

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Thursday, 23 August 2018

(Extract from book 11)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable 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	Prahran	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	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 Hodggett, 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*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and Mr Gepp.

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, 23 August 2018

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (09:33) — Can I welcome to the gallery the Honourable Alan Carpenter, former Premier of Western Australia.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Marong Primary School

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the school community of Marong Primary School draws to the attention of the house that Marong Primary School has completed a detailed planning project for new facilities designed to cater for rapidly growing enrolments and has now reached the design for tender stage.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls on the Minister for Education to allocate funding to finance the project as planned so that construction can commence at the earliest possible time.

By Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (163 signatures).

Bairnsdale Secondary College

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

This petition of residents of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria the need to have stage 2 of the Bairnsdale Secondary College funded as a matter of high priority.

By Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) (273 signatures).

Norwood Secondary College

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents of Victoria who have an interest in Norwood Secondary College draws to the attention of the house the outdated and run-down state of the classrooms at this 60-year-old school. The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria calls on the Andrews government to ensure Norwood Secondary College urgently receives the funding it needs to commission a master plan and to upgrade and modernise its teaching and learning facilities.

By Ms RYALL (Ringwood) (276 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Gippsland East be considered next day on motion of Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East).

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Ringwood be considered next day on motion of Ms RYALL (Ringwood).

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE

Community visitors report 2017

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing), by leave, presented government response.

Tabled.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Acting Clerk:

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 — Report 2017 on the operation of the Act — Ordered to be published

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee's Report on the Inquiry into Drug Law Reform

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Firearms Act 1996 — SR 114

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — SR 112

Victorian Plantations Corporation Act 1993 — SR 113

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rule 113.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (09:36) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 4 September 2018.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Charles Blackman

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (09:36) — I was so sad to hear of the passing of one of Australia's greatest artists, Charles Blackman. Charles left us on Monday, having just reached a personal milestone. He was 90 years old. Iconic works from the *Schoolgirl* and *Alice in Wonderland* series will be familiar to so many in the chamber, but it is a little treasure called *Touching* that I love best. It is only small and simple, but it depicts the most sweet moment between a girl and her

cat. When I sent a message of condolence to his son, Auguste, also a very talented painter, I got back a text which says it all: ‘The earth feels naked today’. And so it does. Australia thanks Charles Blackman for his breadth of artistic contributions. Vale, Charles.

Boronia K–12 College

Ms VICTORIA — Book Week is always a highlight in my calendar, and this year was no different. Dressed as a pirate, I headed off to read to the great students at Boronia K–12 College. The whole primary school, even the teachers and principal, dressed for the occasion. It was lots of fun, and just as importantly it helps reinforce to kids of all ages just how important and enjoyable it is to read.

Wantirna College

Ms VICTORIA — Wantirna College have built up such a strong tradition of fabulous musical theatre productions over the years that I always wonder how they will outdo the performances of the year before. True to form, *Legally Blonde* was a smashing success, with excellent acting, singing and dancing, not to mention the scene with the skipping ropes. I must make mention of the professional staging too. I know the staff and parents who volunteer so much time to create the opportunity for the students to grow as performers and people are greatly appreciated. They really are the icing on the cake. Congratulations to all the leads, including Maddie Wright, Liam Paptic, Tineque Law, James Keam, Rebecca Smedley, Matt Mckenna, Abbey de Laine, Kaiya Dod, Lexi the dog, and the hysterically funny Nikhil de Silva.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Women) (09:37) — I rise to mark one year since the loss of my friend and colleague Fiona Richardson. I sat beside Fiona for almost two and a half years on the front bench here in Parliament. I miss our conversations about our children, and I miss our feminist scheming. Having the honour to hold the women’s and the prevention of family violence portfolios, I have seen firsthand how important the work that Fiona started is. Four in five Victorians can now identify what family violence is and its causes. Those who have seen this government’s family violence awareness campaigns have more positive attitudes towards gender equality and respect.

This is the work that Fiona started — generations of Victorians living in a respectful Victoria, and a Victoria that is free from violence. Fiona knew that not recognising the value of women in our society, in our

workforces and in positions of decision-making just denies Victoria’s potential as a state. Women are now 50 per cent of board and chair appointments in our government, and we know quotas work. She implemented that policy. There is so much more to say about Fiona’s achievements and the work that she started, and we will continue to do that work. To her family, Stephen, Marcus, Catherine and Veronica, today all of us here are thinking of you and sending our love.

