanation for George Lianos, who has a special needs child, placing significant financial strain on his family. Mr Paul Bianchi, who is here today, was advised to submit to the fund in his own name, yet his rejection letter was callously sent in the name of his recently deceased father. Minister, so many families with compelling reasons have been rejected from your fund. Why won't you finally release the criteria for making these decisions, which have been used so harshly in these and many other cases?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (11:41) — I will follow those matters up, but can I just say to the chamber that this line of questioning was flagged yesterday on the Victorian Taxi Families Facebook page. The Leader of the Opposition has said repeatedly that 'the standard you walk past is the standard you accept'.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Hastings!

Ms ALLAN — This is a Facebook page that contains continuous and vile references —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:41) — Order! The member for Kew will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Kew withdrew from chamber.

Ms ALLAN — In terms of having a discussion about standards in this place, this is a situation where the shadow Minister for Public Transport called the member for Oakleigh —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, this was a very specific question asked by the member in relation to what these families have experienced at the hands of the minister, and the minister should direct her answer to that. If she is not prepared to continue to elaborate on why she has done what she has done to those families, she should sit down.

Ms ALLAN — On the point of order, Speaker, I am being entirely relevant to the question that was asked. I have addressed the issue of the Fairness Fund and the families that have been involved.

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

Ms ALLAN — I say this: there have been comments posted on this Facebook page that have attacked a number of us — our families, our children. They have attacked them repeatedly. This is what has happened as a result of what has been incited by the behaviour of those opposite. That is the standard that you walk past.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook is warned. The Leader of the Opposition will assist the running of the house.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, the point of order goes to the fact: does the Leader of the House condone the action of the United Firefighters Union's own Facebook page and the hateful and inciteful issues that were put on that website?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:43) — Order! The member for Geelong will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Geelong withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — That is not a point of order.

Ministers statements: Fishermans Bend

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Major Projects) (11:43) — I rise to update the house on the substantial work the Andrews Labor government is doing to attract investment and jobs to Fishermans Bend — not dodgy deals with dodgy developers, but real projects that bring real benefits and real jobs to the state of Victoria. In 2016 we purchased 32 hectares at the former General Motors Holden site at Fishermans Bend. Let us remember why we had to do that: because those opposite and their mates in Canberra ran the auto industry out of town. We have decided to invest in this precinct with support to develop an advanced manufacturing and engineering precinct of excellence.

The Treasurer indicated earlier that this is already paying dividends, with the University of Melbourne committing to build a \$1 billion world-class

engineering school right in the heart of this precinct. Once a former vibrant automotive centre of production, in the future it will become a vibrant centre for excellence in education and design. But that is not all, not by a long shot. We are leaving no stone unturned in advocating to the federal government for BAE Systems to be successful in its bid to win the Land 400 defence contract, because you know where we want to deliver that project? In Fishermans Bend — right there in Fishermans Bend.

On this side of the chamber we put our money where our mouths are, not in the pockets of wealthy donors. We put it and invest it in the infrastructure and support that our community needs. We always knew that there was something fishy about the Leader of the Opposition, and whether it is lobsters —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Leader of the House is now departing from making a ministers statement and is proceeding to debate the issue. I ask you to bring her back to making a ministers statement.

The SPEAKER — I uphold the point of order. I ask the minister to come back to making a statement.

Ms ALLAN — The substance of this issue is: we are fixing the mess. We are fixing the absolute mess that was left behind by the dodgy deals that were done by the dodgy Leader of the Opposition when he was the Minister for Planning. We are getting on with investing in Fishermans Bend, unlike those opposite.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, at the commencement of question time you very properly informed the house that you and the President had decided to establish an investigation into the allegations about a confrontation that took place in this building last night. As you would have heard during question time, both the Premier and the minister placed reliance on that investigation in the way in which they responded to questions that were asked in this house. In those circumstances, Speaker, I would submit it is incumbent on you, and it would certainly assist members of this house, for you to provide further information to the house about the nature of the investigation that you and the President have decided to establish.

For example, who will be conducting it? Will it be the head of the Department of Parliamentary Services? Will you be appointing someone specific to undertake

it? What powers of investigation will they have? Will they have the capacity to require the parties involved to give evidence before them? Have you secured commitments from those parties to give that evidence? Do you require a resolution of this house and of the other house to give authority to your investigation given that the alleged parties to this incident were from different houses?

These are all very important matters for giving this house and the community confidence in the investigation that you are undertaking. I can certainly signal that on this side of the house we would be prepared to support any resolution of this chamber that you needed to assist your investigation, but I do ask you if you could provide this house and the community with further details of how you propose that this investigation will be undertaken.

The SPEAKER — I thank the member for Box Hill for his point of order. I am not in the practice, as is previous practice, of answering questions from the chamber in the chamber, which is a clearly established practice, but I will be issuing a statement later today about the investigation that the member has referred to.

We have a couple of points of order. The first one is from the member for Eildon.

Ms McLeish — My first point of order, Speaker, is that during question time the phone of the member for Clarinda rang and he took that phone call. This is not the first time that has happened; he is a serial offender. I think that is very inappropriate behaviour in the house, and I would call on you as the Speaker to counsel him as to his behaviour and as to his turning his phone down during all times he is in the chamber.

The SPEAKER — I thank the member for that point of order. I heard the phone ring to my right, but I did not see whose it was. I will follow that matter up and address it accordingly.

Ms McLeish — My second point of order relates to a number of unanswered questions that I have: question 13 584 to the Minister for Police, which was due on 15 December 2017; question 13 781 to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, due on 11 January 2018; and question 13 802 to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, which was expected on 12 January 2018 — all of which remain outstanding.

The SPEAKER — I will follow those matters up for the member for Eildon.

Ms Ryall — I raise my point of order, Speaker, in reference to the adjournment debate and

question 13 154 raised on 21 September last year, due on — well, close to — 21 October last year. I am going to raise this point of order every single sitting day in this house until I receive a response from the minister. I have people waiting for urgent dental care in my community, and it is unsatisfactory that the minister will not respond to your request for her to answer my adjournment request.

The SPEAKER — I thank the member for that point of order. I have written to the minister involved.

Mr Wakeling — On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to advise of three outstanding matters which have yet to be answered: firstly, 13 712 to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and that was due on 29 December of last year; matter 13 334, which was for the Minister for Police, a constituency question, which was due on 18 November 2017; and 13 030, which was to the Minister for Education, and that was due on 7 October last year. I request that all three ministers please respond to the concerns I have raised on behalf of my community.

The SPEAKER — I thank the member for that point of order. I will follow that matter up.

Mr Wells — I raise a point of order in regard to unanswered questions, my questions on notice, which were lodged on 14 November 2017. I had two questions on notice to the Minister for Police regarding crime and police numbers in my area. The question numbers were 13 478 and 13 477, and I would ask you to follow them up.

The SPEAKER — We will follow those matters up for the member.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Questions without notice and ministers statements

The SPEAKER (11:52) — Before calling the first constituency question, I have a couple of rulings. The member for Burwood raised three points of order about the admissibility of constituency questions earlier this week. On Tuesday the member suggested that the member for Yan Yean asked two very distinct questions. Having reviewed the transcript, I do not uphold that point of order. The member for Yan Yean's question was about support and funding for women's sporting clubs and facilities in the Nillumbik electorate. It was asked in two parts, but both parts related to the same theme. The member for Burwood is correct that members cannot ask two distinct questions — for

example, on women's sporting facilities and then on something unrelated — but to disallow a question in two parts would unnecessarily prohibit members from seeking information about government administration and policy.

On Wednesday the member for Burwood queried whether the member for Pascoe Vale's question sought action. The member asked, and I quote, 'will the minister consider funding an upgrade', which is a question seeking information, and I do not uphold that point of order.

The member for Burwood also queried whether the member for Sunbury's question about the Sunbury Road upgrade project sought information already available in the public domain. The member is correct in that this is not allowed, but I make the point that the Chair is not necessarily going to be able to determine that. I know that this project has been reported in the media and that VicRoads has published some information about it, but I am not in a position to assess whether the precise information the member for Sunbury seeks is publicly available. I do not uphold the point of order, but I do draw all members' attention to this requirement and thank the member for Burwood for bringing this to the attention of the house.

Mr Watt — Thank you, Speaker. I just raise a point of order with regard to commentary you made last year about the sessional orders, or Rulings from the Chair, around constituency questions, because I still believe that they are not very clear and I am seeking your guidance as to when you might allow us to know exactly what is and is not acceptable in a constituency question. If you ask, 'Will the minister consider', last year under the previous Speaker it would have been considered an action because you were asking them to fund something. So I would ask that you report back to the house to give us clear guidance on constituency questions. You have already said you would, but I just remind you of that.

The SPEAKER — As I have said in this house before, I will always apply the practices and precedents of this place. In relation to constituency questions and a determination of whether questions are in order or not, if there is any grey area, I always lean towards allowing members to seek information when a question is a genuine attempt to seek information, from any side of the house.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Hawthorn electorate

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (11:54) — (14 037) My question is to the Minister for Water. I have been contacted by a constituent in my electorate who has been seeking answers regarding the differing costs of water meters. My constituent made enquiries regarding separate water meters for her property and found that Yarra Valley Water charges almost double the price for water meters than that charged by South East Water.

In response to correspondence I sent the minister, she stated that it is difficult to compare water meter pricing across water corporations as each has different products and costs, an example being that the Yarra Valley Water's 20 millimetre water meter includes the installation of a meter and lock to prevent theft; however, South East Water's product does not include the anti-theft device. She also detailed that under the Water Act 1989 each of the three metropolitan water corporations have been designated a water and sewerage district. A customer whose property is in one of these water and sewerage districts is serviced by the corporation as set out in the act. My question to the minister is: can she provide advice to my constituent on whether and how customers who have to use a particular company can have and exercise better choice in which meter is installed at their property?

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (11:55) — (14 038) I direct my constituency question to the Minister for Public Transport, and I ask: what is the latest information about the review into the north-west tram network, specifically as it relates to tram routes 57, 59 and 82?

Ovens Valley electorate

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (11:56) — (14 039) My question is to the Minister for Education, on behalf of Kirsty Tyers of Boorhaman. Kirsty has a school bus issue and I seek the minister's support. Kirsty has four children, with the fourth child, Hayden, trying to access a bus so that he can be educated with his siblings. Boorhaman is a small country community west of Wangaratta, and there is no access by V/Line or any other public transport. Kirsty is in the unenviable situation where her oldest three children are transported by the school bus and the fourth must be taken by car. The question that I seek clarification on is if this bus run will be increased to ensure all the Tyers children can access education with their siblings.

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (11:56) — (14 040) My consistency question is to the Minister for Health. What information can the minister provide on how frontline health workers in the Yuroke electorate will benefit from the Andrews Labor government's Health Service Violence Prevention Fund? In my community we are fortunate to have a number of outstanding health workers. Whether it is the paramedics at the Craigieburn ambulance station, our community emergency response team volunteer first responders or the staff at public health clinics, they all work tirelessly to care for local residents. Unfortunately too often these hardworking professionals are subject to physical or verbal attacks. That is why I am pleased that the government has introduced a \$40 billion fund to protect the safety of healthcare workers. I look forward to receiving information from the minister about the local benefits of this fund, and I thank her for the work she has done in this space.

Brighton electorate

Ms ASHER (Brighton) (11:57) — (14 041) The question I have is for the Minister for Public Transport, and my question is: when will repair and maintenance works be completed on Hawthorn Road, Brighton East, near the Nepean Highway? The reason I am asking the Minister for Public Transport is that these potholes and damages are along tram tracks. This issue has been the subject of a lot of correspondence between the two of us. The minister is familiar with the problem of damage to cars or cars swerving. My constituents have been putting up with this since 2015. The work is now urgent, and I would be most grateful if she could supply me with a precise date of when these maintenance works will be concluded.

Macedon electorate

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (11:58) — (14 042) My question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Last year you announced that works would commence at Clarkefield station to upgrade the station, and it was my pleasure to welcome you to the station so that you could see for yourself the sorry state of the car park and the need for improved lighting and CCTV. With an additional 17 services now stopping at Clarkefield, the upgrade is needed more than ever. I understand that delays have been experienced while issues relating to tenancy of the old goods shed are sorted out, but an update on this matter would also be welcomed, so I look forward to receiving your response.

Melton electorate

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (11:58) — (14 043) My constituency question is for the Minister for Health. When will the further planning for additional hospital capacity in the peri-urban fringe of the western growth corridor, which includes the Melton and Bacchus Marsh communities, be commenced and completed, as detailed under the third dot point of page 89 of the *Statewide Design, Service and Infrastructure Plan for Victoria's Health System 2017–2037*? Melton City Council and the community would like to be kept informed on this and to also be consulted on this further hospital capacity, so it would be great if we had a bit of a time line and a bit of an understanding of the next stage of this particular plan for my specific region and district.

Frankston electorate

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (11:59) — (14 044) My constituency question is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the question I ask on behalf of my community is: when will the Frankston Nature Conservation Reserve be fully open to the public and during which hours and for what activities will that reserve be available? This reserve is truly beautiful and a real gem in Frankston's crown. Hopefully it will soon be fully open to the public for the first time since 1926. We look forward to the minister's response.

Eildon electorate

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (12:00) — (14 045) My question is directed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Marysville residents and business owners want to know when Lady Talbot Drive and the beautiful beech rainforest walk will be reopened. They want a clear time frame for its opening. The spectacular beeches rainforest walk is about 4 kilometres return. It features groves of ancient myrtle beech trees, many over 300 years old and covered with epiphytic mosses and ferns. There is also a walk through enormous mountain ash trees to the Taggerty River. These remarkable trees are one of the tallest species in the world, second only to the Californian redwood.

The Marysville visitor information centre relies heavily on volunteers, who want to see their area prosper again. Their ambassadors are always being asked when these walks will be reopened. In addition, the natural beauty of the walks offer an insight into the area's history. Minister, you know the town of Marysville, a very popular and beautiful destination, was all but destroyed in the Black Saturday fires. The community has been

particularly resilient, but they really want to see the government get behind their recovery.

Dandenong electorate

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (12:01) — (14 046) My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and I ask the minister: how is the government holding private energy providers to account following recent power outages in my local community, and what compensation is available to those who have been impacted by these outages?

FEDERAL HEALTH FUNDING

Debate resumed.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Mental Health) (12:01) — It is with great sadness that I resume my contribution, not because this is not an important issue but because you would like to think that it would be one that all members of this house could come together on. I was disappointed to have to follow the member for Lowan and her largely fictitious contribution to the debate, which simply confirmed what we know — that the members of the coalition opposite do not take the adequate funding of health care in all of its iterations across our state as a bipartisan issue; they would rather defend the cuts of their mates in Canberra than back the patients of our health services.

As the Minister for Health indicated, what has caused this concern in our part of the chamber is the locking in of the \$2 billion worth of cuts that the Turnbull-Abbott government system of health funding will wreak upon Victorian health networks over the next five years. This is an enormous cut. Sadly it is but the latest in a line of reckless and, frankly, untenable decisions of the Turnbull government when it comes to its part in providing adequate support in the provision of Victoria's healthcare needs. These are growing needs, as is all too well understood by all members of this place. That is because whether it is the Liberal-Nationals coalition in Canberra or its local variation here in this place, they are fundamentally untrustworthy when it comes to health funding. They do not prioritise it; they do not understand the critical nature of its contribution to people's lives.

I want to focus particularly on the impact of that funding cut on the mental health services that so many of our health services right across the state deliver now under more pressure than they would otherwise have had to do had the commonwealth stuck to its deal of providing 50 per cent of funding to our health networks.

I could perhaps focus on the national perinatal depression initiative, which used to have 50–50 matched funding from 2009 and which supported early intervention and support to women at risk in the perinatal depression field. We saw with great sadness the commonwealth overnight, with no advice to the health services let alone the state that this was coming, ripped away that funding of \$1.6 million in the 2016–17 year. It is with sadness that I see the Turnbull government simply seeking to lock that in.

The \$1.6 million of continued funding was found by the Victorian government. Indeed given the importance of that area, we were proud to increase that to \$2.8 million in recurrent funding. That program is about early intervention and support for sometimes our most vulnerable of mothers, whether they are expectant or new mothers, to look after themselves, their children and their wider families. The fact that those cuts disproportionately landed in the rural and regional parts of Victoria and were still not commented on by those opposite was a double tragedy. This funding was suddenly at risk, it was pulled away, but it fell to Labor to step up and support that.

Whether it is perinatal mental health, the growth demands of mental health, the wide support for acute alcohol and drug facilities, the need through the mental health emergency departments (ED) to get dedicated streams of support into emergency department units to make sure that those increasing numbers of people with mental health and alcohol and drug issues are appropriately streamed, the support and safety for the workforce in these areas, whether it be the first responders or the nurses, doctors and support staff in the hospital's emergency departments, all of those programs should be properly supported by the commonwealth, as is its obligation and as is its responsibility.

The commonwealth seeks to slowly strangle the Medicare system, thereby forcing people into emergency departments, whether they have mental health or physical health issues, yet at the same time it requires the states to keep those services free, as of course they should be, without doing their part of the lifting. This is simply a call for the commonwealth to pay its fair share. We say that the commonwealth and Victoria need to share the growing cost of hospital funding equally. Frankly, it is beyond a shame — it is a national disgrace — that the Turnbull government is refusing to pay its 50 per cent of funding.

They are also proposing to cap the growth of funding at 6.5 per cent, which simply means that the funding that they are providing will continue to erode in real terms

and will not meet the growing needs of our hospitals and particularly the very fast growing need in the mental health components of our health network. Not only is this not in line with community expectations, but it is also not in line with what the people with mental health challenges in our health system deserve. Sadly, it is what we have come to expect from the coalition in Canberra.

At the same time we are still rebuilding after the \$1 billion worth of cuts those opposite wreaked on our health system in the four years they occupied the Treasury benches, and the consequences of that include hospital waiting list blowouts and increased ambulance response times. We saw their war on our ambulance services and first responders and their refusal to ultimately come to an arrangement with our healthcare workers in the system.

In 2011 it only took a matter of a few days before the Honourable David Davis in the other place, who was then the Minister for Health, wreaked his first \$350 million worth of cuts on the Victorian health system, and those opposite kept going for four long years. Those of us on this side of the house now have to both rebuild from the Liberal-Nationals coalition's cuts to our own health system and at the same time combat those of their mates in Canberra, and that is an unfair burden on those people who look to our world-class health system for the support they need.

These services are provided by the Victorian government in partnership with the federal government, but it is the increasingly sad reality that our federal government is ignoring the needs of Victorians, particularly those who need support from our health system. How can they expect our hospitals to employ more doctors and more nurses and to make sure they are equipped with the 21st century equipment they need as demand continues to grow and costs continue to grow if they are slowly strangling the funding our hospitals need? Our hospitals have kept their side of the bargain by providing the health care that Victorians need, particularly in the mental health space; it is the federal government that has failed to keep up with Victorians' needs.

Labor governments are always here to deliver the biggest health reforms and to support our health system. I have got the unmitigated honour of being the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing at a time when the national disability insurance scheme is being rolled out. It is a shame to see that the commonwealth continues, through its lack of full support for the National Disability Insurance Agency, to essentially assist in the process of creating gaps in the system. It was promised

as the national contribution to people with disabilities for the opportunity of an ordinary life but the commonwealth has created systems whereby they do not deliver on the promises that were made to so many to create opportunities for people with disabilities, who look to our health system for the support that was meant to be coming from the National Disability Insurance Agency.

We look forward to the opportunity, whether it is in health, and particularly in mental health, or whether it is in the disability sector for the Turnbull government to do the right thing and for it to support its portion of the funding for our growing health system in a fair and equitable way — the way that was signed up to, a 50-50 partnership. That continues not to be the case, whether it is in mental health, whether it is in the disability sector or whether it is in the alcohol and drug area — the areas of my portfolio responsibilities. Every day I see the impact of those cuts and that failure to fund services properly by the commonwealth as our frontline expert staff, the carers, the support staff and the peer workers all do the right thing. We call on the Turnbull government to do the right thing.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:11) — Here we are, and I think we just need to see the unedifying events that occurred during question time to see where this government is placed. We have got, allegedly, ministers at war with each other. We have got a government that is not focused on improving —

Ms Hutchins interjected.

Mr WAKELING — We have a minister who is at war with one of his colleagues in the other house, if that is a better explanation for the minister at the table. We have got a government that is not focused on improving services and making Victoria a safer place.

Here we are in the last year of this current Parliament, at a time when Victorians are concerned about their safety and at a time when Victorians are concerned about the reliability of electricity supply and the costs associated with electricity, and this government has taken it upon itself not to debate legislation in this place on a sitting Thursday, for an entire day, to determine how to improve situations for which this government has responsibility. It has seen fit to debate a motion, item 5 on the notice paper. Heaven forbid that this government actually takes responsibility for what is within its remit, which is to introduce legislation into this house and to debate legislation to improve the services and facilities that Victorians expect.

When we look at this debate, which is about health services, I am reminded that hospitals have seen a significant increase in the cost of running their services because of significantly increased prices in electricity, and this government has done nothing to provide any relief to those hospitals to deal with that issue. It has done nothing to provide support to health services across the state that are now paying out more money for electricity due to a policy that was imposed by this government. So if we are going to talk about health services, let us talk about how the policies of this government have impacted hospitals, community health services and the breadth of allied health services across the state because of the impact of electricity prices imposed upon them by this government.

But no, we are not even getting legislation in this house to deal with the health system. We are not debating legislation. We are not seeking to improve the health system by changing legislation. We are debating a motion regarding the federal government. I would have thought that there were enough issues within the remit of the Victorian government to occupy this government before it worries about the federal government. I would have thought that this government would have known that there were so many concerns of Victorians with electricity prices, with law and order — and the list goes on — and that this government would use every day available to it for the remainder of this parliamentary session before the election to put in place legislation to improve the services and infrastructure that affect Victorians.

But no, because this government cannot manage its legislative agenda, because this government is lazy in not introducing appropriate legislation to ensure that on a Thursday we have bills to debate, it is wasting the Parliament's time for an entire day to debate someone's motion on the federal government. I think this is a demonstration of where this government is currently at.

This is a government without vision, this is a government without direction, this is a government without an agenda, this is a government that does not listen and this is a government that does not understand what impacts Victorians — what impacts mums and dads. This is a government that does not understand that over summer residents were without power. Residents in my community that rely on electricity to operate dialysis machines were without power for significant periods of time, and a token amount of money is not what my constituents were looking for; they were looking for a government that listened, that understood the impact of its decision to sit back and support the closure of Hazelwood and that understood that if you

remove significant generational power from the electricity system, it impacts the Victorian community.

My community, as are Victorians across the state, are paying significantly more for their electricity. That means they have less money to pay for other services that they would normally spend money on — one being private health insurance, another paying for medical expenses, another paying for drugs and other treatments. When Victorians are making decisions like ‘Do I pay an electricity bill or do I go to the chemist to get my prescription?’, this is an example of a government that is out of touch.

If we are going to talk about health services, why aren’t we in here debating legislation about improving the Victorian health system, instead of wasting our time debating a motion talking about the federal government? If we want to come in here and talk about the Victorian health system, why do we not talk about the fact that just down the road at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre we still have an empty floor? It was closed on ideological grounds and provided no benefit to Victorians — opposed because of blind ideology. I ask the rhetorical question: would that have happened under Steve Bracks? Would that have happened under John Brumby? Probably not. But it happened under this government because this is a government that is more concerned about ideology than it is about delivering health services.

Members opposite can stand up in this house and try to lecture Victorians — lecture us, lecture the community — on what they are doing for the state, but their actions speak louder than their words. If you are really concerned about the health system, maybe you could stand up and explain why you still oppose the utilisation of the top floor of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. Because I am pretty sure Victorians would be appalled to learn that they have paid for a facility that is still empty, and that you had an organisation that was willing to access the facility to provide health services that was overall going to provide a better service with respect to cancer treatment, but no, you did not proceed with it.

When you look around the state, you have private facilities located alongside public health facilities. No-one is talking about the closure of Jessie McPherson Private Hospital out at Clayton. No-one is talking about other services where there are private health providers working alongside the public health system. Another opportunity was presented to the government to do just that — to benefit the Victorian community by marrying the private sector with the public sector, which overall provides a better health

service for all. But no, that did not proceed on ideological grounds.

So if we are going to talk about health and we want to have a motion — if those opposition are not going to worry about legislation, if you are going to abrogate our responsibility as a government in terms of actually trying to legislate and improve services — I would have thought you could at least stand up in this place and provide an explanation to Victorians on that very important issue. I would have thought that you could have stood up in this place and explained to Victorians why it is that the cost of your Victorian Heart Hospital, which was lauded as being a significant health service for residents in the south-east and the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, has blown out by 210 per cent. Costed at \$150 million, it has blown out to \$470 million, and we still do not have a facility. They are the things that we should be talking about under this government, but we are not. This government wants to waste the entire day debating a motion instead of getting on with legislation — and I think that speaks volumes to Victorians about where this government is placed.

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) (12:21) — I rise to speak on the motion that is before the house, which condemns the federal government for a funding proposal that short-changes our hospitals by over \$2 billion, condemns the Leader of the Opposition for failing to stand up to Canberra on Victorian hospital funding, and notes the federal government owes Victoria \$104 million for hospital services already being provided.

It is in this context that I want to put at the heart of this discussion the patient experience and certainly talk about what these cuts mean — what this lack of commitment from Canberra means in terms of real service delivery in my electorate. It would mean that Victorian hospitals miss out on \$113.5 million in the first year of the agreement, of 2020–21, and that \$2.1 billion over the first five years of the agreement would be lost. At the Djerriwarrh Health Services in Melton, which covers half of my electorate, this would mean a loss of \$9.1 million —

Ms Ryall — Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms HUTCHINS — I know the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation would be interested to hear what is being cut out of Djerriwarrh Health: \$9.1 million is at risk over the next five years, and that is equivalent to 1469 elective

surgeries delivered by that health service, and the employment of 72 nurses and over 30 doctors. At Western Health, which encompasses four hospitals in the western region — and most of them are delivering services to constituents within my electorate and surrounding electorates — it would mean a loss of \$119.5 million over five years, which again is equivalent to almost 20 000 elective surgeries or 956 nurses.

Imagine the jobs that could come for all the students that are currently in training at many of our good institutions across Victoria or wanting to do their placements at local health services — 956 opportunities of nursing lost because of these funding cuts. Or it could be the equivalent of 400 new doctors in the west, not to mention the hundreds of child patients and families in my electorate that use the Royal Children's Hospital, which is looking at a potential loss of \$84 million. Victoria's position is quite simple: the commonwealth should pay for its fair share.

On Saturday morning I spend most of my time at kids cricket, and I often sit with a mum at cricket who is one of the receptionists that triages emergency calls that come in at the Royal Children's Hospital. To hear some of the very heart-wrenching stories of parents that are ringing up, seeking advice, wanting extra resources, that are not sure whether to bring their children into emergency and face potential long waits — the anxiousness that she has to deal with on a daily basis in her job as one person that works there — I know from what she has told me that certainly a loss of \$84 million worth of funding would have an impact at a time when this state is growing, at a time when we are seeing more babies, particularly in the northern and western suburbs, being born every week, and the demand on services at the Royal Children's Hospital absolutely escalating.

And why wouldn't people want to move to Victoria? It is a great place to be, it is a great place to live. We are watching hundreds, if not thousands, of families move from other states to call Victoria home. They are dependent on these services but clearly the Turnbull government is refusing to cough up by acknowledging the 50 per cent growth in the sector and funding it accordingly. We think that the federal government needs to have a good, hard look at itself.

It is also proposing to cap growth funding at 6.5 per cent, an amount which would not meet the growing demands of our hospitals or our hospital systems here in Victoria. Its deal is not in line with community expectations and it is less than what Victorians deserve, but quite frankly it is what we have come to expect from coalition governments when it is their turn to cough up

money for health care. Victoria's health system is still recovering from the four years of cuts and neglect that it faced under the former Liberal government, with the cutting of \$1 billion out of our health system just in the four years they were in government.

It only took the former Minister for Health 21 days to inflict his first health cuts on the state, which would ultimately cost Victorians more than \$350 million. We saw the trickle-down effect in many of the hospitals, including Sunshine Hospital, where we saw services being cut particularly to the most vulnerable in my electorate. In specific terms I think the service that was cut was for identifying and doing assessments on children with special needs at the ages of three and four, which is an extremely important time in a child's life to have those sorts of disabilities identified. That service was absolutely stripped back under the previous government. I am happy to say that has been restored and the cap on that service has been lifted, and we are seeing kids being diagnosed at a much earlier age, which means they can get intervention and health support at a much earlier age before they enter schools.

Victorians suffered the consequences with hospital waiting lists blowing out during this time and ambulance response times blowing out as well, but I am proud to say that we have managed to turn that around. Part of that has been on the basis of us being able to negotiate enterprise agreements in good faith with our workforce in the health industry to improve the care for patients. That is really evident in a lot of the productivity outcomes that have been listed in our enterprise bargaining agreements (EBAs) in the health sector. I am proud to say we negotiated all of our major enterprise bargaining agreements in the health sector without any industrial action. This government has also invested \$40 million to prevent and reduce occupational violence in our workplaces across the health system and to protect those that deliver the services. Of course we proudly introduced family violence leave into our EBAs across the health sector as well.

Let us not forget that we inherited an ambulance crisis from the former government as they waged war on paramedics, and Victorians suffered the worst ambulance response times on the Australian mainland. I am really pleased that only this week the Premier and Minister for Health have been able to announce how strong our ambulance response times have now become, with the latest figures showing 81.4 per cent of code ones being responded to within 15 minutes, up from the 2013–14 results of 73.7 per cent in the same category. So we have seen a massive jump, and when we see that massive jump what that means is more lives are being saved. We know particularly in the

circumstances of cardiac arrest that minutes matter in saving lives and also when it comes to those who have suffered strokes. So these response times are having an absolutely huge impact on our communities and are seeing more people and more families being saved by quick response times.

We have recruited 325 new paramedics and we have committed to training and allocating those to a range of areas all across Victoria, including regional centres, and that has been a great achievement. It is absolutely shameful that the funding proposal put forward by the Turnbull government will only see these services under further pressure as we struggle to deliver the high standards that we have established as a government and cope with the growth that we face as a successful state.

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:31) — I rise today to talk about this debate we are having on the fair share for health. Listening already to these government speakers on this topic today, you cannot help but know that there is an election in the air. Those of us who have been around long enough now are listening to Labor prepare for an election. They go to the history books — I know the member for Essendon up there would love this part of the electoral cycle when it gets nearer to election time — and what do they do? They dredge up every Liberal government that they can think of. We have not yet heard them start apportioning blame to Robert Menzies or Harold Holt or anything yet, but we can probably expect that over the course of the afternoon.

Mr Pearson — We are happy to start!

Mr RIORDAN — He is happy to start, because they do not take responsibility for their management of anything. Every single problem they ever have when it comes to running this state is always the Liberal Party. As tragic and as sad as it is that our side of politics has not had the budgetary reins terribly much since 1999, which has been to the great detriment of this state — we have had a four-year spat — the rest of the time, for nearly 20 years, this government, this Labor Party has had an opportunity to set the tone of the state.

Yet what do they do? They sit there and trawl up every example you could possibly think of to blame everybody else for what they do. We have seen that already in this three-year stint, during which they have been standing up at the wicket to take the bat. They have come out and what have they done? They have written out cheques to Spanish tunnel builders. They just write the cheque out to Spanish tunnel builders for \$1.3 billion. We have seen the minister for banjo — the Minister for Roads and Road Safety — playing up,

justifying his billion-dollar waste on country roads, when he could have done a much, much better job of that. I mean, everyone in country Victoria could tell you where to spend it, and of course these analogies travel through to every single department.

We have heard the Labor Party government bleat today — ‘It’s all the federal government’s fault’ — but what do we know about health?

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr RIORDAN — I can tell the member for Essendon up there, who has always got something to say, that I have got 10 hospitals in my electorate. I know something about the way hospitals run, and what do we know about the funding of hospitals? We know that this government forces the costs of running basic health care back onto communities, and they talk about a fair share. Let me give you an example of what a fair share looks like for the 10 hospitals in my electorate under this government. We heard the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs before talking about what a wonderful job they have done negotiating EBAs. When you are spending other people’s money and you are prepared to write out cheques for as much as a union wants, it is probably pretty easy to negotiate EBA agreements, but what does that look like in our country hospitals? Usually it is not funded — that is the first thing. So we have got situations with hospitals that have suffered enormous energy costs over the last 12 months.

We had the disgraceful example late last year where Cobden District Health Services had an increase of over \$200 000 a year in its energy costs. What did this government do about that? Where was the fair share for that hospital? It was the only hospital of the 10 in my region that did not get any compensation, any rebate, any support at all from this government in terms of helping manage its energy costs. No, do you know what the government did? It actually packaged up emergency care services. It gave a little bit of extra funding there under the guise of helping with energy costs. Of course Cobden was not able to access that, and here is a hospital that relies heavily on local volunteers. It is a volunteer hospital board. It is a local community. They fundraised. They worked with the local Rotary clubs and Lions clubs to provide basic services to that community. Where is the fair share for them in running a really vital health service? This government does not want to know about that.

What about, for example, in Colac, a major centre?

An honourable member — Turn your phone off!

Ms Kealy — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, earlier today there was a point of order raised because the member for Clarinda had his phone ring during question time. This has happened on a number of occasions. Again it has happened. The Speaker said he would review this matter, and I would ask you to bring to the Speaker's attention that it has happened yet again today. It is unprofessional conduct.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — I thank the member. I will raise it with the Speaker.

Mr RIORDAN — What else do we know about the way the fair share works with this government? Once again it is happy to sheet the blame to the federal government, but it is running the show. It has been in charge of this for a very long time. It still refuses to participate and get on board and help support doctors and the provision of doctors in our country hospitals. We have the situation where, for example, Colac Area Health has decided that it cannot provide a functional health service any longer for the Colac community without bringing on doctors themselves. Who is supporting that? Guess what? It is the community again. It is not this so-called lover-of-public-health government that we have today. No, they will not even talk. They will not come to the table, and they will not actively participate, because they know that they do not care about health in regional areas. For them, it is all about the big five or six hospitals in Melbourne, and that is where their health messaging finishes.

What is going to happen in a community like Colac? How are we going to fund the seven or eight doctors that they are going to need to help provide a 24-hour seven-day-a-week service to a growing community, a community that is in excess of 12 000 to 15 000 people? It is a community that has seen presentations at accident and emergency go from 6000 only a few years ago to 13 000 to 14 000 in the current year. That is a huge increase in presentations. It is a huge stress, and it is a stress that has been borne for the last 150 years by rural doctors who lived, worked and gave their lives in real devotion to community health in country and regional areas, but they are a dying breed. They are not here forever. The world has moved on, and the expectations of health have moved on.

This government talks about a fair share. They want to blame the federal government in relation to a fair share, but they are not prepared to sit and have a discussion about a real fair share, because what is going to happen is a community like Colac will be using fundraising, donations and other sources of independently gained money to keep doctors in a public hospital in this state. This government is grandstanding about how much it

cares about these things and yet it is perfectly happy to ignore its responsibilities in that area.

Of course we can talk about other communities in my electorate of Polwarth. We have a similar situation in Apollo Bay. They cannot get doctors. Where is the support from the government? They are happy to have telehealth. Well, I would like to see the member for Essendon or the member for Broadmeadows tell their constituents, 'Oh, go to the doctor and look at a TV screen. Just sit there and wait, and you can be seen by someone in a far-off town or city. That will be our solution for your health care, because we're not prepared to give you the dignity of a person in your hospital. We want you to go on telly'.

Mr McGuire interjected.

Mr RIORDAN — Of course you can have telehealth, but that is the only solution. I would like to see the member for Broadmeadows stand up in his community and say, 'People of Broadmeadows, we don't want you to see a person anymore; we're just going to give you a TV screen and a YouTube app. That is what we are going to do: give you a YouTube app medical consultation'. That is your view of a fair share for people in Victoria.

The situation is the same in Apollo Bay. We have got the same issues in the township of Timboon. Where is the support? Where is the forward thinking? Where is the ability of this government to support those small country towns?

Then of course there has been a push by the federal government to get more funded doctors in country areas, and once again, where is the fair share? Where is the support from this government? They are not providing the funded training spots in our hospitals. They are not allowing in young doctors who are on these rural and regional medical courses and degrees offered at Deakin University and through South Australia and other places that are trying to do more for rural and regional health. But this government refuses to come to the table and talk to our local healthcare providers in the country, to provide genuine training spots so these young doctors do not have to pack up. They have done a bit of training in the country, and they have probably begun to like the idea of working in the country, but guess what? This government makes them go back into the city, makes them come back to the big teaching hospitals in Melbourne, and we are losing those people. We are losing the opportunities to provide better and more consistent health care in the country.

Once again it is a very, very cheap shot for this government to be raising the fair share argument because it is election time. They are raising it because they have very little else to offer in this space. We have heard about the neighbourhood houses, which are once again a very, very important part of what we do as support for health and community care in country areas. We have seen them backflip on that. They have not kept their commitments. You have got to say if there was a healthcare sector that was generally supported by this government, you would think it would be the community houses. But even they have shown their disgust at the lack of real commitment and real fair share by this government.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (12:41) — It is my pleasure to rise in support of this motion moved by the Minister for Health. There is absolutely no question of the difference between the two major parties when it comes to health funding. Labor is the party of investment in our health system, and the Liberal-National coalition is the party of health cuts. We all know that. They have an inherent and institutionalised disdain for investment in health care and for those who rely on our public health system. This is yet again evident in the latest Turnbull government proposal to rip \$2 billion out of Victorian hospitals and away from the Victorian people who rely on those very hospitals.

This willingness to threaten lives and our health system so they can give the top end of town tax cuts is absolutely unacceptable and, to be frank, appalling. This latest agreement means that Victorian hospitals will miss out on some \$113.5 million in the first year of the agreement and \$2.1 billion over its first five years. But dollar figures, as many of us reflect on in this place, may not always compute for everybody in our community, so I prefer to think about these cuts in terms of what they mean on the ground.

Monash Health is a major health provider in my region, and they deliver extraordinarily high-quality services to thousands in my local community and do their job very well indeed. But for Monash this new proposal would mean a loss of \$259 million over five years, and that is the equivalent of 41 726 fewer elective surgeries, 2072 fewer nurses and 869 fewer doctors. We all know what the impact of those individual figures would be on the ground in our communities and what that impact is on the health of all Victorians. That is tens of thousands more people waiting for surgeries that they desperately need. Those opposite are quite happy with that. They are quite happy to make people wait. If I can recall the member for Ferntree Gully's comments, he seemed to be suggesting that people should just get private health

insurance. Allow them to just get private health insurance; that will fix everything. I find that a little bit disappointing, to say the least, but also out of touch with the needs of ordinary Victorians.

We had an arrangement whereby the state and the federal governments once agreed to split the quality of growth equally — that is, 50-50. But Prime Minister Turnbull is seeking to shirk that agreement and refuse to pay the federal government's fair share. They are also proposing, as we have heard, to cap growth at 6.5 per cent. The fact is that simply will not meet the growing demand in our hospitals. If this was a one-off, it would be disappointing. But it is not a one-off; it is a pattern of behaviour from the coalition that is all too familiar and, sadly, it is all too familiar from the coalition at both the state and federal levels.

Of course the cuts outlined in Mr Turnbull's proposal are on top of the \$104 million that the Turnbull government owes Victorian hospitals for services that were provided in the 2015–16 year. These were services that were provided in good faith by Victorian hospitals on the basis of a clear funding agreement —

Mr Watt — Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Ms WILLIAMS — I am not at all surprised to see the opposition trying to stifle debate on this issue. Clearly it is one that they are deeply, deeply uncomfortable about. As I have said, I was reflecting on the \$104 million that was owed to Victoria by the Turnbull government. I talked about the fact that the services that were provided and that we are owed for were provided in good faith by Victorian hospitals on the basis of a clear funding agreement — another example of the federal government shirking its arrangements and walking away from its responsibilities.

In addition to all of this, we need to remember that Victorian hospitals are still recovering from four years of cuts and neglect — \$1 billion worth of cuts by the former state Liberal government. That is right. The state Liberals are as mean as their federal counterparts when it comes to health funding, and we all know it. These cuts have consequences. That is why we are talking about them. It is not just about the dollars; it is about the consequences of a lack of investment. Hospital waiting lists blew out on the watch of those opposite, and ambulance response times blew out, and that ultimately put people's lives at risk. Meanwhile the former Liberal government was waging war on the

paramedics themselves. Rather than fixing the system, they were systematically working to break it. David Davis in the Council was only in the job for 21 days when he inflicted his first health cut. It took only 21 days for him to be true to Liberal form and gut the system to the tune of \$350 million.

So let us compare the pair: let us compare the record of the previous state Liberal government versus that of the current Andrews government to see where it all lines up on health investment here in Victoria. As I have said, we know the Liberals cut \$1 billion out of the Victorian health system, and in comparison the Andrews government will invest over \$3.5 billion more in 2017–18 than the Liberals did in their last year in office. That is an increase of over 20 per cent. We are investing \$1.3 billion to meet hospital demand, \$35 million for specialist medical equipment upgrades and \$215 million in patient safety.

To look at another comparison, hospital infrastructure, the Liberals delivered a few projects that were actually funded by the former Bracks-Brumby Labor governments — we had the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, a Labor investment; the Western Centre for Health Research and Education at Sunshine Hospital, a Labor investment; and the Sunshine Hospital radiation therapy centre, again a Labor investment — but, hey, the Liberals paid for the ribbon that they cut, and they want us to be happy about that.

In contrast the Andrews government's health infrastructure project list is very, very long indeed. We have got the Austin Health critical care works, the Monash Medical Centre expansion, the Northern Hospital inpatient expansion, the Royal Melbourne Hospital infrastructure works; the Warrnambool hospital works; the announcement of a new Footscray hospital; the redevelopment of the Shepparton hospital, the Victorian Heart Hospital, the Monash Children's Hospital, the Werribee hospital, the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital and the upgrade to Casey Hospital, which serves part of my community — a very important project that will deliver 96 new beds and four operating theatres. There are many, many more I could reel off, but I think you get the idea. We have been very busy, and we intend to stay very busy in delivering for the Victorians who need it most.

We can also look at nurse-to-patient ratios. Labor protected these ratios in law; the Liberals secretly planned to remove the ratios from the enterprise bargaining agreement. We can look at elective surgery waiting lists. Under the Liberals the waiting lists

reached a record high of 50 054 patients in March 2013, but under the Andrews Labor government elective surgery received the largest ever one-off funding boost as part of a \$319 million package, and the waiting list was reduced to 42 185. That is a substantial decrease in a very short period of time.

We could look at emergency departments. Under the Liberals hundreds of patients were waiting longer than 24 hours for a bed or to go home, and the number peaked at 1154 in September 2012. In contrast Labor reduced that number to just 27. On preventative health, something I am personally very passionate about, we know those opposite cut the free whooping cough vaccine, and we saw an increase in cases as a result. At the same time the federal Liberal government were cutting the national partnership agreement on preventive health. Meanwhile here, under the Andrews Labor government, we were reintroducing and expanding the free whooping cough vaccine. We introduced no jab, no play, and we have seen the incredible results of that policy more recently. We have stepped into the void left by the commonwealth and funded the meningococcal W vaccine.

We have also funded supercare pharmacies, we have introduced kilojoule labelling for fast food, we have of course had the PrEPX trial to reduce HIV infections and we have had real-time prescription monitoring. We have boosted health and medical research, which is important in and of itself but is also important for retaining our world-class medical research expertise right here in Victoria — and the member for Broadmeadows will have more to say about that, I have no doubt.