Regency Park Primary School

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (09:39) — I wish to raise concerns on behalf of Regency Park Primary School in Wantirna. They have been advised by the state government that they were receiving funding to upgrade their library, which was part of the asbestos removal program. It should be noted that the state government said all asbestos was going to be removed from our schools, another promise that has been broken by this government.

The school was not consulted about the funding and was not consulted about the fact that the funding was going to be used on their library. In fact the school wants the money allocated to upgrade their multipurpose hall which they use for assembly. The school has requested for the money to be transferred to the multipurpose hall, which contains asbestos, but the government to date has said no. I call on this government to listen to the concerns of the school community and to work with the school to ensure that the money can be reallocated to upgrade their multipurpose hall.

Wantirna College

Mr WAKELING — I would like to congratulate all of the students and staff at Wantirna College for a fantastic production of *Legally Blonde*. It was another outstanding event, and I pay tribute to all involved in this great production.

Ferntree Gully electorate

Mr WAKELING — I wanted to note that in talking to residents in my community, like so many across this state, the main concerns that are being raised are concerns about law and order within the Knox community, concerns about the cost of living and the rising electricity prices under this government, concerns about congestion and the way in which this government is mishandling planning in this state and also concerns about congestion. They are calling on this government to build the east–west link.

Dorothy Armstrong and Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms KNIGHT (Wendouree) (09:40) — I received the best hug the other day, and it was from an extraordinary woman called Dorothy Armstrong. Dorothy won the excellence in promoting rights, fairness and safety award at the 2018 Victorian Disability Awards. The violence that Dorothy experienced not only caused an acquired brain injury, it also placed her into the criminal justice system and, ultimately, jail. Dorothy is now a fierce advocate for the rights of women with a disability, particularly those who are in contact with the criminal justice system.

As I was hugging Dorothy I thought of Fiona Richardson — also a fierce advocate, also a survivor of family violence. Fiona was determined to stop violence against women to prevent women like Dorothy being permanently injured and to prevent women being permanently traumatised. I think about the amazing work that Fiona did in her life and cannot help but think about all the incredible work that she wanted to do. But when I meet women like Dorothy I am comforted to know that because of the work that Fiona did and because of the honesty she showed in talking about her own childhood the work to prevent family violence has the best foundation possible.

The establishment of a prevention agency was a dream of Fiona's that is becoming a reality. The prevention of violence against women is now well and truly on the agenda, and it is there to stay. And because of Fiona that includes women with disability, it includes elder abuse — it includes everybody. Fiona, you would have loved meeting Dorothy, and Dorothy would have loved meeting you. And today, 12 months since we lost you, I am reminded of your great work, your tenacity and your genuine passion to support all the Dorothys in our state. Thank you, Fiona. I really miss you.

Burra Brewing Company

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (09:42) — There is a new energy building in South Gippsland and nowhere more so than in the town of Korumburra. The recent opening of dual cafes and the fresh food market in the former Parry's store in the main street has now been complemented by the opening of the Burra Brewing Company just across the road, serving fine craft beers and wood-fired pizzas.

I was privileged to officially open this fantastic new addition to the town's food and tourism attractions and would like to congratulate owners and developers Phill and Ange Dempster, Anthony and Kim Dempster, and

Luke and Narelle Jones for their foresight and drive. It was great to see so many local tradesmen also employed in the transformation of the old garden store into a wonderful new brewery.

Sale Field & Game Association

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Well done to the members of Sale Field & Game, the largest branch of Field and Game Australia in the state, for their efforts in planting 6000 trees at the Heart Morass two weeks ago. Some 45 volunteers from the club did a great job of revegetating the area, which has been transformed over recent years by the work of Field and Game and its volunteers. Their work shows who the true environmentalists are. They have done a magnificent job revegetating and rehabilitating this beautiful wetland just outside of Sale.