We have released the *Victorian Cancer Plan* and delivered funding to support an additional 10 000 breast cancer screens and 10 000 more hepatitis B vaccinations. I could go on and on, and I have not even got to ambulance response times yet, which are a positive story for this government as well. Despite all these achievements, we on this side of the chamber know that there is always more to be done. We are up for the challenge, but we need our federal counterparts to be up for it too.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (12:51) — I rise to speak on the motion before the house, and I will begin in my electorate. Mildura is a growing community and it has a very complicated and extensive network of health services. It has Mildura Base Hospital, Sunraysia Community Health Services, Mallee District Aboriginal Services and Headspace. There are a number of private providers, there are GPs, there are specialists and there are people everywhere who are involved in health, but

they all need to be integrated with each other, and they all need to be supporting each other.

In government we were able to deliver to Mildura a number of increases to the health services. Our accident and emergency department was doubled. There was an extra birthing suite built at the hospital and an expanded special care nursery. We doubled the size of our oncology unit, and we were able to find an oncologist. This work was done by Dr Walker, who has now moved on from Mildura, but her international connections were vital in gaining that service.

Our mental health facilities were all brought under one roof and funding was approved for the Mildura Prevention and Recovery Centre (PARC). This unit is now completed, and I believe it is receiving its first patients as it is commissioning this service. This is a vital mental health service, because it is a step-up, step-down facility for people who have finished their acute phase at hospital but may not be ready yet to go home and for various reasons may not be able to be adequately supported in the community by family or services. Also people in our community whose health might not be as strong as they would like can enter the PARC as an alternative to waiting until there is a crisis and having an acute admission. Headspace also works in the mental health area with our younger people.

I will now talk about what we need to do next to continue the suite of services that are important to a growing community like Mildura. The scourge of drugs has been with us, and over time we have all seen the scourge run through with that ever-present scourge of alcohol and of course nicotine or tobacco, and then there have been various other drugs over time. We have seen heroin and, to a lesser extent in Mildura, cocaine, but certainly ice has been a major problem in recent times. I do note that from the latest lot of figures I saw for earlier this year it appears that things have plateaued off, so I do commend the multipronged approach to dealing with this drug, which is of course one involving police and others who are in the drug treatment areas. However, we have to look at this drug. In my experience, I have never seen anything ruin a family and ruin someone's life as quickly as ice does.

We are looking at residential rehab as something that is important for Mildura, and this is where the current state government can assist. Mildura is currently preparing a business case for a residential rehab facility. Some time ago the Sunraysia Community Health Services were funded to provide non-residential treatment, but there are those who do not respond to the non-residential treatment, so the next step is of course a

residential facility. There has been community discussion of this of late.

Odyssey House have added to the debate in the *Sunraysia Daily* recently. I think all of us know Odyssey House and all of us value what they have to say in the drug area. They have been involved for a very long time. Dr Stefan Gruenert, who is the CEO of Odyssey House and a psychologist, is encouraging the community to have a discussion about the need for a drug and alcohol facility, saying the community would benefit greatly from it. Odyssey House has been providing long-term intensive treatment in Victoria since 1979.

We all know that Victoria has fewer drug and alcohol residential beds per capita than any other state or territory, so there is a strong case for local residential rehabilitation programs, and those programs need to be in rural Victoria as well as in metro Melbourne and its surrounds. It is about improving access. A number of people who have had the ice experience and have come through the other side have added their voices to it, in particular Adam Thompson, to lead the way for that. I congratulate him on being able to talk publicly about his experience.

We are involved with having Dr Nicole Lee of 360Edge to prepare a case for an application for funding. We know the Victorian government has made a significant investment in drug treatment services. They have added 100 beds to the existing residential services as well as establishing three 20-bed facilities in residential Victoria; however, north-west Victoria is not on that list. As we approach the budget time, Mildura will no doubt present a very good case. I do encourage this government to invest in drug rehabilitation in north-west Victoria.

The other area that puts pressure on our health systems and does need this government's attention is hospice and palliative care, and the care of elderly people who are shifted from their nursing homes to hospitals. Particularly last winter, with a bad flu season, the Mildura Base Hospital was almost overrun by older people, particularly from nursing homes. This severely restricted the services that the Mildura hospital could run at that time. I know the management of the Mildura hospital are busily trying to work out — and I think this is something we need to address as a wider community — how we are going to manage the changes occurring in nursing homes where people are cared for in nursing homes but not nursed and then have to be moved to the public hospital system for care. We do need to look at how we go about that, and Mildura is endeavouring to be innovative, and I urge

support for that program because it does keep beds open for other uses.

The other area that runs with this is hospice and palliative care. I know that discussions are occurring today with the federal minister in Horsham, where a one-woman delegation is talking about hospice care. Like all things, hospices are partnerships, and the Victorian government will need to stump up to make this a reality for Mildura. I do note that despite all the talk we have heard today Labor has fallen short on its commitment to palliative care. It also came out during the euthanasia debate. I think we need to put more funding into palliative care. This government needs to do that so that there is an option for people who might require that assistance.

Also, I do note that after the terrible flu season we had last year, the Liberal-Nationals will fund free vaccinations for children to prevent them suffering from the flu.

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

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (14:02) — As I said before the lunch break, we can all see that there is plenty to do in health, and that is not going to be advanced by squabbling with the federal government. Labor is in government, and Labor should be solving these problems. Those who are waiting on hospital ramps, ramped up in ambulances, and those who have been treated in hallways do not want to hear what is going on here today. What they want to hear is that the problem is going to be fixed, that they are going to be treated in a timely manner and that they are going to be treated in an appropriate manner. So Labor should end the squabbling and get on with meeting the needs and the health of Victorians and those in my electorate.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (14:02) — It gives me pleasure to speak on this very, very important motion. I am stunned by the depth of cuts and lack of care about health that the Minister for Health outlined by those opposite, both when they were in government and now in opposition, and also by their family in Canberra, the Turnbull government. As we have heard, our Premier was right not to sign up to an agreement the other week in Canberra which would have seen what the Turnbull Liberal-National government in Canberra wanted, which was a \$2.1 billion cut over five years to Victorian hospitals. That is just for one state. You can imagine what it would be across the whole nation. On top of that, as the Minister for Health said in this very chamber, they also wanted us to sign up to cutting the growth funding by capping it at 6.5 per cent, which, as we have heard, was completely insufficient to

cater for the growth in demand for Victorian health care and hospital procedures.

What do Prime Minister Turnbull's proposed cuts mean for my community? My community is mainly serviced by Monash Health but also partly by Alfred Health. Starting with Alfred Health, the cuts that the Liberal-National government in Canberra is proposing would mean 25 788 less elective surgeries. That is 25 788 less human beings, less Victorians, being treated for an elective surgery procedure. It would mean 1281 less nurses and 537 less doctors — 537 less doctors, not one or two or 10 or 20. In Monash Health the story is far, far worse. It would mean 41 726 less elective surgeries, 2072 less nurses and 869 less doctors over that five-year period. That is an extraordinary cut. In fact that is not a cut; that is a complete lopping off of a limb of the health system in Victoria.

Who are these people? Well, they are hardworking Victorians of all ages who cannot afford thousands and thousands of dollars, not just for private health care but also for the gap that you always find yourself in, even if you have private health care, after the bills have come in and the private health insurance has paid its share.

As we also heard from the Minister for Health, the commonwealth government, the Liberal-National government, is also a bad debtor. They still owe Victorians \$104 million from procedures undertaken in the 2015–16 financial year. Who would have thought the commonwealth government was a bad debtor? But they absolutely are. This was an agreement reached by the former Gillard Labor government that the national government would take its share of funding of health care from 40 per cent to 45 per cent and eventually 50 per cent. This national coalition government, as the minister was telling us earlier, is flatlining on 40 per cent and not even paying for the procedures that we performed in good faith under the national healthcare agreements which were delivered by the Labor government. We were to be funded by procedures rather than just outputs — by the number of procedures we performed. So they still owe us \$104 million.

We cannot expect much better from the Liberal-National government in Canberra because they took their cues from the former Liberal-National government in Victoria. Here are just a couple of vignettes of what the mob opposite did to the health care of the Victorian community when they were in government. For example, poor planning by the Baillieu-Naphthine-Shaw government failed to discover that the building at the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital was full of asbestos, and the project was thrown into chaos with a \$30 million cost blowout. In

my community they also cut the rooftop helipad and the Early in Life Mental Health Service from the Monash Children's Hospital project that we started.

So when we got back in I was really proud and pleased to be there with the Minister for Health announcing that we would actually deliver the Early in Life Mental Health Service. I was equally proud to be there with the Minister for Health to say that we are delivering the rooftop helipad, and I was equally happy to be there with the Minister for Education saying, 'You know what? There was never a school proposed for this children's hospital, but we are putting a school in there' — 170 students, 17 teachers. Those opposite gave the pathway to the Turnbull government by cutting under the Baillieu-Napthine-Shaw government in Victoria. They are just a couple of quick examples.

I do want to read a story from a real nurse who works in our healthcare system. Her name is Edwina Byrne, and she posted on a website on 16 September 2014, a couple of months before the state election:

I've been a registered nurse in Melbourne's public health system for over 20 years — it's a job that I love, because I get to make a positive difference to people's lives every day, often at a time when they're afraid, in pain or vulnerable.

Delivering health care has never been easy, but under the Baillieu-Napthine government my job has been more difficult than it needs to be. Every month our hospitals are put under more pressure to increase how quickly we process patients — to get them up to the wards from emergency within 4 hours, even if that means they haven't adequately been assessed ...

She went on to say:

Despite this increasingly demanding, difficult nature of our work, Victoria's healthcare system is still productive and efficient, treating more patients without increased resources —

because of the commitment of the doctors and nurses.

She continued:

Instead of recognising that more acutely ill, complex patients need more nurses to care for them, the Napthine government tried to reduce the number and experience of staff caring for the public.

In 2011–12, nurses had to fight harder than we've ever needed to before, to ensure our patients ... get acute public health care from qualified nurses, not minimally trained aides nominally under our supervision ...

She went on to talk about how the then Premier Denis Napthine and then health minister David Davis in the Council — that is a misnomer if there ever was one, 'health minister'; he cut more than any health minister in Victoria's history — were:

... making a lot of promises about their commitment to health. They've had four years to demonstrate that they value health and the professionals who provide it. In that time Victoria has seen unprecedented elective surgery waiting times, fewer acute care hospital beds, privatised aged-care beds, emergency departments struggling to cope, a jump in violence against health providers, and too few new graduates entering the nursing profession ...

That is not me talking; that was a nurse in Victoria's healthcare setting. That was a nurse talking about the devastating cuts by that opposition there. That was the former government.

It is not new. As the Minister for Health said, it is in the DNA of the Liberal and National parties to cut. It is not only a historical story; it is a story that Victorians should be fearful of right here and now for the future. At the end of this year we will have a state election. It was not long ago that the Leader of the Liberal-Nationals coalition, who wants to be the Premier of Victoria, confirmed — in November last year — that if they got into power, they would undertake a commission of audit. A commission of audit — what does that mean? We have had a lot of experience of commissions of audit by that side, ripping almost \$1 billion out of schools and announcing the axing of the education maintenance allowance.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the honourable member for Oakleigh is misrepresenting the position of the Leader of the Opposition and of the opposition more generally, and by doing so is making unjustified imputations against the Leader of the Opposition. I ask you to instruct him to cease doing so and to comply with standing order 118.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — It has been a wideranging debate on the motion, but I would encourage the member to make sure that he does not impugn the reputations of other members of this place.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thank you, Acting Speaker. I cannot see how a commission of audit is impugning anyone, but nonetheless. It is interesting, though, how —

Mr Gidley interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — If the member for Mount Waverley wishes to interject, he can take his place.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — If you do object to that turn of phrase, that terminology, that means there must be something in it that is a worry. In terms of ambulance response times —

Mr Watt interjected.

Ms Neville — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, it is unparliamentary to call another member a liar, as I understand, and I ask you to get that withdrawn.

Mr Watt — No, I will not withdraw because she cannot ask me to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — If a member takes personal offence to something that has been said, it is up to that member to ask for a withdrawal. However, I would remind members that yelling out 'liar' is unparliamentary and is not becoming of the house. The member for Oakleigh to continue.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I had not heard that until the member repeated it. Yes, I would like the member for Burwood to withdraw that comment.

Mr Watt — It is not my intention to withdraw something — he cannot ask me to withdraw — if he has not heard it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! The member for Burwood, the member has asked you to withdraw. I ask you to withdraw.

Mr Watt — I withdraw.

Mr WATT (Burwood) (14:13) — I rise to speak on the motion before the house. It was interesting when I arrived in Parliament this week and saw what was on the government agenda. I note that we had a debate around the business program, and I did think the business program was fairly light on. I wondered yesterday, when we got through all of the bills, what the government had up its sleeve. It was only last night when I realised that they were edging for a fight.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WATT — It became very clear that members of the government were edging for a fight; I had not realised that it was an actual fight.

If you look at this motion that is before us, what the government is trying to do is distract from its own ineptness. They are trying to distract from their behaviour. They are trying to distract from their performance. This government has no capacity to get out there and do anything to help the lives of Victorians and no capacity in this place to actually debate genuine legislation. I would have thought that, considering there are four bills on the business program, we could have spent a bit more time and a few more members of the government might have gotten up to speak on some of

these bills. But no, what we have is a motion which — whether it is passed or whether it is not, whether we vote on it or whether we do not, whatever the result is of this particular motion — will have no effect on anything.

I am wondering why we would bother having this motion before us, and the only reason we would have this motion before us is that the government is lazy, the government has nothing to do and the government cannot stand by its own legislation. We have four pieces of legislation before the house. There are 45 members. I mean, they are falling by the wayside. The member for Melton has gone, so that is 45, I think. Well, they lost Northcote to the Greens, so that is 45. So they have 45 members who could actually come into this place and contribute to a bill. But instead what the government has done, or what the Minister for Health has done, is put up this motion which is going to achieve nothing — if anything, very little — for the people of Victoria.

I for one am pretty disturbed by the behaviour of members of this government. I am disturbed by their performance, and I am disturbed by their behaviour when it comes to dealing with other members of Parliament, even those members of Parliament on their own side. I think that what they should be doing is getting on with the job. What they should be doing is worrying about why it is that the Monash heart hospital has blown out from \$150 million, as was promised at the election, to \$320 million. What they might want to do is just get on and work with the federal government to bring about outcomes which are good for the people of Victoria. Rather than in the back rooms of Parliament beating the crap out of each other, they might actually want to get on —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! The member is not to use unparliamentary language nor to refer to an ongoing investigation.

Mr WATT — I am not allowed to refer to ongoing investigations? That is pretty broad. Are you telling me that I am not allowed to refer to any ongoing investigation that any person might have? I mean, what if the member for Gembrook wants to investigate whether or not the federal government is cutting funds? Am I now not allowed to talk about that? Because the member for Gembrook might want to investigate whether the government is actually lying. I do not trust anything they say, so on the motion before us I am not sure that that is actually telling us the truth. I am not actually sure that I could take on face value what that says. If the member for Gembrook, who is sitting at the table, decides to investigate that, am I not allowed to talk about the motion now?

Mr J. Bull — That's going well.

Mr WATT — Well, it would be going well if you put us back onto some bills that we could actually debate. We have got four bills on the notice paper. These things actually might have an impact on the people of Victoria. Your motion is going to have no effect. What actually happens when this motion gets voted down or this motion gets passed? What then? What then, member for Sunbury?

An honourable member — You write a letter.

Mr WATT — Yes, so you could write a letter to the federal government and tell them how very, very angry you are. It reminds me of the movie *Team America: World Police*. 'What are you going to do?'. 'I am very, very angry. I am going to write you a letter and tell you how very, very angry we are'. Why don't you get on with doing your job? You are the government. Why don't you get on with doing your job? Why not just get on and build the hospitals, start opening police stations, actually improve student outcomes. Why don't you get on and govern instead of debating this motion?

Mr J. Bull — Instead of —

Mr WATT — Well, I might have wanted to use a little bit more colourful language, member for Sunbury, but over the last day I have realised that colourful language is probably not a good idea. I heard about the colourful language used in the bar, which actually ended up in a bit of fisticuffs.

The government is a joke, and this motion proves that the government is a joke. The government would put forward a motion proclaiming that there have been cuts made by the federal government. The federal government can provide statistics showing that there are record levels of funding from the federal government and that funding has actually gone up from \$3.1 billion to \$5.7 billion, but the state government will argue the other way. All the while nothing will actually happen.

You are the government: get on and govern. We are 275 days away from an election and all you want to do is talk about a motion that will have no effect on the lives of the people you represent. You have been given the duty to govern. What you need to do is start getting on with opening police stations. It is nice to have the —

Mr Dimopoulos — Police stations? They were on strike under you, mate! They were on strike! What is wrong with you?

Mr WATT — Member for Oakleigh, it is better to have your mouth shut and be thought an idiot than to open your mouth and be proved one —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Through the Chair.

Mr WATT — If the member for Oakleigh wants to talk about the police, then let us debate the police. This motion is rubbish, so let us talk about the police. In my electorate of Burwood, we talk about the government actually getting on and doing something that will improve the lives of the people out there in Victoria. Police stations in my area have been closed. We have a Minister for Police who tries to proclaim that police stations have not been closed. She says, 'Oh, no, the police stations haven't been closed; the hours have just been adjusted'. They have been adjusted down to zero. The minister will tell me, 'No, no, police stations haven't been closed', but the doors have not been opened since July 2015. Yet she says the police stations are not closed. I turn up to my police station regularly and see graffiti on it. It is not closed; it just has graffiti on it. The police are not there, but it is not closed. Nobody goes in the door, but the place is not closed. The hours have just been adjusted to zero.

Let me turn to other police stations in my electorate. The Ashburton police station is a great example. Under the Bracks-Brumby governments, my electorate had a Labor member of Parliament. That government cut that police station so it went back to two days a week. When we were in government, under the Baillieu and Napthine governments, we actually opened that police station seven days a week. Now we find that for more than two years that police station has once again been slashed back to two days a week.

If you want to know why I talk about police stations, this is about credibility; this is about whether we can believe anything the government says and whether we can believe this motion. When I first got elected, for four years there were four words I understood: West Heidelberg police station. Every day I came in here we had members of Parliament yelling and screaming — or one member — 'West Heidelberg police station!'. We cannot believe anything this government says or does.

Mr Dimopoulos — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, for the last 2 minutes the member for Burwood has been talking about police. I understand the motion is on health, so my point of order is on relevance.

Mr WATT — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I would remind the member for Oakleigh that the motion is actually about federal government funding. It might be federal government funding for health, but if the member for Oakleigh is entitled to get up and talk about things that are not about federal government funding for health, then so am I. I am talking about the credibility of the government. I am talking about whether we can believe anything they say —

Mr Dimopoulos — On the point of order, Acting Speaker —

Mr WATT — I am still on the point of order — sit down! I am talking about whether or not you can believe anything that this government says.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Mr WATT — I am on the point of order; I am still talking about the point of order. If members on that side are allowed to talk about anything but federal government funding, then I am entitled to talk about things that are not about federal government funding.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! I have heard enough.

Mr WATT — I am talking about whether or not the government has any credibility and whether this motion has any credibility.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Order! Member for Burwood, I have heard enough. The member's time has expired.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:23) — The *Yes Minister* episode is titled 'The Compassionate Society'. It tells a story of conflicting values concerning health funding with biting insight. Instead of the focus being on life-saving care for patients, it highlights funding follies. We are witnessing Australian political life repeating scathing British satire. The stakes can make the difference to pain relief for many, and in some cases even the difference between life and death. That is why this motion matters, despite the opposition's deflections and denials. Put simply, the Turnbull government is proposing to short-change Victorian hospitals and Victorian families by more than \$2 billion. That would mean Victorian hospitals missing out on \$113.5 million in the first year of the agreement, from 2020–21. This rises to \$2.1 billion during its first five years. At the Northern Hospital, this means a loss of \$83.5 million over those five years.

For the people I represent, let me put the human face on the consequences we are discussing here. This is equivalent to cutting 13 447 elective surgeries that relieve pain. It would axe the jobs of 667 nurses or 280 doctors. This is why such cuts could prove fatal.

Victoria's position is straightforward: the commonwealth should pay its fair share. The commonwealth and Victoria should share the cost of hospital funding growth equally. The Turnbull government is refusing. It beggars belief that the Victorian opposition, the coalition that wants to have the privilege of governing Victoria at the end of the year, still comes in here and argues against the public interest. That is the critical point — they are arguing against the public interest and the better health of Victorians.

There is more. The Australian government is also proposing to cap growth funding at 6.5 per cent, an amount which will not meet the growing demand in our hospitals. The coalition is dudding Victorians — as the Australian government and as the opposition here in Victoria. They are repeat offenders. Victoria's health system is still recovering from the four years of cuts and neglect under the former Liberal-Nationals coalition. It cut \$1 billion out of our health system in one term. I know they want us all to have amnesia about that one-term government, the first in over half a century. This was the critical point. People remembered what they did.

The Andrews Labor government inherited an ambulance crisis from the former coalition regime. Victorians suffered from the worst ambulance response times on the mainland. The Turnbull government's latest funding proposal can be seen as one of many repeat offences and disappointments in health.

Only a Labor government will prioritise health spending in the way that Victorians deserve. The deal the Turnbull government is proposing comes on top of the \$104 million they still owe Victorian hospitals for services provided in 2015–16. These were services provided in good faith by Victorian hospitals on the basis of a funding agreement, an agreement the federal coalition has ignored. This trumps even the *Yes Minister* satire.

How can they expect our hospitals to employ doctors and nurses, buy the necessary equipment or plan for the future when they refuse to pay money owing for work that has already been done — and I have not heard anybody from the opposition mount a case to defend that. That is the indefensible proposition that we are facing now. But they will not rise above partisanship and actually address the public interest. Our hospitals

have kept their side of the bargain by providing health care to the Victorian community, but the federal coalition government is running away.

On other matters connected with this, I want to quickly go to the issue of dental cuts. Some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in my community are already being affected by the cuts to dental services imposed by the Turnbull government. The federal coalition government has rolled out a new National Partnership on Public Dental Services for Adults agreement, with a 30 per cent cut to dental investment. This means that more than 60 000 Victorian public dental patients will miss out on crucial dental services. This cut amounts to almost \$30 million over the life of the agreement. This cut to dental services will also affect jobs, as providers are forced to scale back on services. Of course people in my community will again be hardest hit by these cuts.