Southern Business Women's Network

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Congratulations to the Southern Business Women's Network, which last week celebrated its 20th anniversary. I believe the member for Bass was present at the celebration. This is a fantastic organisation which supports women in business in the South Gippsland and Bass Coast shires. I am sorry that I could not make it to the celebration due to the death of my own mother, another wonderful woman. Vale, Josephine Ann O'Brien.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) (09:43) — Last night when I re-read my condolence motion for Fiona Richardson, I was convinced that Fiona's master strategist mind was still influencing my life. Let me explain. Last year, with a heavy heart I made it clear that Fiona was like a sister to me — protective, nurturing, loyal and never afraid to speak plainly when she wanted to make a point. As we know, Fiona died one year ago today, aged 50. In a remarkable twist of fate my older sister Lisa turned 50 on Tuesday. It was the type of diversionary tactic that Fiona would have loved, designed to redirect attention away from herself and her many wonderful deeds. As I stand here today, I still cannot quite believe she has gone. I think about her often and I see her influence everywhere.

Her gift to public life was her boundless intellect and razor-sharp focus and she used these qualities to achieve greatness. These achievements have been well documented, but in an era where politicians are losing respect in the community, Fiona broke the mould and carved out a political career that will be matched by very few. She was a person of conviction and used her

power to change the course of the biggest community safety issue of our time, preventing violence against women. Our thoughts today are very firmly with Stephen, Marcus, Catherine and Veronica and brothers Hamish and Alastair. You are greatly missed, sister.

Beaconsfield Primary School

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (09:45) — I first rise to speak about Beaconsfield Primary School which I attended last week to meet up with Suzanne Humphreys, who is the student representative council (SRC) liaison, and SRC representatives Maddy, Charlotte, Tristan, Rory, Karima, Holly and Jasmine. I joined them to get a message out about positive mental health. When we talk about mental health it is very important that we talk about the influence of positive mental health on young people to ensure that they can prepare themselves with resilience for the future. Gary Methven, who is the principal, proudly hosted pyjama day. Members would be very pleased to know that I did attend in my pyjamas at Beaconsfield Primary School and proudly wore my Geelong Football Club pyjamas. With my Geelong Football Club pyjamas I had my running gear on the top half, which the students thought was quite interesting. They asked, ‘Why would you wear running gear to bed?’. Of course it is so you can get up and get going first thing in the morning to improve your positive mental health.

Woodlands Park retirement village

Mr BATTIN — On another issue, I raise the Woodlands Park retirement village. I have met with Malcolm Menzel down there who is on the residents committee, and he is a fantastic ambassador for his local community. He is calling on the government to have discussions with him at the moment around the extension and expansion of the Monash Freeway that will go past Woodlands. Currently they do not have any sound barriers along that part of the freeway and they would like those for the future. They would like to have some discussions with government. I note that the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is at the table today, and I am sure we will get some letters to him shortly around having discussions to ensure their sound protection.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms GARRETT (Brunswick) (09:46) — The things that made Fiona Richardson such an extraordinary politician, and more importantly a policymaker, were the same things that made her such a remarkable mother and an exceptional friend. She was authentic, unwavering and courageous. She had conviction and

character. She was both impossibly kind and unflinchingly steely. She stood up for what she believed in and she stood with those she loved, regardless of, at times, great personal cost. She had an open heart and a clear head and she had a wicked, if sometimes hidden, sense of humour.

Fiona loved wind chimes. She has this beautiful one in her courtyard. The sounds it makes are complex and haunting yet clear, cutting through the afternoon sun, a link to her deep spirituality — earth, sky, sea and wind. In a link to my spirituality I want to finish with that great song that became a civil rights song, *We Shall Not Be Moved*. Just like a tree standing by the water, we shall not be moved. The roots that she put down in this place and throughout Victoria in terms of policy and legacy will not be moved. Her love and friendship will not be moved. Her family’s outstanding beauty and depth will remain. She is on her way to heaven and she will not be moved.

Mildura residential rehabilitation facility

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (09:48) — Drugs are a scourge in any community, and north-west Victoria has been overlooked by the Andrews Labor government in its need for a residential rehabilitation facility. The community has been proactive in seeking to offer a residential rehab facility which has been supported by the testimonies of people in our community who have successfully beaten drugs but have had to leave town for assistance. When the ice epidemic hit Mildura, the community confronted the epidemic head on with Project Ice, which first explained what ice is and then assisted the community in identifying and assisting people who are addicted.