Unfortunately this will disadvantage Australians everywhere because this cut is not just occurring in Victoria. The contrast is stark: while the Andrews Labor government is committed to improving the oral health of Victorians with an increase in investment, the Turnbull government is slashing billions of dollars from dental services around the country.

I want to go to the one-term coalition government, because in Victoria they had the metropolitan health plan and they released it within hours of the Baillieu government's first budget. It is what the Americans call 'taking out the trash', because they knew they had no answer to the problems that it exposed — that the greatest growth and the greatest need was in Melbourne's north.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Oakleigh decided to jump to his feet and call a point of order on me for not being relevant. I do not see how what the member for Broadmeadows is saying has anything to do with the federal government funding, the Leader of the Opposition not standing up to Canberra or the federal government owing us money. He is talking about the former state Liberal-Nationals coalition government, and that is not within the remit of this particular motion. If the government had wanted to go to those things, it should have put them in the motion. They had the opportunity; it is their motion. The member should be brought back to actually talking about the things that are in the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Member for Burwood, I have heard sufficient. It has been a wideranging debate. The member is making a point, a characterisation —

Mr Watt interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pearson) — Member for Burwood, in your contribution you covered a whole range of areas which did not relate to health. There is no point of order. The member for Broadmeadows to continue.

Mr McGuire — The member for Burwood in his proposition said that there was no capability to do something to help Victorians. That was his critique, so I am taking him up on it. This is what you guys did. You did nothing for Melbourne's north. Who opened the Broadmeadows Hospital? It was the Andrews Labor government. Who actually has put in more than \$160 million to build the entire stage two of the Northern Hospital? It was the Andrews Labor government. Who is delivering to help save lives, to help cut pain for people and to help families? This is the proposition.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr McGuire — He does not want to hear it of course because they want us all to have amnesia when it comes to what the facts really are.

The Andrews Labor government has committed \$162.5 million to deliver the vitally needed stage two of the Northern Hospital. I am delighted to have advocated for that and to have seen the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Health deliver it, and also to have stood with the Minister for Health — Australia's best health minister opened that hospital — in Broadmeadows when we opened that hospital, because that had been subject to another *Yes Minister* proposition from a former Liberal government. They did not build it when they should have.

I want to go to the issue of what we are doing for cancer. We should realise that in relation to cancer the White House came to Melbourne. Joe Biden came here because of what we are doing. We are forming international collaborations. This is what is critical. These are the partnerships that are being formed by Labor to actually deliver better opportunities and to be a partner with Barack Obama's moonshot quest to cure cancer. We are building those alliances.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr McGuire — The US Vice-President Joe Biden came to see the \$1 billion jewel in Australia's medical research crown, the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. That is what we have done. This is what has happened. The reality is that no matter how much they shout —

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr McGuire — If you want to be the last galah at the end of the line, it is your call to define yourself in this place. But from Medicare to medical research, from investments and international partnerships to fight cancer, from dental care to the hardest hit, to cuts to the most vulnerable, from infrastructure to health, Victorians know who is cutting, who is defending and who is investing in the compassionate society.

Mr Blackwood (Narracan) (14:33) — It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the motion moved by the Minister for Health. I think at the outset it must be pointed out that we really need to get some honesty and truth into this debate, and in particular about the negotiations that should be occurring between our state government and our federal government. We need some honesty and consistency and also some truthfulness, and we need to take the politics out of the debate, because at the end of the day it is the people of Victoria who will suffer if we concentrate on the politics of the issue rather than getting to the nitty-gritty, which is to make sure that we can provide the best possible healthcare opportunities for Victorians. It is something we all should aspire to in this place.

As the federal Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, pointed out in a media release:

It is disappointing that Daniel Andrews has turned his back on more than \$7 billion in additional funding for Victorian hospitals.

As Greg Hunt said, the Premier is putting politics before patients. It is pleasing to note that the Western Australian and New South Wales governments have signed on to the health agreement proposed by the federal government. Greg Hunt reinforces that he is ready to deliver record funding to Victorian hospitals, providing more doctors, more nurses and more services. The media release states:

Under the new deal offered ... by the Turnbull government, Victorian hospital funding would increase from \$24 billion in the five years to 2019–20, to more than \$31 billion in the five years to 2024–25.

This is a funding increase of nearly 30 per cent and takes into account Victoria's strong population growth.

The more patients treated, the more funding the commonwealth provides.

Our record hospital funding means more doctors, more nurses and importantly more services and support for Victorian patients.

Daniel Andrews must ... explain why commonwealth funding for Victoria is growing faster than his own contribution.

Between 2013–14 and 2016–17 the commonwealth increased funding to Victorian hospitals by 36.4 per cent while the Victorian Labor government only increased its funding by 13.9 per cent.

It could be said that if anyone is short-changing Victorian patients, it is the Premier.

As well as concentrating on the shortcomings of the Andrews Labor government we must also concentrate on what the Liberal-Nationals coalition will do if elected in November. One of the announcements we have made is in the very, very important area of palliative care. A Liberal-Nationals government will provide an additional \$140 million to deliver world-class community palliative care in Victoria. This will be the largest investment of its kind in Australia. In 2015–16 funding for community palliative care provided support for 16 777 Victorians. This increase in funding announced by the Liberal-Nationals will help provide palliative care support for up to another 8000 Victorians.

Research indicates that around 70 per cent of Victorians want to live their final days at home, surrounded by family, friends and memories. Research also shows that barely one-third of Victorians get to realise this final wish, due to inadequate funding for community-based palliative care services. With an ageing population and increasing rates of complex chronic illness, demand for palliative care will continue to grow. Only a Liberal-Nationals government will make the necessary investment to deliver timely and comprehensive community palliative care for those who want it.

In this area we will see a doubling of specialist palliative care medical and nursing services to community palliative care clients, especially in rural and regional Victoria. That is important because so many times we see rural and regional Victoria ignored, in particular during times of Labor governments, which seem to very much concentrate on the city area. The coalition will provide a 50 per cent funding increase in community palliative care provided in the home, including overnight care, in-home respite and carer support, and it will enhance linkages to after-hours supports, such as GPs and pharmacists.

There will also be significant education and workforce development to recruit and train skilled palliative care workers to deliver expanded services, enhance health professionals' capacity to have an end-of-life conversation and support volunteers. We will also establish an end-of-life ministerial council, with

representation from palliative care and the broader health sector, as well as patients and carers, to ensure palliative care is integrated with broader health services and is flexibly and effectively meeting the needs of terminally ill Victorians and their families. As I said, additional funding is especially important for those in rural and regional Victoria, many of whom cannot currently access palliative care so often do not have the choice to die at home.

Also, in the area of flu vaccinations, we have announced that a Liberal-Nationals government will provide up to \$7 million over four years for free voluntary flu vaccinations for all Victorian children between the ages of six months and five years. As we know, influenza is a deadly disease, with thousands of Victorians suffering from it every year. Tragically, the flu takes the lives of many elderly people, as well as otherwise healthy young children, who can be particularly vulnerable to the illness. Many parents do not have their children vaccinated against the flu because of the cost or because of concerns about the vaccine. Funding the vaccine for young children will provide a strong incentive and send a clear message that the safety and wellbeing of their children is paramount and that flu vaccinations are recommended. Instead the Premier just wants to pass the buck to the federal government, while the Liberal-Nationals will take action to protect our youngest children.

Another serious shortfall of the current government is the action it has taken in relation to the cancer beds at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, with the cutting of a 32-public bed unit at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, which was built as part of the 160-bed Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre but has now been axed by this Labor government. That has been backed up by senior Department of Health and Human Services officials, who confirmed to a parliamentary committee that level 8 of building 1B at the Royal Melbourne Hospital was part of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre and was to have been used for a 32-bed medical-surgical inpatient unit. But of course, as we know, that has been cut.

In my own patch, down in West Gippsland, in stark contrast to the mismanagement of our health services by the Andrews government, the Liberal-Nationals have committed to building a new hospital on the greenfield site in Warragul if elected to government this year. The West Gippsland Hospital is under enormous pressure from the population growth that Warragul, Drouin, Yarragon, Trafalgar and Moe are experiencing. When the current hospital was built the catchment that it had to service had a population of around 15 000.

Today that same catchment has a population of 50 000 and is predicted to hit 90 000 over the next 20 years.

In 2006 the West Gippsland Hospital board of management displayed enormous foresight by purchasing a greenfield site of 59 acres between Warragul and Drouin. The site has great transport links, enormous potential for a purpose-built health hub and is located right in the middle of the residential growth centres of Warragul and Drouin. Thanks to the courageous decision of then CEO Ormond Pearson, board chair Brian Davey and the support of the board, this site was purchased. As has been the case since the current hospital site was donated by Mary Sargeant in 1898, the generosity of the community has been amazing, and a bequest provided significant funds to assist in the purchase of the new site.

As I said, the Leader of the Opposition announced the commitment of the coalition to build a new hospital on the greenfield site if elected to government this year. The shadow Minister for Health, Mary Wooldridge, understands the needs of West Gippsland when it comes to health. The Premier and the Minister for Health have refused to make the same commitment, and I might add, this is despite strong advocacy from within their own ranks — by a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the Council, Harriet Shing.

The Andrews government needs to have a look in its own backyard before criticising others. We should all be fighting for the best possible outcomes for Victorians, but we should always be honest during the debate, and honest with Victorians, about the real detail of any funding offer that is made by the federal government.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (14:42) — I rise to speak on this motion, because Barwon Health and Geelong patients will be billions of dollars worse off under a plan by the Turnbull government to slash health funding. I am really proud of the Andrews government's commitment to and record on propping up our health system because of the failure of the Turnbull government to commit to the funding that Victorians are owed for health.

Once again Victorians and the people of Geelong are being duded by the Turnbull government, with new analysis confirming plans to short-change Barwon Health to the tune of \$99.6 million as part of a new health funding agenda. Under the Turnbull government's national health reform agreement, there is a cap to the growth for Victorian hospitals of 6.5 per cent, which will not meet demand in our hospitals, and there is no increase in the commonwealth contribution rate to 50 per cent.

We have heard a lot from those opposite today talking about funding cuts and what they are going to do if they win government at the next election, but all they have done is defend the Turnbull government's cuts to Victoria — that is all they have really done. They are not out there lobbying their federal counterparts to ensure that Victoria gets its fair share of health funding.

These cuts will mean \$2.1 billion less for Victorian hospitals over five years, which in Geelong will be equivalent to 334 fewer doctors, 796 fewer nurses and over 16 000 fewer elective surgeries. This is something that our Geelong community will not tolerate and cannot tolerate. This will hit our hospitals hard and will leave the people of Geelong waiting longer for vital health care.

I want to thank our doctors, nurses and staff in our public hospital system because they do an amazing job. The Andrews government negotiated an enterprise bargaining agreement because it knew the great value of the work that our nurses in particular do in our public hospital system. They look after the most vulnerable people in our community, and that is something that our healthcare providers are committed to — and they do an amazing job. I know at Geelong hospital they work under some pretty extreme circumstances. They deliver a fantastic healthcare system to my constituents, and they provide the health care that my constituents actually deserve in a city like Geelong.

Geelong is a pretty working-class city which relies heavily on our public health system. We have many people reliant on the many services provided by Barwon Health. It is very concerning not only for me but for my constituents that these health cuts by the Turnbull government will have a significant effect on them. I often hear from constituents in relation to the changes to Medicare made by this Turnbull government, where people are now finding they have to pay for services that they did not have to pay for before — and that includes chemo patients, patients having particular blood tests and so on. I think the Turnbull government has got a lot to answer for, and this latest commitment to cuts is going to have a significant impact on many in my community.

I also want to raise the impact on the Closing the Gap targets. We know from the *Closing the Gap* report that was recently released that the federal government is not meeting the targets for Aboriginal communities. The same applies here in Victoria. So these health cuts will have a significant impact on the Aboriginal community in Geelong, who rely on those services. In fact a lot of the services have been propped up by our state government, and I know the Minister for Health is very

committed to closing the gap, and she is very committed to addressing the health needs of the most vulnerable people in our community — working-class people. But the state has well and truly met its responsibilities in terms of health funding. It is the Turnbull government that is now turning its back on Victorians, turning its back on the people of Geelong, and not delivering the health funding that we need.

Across the Barwon south-west region cuts of \$153 million would mean 514 fewer doctors, 1226 fewer nurses and 24 685 fewer elective surgeries. The Geelong region has about 260 000 to 300 000 people. It is a fast-growing population, so we need these services in place. We need these services to meet the demands particularly of those who are reliant on our public health system. This is on top of the \$104 million that Victoria is already owed by the federal Liberal government, which Malcolm Turnbull still refuses to pay, despite independent advice confirming Victoria is entitled to that funding. This \$104 million cut is equal to 100 000 chemotherapy treatments or 650 nurses. Again I know that in my community of Geelong the Andrew Love centre, which provides amazing services to cancer patients and provides the chemo services that people rely on to keep them alive and save their lives, will be severely affected by these sorts of cuts.

The other issue I wanted to focus on is the dental cuts. Some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in my community are already being affected by the brutal cuts to dental health services imposed by the Turnbull government. The federal Liberal government has rolled out a new national partnership agreement on public dental services, with a 30 per cent cut to dental investment. This means that more than 60 000 Victorian public dental patients will miss out on crucial dental services. This cut amounts to almost \$30 million over the life of the agreement. This cut to dental services will also affect jobs as providers are forced to scale back on services, and I know the difficulties that Barwon Health in my electorate has in meeting the demand of the dental services required by low-income people, by the most vulnerable people in our community, so to have any cuts is very difficult for the people in my community who rely on those services, who rely on the public health system to give them the health services that they need.

Of course we hear about the importance of dental care, particularly for our children — ensuring that they have the right dental treatment — but if they are not going to be able to access the public health system dental services, then we are not going to be dealing with those issues, and we will see far greater issues as those

children get older. People in my community, some being the most disadvantaged, will be hit the hardest by these cuts, as I have said, and while the Andrews Labor government is committed to improving the oral health of Victorians with an increase in investment, the Turnbull government is slashing millions from dental services around the country. This just is not good enough, and I know there are grave concerns in my community about these health cuts, about how people who are the most disadvantaged, the most vulnerable — the low-income workers who are totally reliant on the public health system — will not be able to access these services like they have in the past.

It is shameful that the Turnbull government is not committed to ensuring public health services for people, not just in Geelong but across the country, but it is also shameful that those opposite are defending the Turnbull government. They are not lobbying the Turnbull government and saying, 'We need these services. We need this \$104 million that is owed to Victoria. We need adequate funding to keep our health services going'. They are not doing that. All they are doing is condemning the Andrews government for things that it did not even do or things that it did do, depending on the argument. So I think it is really important that those opposite get to their federal members, their federal colleagues, and start pushing them to put that money back into Victoria to fund our health services as they should be to meet the future demands of all people who use the public health system, whether they be low income, disadvantaged, Aboriginal or whatever.

Higher income people also use our public health system because they believe in it, and it is the best system — the absolute best system — that we have. Private hospitals send people to our public hospitals because they do not have the same services, so I think it is important.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:52) — I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the motion on the notice paper today. It was certainly highlighted by the Minister for Health when she started talking about the blame game. There is no doubt about it that members of the Andrews Labor government have become absolute experts at the blame game over the last three years, and I think they need to remember, as with the previous speaker, that when you are elected to government, you have got to govern. You have got to put aside all the circumstances that you have got and get on and deal with the resources you have got and make the decisions that are before you. I think that what we see here in this place is whingeing, whining, day after day, week after week, with ministers saying, 'We want to blame somebody else'. There are times when

you are in government that you have got to stand up, be counted, make the decisions and get on with it.

The absurdity is that this government ripped out \$1.3 billion on a road that did not get built and squandered opportunities, spent a fortune fighting the Country Fire Authority and its volunteers and wasted millions of dollars on other projects, and now it is again trying to blame the Turnbull government. It is always going to be somebody else's fault.

This is not just the Minister for Health, I have got to say. The Minister for Public Transport must have been spending too much time with the Minister for Health lately, because in relation to the north-east line we hear another example, where the Minister for Public Transport is always talking about how the federal government is not spending enough money on that line. The federal government invested \$750 million, a further \$135 million and now Darren Chester has committed another \$100 million to that railway line, and it actually is in far better shape than it ever was.

The minister keeps saying it is the train line that is the problem, whereas we all know it is the rolling stock. It is the 1950s trains, locomotives and train sets that are the problem. The way we can prove that is the XPT that comes down from Sydney is a reliable train, it is a modern train and we do not have a minute's bother with that in terms of frequency and breakdowns. So when the Minister for Public Transport continues to blame somebody else — again the federal government, as it is always somebody else's fault — there is a chance to crosscheck that with the XPT in this instance. The blame game does run deep with those in government. They are very good at that, and I think we are wasting a lot of time today when we could have been debating bills, with only four bills on the legislative agenda for this week.

The Minister for Health needs to stop blaming others, particularly the Turnbull government, and get on and support some of the hospitals, like those in the Ovens Valley. Cobram District Health and Yarrawonga Health certainly have not got the funding that they have been used to; they are well down. Northeast Health Wangaratta and Alpine Health in Myrtleford and Bright continue to need more ongoing funding, and they have all had significant energy costs as a result of the closing down of the power station. Again we can talk about funding and how they want to keep blaming Malcolm Turnbull, but most of the issues lie within the remit, within the hands, of the current government.

I am certainly disappointed that this government continues down this path. Let us face it: we know it is

in a spot of bother in the upper house here; it just cannot get through the legislative program, so it has got to slow down the lower house so it can try to clear the backlog at some point.

Mr Pearson interjected.

Mr McCURDY — It is the government's responsibility. If the government cannot put forward responsible legislation that is going to be agreeable to all parties, then it can expect to be stonewalled. The member for Essendon wants to blame somebody else. It is never their fault, just like they cannot control their feral federal senators that we have had an issue with recently as well. It is always going to be someone else's fault.

Because they have got that backlog, we are going to waste a day and fill in a day talking about the federal government. That is a disgrace, to be honest, because they need to get on and govern in their own right. We hear it all the time — 'We've inherited a mess', and they try to rewrite history. They bleat 'Poor me' and 'Woe is me', and they seem to forget that for 15 of the last 19 years they have been in government. So in terms of trying to blame everybody else, you have really got to look at your track record, your history and the time you have spent in government instead of just trying to blame others all the time.

Cobram District Health and Yarrawonga Health have certainly been duded financially, and the lack of investment in regional Victoria is quite appalling. I note that in the last sitting week the member for Thomastown said:

This brings state Labor's spend on infrastructure in the safe seat of Thomastown to over \$340 million ...

The safe seat of Thomastown — this is another disgraceful exhibition by this government. They look after their safe seats and ignore the rest of us. I suspect the members for Eltham and Macedon must be embarrassed by the amount of money that is being spent in Thomastown, because they are not in safe seats so they have been duded as well. Can you see why people, certainly those in regional Victoria, are calling the Premier the Premier for Melbourne? Because clearly the pork-barrelling that goes on and the dedication of infrastructure resources to metropolitan seats is quite out of kilter with the rest of Victoria.

As I mentioned earlier, there are four bills on this week's business program. In my view, that is a complete failure. You really need to keep the legislative program going, and if there is an issue in the upper house, it is because you are not prepared to present legislation that is fair to all concerned. If there is a

backlog, it is because it is one-sided and greedy. You need to understand that the situation that we have got in this government is that we need to talk and communicate and negotiate, and that is obviously what they are not prepared to do. That is why the government is in the predicament that they are.

We have a government that does not want to govern and that is bickering and fighting among themselves. It is not considered good use of MPs' time to engage in factional fighting and even fisticuffs in the dining room, as I heard just recently. And the roads minister is another exception. He is just an outstanding roads minister, given what comes out of his mouth! What is next, I wonder.

Condemning the federal government is another attempt at a distraction. This government is the king of distractions, always trying to blame somebody else or find a distraction. I say to my colleague, the member for Gembrook, that they have certainly done that with the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. The events of last night was certainly a distraction, turning the attention away from the dysfunctional government that we have at the moment.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (15:00) — I am delighted to support the Minister for Health's motion. I have listened to various contributions over the course of this morning and now this afternoon in relation to this debate, particularly some of the contributions of those opposite. One of the arguments advanced by those opposite is that, 'You're the government. You should just get on with it. You have the responsibility. You should do it'. On one level, you can understand why they would say that, but it shows a complete lack of understanding of commonwealth-state relations. The reality is that we have vertical fiscal imbalance as a consequence of the commonwealth. By that I mean that since 1942, when the income tax powers were passed from the state governments to the commonwealth government as a temporary measure during the course of the Second World War, we have had a set of circumstances where the federal government raises the money and passes those funds to the state governments or the territory administrations to deliver services.

It is all well and good for those opposite to say, 'You should just go off and govern. That is what you intend to do'. But where you are deprived of the resources to govern, then that is a problem. When you lose \$2 billion in funding from the federal government, I would suggest to those opposite that that is going to compromise the ability of the state to deliver the services that the community expects and deserves. That is just a reality. Where would you find a \$2 billion

shortfall of that nature, of that scope, bearing in mind that the budget in Victoria for 2017–18 financial year was \$63 billion? So \$2 billion in the context of \$63 billion is not an insignificant amount of money.

The issue is that cuts of this magnitude and of this scale have a significant deleterious impact upon people from poorer communities, people from isolated communities and people from regional and remote communities. It is surprising to see that yet again The Nationals will line up and throw their lot in with the conservative Liberal Party to oppose this motion.

Ms Ryan — Acting Speaker, I direct your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr PEARSON — As I was saying, who are the victims of these cuts? If you were to map the victims of these cuts, where would they live? Overwhelmingly, they would reside in electorates held by The Nationals. When it comes down to it, The Nationals do not care about the people they purport to represent. Every step of the way they will side with the Liberal Party because they cannot wait to get their snouts in the trough. They cannot wait to be back in government so they can have their taxpayer-funded cars to travel all around regional Victoria. They will be lining up to get their flights to go around regional Victoria. That is their form. That is all they care about.

A good friend of mine once said to me that The Nationals will compromise on anything, especially if it involves a matter of principle. They are absolutely shameless every step of the way. They will always side with capital against labour. That is their form. Far be it from me not to mention the Greens at this point in time, but this is a motion which is attacking the fact that Victoria has been short-changed by \$2 billion — and where are the Greens? Where are they? They have not spoken today at all. I have checked the speaking list and they are not listed to speak today. So when you are talking about a fair, just and equitable society and community, the Greens are nowhere to be seen. They are not interested. They are very happy to sink their boots into a Labor government at every opportunity, but call out \$2 billion in funding that this state has been deprived of by the federal coalition government and they are nowhere to be seen.

When it boils down to it, in the great political debates it is capital versus labour and it has been this way for ever. You can always be assured that the Labor Party will be opposed consistently by the vested interests of those opposite, regardless of whether they be the

Liberal Party or The Nationals or the Greens or, in years gone by, the DLP. It is always the Labor Party that has to come into places like this and fight for and defend our communities, because it is our people who get left behind when the coalition government has its way. It is our people who will struggle for decent quality health care. It is working-class people who will feel the brunt of these cuts.

The people in my electorate, people who live in public housing — Somali-Australians, for example, who live in a two-bedroom public housing flat with six children — take their kids to the Royal Children's Hospital when there is a problem. The Royal Children's Hospital is going to lose \$4.235 million. Melbourne Health is going to lose \$7.823 million. If you have private health insurance, you can just go to the Epworth. You have those opportunities. But when you are poor and when, for example, you live in public housing and you do not have the means with which to access private health care, you have no choice but to go to the public hospital system.

These cuts are going to hurt the most disadvantaged and most vulnerable people in our community. They are going to hurt people in regional and rural Victoria. They are going to hurt Indigenous Victorians. They are going to hurt culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people who live in public housing. They will be the victims of these cuts. Yet the Greens cannot be bothered to show up to defend these communities. They are not interested in defending these communities. They are very happy to take their votes, they are very happy to corral them into polling stations on election day to ensure that Uncle Adam Bandt can remain the federal member for Melbourne, but they will not fight for these communities. They will not defend these communities from these cuts.

The National Party will do anything they can to get in power and stay in power, and if that means they have to shred their communities and deny their communities the support they need, they will do that. They will do that, and they have always done it, because they do not care. They do not care about working communities. They profess to, but they are not interested. They just do not care. When it comes down to supporting the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged, it is only the Labor Party that does that. National Party members do not care. They will throw their lot in with the Liberal Party every time. Give them one chauffeur-driven car for four years and they will turn their back on their communities, because they just do not care.

The reality is that we stand for working Victorians. We oppose these \$2 billion in cuts. We oppose these cuts

because they are going to hurt our communities the most. The people in this place who represent similar communities have got no courage; they have got no backbone, they have got no spine. They will hide behind the federal Liberal Party, they will support Malcolm Turnbull and they will turn their back on the communities that they are supposed to defend. It is an absolute outrage. You have got apologists on the opposition benches and you have people who are conspicuously absent from the fight today, the Greens political party. They do not care. I came to this place because I wanted to defend my communities. I want to make life better for working Victorians, and it compromises our ability to do that when we have got \$2 billion worth of cuts.

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (15:10) — Well, how do you follow that? What is that? Is it just acting or performing? This is a serious, serious subject, and that contribution was just typical of what we see from across the chamber — just performance after performance of talking the talk and pretending that they absolutely care. But the reality is to care you need to deliver. To deliver you need to be able to put the runs on the board and show how you can economically provide for the community. That is true caring.

We can all look at the figures and we can see the reality. You can twist figures, and that is what is going on over there. We are getting twisted figures reported to the community, tricking the community into believing things that are not a reality. But do you know what? The reality is we have a growing Victoria and we are not seeing this government understand the needs of the community. Where are they out in the regions understanding the community there? They are not out in the regions, not at all. That is why our roads are crumbling and that is why we do not have access to regional rail. If those opposite say to me, 'In four years nothing was done', I would ask them: of the last 16 years how many years have Labor been in charge and done nothing for the regions? Once they hit the end of the tram tracks they have no idea how to even drive, let alone drive on country roads even when they are in good nick, and certainly not when they are in the poor state they are in today.

But let me get back to health. I will give credit where credit is due. Our system is a good system, and that is because of the many hardworking people — nurses, doctors, orderlies, X-ray technicians, radiologists, gynaecologists and specialists — that devote their time to the communities both in Melbourne and across regional Victoria. But it is tough when you see hospitals like Portland hospital. Portland is a small city for the remote position that it is in, and the hospital has a very

large catchment of about 15 000 people. It is the hospital with the longest journey to any tertiary centre. You would think that might be Mildura Base Hospital, but they have access to Adelaide. Portland hospital is in a real predicament. With the current state of the funding that they receive, they are not able to meet the demands of the community. It is a growing community. It has a high youth population. These are people who are having babies, and they want to have babies at home in Portland. It is pretty obvious why you would want to do that — so you can have your family around supporting you and your husband present at the birth. These people do not want to travel hours to the closest centre to have their babies. This service should be something that is offered in a hospital as remote as Portland.

However, to keep that service going well you have to have providers like doctors and obstetricians so you can provide a safe service, which is what we would expect in this day and age. But with population growth — 150 000 people came to Victoria last year — Portland hospital had an increased throughput of 9 per cent, and yet under the weighted inlier equivalent separation funding model, known as WIES, they only got a 3.2 per cent increase in funding from this state government. You are supposed to be able to manage your own funding, and so what you would do if you had gone above your funding is cut some elective services, but if you cut your elective services, how do you keep doctors working enough to keep them employed? This is a catch 22 for Portland hospital that needs to be looked at by this government with a view to understanding the challenges the hospital has. They need to attract doctors, but they need to be able to pay them, and they are not always going to be as busy as they would be in another hospital, and that needs to be understood. However, they cannot be left with no doctor. It is not appropriate to just say to them, 'Bad luck. You've got a gap and you've got to figure out how to deal with it', because what we have seen with hospitals like Portland — we have seen it at Port Fairy and Heywood as well — is increased costs.

They had increased costs from an enterprise bargaining agreement that left them needing more money to pay their nurses. I have no problem with nurses being paid well, no problem with that, but how do they do that if they do not get the money from the government which is giving them the money to meet their costs? So what do they have to do? They cut nurses. They have to cut services, and often that is the nursing staff if that is the increase of the enterprise bargaining agreement, that they have to pay more to staff.

We need to understand that hospitals the size of Heywood, Port Fairy and Portland are getting the same

regulatory demands made of them that you might see at the Royal Melbourne or the Royal Children's hospitals, but they are not getting any extra administrative support to be able to manage those extra requirements. So we have got increased costs of more staff payments — which is fine, I have no problem with nurses getting paid well — but I do have a problem with the government saying, 'Pay your nurses more', but giving no more money in the budget to accommodate that. It just makes no sense.

We have also seen electricity costs. Those hospitals specifically told us earlier this year that they could not manage the increase in costs unless the government gave them more money to pay for those power cost increases, yet we saw none. We saw nothing in response to that, that the government would actually say, 'All right, we understand your costs have gone up, and we need to allocate money accordingly'. No, we see services cut. That is the only option for these hospitals, so regional Victorians are at a disadvantage when their health needs are unable to be met.

What I see too is a 30 per cent increase in the public sector spend. It concerns me when I hear from nurses that instead of the hospital being able to meet their pay rise through extra government funding, they are actually seeing their colleagues not being able to be employed and losing services. With a 30 per cent increase, I would hope to see better outcomes from more people in the public sector, so I would have thought I would see more nurses, but that is not what I am seeing. I would have thought I would see more teachers and better teaching outcomes, but that is not what I am seeing. I would have thought I would see a safer Victoria from more police, but I am not seeing that either. So I do not understand why we are getting increased public sector costs but not increased outputs from that. It just does not add up any more than not funding a hospital to accommodate the growth that the government has orchestrated through increased power costs or increased staffing costs.

The other thing I wanted to bring to the government's attention was the fact that they can sit there saying, 'We don't get enough funding'. Well, here you have a community in Warrnambool with a proven track record that has a hospital that needs to have the nerve centres funded. All we have seen this government do in the last budget was set up a consultative group. That is great. Well, guess what? We know what we need. We need an accident and emergency — it is not big enough to meet the needs of a major motor car accident that may occur and does occur in our region, where you need a lot of staff in the accident and emergency at the critical time.

It also does not have enough theatres. We had an incident recently. Knowing a lot of health staff in the region, I heard about how a baby was at risk because the theatres were full and to get the caesarean section in time was a close call. We have got increased numbers of people in the community demand wise and population wise, so we obviously need more than three theatres. Theatres that I worked in 32 years ago when I started my training and did my theatre time are the same three theatres there today. Get on with it if you really care. You know we need it — just build it.

The last thing I want to talk about is The Lookout, which is demonstrating how committed my community is to helping themselves. Here you have got a community that said, 'We know there is a drug and alcohol problem. It's a health problem'. It often ends up being a criminal issue and a family violence issue, but it starts off as a health issue. The community said, 'Let's build our own centre, a rehabilitation centre where those who want to be rehabilitated can actually stay for three months and be supported'. So they have got together. They have raised, I think, over \$600 000, and they have got another \$600 000 committed, but they need \$1.1 million of recurrent funding committed from this state government, and they will get it done. They will get that area addressed.

And what have we heard? Nothing. It is an opportunity where the community have said, 'We'll do our bit. We only need a little bit of recurrent funding. We've got everything sorted otherwise'. What an opportunity! You have seen Warrnambool do it before. You saw the cancer centre — the cancer centre that everybody said Warrnambool would not get, but the Liberal government, both federally and state in the Napthine time, saw that come to fruition. That was because the community decided that it was needed, and the Libs backed them.

So do not tell me that health is not something that Liberals absolutely treasure. We are not anywhere near unaware of the fact that it is a high priority of our community. It is a high priority of mine and it is a high priority of my colleagues. It is because we understand health, education — all those real basics — are what we must do with absolute commitment, and we do. We do it fiscally responsibly, and that is how you make care really work.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (15:20) — I am delighted to join this motion on health, but I am really sorry that we are actually having to debate a motion like this. It is just shameful that we have a government in Canberra that is again short-changing Victoria. It does not matter what category of funding it is — health, education,

infrastructure, you name it — the Prime Minister for Sydney is blind to the needs of Victorians. The Premier and other state leaders went to Canberra and found a pretty pathetic offer on the table, particularly for Victoria, which is short-changing our hospitals and Victorian families by more than \$2 billion.

Some members in the house — maybe the member for South-West Coast herself — may be surprised to hear that I agree with quite a bit of what she said in her speech. I do not know why she was speaking in opposition to the motion, because she should be putting her level of knowledge — having been a health professional before entering this place — about health in her community right at the feet of Dan Tehan, a minister in the Turnbull government. She should say to him, ‘Dan, you need to get a better deal for Victoria and for the South-West Coast’. But she is not saying that. She is being a Liberal first and a Victorian second.

Then we have the National Party. As the member for Essendon said quite eloquently, time and time again you see those with the poorest outcomes when you look at every measure. I was on the VicHealth board as the representative of this Parliament for three years, so I saw a lot of evidence of the dire health statistics that come out of really impoverished areas of rural and regional Victoria. Do we ever hear those opposite, hear the National Party actually speak up for those pockets of health disadvantage? No, we do not. We do not hear anything. They are quiet on this front.

I would urge those opposite to look at the Heart Foundation’s Victorian Heart Map. This fantastic map links into Australian Bureau of Statistics data and to a whole lot of other health data that actually maps, by local government area, the risks for heart health, the rates of obesity, the rates of smoking and the low level of participation in rehabilitation after stroke and after heart attacks. It is really sobering news.

Life expectancy in those rural and regional communities is way below other parts of the state. I would have thought that members of the National Party would be standing up and saying that, and that they would actually be giving credit where credit is due, that this Victorian government has actually been putting a heap of money into health capital, into recurrent funding and into our ambulance services.

I was surprised by what the member for South-West Coast was talking about. On the one hand she was saying that health professionals were doing it tough and that there were not enough in the system, yet I did not hear her ever explain why the party that she now represents — now she is not a nurse — has not

supported nurse-to-patient ratios, because that is how you get really critical care and good care. That is why we have gone down that path. That helps not only metropolitan communities but also rural and regional communities.

When we came to office — and I know, because I had been a member in this chamber for four years — the member for South-West Coast was not here then. The member for Euroa was not in this chamber, but she was actually a staffer with the Baillieu government. She would be well aware of the ambulance crisis that existed under the government she served as a staff member. It was appalling. It was absolutely appalling. You only have to look at the independent data. There was a war against our paramedics. I remember the previous member for South-West Coast used to get up in this place and decry our hardworking paramedics, and he used to describe them as ‘ambulance drivers’.

Ms Ryan interjected.

Ms GREEN — Member for Euroa, if you would like to speak on this motion, you can actually get up when the call comes and it is your turn instead of shouting out across the chamber. I would hope that the member for Euroa would be sticking up for her community instead of what she does in terms of misleading this house when she talks about health expenditure and ambulance services in her community. I think the member for Euroa indulges in that old political tactic of one finger pointing forwards and two fingers pointing back rather than actually saying to Canberra — Malcolm Turnbull, Barnaby Joyce and every federal Liberal and National member — that this is an appalling deal for Victoria. She should be saying to Damian Drum, who used to be in this Parliament in the other place and is now the federal member for Murray — a great deal of the member for Euroa’s electorate is within Murray and it neighbours hers, so I think she would actually see him reasonably regularly — ‘Why on earth, Damian Drum, are you not saying that this is an appalling deal for Victoria?’.

My electorate happens to neighbour the electorate of Euroa, and I know how the hardworking paramedics in Wallan and Kilmore felt very let down by the previous government. The member for Eildon is in the house. She was the member for Seymour back when delays occurred with the Wallan ambulance station, which was much needed. If we had been re-elected to government in 2010, we would have got on and built it.

Ms McLeish — We did build it.

Ms GREEN — She is trying to say she built it. Well, what was actually built? It was actually funded in one of their budgets. She talked in successive budget speeches about how it had been funded, but at no stage did she raise an adjournment matter or a question asking, ‘Why on earth is there such a delay, and why are Wallan residents and families waiting for three years after it had been funded?’. It was like an episode of *Utopia*.

The former member for Seymour did not seem to care much about it except to brag that they had funded it, but she actually did not push it through to the finish line. Just before they went into caretaker mode — Mr Davis in the other place, was the then Minister for Health, who delivered not one hospital bed — they actually managed to move a bit of dirt around and put a fence around it. I think that was stage 1. Stage 2 of the Wallan ambulance station was putting a sign up. That was the sum total of what that money had done.

Let me tell you that is in stark contrast to us. I tabled a petition in this house for the Whittlesea community that was one of the largest that had ever been tabled. When the Premier was the Minister for Health, he got that funded in one budget, and it was built and operational by the next one. The Kinglake branch did not take much longer after that. That is what this government does when we are in office to get ambulance services.

Last night in this place the member for Euroa totally denigrated, misled and talked down the ambulance community officers (ACOs) in Nagambie and made it sound like they are not doing their job and are not being resourced and supported. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Ms Ryan — On a point of order, Speaker, I take offence at what the member for Yan Yean is saying. She is completely incorrect. I have never denigrated those ACOs, and she is completely unfamiliar with the situation in Nagambie. I look forward to showing her transcript to the community of Nagambie, who will be outraged by it. But I ask her to withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Will the member withdraw?

Ms GREEN — It is a point of debate. I am not going to withdraw.

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Yan Yean has been asked to withdraw. She should withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Will the member for withdraw?

Ms GREEN — I am not clear. The member for Euroa did not say what she found offensive.

Ms Ryan — I found it offensive that she accused me of denigrating hardworking ACOs in my community, whom I have supported for the last three years against those opposite, who have refused to deliver what they have promised. I ask her to withdraw that.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — I ask the member to withdraw.

Ms GREEN — I withdraw.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (15:30) — I rise to make a contribution to the motion before the house, which is a complete stunt. We have had to curtail debate on the actual bills that were before the house. I was quite prepared to speak on the Audit Amendment Bill 2017 and was quite disappointed that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, who was at the table, stood up and adjourned debate on that quite quickly. I know we had a number of speakers, as with the other bills on which we had quite a few speakers.

Given that there were only four bills presented for this sitting week, we knew that something was up — political games being played. We know that the government are completely distracted by their own political games. We saw those games — I think it was boxing games — last night in the dining room. They are doing it again in the chamber this week, and it is a complete waste of our time when we have important bills to debate. The government are always talking about what they are getting on and doing, but they are certainly not getting on and doing anything with legislation.

There are a number of things that we all agree on. We all agree that it is important to have robust and healthy expenditure in the area of health. We all agree on that. We all agree and understand that Victoria is having population pressures that other states are not experiencing. The coalition, unlike the government, certainly has a plan to ease the squeeze in this city. We have a population strategy about decentralising that growth. We are certainly looking at that at the moment. We also agree that everybody is entitled to a fair share of funding from the federal government. We look at GST funding. We look at when Labor was last in and short-changing us federally with GST funding.

We also agree that Victorians do not like government waste. It is only the coalition that takes this seriously. We are the ones who understand that it is not our money; we are dealing with taxpayer money. We know that people like governments to look after their finances and take great care, but Labor do not care. We saw that

when they ripped up the contracts for the east–west link. We see now that there is a \$3 million overspend in the Level Crossing Removal Authority. But it is not their money, so they do not care.

Ms Ward — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, we are talking about health, and I understand that the member opposite may have in only 2½ minutes run out of things to say about health, but I would urge her to show her commitment to health and health reform within this state and health funding and bring herself back to talk to the motion.

Ms McLEISH — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I have actually spent the majority of my 2½ minutes talking about health. Clearly the member for Eltham, again, was talking and not listening to what was being said and chose to misinterpret it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — The member for Eildon to continue. There is no point of order.

Ms McLEISH — Thank you. Let us look at the truth here. What is going on? Between 2013 and 2014 and 2016 and 2017 the commonwealth Turnbull government increased funding to Victorian hospitals by 36.4 per cent. Let us have a look at what the Victorian government in that time have done: they have increased the spending by 13.9 per cent. So this was certainly not slashing funding. This is the spin that is being put on purposefully for this motion that is before the house.

I will draw the house's attention to a book by Darrell Huff that I read during my studies, *How to Lie with Statistics*. We know that statistics can be presented and manipulated in whatever way people like. People present statistics without comparing apples to apples, and I think in this case this is certainly what is being done. There is not the slashing that the government is claiming by the federal government. In fact, there is more money being put on the table, and I would urge the Premier and the Minister for Health to get back to the negotiating table and work constructively together to make sure that Victoria does get the best deal. Commonwealth funding has grown from \$3.3 billion in Labor's last year to \$5.7 billion in 2020–21, and this will continue to climb each and every year. So I think there is a lot of misleading going on by those opposite.

I want to have a look at what the government is failing to do in health in my electorate. I have quite a number of hospitals. I am going to start with Mansfield. They urgently need money for planning. They are an ageing hospital, and all credit to them, they make the hospital look as good as it can; it looks fresh because they want

to portray that positive image to the community. But the community is growing. Mansfield is growing. The hospital has so many challenges at the moment with space. Their urgent care is absolutely tighter than they would like.

Mansfield is a wonderful tourist destination. They have the great outdoors; they are in the heart of the great outdoors — they have snow, they have water, they have cycling and they have fishing and hunting. But I want to draw the house's attention to what happens in their emergency department. They get a lot of presentations to the emergency department who are not local. They are from a population who are coming for the seasonal activities. If we have a look only at water incidents that resulted in presentations to the emergency department in December, of the 12, two of those were local and 10 were not. In January the number of presentations increased dramatically. There were 43 presentations; 38 of those were non-locals. When you look at the population, that is one thing, but you need to understand the context in which these hospitals are operating. The urgent care presentations at Mansfield really pick up way in advance of what you would probably be predicting based on the population alone.

The community in Mansfield are right behind their hospital. They have aimed to raise \$7 million, and they are well on their way. They would like some state funding to match that. As I said, they are so committed to their hospital.

Yea hospital is a small country hospital. It is my home town. In fact, I was the first baby born in the Yea hospital when it opened, way back. My grandfather opened it the day before I was born, being the shire president at the time. Yea is in limbo. I urge the health minister to step in and look for a quicker resolution than what is happening. Yea had back office functions and the CEO out of Goulburn Valley Health. For some unknown and bizarre reason, Goulburn Valley Health decided the risk of Yea was going to be impacting it, and it wanted that relationship to cease.

Yea hospital is one of the lowest-risk hospitals in the state. It does very low-level work. It does not have operations, it does not have births, it has very low-level care. The minister, I notice, has two ministerial delegates on the board, which is extremely unusual. I think the rest of the board are quite perplexed at how come there are two. There have been reviews and more reviews, but the situation is not going away quickly. Yea is without a major partner for the back office function. They cannot do all of the things; they need another hospital to work with them. They have explored relationships with Alexandra, they have

explored relationships with Seymour — and still they are no further down the track. I really hope that the minister has a close look and actually gets some progress happening. I think that the relationship they had with Goulburn Valley Health in the first place made the most sense.

Alexandra hospital is a new hospital. It has a few challenges. Again, it has urgent care presentations that fluctuate seasonally, being so close to Lake Eildon, and that service needs to be looked at. Healesville hospital had a fabulous upgrade during the term of the coalition government. We invested \$7 million or so in that. Perhaps there is room for having a look at their urgent care at the moment. I know there are ambulance stations that could be upgraded at Yarra Junction and Mansfield.

I want to also mention the concern I have with the move by Health Purchasing Victoria into purchasing sonography services. What is required of a sole operator and what is required of large companies in terms of getting set up is exactly the same. We have a sonographer in the Murrindindi shire with 20 years experience. She is at a disadvantage because to prove the same safety record, which she can do, as a sole operator will take an enormous amount of time, whereas a much larger health service would have the resources to do it. I would encourage the minister to have a look at how the policy from Health Purchasing Victoria can really disadvantage small country communities who rely on locals to deliver these services locally.

I am very concerned that if these services cannot be delivered by this local person, they might not be delivered at all. Yea has already lost out on ultrasound services because it has not been feasible for that to happen. Large companies are very unlikely to send people to small country hospitals to have these services delivered. I am very concerned about that. I think the government should get on and resolve a lot of these issues rather than debate nonsensical federal-state issues.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (15:40) — I am very pleased to rise today to speak on this motion. I congratulate the Minister for Health for drawing to this house's attention the diabolical work of the federal Liberal-National coalition. What we have in Canberra at the moment is a government in chaos, and the people that are bearing the brunt of that are my constituents in Macedon.

Ms McLeish interjected.

Ms THOMAS — They are the constituents of the member for Eildon, who is on her way out the door, and they are the constituents of the member for Euroa and the constituents of the member for Yan Yean, those of us that represent rural communities. These are the ones that are bearing the brunt of the diabolical lack of action from the federal Liberal-National coalition. I am pleased to be able to speak on the motion today and to correct the record when it comes to some of the comments made by the member for Euroa in this place when it comes to ambulance services.

I did want to say this. Under this government, under the Minister for Health in this place, we have seen the ambulance response times improve quarter on quarter on quarter on quarter — and we now have the fastest response times in nine years —

An honourable member interjected.

Ms THOMAS — In nine years. I will tell you how we have achieved that: by investing in our ambulance services, by employing more paramedics and by working with our workforce — by working cooperatively with our paramedics and their union representatives.

When we came to office, morale in the ambulance service was at absolute rock bottom — and is it any surprise? — because the then Minister for Health, Mr David Davis in the other place, was at war with our paramedics. We had an absolute crisis on our hands. I commend the Minister for Health on the work that she did immediately in our first 100 days to end the war on paramedics and to ensure that our hardworking paramedics, our well-trained ambulance officers, were out there doing what they do best — saving the lives of Victorians.

As I said earlier, I am particularly pleased to see the results achieved in regional Victoria. It was fantastic to have the Minister for Health only last week visit the Woodend ambulance service to meet with the paramedics and to congratulate them on their very fine work.

The member for Euroa last night in the adjournment debate had some things to say about the ambulance service at Nagambie that are purely and simply wrong. I would like to take the opportunity to talk a little about this, because I do know a little bit about it. At the time of our government's delivery of service to the Nagambie community I was the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. It was my pleasure over some time to work with the Nagambie Ambulance Service Community Alliance, and visit Nagambie on a

number of occasions. Indeed the member for Euroa was at some of the meetings that I attended. I need to be very clear about this — and the people of Nagambie need to understand — last night the member for Euroa in this place attacked our ambulance services and misled Nagambie locals over the significant ambulance resources we have put into the community. It is a disgrace that she would suggest that we are eroding services to that community when it is clear we are doing nothing of the sort.

It is the sort of fearmongering we have come to expect from those opposite, but to be frank, the communities that they represent can see through this a mile off. Because do you know what? The people of Nagambie for a long, long time have been represented by those on the other side and they know that they have been duded by that representation. They know that their needs have been overlooked, because we know how ineffectual The Nationals are. If we want any further proof of that, look to Canberra. But let us not look there because, as I said, there is nothing to see; nobody is at home. It is absolute chaos. While in Victoria we are focused on delivering health services, up there they are involved in internecine warfare. It is an absolute disgrace.

Let me be clear: there are no changes to the Nagambie ambulance service to what was announced by me in August 2016 — the community's first-ever permanent ambulance service, delivering quicker responses to local medical emergencies. I take the opportunity to congratulate the community of Nagambie. As I said earlier, it was really my pleasure to work closely with them. I have to tell you this: for the first time Nagambie locals had someone who listened to them. Their own representative had failed to properly represent their needs in this place, and so it was really terrific to go there. I have got to say that every time I have been to Nagambie I have been warmly welcomed. In fact the last time I was in Nagambie I was told that it was always good news to see an Andrews Labor government MP in Nagambie because good news would follow. Because that is what we do — we deliver for people in regional Victoria, the very same people who are totally ignored by those on the other side, giving lazy, incompetent representation.

As I said, the service in Nagambie is a 24-hour, on-call ambulance service, staffed by ambulance community officers — employees trained to provide life-saving emergency care with professional paramedic support at peak times. This is the most significant investment of ambulance resources that Nagambie has ever seen, and it took a Labor government to deliver it.

The member for Euroa is simply wrong to suggest that we are withdrawing services. Nothing has changed. The ambulance community officers have had significant support from the career paramedics during periods of high demand. Ambulance community officers are skilled and have a level of care above that of a basic life support paramedic. It is simply offensive of the member for Euroa to suggest that this is not the case.

Further, the member for Euroa asserts that ambulance community officers are not properly equipped with a suitable vehicle. This is simply wrong and yet another example of the member for Euroa misleading this place. The vehicle in Nagambie has a stretcher and can transport a patient, which community emergency response team volunteers cannot do.

Ms Ryan — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Macedon is misleading the house. I never said that ambulance community officers in Nagambie are not supported by an appropriate vehicle. They do have an ambulance — that is the whole point. They have an ambulance that says 'Paramedic' on the side. They are not paramedics. When they get to jobs, the community thinks they are getting a paramedic and there is no paramedic there and they cannot deliver the services.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny) — Member for Euroa, there is no point of order; it is a point of debate.

Ms THOMAS — As I was saying, the member for Euroa is wrong. The vehicle in Nagambie has a stretcher and can transport a patient, which community emergency response team volunteers cannot do. To suggest this is a regression of service is wrong and only serves to whip up fear in local residents.

During major events such as Head of the River, Ambulance Victoria also provides increased resources, which I know the member for Euroa knows. The size and nature of the event dictates the level of extra resources. Local managers review the resourcing needs for every significant event, and it is no different for events held in Nagambie. The member for Euroa should apologise to the Nagambie community for misleading them, for this political scaremongering with no basis, for offending the very ambulance resources who are trained to support and care for local residents in their time of need.

We are used to hearing those opposite talk down our ambulance service. That is what they did for the four years they were in government, as the member for Yan Yean so rightly pointed out. The member for Euroa was

at that point a staffer in that government, and what did she do? She did absolutely nothing. She did absolutely nothing to encourage the people that she worked for to stand up for regional Victorians.

In stark contrast, only Labor will respect and invest in our ambulance services to deliver better care to people right across Victoria. The member for Euroa should get on board with all the great initiatives of the Andrews Labor government. The work that we are doing to restore health and ambulance services in this state has been extraordinary. She should also get on board in condemning the Turnbull-Joyce government in Canberra for ripping Victorians off to the tune of \$2.1 billion. The impact that that will have in my electorate is truly alarming — \$2 million is at risk at Kyneton District Health Service and \$2.5 million is at risk at Hepburn Health Service. This is about doctors and nurses and access to elective surgery. So instead of coming in here and attacking the Labor government, those on the other side — The Nationals in particular are an absolute disgrace — should stand up to their mates in Canberra and stand up for Victorians.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (15:50) — I turn to this motion before the house today. I wondered at 10 o'clock this morning why we were going onto a motion on an issue such as this. Surely this great reforming government, this government that has got so much to do to get on with things in Victoria, has not actually run out of legislation. We had a total of four bills on the business program this week because the Labor government has got nothing to say. But I have worked it out now. I listened to a few of the speakers before me, and we now know that this was put up as a platform for all those on the backbenches to do their auditions. We have just seen one by the member for Macedon, who has so little to offer on health services or anything else that she spent 8 minutes of her 10-minute contribution on an issue outside her electorate in attacking the member for Euroa. I just have to wonder what the member for Macedon is doing in her own electorate, because she certainly had nothing to say about it. She was more interested in talking about the member for Euroa and what The Nationals are doing than what services she is delivering to the people of Macedon. I acknowledge the work of the member for Euroa and what she has done since she was elected — and before she was elected — with respect to the Nagambie ambulance service, which she has been banging on about, I have to say, for a good four years already.

We heard a little earlier — thankfully I was not in the chamber at the time — a diatribe from the member for Essendon, which is what really got me thinking that this

was an audition process. I love these sorts of pointless debates, because there always seem to be one or two members opposite who are put up to attack the National Party. They must have a little roster that says, 'We cannot all be talking about the Liberal Party. One of you will have to talk about the National Party and what they are doing or not doing in country Victoria'. It must have been the member for Essendon's turn this time. I always love it when someone from inner-city Melbourne gets up and tells us what country people are thinking; people who talk about places like Nagambie or Foster or Yarram, when they have never actually been beyond the tram tracks of Melbourne. We saw that today —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I hear interjections coming from the other side. We heard a question in question time today about the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, and there were fingers being pointed at us from those over in that direction who were asking 'What are you doing?'. They went very quiet when we pointed out that the Murray-Darling Basin plan was under threat because of the actions of Victorian Labor senators. It highlights just how ridiculous it is when urban Labor MPs stand up and start preaching about country Victoria, because they have got absolutely no idea.

This matter today is a big waste of the Parliament's time, because this debate is not delivering anything. This is not going to help one more person to get better health care. Is it going to deliver a doctor for the Yarram hospital or for Mallacoota? Is it going to improve the health of a child at the Royal Children's Hospital? Will it shore up maternity services at Foster? No. This is just base politics, and it is ridiculous politics at that, because if we go to some of the claims that are made, the motion condemns the Leader of the Opposition for failing to stand up for Victoria and Victorian hospital funding. Let the record show the comments of the Leader of the Opposition when he said, quite rightly, on Thursday, 8 February:

Well, I'm ... sceptical of when Daniel Andrews claims there's figures that dud Victoria ...

Amen to that. We are always sceptical about that, and I will demonstrate that in a moment. He continued:

Having said that, our state is entitled to its fair share and population pressures are greater in Victoria than any other state. So Victoria is entitled to its fair share and I would hope that that will be any determining factor when it's health or infrastructure funding for our state.

So to suggest that the Leader of the Opposition is in some way running a protection racket for the federal government is simply wrong.

Let us also go to the facts of the matter. As the Leader of the Opposition said at that doorstep interview, he is sceptical of the Premier. We all are, and with good reason. Between 2013–14 and 2016–17 the commonwealth actually increased funding to Victorian hospitals by 36.4 per cent; 36.4 per cent was the increase in funding from the commonwealth to Victorian hospitals. At the same time by how much did the Victorian government increase funding to hospitals? It must have been more, given the debate we are having today, I would assume. Hang on! No, it is not; the increase was 13.9 per cent. So here we have the Labor government attacking the commonwealth on its position on health funding, and yet actually the increase has been smaller in Victoria than it has been from the commonwealth.

Likewise, commonwealth funding to Victorian hospitals is growing, from \$3.3 billion in the last year of the federal Labor government to \$5.7 billion in 2020–21, and it will continue to climb to record levels each year. So for this government to be claiming that there is a cut is ridiculous. I think the hypocrisy of it echoes another important area of public policy — and that is with respect to education funding, where we saw the bizarre spectacle of the Deputy Premier, in here as the Minister for Education, attacking the Liberal-National commonwealth government for failing to commit to the Gonski program of funding, when he himself had not committed to it. It is a classic case of do as I say, not as I do. It is a ridiculous situation, and I have to say: hypocrisy, thy name is Labor.

This debate is not helping to get a single person extra health care. It is not improving our healthcare system. It is not helping to find a doctor for Yarram or Mallacoota, which are places where hospitals are searching for them, and it is not helping to improve services like those at Foster. At Foster we have a hospital, and my colleague Melina Bath, a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the other place, was born at the Foster hospital. The maternity ward has not changed since she was born. I am not going to be ungracious and say how long ago that might have been; suffice to say it is quite some time.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — You never speak about a woman's age.

The Foster hospital in 2016 put in an application for funding to upgrade its maternity service and also to provide a post-treatment section for its post-operative ward, where at the moment doctors have to see people post-theatre literally in a broom closet. That is obviously not ideal. Foster is about 45 minutes from Leongatha; it is about 45 minutes or 1 hour from Yarram. It is not in any way, shape or form a short trip across to the Latrobe Valley due to the Strzelecki Ranges. It provides excellent service in its maternity ward. It services all of the South Gippsland area, running pretty much from Meeniyan through to Yarram and indeed more.

We have a great bunch of dedicated GPs there who work really well with the hospital. The maternity service is critical to them, because obviously having the maternity ward there and the surgical ward helps them to keep up their skills and makes sure that it is a great place to attract GPs. A great case in point is that when you look at Foster, it has a population of about the same size as Yarram — a larger regional population but it is about the same size. We have three doctors in Yarram. We have got about 12 in Foster, and that is partly because the maternity ward and surgical ward are there.

The hospital applied for funding for an expansion there two years ago. The government said it would have a response in about November last year, and here we are on our way into March and still they have not heard. It is very important that the Andrews Labor government does fund that particular project. I acknowledge that the government has funded important projects at Yarram and also at the Central Gippsland Health Service in Sale, and I am sure it has done that in part thanks to the increased funding that it has received from the commonwealth in the health budget in the last four years, as I just outlined.

There are many other areas where this government could be doing better with respect to health services. Other speakers have outlined the debacle of the Victorian Heart Hospital, where the government made a big song and dance and then has not been able to attract any partners to fund that hospital, and the debacle of the 13th floor of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. These are issues where this government should be looking at its own performance and not trying to point the finger in other directions. We of course want to support our health services, and the government stands condemned for this debate today.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (16:01) — I am pleased to speak on the motion from the Minister for Health, that this house:

- (1) condemns the federal government for a funding proposal that short-changes our hospitals by over \$2 billion;
- (2) condemns the Leader of the Opposition for failing to stand up to Canberra on Victorian hospital funding; and
- (3) notes the federal government owes Victoria \$104 million for hospital services already provided.

I should set the context. In the Ivanhoe electorate the Austin Hospital has a significant history in the local community, a history that those opposite need to be reminded of. The Kennett regime sought to privatise the Austin Hospital, but such was the outcry and the anger in the local community that a cabinet minister in the Kennett government, who was the member for Ivanhoe at the time, lost his job at the 1996 election because of those matters.

It was a campaign by a former member for Albert Park, John Thwaites, who as a minister in the Bracks government helped to rebuild not only the Austin Hospital but with former Premier Steve Bracks and several health ministers, including Minister Thwaites, rebuilt two hospitals on one site — the Austin Hospital and of course the Mercy Hospital for Women. That is the contribution made by Labor governments to the Austin medical precinct in my electorate to ensure that it remains in public hands, to ensure that it receives investment from governments and to secure it from privatisation, which was always the agenda of those opposite when they had the opportunity to serve in government.

Not only that, but we continue to secure the ongoing services and support of the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, which of course is very significant historically in our community in its support for veterans and also through several programs funded and announced by the Andrews government in relation to post-traumatic stress disorder clinical support and work. It is not only for our veterans and many of those younger veterans from conflicts in more recent times but also for emergency services workers, which was a policy that we announced in opposition to make sure that the repatriation hospital campus in Heidelberg is also providing critical services to people in need today.

I want to pay tribute to some further important work at Austin Health, which goes fundamentally to the issues that the Minister for Health raised when she pointed out these cuts from the Turnbull government. Can I say that at Austin Health what we are talking about is a cut of some \$6.329 million. That is a very significant sum of money which will have a significant effect on the capacity of Austin Health to deliver services to the community.

Just touching on that, from one of the more recent annual reports from Austin Health, we are talking about over 106 000 patient admissions over the financial year. That is more than a full MCG of patient admissions through the door at the Austin Hospital. When we talk about outpatient attendees, that is over 192 000. That is a couple of MCGs of Victorians right there, and not just from Melbourne but from across regional Victoria, who rely on Austin Health as a tertiary healthcare service to provide important services to them.

That also reminds me of the great work done by Lions House and Lions clubs in our community. Lions House provides accommodation for regional communities and regional families. When they come down to get treatment at the Austin Hospital, there is a place for families to stay near their loved ones in Melbourne, in Heidelberg, and that has been a great community project that we have worked on over very many years.

There have been nearly 84 000 emergency attendances at Austin Health just in the past year. Again, that is a very significant number of people from the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne that rely on the services of Austin Health. It is why the Andrews government continues to invest in Austin Health. We have a track record of keeping that hospital in public hands, away from privatisation, as those opposite sought to do. Then we have made sure that we continue to invest in Austin Health.

Can I say also that I am looking forward to the rescheduling of the Minister for Health's visit to open the short-stay unit, which was a \$15 million investment to increase the short-stay bed numbers and also the redevelopment of the short-stay unit at Austin Health — a critical service to provide turnaround times for patients in need in the community. A lot of the funding for that project came from some of the great work that the former CEO, Dr Brendan Murphy, who is now the chief medical officer for the country, was able to do in ensuring the efficiency of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness and Research Centre. The development there provided some capacity to help fund the work at the short-stay unit.

In last year's budget alone, to demonstrate again the bona fides of the Andrews Labor government, over \$40 million was provided in critical infrastructure funding to make sure that we continue to invest in infrastructure at Austin Health. With thousands of employees at Austin Health — and you are talking about hundreds of thousands of people who are using its services every year — it is almost like a regional city. It is certainly a very large country town in its own right when you talk about the thousands of employees

and the hundreds of thousands of Victorians, including those in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, who rely on its services on a yearly basis.

So of course it is critical we make sure that we continue to invest in Austin Health. I can say there has been some bipartisan work across the chamber from different governments in terms of support for the Olivia Newton-John cancer wellness centre. What we are not seeing in a bipartisan sense is an effort to make sure we hold the federal Turnbull government to account to provide its fair share of hospital funding in Victoria to Austin Health. If we had the same level of bipartisanship that we have seen in relation to the development of the Olivia Newton-John cancer wellness centre from the federal government in relation to health services at the Austin, we would be in a much better place to be able to treat more patients.

Can I say also that there have been some other very significant developments across the Austin Health campus, but in particular I want to touch on some of the other innovations and works at the Mercy Hospital for Women at Heidelberg and the work that it does providing great services for families in my community. Some of the great work that it has been able to do in more recent times includes innovative practice around breastmilk for babies and providing opportunities for families in need, to support them. There have been some very unique services provided by them. Across the road we have got Warringal Private Hospital in that Heidelberg medical precinct. It is another great provider in my community, and there is another great offering in terms of staffing. I am not just talking about the brilliant work of our nurses, of our medical doctors, but also people like Brian Kane, who I have known for over 25 years.

Mr Thompson — A party member.

Mr CARBINES — He knows a lot about the work at Austin Health. He has been a cleaner there for over 40 years. It is people like Brian Kane, as the member for Sandringham would know, who are diligent, capable, committed people who, day in, day out, without thanks, do a great job to keep the wheels turning at places like Austin Health, where you have got hundreds of thousands of patients and thousands of determined and dedicated staff. Brian is just another one of those living locally who is well known to many and who provides a great service and is very committed to his task. It is fortunate that he has been recognised for his long service and achievements at Austin Health. Everyone makes a contribution, everyone makes a commitment and people feel a great personal connection.

I can say also that in taking our daughter there in recent times I have learnt a lot more about greenstick fractures. Knowing that we could go in there — not take any chances, get straight down to emergency — and be seen straight away with appropriate treatment, put our minds at ease. It is a fantastic service; it gives great peace of mind to the community.

It is something that is valued not only for those who rely on its services but also for those who rely on it because it is where they dedicate their careers and their working lives. Also, it is from where many people then fund and resource and raise their families. That is where they work and they have decided to make their contributions to other Victorians in the healthcare sector. I thank them. I have an electorate where a very large proportion of people work in the health sector, both in administration and medical practice.

The medical precinct at Heidelberg is second to none in Melbourne. The Turnbull government should understand and recognise that for the cuts that it seeks to deliver to the Austin hospital it stands condemned. The Andrews government will continue to invest in health services.

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (16:11) — I am very pleased to join this debate in relation to hospital funding. On 30 March 2016 the *Age* newspaper had the headline on the front page ‘High Court fight over health cuts’, and it noted:

It could also force Sandringham Hospital to slash its 24-hour emergency department to operate just 12 hours a day ...

That was a deplorable circumstance in the minds of the Sandringham community. I had occasion to write to my electorate in the following terms:

The Sandringham Hospital emergency department has developed into a vital resource used by almost every family in the wider Bayside and Kingston region of Melbourne. I fully support the Sandringham Hospital emergency department remaining open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Press speculation on the front page of the *Age* late March that the Sandringham Hospital emergency department represents an early savings point in Victorian health administration must be counteracted emphatically by the local community.

The closure of the emergency department from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. speculated upon in the context of a federal/state funding stoush would jeopardise local health care and in the words of one Bayside doctor ‘would place lives at risk’.

Alfred Health has subsequently stated that it has no plans to alter services. Nonetheless, even the debate about politically expedient cuts to the 24/7 emergency department at Sandringham Hospital must be rejected.

Local residents attend Sandringham Hospital emergency department for multiple reasons, including cardiac arrest, bone fractures, allergic reactions, pneumonia, appendicitis, diabetic coma, food poisoning, high fever, domestic accidents, asthma and croup. Some of these conditions can be very frightening for families, even more so if the patient has to travel another 14 kilometres to the nearest other emergency department.

The Sandringham Hospital emergency department has developed into a world-class treatment and training facility with massive reinvestment in the last five years and it must remain that way for the next generation of Bayside and Kingston residents.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr FOLEY (Mental Health).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

CHILDREN LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INFORMATION SHARING) BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed from 21 February; motion of Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1

Ms VICTORIA — I am very pleased on behalf of the coalition to be able to seek some clarification around some of the clauses in the Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017. If we have a look at some of the things that are required, we need to go back to a little bit of history and have a look at what was happening under the Bracks-Brumby governments. I do not think anybody can deny that child protection was an absolute disaster and was constantly on the front page of the paper. Inquiries took place under the coalition government, of which we were very proud, and of course action started to happen, and it is very good to see that the government is continuing with some of that good work but we in the coalition as well as a lot of experts and the wider community have some grave concerns about some aspects of the bill.

A child wellbeing and safety information sharing scheme is certainly important and it is incredibly important when we are talking about potentially nipping an issue of safety or wellbeing in the bud. We have seen all too often where information sharing has

not happened and perhaps there could have been some circumstances where some outcomes could have been changed by doing that. So we are not against the idea of information sharing, but what we would like addressed during this session are the grey areas. We believe there are quite a few of those.

I was a bit confused when I heard people talking about foetuses, and I am glad that the minister is going to have an opportunity to talk about some of this. I heard people talk about foetuses being included but if we have a look at the bill itself, it says that it is a register of children born or residing in Victoria. So some clarification on that would be good.

It also specifically talks about children's participation in government-funded programs and services, and one of the questions I want to ask there is: where does that leave children who are homeschooled or not generally in contact with mainstream services? Does that mean that if they are not using those mainstream services and do not tend to have a lot of contact through them, does that immediately raise a red flag? In that case, we need to get onto the definition of wellbeing because if a red flag is put up, if you like, that children are not attending these services or not having contact with these services, does that mean that the child is not being looked after? Not necessarily, so the definition of wellbeing is going to be incredibly important.

In my contribution yesterday I talked about the definition of wellbeing. If you look up various dictionaries, they are all different, so we want to know specifically what definition of wellbeing the government is subscribing to. We also have general ideas of what it means, but how are those ideals and those definitions going to specifically trigger an action or an intervention?

Security of information is another major questionable area for those who have made contact with me and some of my colleagues. Who can see what exactly? We do want to know exactly. Unfortunately, there is a very long list of IT stuff-ups under successive Labor governments and we need to make sure, because this is talking about the most vulnerable of all people in society. What privacy protections are going to be in place? We would like some specifics on that.

We will need to get to some of the other sections to talk about who is going to be able to use the system and who might be in the category of a restricted information-sharing entity, because at the moment all we have got on that is uncertainty. So would unrestricted entities include people like maternal and child healthcare services, kindergartens, schools,

doctors or psychologists and, really importantly, who within those entities will have access to the files, and what might those files contain? What information can be stored in there?

The rights of the child are obviously paramount, but does the ability to request files from various practitioners or entities breach the privacy rights of parents, guardians or other people surrounding that child? If some of the documentation requested is not relevant to the flagged issue, where do we stand with that, and again, where are the rights of the adult and the safeguards that will be in place? There are other bits of confusion, which we will get into through other clauses, but we really do need to know which agencies will be able to access information, which ones will share the information and we need some clarification, as I said, on some of those grey areas.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you very much, and I thank the honourable member for Bayswater for her contribution and particularly acknowledge what would appear to be shared ground across the Parliament — that the emphasis on the importance of information sharing in this space is at the heart of what we are seeking to address here. In terms of some of the specifics that the honourable member has raised in regard particularly to the issue around wellbeing, which she drew some attention to and the importance around that, she is right in her assessment that that contribution around wellbeing, as well as safety, is at the heart of the bill and is at the heart of why the enormous number of stakeholders who have been party to the deliberations that have given form to this bill have come around in support of it.

Whilst we acknowledge that there are some organisations that support the policy intent of the reforms they may have concerns about one or more aspects of the reforms, particularly in the domestic violence area, the women's legal service and the Federation of Community Legal Centres, we do in fact note that whether it is the champions of reforms, particularly in the Indigenous community, the early learning associations, the principals' associations and a whole raft of others — the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, let alone a range of other supporters who are very numerous — there is at least shared consensus around the need for this bill to be got right.

This is why many of the issues that the honourable member has raised in regard to some of the specifics go to the heart of how the system will roll out in a graduated, informed and consultative way, so as to allow the regulatory framework that sits behind the bill

to address many of the concerns that the honourable member has raised.

In the limited time available, whilst wanting to genuinely engage with the opposition in a constructive way here but noting I am advised by the manager of opposition business that there are a multitude of questions, I am happy to give the opposition a general assurance that these and, I have no doubt, other questions that may well come up in the committee stage in the upper house will be the very subject of that consultative process that the act envisages as it comes into being at a number of graduated, staged benchmarks over the coming years. In that regard, I am happy to seek the advice of my friends in the advisers box about some of the specifics which go to the issues of — if I have got this right — in particular who can see what.

Obviously at a general level that is set out in the different categories of who has access in terms of the nominated entities and the nominated persons within those entities. Equally there are, as the legislation seeks to establish, protocols and regulatory frameworks that put behind that a series of protections as to the level of access that people need in terms of some of the specific information from the registered providers that the state has. But in terms of at least some of the specific issues that the honourable member raised about issues of the state-funded services and particularly what that might mean for people who are outside of the potential scope of some of those services and what entities have access to what level of information, I might, with your leave, just very briefly seek some further advice in the expectation of wanting to generally engage with the honourable members of the opposition.

In addition to the generalities that I suspect will come up on a number of occasions, I advise the honourable member for Bayswater that when it comes to the issue of unborn children the act is clearly using the same definition as the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 — that is, from the child being born to the child turning 18. If, however, in the circumstances that there are concerns registered around the potential wellbeing of a yet-to-be-born child, there is the capacity to address that and to alert the system for that issue to be dealt with once the child is born. So in a strict sense, I suspect the answer is from the date of birth to when one is 18 in the sense that that is the definition that comes from the youth and families act. But of course in the circumstances of a yet-to-be-born child and agencies having concerns about the potential wellbeing and safety of that child once they are born, there is a process that will alert the system of that possibility once the child is born.

In terms of the issue around state services and the definitions, particularly for those children that might be beyond the scope of, if you like, mainstream services — although I think you could well and truly mount an argument that homeschooling would be seen as a mainstream option, particularly by the stakeholder groups themselves — I am advised that that kind of example would be covered. Indeed the peak bodies for homeschooling were quite supportive of that proposition — looking towards that prospect as a form of legitimate recognition of their form of schooling and education that would take away some of the, in that sector's view, negative stigma that goes with some aspects of how the wider community see them.

As general as those initial responses might well be, I hope that they have sought to address some of the concerns, if not the majority of the concerns, that the honourable member for Bayswater has raised. Obviously I am at the Parliament's disposal for further contributions.

Ms VICTORIA — I thank the minister for some of the clarifications. I will flag with you that we would like to talk further and perhaps you might like to give us some more information about what you have just spoken about as far as flagging a child that is not yet born. I assume that the child will not have a record, so I assume then that it is the mother who will be flagged within the system, not the unborn child. Whether there is a mechanism there in place for when the child is born is another matter, but certainly that is the flagging of the mother.

I want to just add one more query about this. It is about the reporting requirements around the guidelines and when there is a breach in reporting, whether somebody has gone a little bit too far or has not been doing the right thing. Knowing that there is a three-part test that is going to be taken into consideration, we have got some questions about that. We are querying what an entity is able to do voluntarily — in other words, what they are able to voluntarily disclose or request about any person for the purpose of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or indeed a group of children. In the second-reading speech, Minister, you said:

The agencies that work with our children and families every day have become reticent and deterred when it comes to sharing information about a child. This arises for a combination of reasons:

people are confused about when and what they can share under the law;

they may fear punitive consequences if they get it wrong; and

privacy appears to have taken on a higher cultural value than the wellbeing and safety of individual children.

Naturally many of those who have expressed anguish about this bill to my colleagues and me are seeking explanations as to how the government is going to eradicate that confusion by the introduction of this bill. So I guess the question is: is the government also saying that there are no consequences if somebody handling the information does it wrong?

Mr FOLEY — In terms of the first issue raised by the honourable member, I am more than happy for the government to provide that further information that the member sought in regards to the flag for the family, as opposed to the unborn child, and particularly the mother in that regard. I will certainly undertake to do that.

In regards to the specific issue of breaching and reporting of entities and the issue that the honourable member touched on around confusion, this goes to really the heart of the cultural change that this bill seeks to be a part of. This is not a cultural change that comes in isolation from, as the honourable member touched on in her introductory comments, the lengthy process of multiple reviews and oversights in response to far too many tragic cases of child welfare and safety not happening. There was a report of this Parliament in 2013, the *Betrayal of Trust* report, and more recently the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The royal commission report states:

In our view, legislative definition of the terms 'safety' and 'wellbeing' is unnecessary and may be unhelpful. In particular, it may unnecessarily limit the scope of information sharing. The objective of the scheme may be better promoted by commonsense interpretation of the terms 'safety' and 'wellbeing', based on the ordinary meaning of these words and allowing for the exercise of professional judgement in particular cases.

That is the most recent of the numerous iterations around how you encourage a culture of information sharing in the interests of the wellbeing and safety of children in the context of very complicated circumstances and sometimes multiple providers, whilst at the same time providing the checks, the balances and the security of that information. That lies at the heart of how this bill seeks to contribute to that outcome. In that regard, to use the royal commission's key phrases from the extract I have just cited, whether that is the professional judgement or the commonsense interpretation, how can we make sure that the legislative tool, the regulatory framework and systems and the IT systems that sit behind that will deliver that outcome, against the necessary protections of data and the necessary protections of arrangements that you

would expect this legislation, given its specific provisions, to provide?

In terms of some of the issues that the honourable member touched on, she will see that later in the bill there are substantial penalties and processes for breaching some of the protections and arrangements should that line be crossed around what can and cannot be shared and with whom. But there is also a whole level of protections around the IT system itself and who has access to what in the entity stage and in terms of the nominated persons within the entities. So in that respect I repeat the general comments that I started off with in regard to how the provision of the regulatory framework and the evolution of that framework in a highly consultative way over the course of the staged rollout of this bill, I am sure, will address not just the questions that the honourable member has raised but also many of the issues that a number of the stakeholder groups have raised.

Having said that, many of those issues were the subject of debate, including through the consultative processes that were put in place to arrive at this bill, and whilst in no way diminishing the legitimate concerns of those people who support the policy intent of the reform but who have some concerns about aspects of its rolling out, the overall package has the overwhelming support of those providers and advocates in the sector. I am confident that the processes that are put in place in this bill and, more importantly, the consultative mechanisms that will sit behind its rollout will more than adequately address the concerns that the honourable member has raised. But I do think she hit the nail on the head when she pointed to the cultural change that lies at the heart of this bill as a tool towards the mechanism that government services and non-government agencies can be engaged with after what has been a very long litany of recommendations of inquiries and support from the child and welfare sector around safety and wellbeing to deliver this as an outcome. I hope that addresses the honourable member's concerns, noting that much of the specifics of those particular undertakings are either contained elsewhere in the bill or will emerge through the consultative and regulation-making powers that sit behind the bill.

Mr CLARK — There are three specific matters relating to the overall operation of the bill that I would like to raise with the minister. The first is one he touched on — that of the government's plans and intentions regarding time lines around the rollout of the various measures that are proposed in the bill. I note the bill has an ultimate default commencement date of 31 December 2019, but I am assuming that the

government is planning to bring various parts of the regime into operation before then. I am wondering if the minister can give us some guidance on what the government's thinking is about the commencement of various stages, and in particular what is the government's target is for the first operational commencement of parts of the bill. Which parts of the bill are intended to be the first to come into operation?

My second issue relates to the views of the Victorian information commissioner and in particular the privacy and data protection deputy commissioner in relation to the bill. As the minister may be aware, there is a statutory function for the privacy commissioner to consider any legislation being contemplated by government that may affect laws relating to privacy and provide views to the responsible minister on those matters. It would certainly give the opposition a great deal of comfort if we could be assured that the privacy commissioner had been consulted and was comfortable and satisfied with the provisions of the bill, or conversely, if there are issues and concerns that the privacy commissioner still has, to be aware of those concerns so that we can take them into account. We understand from information provided by Minister Mikakos's office that there have been some meetings held with the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC), but we would seek further details about what the outcomes of those meetings were.

My third point is in a sense a similar one in relation to the health complaints commissioner, where again we understand that the health complaints commissioner made a submission on the consultation paper that was issued in relation to this bill. We would be interested to know what the views were of the health complaints commissioner on that consultation paper, and then also what views, if any, the health complaints commissioner provided in relation to the bill as it is introduced into the house. Clearly the views of both these independent commissioners are very important for this house, the Parliament and the community as a whole to assess the various considerations relevant to this bill.

Mr FOLEY — Can I thank the member for Box Hill for those three issues. I will give a general response and then seek, with leave, the further detailed information as quickly as I can and report back here and now.

You are quite right. You have identified in terms of the rolled out time frames what the arrangements in the bill are. In terms of which specific provisions come in when, I will seek some information from my friends in the box and get straight back to you.

In regard to the information and the data-sharing issues around the statutory functions of different privacy commissioners and the like, you are quite right. The bill in a number of aspects deals with extending the operation of the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 to cover a whole range of information-sharing entities and restricted information sharing that might not already be covered by the act, so I think it could be seen, in relation to that, that this seeks to extend the provision of privacy and data protection beyond what was previously there.

In regard to the health complaints commissioner, I will also seek some immediate advice from my friends in the box and report back as quickly as I can. I will do this in a series of tranches, not wanting to delay the limited time available to us.

In terms of the first question that the honourable member for Box Hill raised in terms of rollout, the goal is to seek alignment with the recently passed family violence information-sharing processes. The first tranche of that is in fact underway as we speak, so that is clearly already underway. The second tranche of those reforms is scheduled for a time in the third or fourth quarter of 2018, the second half of this year. It is the hope, subject to the passing of the bill and the normal administrative arrangements that need to be put in place upon that, to seek for the first tranche of the requirements of this significant reform to be closely aligned, given the enormous crossover of stakeholders and issues involved, with that second tranche of the family violence information-sharing arrangements, and then it is subject to seeking to further align both the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 and this bill in a closer way, subject to how those learnings are taken for post-2019 and onwards. That is one aspect of the reforms.

In terms of the perhaps more substantive Child Link process and system that sits at the heart of the bill, it is proposed that there be a two-and-a-half-year process of engagement, development, consultation and implementation, which takes us into 2019 arrangements insofar as that significant aspect of the bill.

As to the issues in relation to the engagement with the privacy commissioner and the Victorian information commissioner, they have both been — particularly the privacy commissioner — at the heart of the consultations. The honourable member is correct; they did make substantial submissions. Based on those submissions, it is the government's intent, and indeed it is the intent of the bill and the regulatory framework, to seek to pick up a fair number of particularly the privacy commissioner's submissions to the point where those discussions have got to the

position where it is the intention of the government and the privacy commissioner to work closely, both together and with the sector, on how the rollout will work in as collaborative a manner as possible to deliver on the statutory goals and obligations that the privacy commissioner brings and on the intent of this particular bill.

In regard to other information that the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner had, as the honourable member indicated, the OVIC put in a submission and there were several meetings with the OVIC, including as recently as late 2017, in the preparation of the bill. The OVIC acknowledged that, whilst privacy is not an absolute right, the wellbeing and safety of children is vital. With that in mind, the OVIC were supportive of the inclusion of the safeguards as set out in these reforms. The commissioner invited the government to continue to work with that office to ensure particularly that record-keeping requirements are developed as part of these reforms and encouraged the government to develop appropriate training and consultation for and messaging to the sector about information sharing, including the appropriateness and the responsibilities as well as the overriding privacy to the extent necessary. The OVIC emphasised its role as a conciliator rather than focusing on punitive measures and took the view that its goal is to build the capacity of its statutory requirements whilst meeting the obligations of this bill.

In regard to the health complaints commissioner, the health complaints commissioner was included in the consultations, and it provided input with the consultation paper and responded in written submissions. They did not raise policy concerns but rather raised a number of important but, in the scheme of things, relatively small factual or technical matters, which were all taken into account in the drafting of the bill. I think that answers the three issues.

Mr McGuire — The *Betrayal of Trust* report revealed the cover-up that killed. I had the privilege of tabling the report in this chamber in November 2013. One of the key reforms was that it was basically calling for cultural, generational and systemic change to be made. If I could ask the minister: with the subsequent Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the model for sharing information in New South Wales, how has the government looked to prioritise and get the balance right between the wellbeing and safety of children and their right to be heard and involved in the decision-making? This was something that we wrestled with within the inquiry — how we try to get these balances correct in the best way that we can judge them

at the time, the critical proposition being that priority one is the safety of the children.

Mr FOLEY — I thank the member for Broadmeadows and indeed members of the then government for both that initial reference and the groundbreaking work that they did in the *Betrayal of Trust* report. That of course then helped significantly inform the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which reported in December 2017. At its heart this bill seeks to adopt the core principles of those two inquiries. Chapter 16A of the report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the McClellan report, identified the New South Wales Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 as leading best practice and used it to inform their recommendations relating to information sharing. The royal commission's view was that the threshold test of the legislative definition of the term 'safety and wellbeing' was unnecessary and may well be unhelpful, therefore going to precisely the issues that the honourable member for Broadmeadows raised.

As I have already addressed in the quote earlier, a commonsense interpretation of the terms in the ministerial guidelines allowing for the exercise of professional judgement in particular cases may be the better way to promote the objective of the scheme. Therefore, flowing from that, guidelines supporting decision-making by practitioners should advise those intending to share any individual's personal information that they should first inform the individual of that intention and seek their views rather than explicitly focusing on seeking consent. The purpose-driven thesis that sits behind that around information sharing should therefore ensure that the information it is sharing is both appropriate and effective at identifying, responding and preventing risk to children — that is, the purpose of sharing is to assist recipients to undertake the functions relevant to their responsibilities for the child's safety and wellbeing.

I could go on, but I do notice that the member for Burwood is chafing at the bit. But I would refer the honourable member for Broadmeadows to particularly chapter 16A of the McClellan report, which precisely addresses the issues he has raised and which informs in great detail the thesis underlining the bill.

Mr WATT — I have a few things that I want to get into one question. I note the submission from Domestic Violence Victoria, Victoria Legal Aid, the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, the Women's Legal Centre, No to Violence, the Federation of Community Legal Centres, Berry Street and Safe Steps. In their submission they raise an issue with the purposes of the

bill, and essentially their suggestion was that the purposes of the information-sharing bill be amended to assess and manage the risks to the safety of a child or a group of children. They are particularly worried, as I am, about the actual purposes of the bill and wonder why, if people are saying that this is about family violence or risk to children, the purposes of the bill do not reflect that, because the purposes of the bill are much broader than that.

I would also raise another question about the definition of confidential information and the information that can be shared and why it is that the government thinks information such as political opinions, membership of a political association, religious beliefs, philosophical beliefs, membership of a professional or trade association, membership of a trade union and sexual practices or preferences — and this is not just of a child, this could also be a parent or any other associated with the child — is specifically included in the bill to be shared amongst a group of people.

The third thing I would raise is that the bill actually says if an information-sharing entity believes that information may promote the wellbeing and safety of a child and a decision needs to be made about that, then it must be shared even though they may believe that it could assist even if it might be more probable that it would actually not assist and it would not be in the wellbeing of the child. So I am concerned about that bar about what may, what will and what probably will, because it may assist but it probably will not, and yet they do not have the capacity to say no unless they reach a much higher bar of risk to the child.

Mr FOLEY — I thank the member for Burwood for those issues. I will seek some further clarification. But in relation to his list of organisations that support the policy intent of the reforms but might have some concerns about one or more aspects of the reforms — without repeating them, he did identify a number of the organisations — it is my advice that both Berry Street and Bethany Community Support have since had further consultations with the relevant minister, the government and indeed the many organisations who both champion the reforms and support the reforms in the child and wellbeing sector more particularly and now support the bill. So just for the sake of the record, it would be useful to clarify that.

In regard to the provision of some of the information and the honourable member's issues as to the purposes that are then reflected in subsequent clauses, I would draw his attention to clause 8, which inserts new part 6A, child information sharing, specifically the issues to be included in what the test is and the suggestion about how entities can refuse shared

information. The test for the information that can be shared under part 3 of this bill sets out the purposes for the safety and wellbeing of a child or children in that regard and states that there must be a reasonable belief that the information may assist the professional to provide a service, make a decision, plan or assessment for the child, conduct an investigation that relates to the child's wellbeing or safety or manage a risk, and therefore the information is not excluded information. So it is that policy commonsense definition that the McClellan report talked about.

Whilst I personally am far from an expert in this space, I would relate the opportunity that I did have of seeing, again, a similar scheme in East London where, following a horrific murder of a young child, very similar provisions in joined-up services based on an IT system were in place. Similar concerns as those that have been shared by the honourable member were raised in the context of the rollout of that system, to the point where the levels — this was a national system but operated particularly in East London — did see in fact not just the confidential and adequate sharing of systems there but indeed a resulting demonstrable and measurable, and accounting to the Parliament of Westminster, improvement in the safety and delivery of wellbeing and protection for young people.

In terms of the specific issues related to the list of beliefs and attributes I might, with the indulgence of you, Deputy Speaker, go and seek some specific information, but it did sound familiarly like references to other particular acts. I will seek some speedy advice.

As to the list of any particular information, or child information, sharing, why is the part 3 test crafted as it is in the list of information? Instead of information sharing related to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or class of children, as they have in New South Wales, we have the information being shared, and I quote, 'for the purposes of promoting the wellbeing or safety of a child or a group of children'. Insofar as the second test, it then comes in as identical to chapter 16A, except for how that may assist, or would assist, in the issues that the honourable member raised. The activities are the same as chapter 16A.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The time set down for consideration of items on the government business program has arrived, and I am required to interrupt business.

Clause agreed to; clauses 2 to 41 agreed to.

Bill agreed to without amendment.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
AMENDMENT (DISTINCTIVE AREAS AND
LANDSCAPES) BILL 2017**

Second reading

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

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

MARINE AND COASTAL BILL 2017

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 20 February; 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.

AUDIT AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 20 February; motion of
Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).**

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.**ADJOURNMENT**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Canterbury Road, Heathmont

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (17:02) — (14 047) I rise to ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to have VicRoads upgrade the pedestrian safety fence at the railway bridge on Canterbury Road in Heathmont as a matter of urgency. In recent times Canterbury Road, Heathmont, has seen an increase in significant and frightening accidents. There was a truck driver that blacked out, crashing his large rig and shutting down a designated VicRoads-preferred truck route and knocking out the power in the area for an extended period. Fortunately the truck careered mostly down the centre median strip and did not end up amongst traffic, pedestrians or in the railway cutting. Those outcomes would have been horrific.

There was also a major car accident the other week, where a car heading north-east into Heathmont wrote off several cars on that side of the highway and ended up in the fence on the opposite side of the road. The driver was extremely lucky there was nobody coming the other way. It was also lucky that no pedestrian was in that exact spot at that time. This particular incident caused the current damage to the fence in question. There have been several other accidents on that bridge, and the numbers are growing. During the accident in question the car ended up taking out panels of the fence that separates cars from pedestrians using the bridge. These particular panels are frequently damaged. It is, unfortunately, becoming the norm to see tape or orange hazard netting where the panels were. The fence is best described as the sort you find at most primary schools — waist-high, steel, with a mesh construction flared at the top and bottom — fine for stopping little ones running out in front of traffic but highly inadequate for stopping anything stronger than that.

The reason for the increase in accidents is very simple. Back in 2015 some geniuses decided that Mountain Highway in Bayswater was one of the few roads ever that needed to be narrowed. When the level crossing was removed, so were vehicular lanes, much to the disgust of and despite protests from local road users. To go from six lanes to four, citing that traffic had not increased on Mountain Highway in the previous 10 years, was stupidity at its best. Nobody believed it then, and nobody believes it now. Add to that the

addition of extra traffic lights. This meant that trucks and cars fled Mountain Highway and rerouted onto Canterbury Road in droves. The combination of more traffic and sharp turns out of the traffic onto side streets is causing accidents.

The little pedestrian safety fence over the rail line in Heathmont is simply inadequate, and I believe it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt or worse. So again I ask the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to have VicRoads upgrade the pedestrian safety fence at the railway bridge on Canterbury Road in Heathmont with something much, much sturdier.

Narre Warren South electorate kindergartens

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (17:05) — (14 048) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Families and Children and concerns the recent announcement of the new early childhood capital grants through the Inclusive Kindergartens Facilities program. The action I seek is that the minister visit a kindergarten in my electorate to discuss this program with teachers and parents and explain how this new funding will help improve classrooms and playgrounds by providing a more inclusive environment for children with disabilities and additional needs.

Every child deserves to feel safe and welcome in Victorian kindergartens and to be able to succeed, and their parents should feel their child is being fully included and being assisted to reach their full potential. I am really proud that the Andrews Labor government is delivering a record \$76.4 million to build, upgrade and improve kinders throughout the state, because on this side of the house we know the importance of providing families with strong support in the early years and the benefits it has for kids throughout their lives. We know that the best start in life means you are more than likely to live a healthy and successful adult life.

I also take the opportunity to lobby those opposite to get on their phones and talk to their federal counterparts out in their electorates to make sure that their mates in Canberra provide Victorian kindergartens and Victorian kinder kids with that additional funding to make sure that all kids can go to kinder, or in fact more kids can access the kindergarten experience. I look forward to welcoming the minister to my electorate, which will hopefully encourage more kinders in my electorate to apply for this new funding stream.

Anti-Semitism

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (17:06) — (14 049) I raise a matter for the Minister for Police, and the

action I seek is for the Minister for Police to tell us what advice she has received with regard to the growing incidents of anti-Semitism in our state and what the government will be doing to combat such unprovoked attacks and threats.

Just last week anonymous flyers were distributed in Footscray spreading anti-Semitic conspiracy theories — blaming the Jewish community for the creation of ISIS, mass immigration and the breakdown of traditional families, among other things. These flyers went on to describe the Jewish community as ‘pure evil’ and directed their readers to various anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi documentaries. This was a clear attempt to create hatred and division among our community. The Anti-Defamation Commission (ADC) has described this incident as a ‘redoubling’ of the efforts of anti-Semites like never before. Victoria Police speculate that this may be a new group, utilising different and more aggressive tactics.

This is not the first time an attack of this nature has occurred in Footscray, with anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant graffiti appearing all over the suburb in 2016. This latest incident sadly coincides with a recent explosion in anti-Semitic attacks. The ADC states that there has been a worrying 10 per cent increase in anti-Semitic attacks in the last year alone, with Victoria Police recording at least three incidents in the last two weeks. Earlier this month a Bentleigh history teacher was verbally abused in a supermarket car park by a man passing by in an SUV. He stopped to swear at her and yell the words, ‘Hitler had the right idea’. Incidents like this are a disturbing reminder of the continuing threat of anti-Semitism in our state.

We Australians are proud of our diversity. We are a proud multicultural state that welcomes all. We need to ensure that we protect this image and that we have a state that welcomes everybody and tackles these kinds of individuals with the harshest possible penalties. I call on the government to stand up to these bigoted and racist attacks, to provide any resources necessary to Victoria Police to identify and pursue the perpetrators and to prove to all that anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism and any other form of racism will never find a home in our great state of Victoria.

Broadmeadows electorate youth participation

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (17:09) — (14 050) My adjournment request is to the Minister for Families and Children, Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth Affairs. The action I seek is for the minister to visit my electorate to discuss initiatives for social inclusion, particularly to improve

youth participation. Specifically in this case I want to concentrate on girls and giving them better opportunities and making sure they get a fair go.

Investing in attitude, education and opportunity is critical, particularly in helping postcodes of disadvantage to again become postcodes of hope. Labor in power has delivered over a long period of time, with landmark investments from the Bracks-Brumby governments into the schools regeneration project, the Hume Global Learning Village, the ideasLAB and the Hume Multiversity. The Minister for Health has just left the chamber, but Labor also opened the hospital. The Minister for Sport has invested in how to connect people into different sporting activities. Women are now the new trailblazers in footy. Their talent and skill is on display and is there for everyone to see.

I am really trying to go to the next level to see what are the other engagements we can make to connect the disconnected so people feel they are part of the community and part of a team, whether in sport or in a whole host of other activities, because this is the way we need to build cohesion. Just in response to the point that the member for Caulfield was making, we have to invest in attitude, education, opportunity and social cohesion — making sure people feel connected. I was disturbed to hear what he outlined to the Parliament on anti-Semitism and, yes, we need to stand up on these concerns when they become issues in the public domain.

The minister has done a lot in early childhood development in particular. We know the first 1000 days are the most critical in a person’s life to get the positive response and positive inputs to allow you to grow and fully develop and make a really meaningful contribution to the world’s most livable city. We should never forget the opportunities we have, and we should express gratitude for them. On behalf of my community, I am looking forward to seeing the minister in my electorate soon.

Heatherdale railway station

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) (17:12) — (14 051) My adjournment request is for the Minister for Public Transport. On behalf of my community, I call on the minister to reinstate the Heatherdale station pick-up and drop-off zone that existed in Forster Street, Mitcham, close to Heatherdale Road. When Heatherdale station was moved to the eastern side of Heatherdale Road, taxpayer funds were spent removing the pick-up and drop-off zone without community consultation. The zone was filled in with a nature strip and curbed and channelled to the road. A number of cars used to be able to pull in very, very safely, allowing traffic to

continue to flow onto Forster Road and out onto Heatherdale Road. We now face a significant and dangerous risk. Cars either bank up behind each other on Forster Road or they have to actually pull out to go around the cars that are dropping people off. Both examples are significantly concerning and dangerous.

I spoke with the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) prior to the station move and was not at any time informed that we would lose our drop-off and pick-up zone, which has served our community for so long and so well. Instead, after filling in the nature strip what they did was put up a 2-minute drop-off sign there without any indentation for people to pull into. With the removal of the turn-in and the placement of the 2-minute sign, I am advised that complaints have been made at LXRA meetings. I have also been advised that a 'kiss and ride' was planned by the LXRA and that there were community concerns in relation to its structure and how it would work, but nothing has been done in relation to that and the community has not been informed of any resolution in relation to it.

This pick-up and drop-off zone is something that commuters in my community certainly want. It is something that we need to deal with to take away the danger that exists, certainly for people with disabilities. Therefore both my community and I ask the minister to resolve this issue immediately before an accident occurs and to make sure that the community is consulted about any changes that might be made so that it is done in their interests and with their approval.

Essendon electorate kindergartens

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (17:14) — (14 052)

I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Families and Children, but firstly I want to acknowledge that today is Tony Favier's last day in this place before he heads off to retirement. Tony, thank you so much for all you have done over many years. As new members of Parliament, you certainly went out of your way to make all of us in the class of 2014 welcome, and I wish you all the very best in your retirement.

I direct my adjournment to the Minister for Families and Children, and the action I seek is that the minister convene a meeting between the City of Moonee Valley and the Department of Education and Training to discuss opportunities to improve attendance rates at kindergartens for the culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the state district of Essendon.

Parks Victoria funding

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (17:15) — (14 053)

My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer, and the action I seek is for the Treasurer to agree to restore funding for Parks Victoria to pre-2014 levels and make up for the recent shortfall after budget cuts. Our parks need at least \$168 million to make up for the shortfall in recent years so they can properly protect our environment and manage our national parks for the good of all Victorians.

Our national parks here in Victoria are incredibly precious places. From the snowfields of the Alpine National Park to the mountain ranges of the Grampians and the stunning scenery of Wilsons Promontory, these are places that nourish our soul. They are also the last refuges of many endangered plants and animals here in Victoria. But right now all of this is at risk. In 2014 Parks Victoria, which manages our national parks, had their core funding slashed for no reason. Since then, this government has not made up the shortfall. Now Parks Victoria has been deprived of \$168 million that they sorely needed.

These budget cuts are having a terrible impact on our environment. There are not enough scientists or rangers to look after our parks. There are not enough resources for visitors to our parks, and facilities like walking tracks and toilets are becoming run-down. But worst of all, invasive and feral plants and animals are taking over — they are exploding — and they are killing and destroying our native plants and animals.

Our national parks need an urgent injection of funds. So I say to all those who want to see their children grow up visiting our beautiful national parks in Victoria, just like we all did: join our campaign to restore funding to Parks Victoria. To all those who do not want to see more native species go extinct on our watch: join our campaign to restore funding to Parks Victoria. To this Labor government: please restore funding. Please save our national parks before it is too late and before future generations no longer have a chance to experience the beautiful environment that we all have.

Mordialloc electorate health services

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (17:18) —

(14 054) My adjournment matter this evening is to the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for the minister to detail how federal government cuts to health funding over the coming years will impact on hospitals and health providers that service my constituents in the Mordialloc electorate.

The Andrews Labor government is dedicated to investing in our health services, and we have seen substantial funding for our local hospitals. Of course we have seen increases for the Monash Children's Hospital as well as Sandringham Hospital, where we saw special care nursery upgrades that will have a significant impact on the more than 1500 babies that are born every year at Sandringham, a lot of them from my electorate. Just recently we announced funding for special day procedures, which goes to the heart of the very important surgeries that are sometimes referred to as 'elective surgeries'. But if you ever need a knee replacement or a hip replacement, there is nothing elective about it. It is about your quality of life and it is about support into your later years.

The fact that the funding agreements nationally have resulted in money being taken out of Victoria is a great shame. We are investing in our health services to support Victorians and to respond in my community to the City of Kingston's growing population, where we will see 10 per cent growth over the coming 10 years, and the need to invest in health and to support people across all ages, from little tots all the way through to elderly residents, is so very important. Those funding agreements are critical. They do not just mean numbers; they mean less doctors, less nurses and less people employed in the health sector in my electorate, and people who will not have a job in the health sector, whether it is administrative staff, nurses or doctors. It also means that fewer people are getting critical surgery.

I ask the Minister for Health to update my community on how the Victorian government is working to address this, because this will have direct impacts on constituents in my electorate.

Forest Hill electorate housing

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (17:20) — (14 055) I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The action I seek is for the minister to urgently resolve the matter that I first wrote to him about on 22 December 2017 and a further three times subsequently. The issue is that there is a department-owned property in a street in the northern section of the Forest Hill electorate where over the last 12 years there has been nothing but trouble from the occupants of the property and their visitors.

The property in question has been occupied during that time by three tenants. Neighbours advise me that the first tenant ran meth labs at the property over a number of years. These were raided by the police, resulting in the tenant's arrest and subsequent imprisonment. Following his eventual return to the property, he was

evicted. Neighbours also advise me that the second tenant regularly behaved in a totally antisocial way. This included episodes where he walked naked down the street several times, obviously under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, causing significant distress to residents. He also engaged in other ongoing antisocial behaviour and was ultimately evicted.

I am advised that the current resident and his visitors also behave in a grossly antisocial way and are causing angst and distress for local residents on a very regular and ongoing basis. Police are regularly called out to the property and have attended there multiple times in the last year alone. The antisocial behaviour of the current tenant and his visitors includes shouting, loud obscene language, domestic violence, verbal altercations, the slamming of house and car doors, loud engine noises, assorted rubbish strewn around the property and occupants climbing a side fence and trespassing into a neighbouring backyard.

I recently met with a group of local residents who are thoroughly decent and hardworking people. They are very distressed and are living in a state of ongoing fear and sleep deprivation as a result of the behaviour of the tenant and visitors to this property. They have experienced an extremely detrimental impact upon their families, as have other residents in the area, with a total loss of amenity for them. I call on the minister to urgently resolve this issue by having the current tenant relocated and ensuring any future tenants are suitable for the peaceful, family-oriented area that this property is located in. I look forward to hearing from the minister for housing urgently with a favourable consideration of this request.

North-east rail line

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (17:22) — (14 056) The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is for her to inform my community about the hard-fought improvements to the north-east rail line. The minister is no stranger to the north, having represented northern Victoria for such a long time. She really gets it. She was in Wallan last year and, along with people from her department, spent a number of hours speaking personally about what was needed in that fast-growing area. Since then we have seen more stops on the Seymour line, including at Donnybrook station, as a reflection of that growing population. A couple of budgets ago we had funding for planning to connect the Seymour line to the Upfield line, which would make enormous improvements to travel times and give increased services.

In relation to the Melbourne Metro project, I know that those opposite, and particularly some in the National Party, bagged the project and said that it is not good for country Victorians. But it absolutely is, because rather than members of my community having to change to a bus at North Melbourne — a very good bus that Labor introduced — when Melbourne Metro is complete they will have direct rail access to the medical and university precincts, which my community deserve.

On Melbourne Airport rail, those opposite had a thought bubble about that. This minister is pushing really hard for that to be a new project that we will deliver. It will not simply connect to Melbourne; it will connect to our regional Victorian lines and make it easier for regional Victorians to access the airport and for visitors to get from the airport to regional Victoria to see all the magnificence that regional Victoria has to offer.

The Donnybrook and Wallan stations have been the beneficiaries of two lots of car park upgrades, and we are getting new stations there. I know the minister worked absolutely doggedly, and like her I have been pleased to go all over the state to talk about the importance of the regional rail upgrade. I know the minister worked really hard talking to the federal member for Gippsland, Darren Chester. It seems like his own party has knocked him off so that we no longer have a Victorian in federal cabinet from the National Party — and those opposite seem to be silent about that. Spin Doctor Steph, the member for Euroa, is constantly criticising the north-east line — commentating but not getting it done.

The SPEAKER — Before calling the Minister for Police to respond to a matter raised by a member of this place, I wish to acknowledge the service of Mr Tony Favier, who has been an attendant here since 2000 and is now a senior tour guide. It is fair to say that he has made the experience of countless thousands of Victorians who have visited this Parliament an enjoyable one. He has certainly made life for members much easier and more enjoyable as well. Thank you, Tony. We note that you retire on 2 March, and we wish you well in your retirement.

Responses

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (17:26) — I thank the member for Caulfield for raising this very important issue. Earlier this week the member for Footscray also raised with me the matter of anti-Semitic material that had been distributed to her constituents in Footscray. There is absolutely no doubt that the content of that material that was distributed was vile and completely unacceptable. Anti-Semitism has no place

in Victoria, and I absolutely support the member for Caulfield's view on that. We need to stand up and make sure it has no place in Victoria. We are a multicultural community built upon respect for each and every Victorian. Our multiculturalism makes us a stronger and more resilient community. This is an incredibly serious matter and one that Victoria Police are currently investigating. The incident was reported to Victoria Police, as I understand it, on 14 February, and police have been working with the residents and building management to secure evidence to support the investigation. It is ongoing. They are taking it very seriously and there are a range of offences being considered by Victoria Police.

I think Victoria Police do have a track record of working with communities to tackle anti-Semitic and racist behaviour, and that will continue. They will not let up in that work. The government is also taking this very seriously. We know from past experience that this kind of offensive material must be tackled head on. We know that even today there are those who seek to spread division and hate, and that is why when it comes to anti-Semitism there can be no half-measures taken. This material not only hurts the Victorians that were targeted but diminishes all of us, and that is why there needs to be and continues to be a zero-tolerance approach to tackling this behaviour and the attitudes that give rise to it. So I can assure the member for Caulfield and the member for Footscray that Victoria Police will continue to focus their energy on this particular incident but its work is ongoing in terms of dealing with anti-Semitic behaviour.

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (17:28) — Can I add my voice to the many voices wishing Tony Favier well for his time as an attendant in our Parliament, having served here for 17 years, as many people have already reflected on. We thank him for his years of service during that period of time. We wish Tony all the very best. We will miss you; I am not sure you will miss us, but we will wait and see. Come and visit us sometime — you know your way around the building. All the very best.

In that spirit, I am responding to the matter raised by the member for Ringwood regarding some matters to do with traffic movements around the new Heatherdale railway station. You may ask: why are we talking about the new Heatherdale train station? It is because the Andrews Labor government got rid of the Heatherdale Road level crossing. That meant we had to not just remove the level crossing but build a brand-new train station in the Heatherdale community. Heatherdale Road is one of 15 level crossings that have been removed around Melbourne as part of that terrific

program that was opposed by those opposite at the November 2014 election. They did not want us to remove level crossings; we rejected that. As I have said, we are getting rid of level crossings in a rapid way, including at Heatherdale in the member's electorate.

I just want to pick up on a couple of things that she made mention of in her contribution. She talked about the community not being consulted, but she then went on to talk about a number of conversations between the Level Crossing Removal Authority and her community. She indicated that there was not a drop-off zone but then went on to point out that indeed there is a 2-minute drop-off zone around the new train station. Notwithstanding those contradictions that were in the member's contribution, I do note that as a result of the removal of the level crossing there has been a 40 per cent improvement in traffic flow through the area, and that has greatly facilitated the movement of traffic through the local area. In relation to the concerns that have been raised by the member, in particular about where Forster Street meets Heatherdale Road — adjacent, can I say, to the new train station that is there as a result of the level crossing removal — I am happy to have those issues investigated by the Level Crossing Removal Authority.

I now wish to respond to the matter raised by the member for Yan Yean, who is a terrific advocate on many things in her local area, but her gaze goes even further to the broader region within which she sits because she recognises that improvements to transport links in that area mean improvements for many communities in her local area. The member referred to a forum that we had in Wallan a little while ago, and I caught the train to Wallan on that evening so that I could get that experience on the corridor firsthand.

The matter that the member asked me to take action on was to inform her community of improvements that need to be made to the north-east line. I am very pleased to have the opportunity this evening to do this because there has been a bit said, not all of it entirely accurate, about the north-east line. The Andrews Labor government has made it very clear that it stands ready to order new trains for the north-east line once the track work is fixed, finalised and approved. Indeed we have set aside \$2 million for the design of new rolling stock to replace the existing stock once those works are finished. Why is this important? Because we cannot put new rolling stock on what is considered a third-class track.

This is something that I know the communities along the north-east corridor are very keen to see improved. I was pleased to see that late last year we had almost got

there with the release of funding for our regional rail revival package — the release of those funds with the commonwealth. However, as we know, the Victorian federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Darren Chester, was removed from that position. We continue to focus on getting the funds that we need released without further delay.

I set this in a broader context. What we have been working on through this process is that the federal and state governments set up a steering committee involving a range of experts, our departments, the Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) — the ARTC is a federal government body that is actually responsible for the track, which is an important point to note — V/Line, which runs the passenger rail services, and Public Transport Victoria. Their job is to consider the works that are necessary to improve the north-east line's track condition.

I am advised that with the \$100 million that sits in the regional rail revival package for various capital works along the line, the steering committee found that it would improve passenger service resilience, reliability and track quality. However — and this is a critical point — it is not enough to fix the track to an acceptable standard, and it is likely to require significant ongoing maintenance. Indeed for us to improve the track, for it to run at a standard that the new trains can run on, we need the track to be at least a class 2 standard. That is the standard of the majority of our regional passenger network in Victoria which the VLocity trains run on. In order for this class 2 track standard to be achieved, we need more than the \$100 million that has been set aside in the regional rail revival package. It is estimated that at least \$135 million would be required to upgrade the line to at least a class 2 standard to enable the new trains to run at a faster speed.

I want to assure the member for Yan Yean and our good friend and colleague in Northern Victoria Region, Jaclyn Symes in the Council, who is working so incredibly hard on this issue as well, that I am pushing very hard for this additional funding. Indeed I raised this directly when I had my first opportunity to meet with the new federal infrastructure minister in Canberra on Wednesday a week ago. I raised this directly with him. I pointed to the joint work that had been done by our agencies and at the report that we had, and I said that we wanted to see the line improved. We can get those improvements for the passenger services, and Victoria stands ready to put the trains on the track once those line improvements are made.

I hope that information is of great use to the member for Yan Yean and her broader community, because there have been some other claims made. Sadly, there is a bit of politics in this. You expect that from the National Party from time to time, but sadly they are continuing to misrepresent this issue in the community. Indeed the member for Euroa quite recently — during the last sitting week — indicated that the money invested by the federal government in this was to fix the track. I am sorry to inform the member for Euroa that that is just not true. The federal and state governments have the work there to tell us what actually does need to be done.

I am going to continue to push very hard — and I am confident I am joined very closely by the member for Yan Yean and Jaclyn Symes, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the other place — and continue to push for this funding and push for better passenger rail services because that is what Labor governments do. It does not matter which part of regional Victoria you are in, we are going to continue to push for improvements to rail right across regional Victoria.

Eight other members raised a number of matters for various ministers, and they will be referred on for their action and response.

The SPEAKER — The house is now adjourned.

House adjourned 5.37 p.m. until Tuesday, 6 March.