Sunraysia Community Health Services have a non-residential rehabilitation program running in the community. With the support of people like Gary Castleman, his Rotarian colleagues and the Royal Flying Doctor Service, they have been advocating for a residential facility. Gary’s crusade has turned into a local drug action team, which has produced a business case supporting the need for a residential rehab facility in our area. The time is fast approaching when the Labor government should make commitments to a residential rehab facility in Mildura.

Art of Football exhibition

Mr CRISP — For lovers of art and football I suggest they get along to Mildura and treat themselves to the finest football art exhibition ever. This event is the lovechild of Bob Utber, a local celebrity and football aficionado, and this is his third exhibition.

More than 20 artists from around Australia have submitted works this year and I highly recommend that art lovers take the opportunity to experience, in Bob's words, 'what football can bring to art'.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (09:49) — It is hard to believe that a year has passed since the passing of Fiona Richardson, the first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. My thoughts are with Fiona's loved ones today as they remember and reflect on the wonderful memories they hold, just as we will here in this place today. I am sure that many of us will be thinking of Fiona today and the legacy she left for all Victorians, particularly women and children. Thousands of Victorian women and service providers will remember her passion and commitment to addressing family violence. I know in my electorate of Geelong service providers who had worked very closely with Fiona mourned her passing and were devastated. They too will be reflecting on the significant changes we see in the family violence sector, driven by Fiona.

Fiona would be very proud of the progress the Andrews government has made with the ongoing implementation of the recommendations resulting from the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The current Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence has done us proud by continuing this critical work on the prevention of family violence. At the recent opening of the safety hub, The Orange Door, in Geelong I was thinking of Fiona. I thought about how proud she would be to see these doors open and the commitment of the family violence practitioners who are rolling out the safety hub. The family violence prevention agency fulfils recommendation 188 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. This was something Fiona advocated for and we have now implemented. It is a reminder to all of us who have the privilege to sit in this place that the policy changes we make can so significantly affect the lives of women and children in Victoria.

Gippstar Awards

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (09:51) — Last week I had the pleasure of attending the 58th annual Gippstar Awards to celebrate and present awards to some of our highly talented Gippsland sportsmen and sportswomen and some of our sporting clubs and teams. Congratulations to all winners and nominees within the Morwell electorate, including Ella O'Doherty, Jorja Halsall, Molly Cargill, Chelsea D'Angelo, Alex Vuillermin, Alarna Gibson-Williamson, Jordyn Cargill, Isabella Lia, Ruby Storm, Jade Melbourne, Blake

Townsend, Andrew Brady, Adam Murray, the Falcons 2000 senior men's soccer team, the Gippsland under-21 men's cricket team, the Morwell Pegasus women's soccer team, the Traralgon City women's soccer team, the Falcons 2000 senior soccer club, Don Wight and Joe Auciello. It is incredible that so many Gippsland athletes continue to compete and perform so well regionally, statewide, nationally and internationally across a wide range of sports. Congratulations to all.

Churchill primary schools

Mr NORTHE — Last week the Minister for Education delivered some good news by announcing funding to upgrade Churchill Primary School. In the minister's media release was the following statement, and I quote:

Churchill families will get the world-class local school their kids deserve ...

Now, there might not seem to be a problem with such a quote. That would be if there was only one primary school in Churchill, as the minister's statement suggests. However, there are actually three primary schools in Churchill, and they all deserve world-class facilities and the very best start in life for their kids. I have been contacted by concerned community members who fear that Churchill North and Lumen Christi primary schools may lose students, as they are not deemed world-class by the minister. I implore the minister to reconsider his comments and ensure all Churchill primary schools have the best possible facilities, so their students and families have access to an equally deserved and brighter educational future.

John Lithgow

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (09:52) — Last Friday, 17 August, we lost a most wonderful and caring person and dearly loved member of our Labor family in Carrum Downs. John Lithgow was a most selfless man. Thirty-three years a paraplegic, he dedicated so much of his life to helping others and supporting the fight to make the lives of everyday Victorians better and fairer. I am so fortunate to have known John and to have had his support over the years. His friendship, his thoughtful conversations and his support will be missed so very much. To his sons, Lachlan and Todd, and their families, thank you for sharing this most beautiful person with us. Our thoughts are with you.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms KILKENNY — It is hard to believe that it is now one year since we lost our colleague and friend the Honourable Fiona Richardson. But what a legacy she

has left, especially for Victorian women and children. Fiona's impact has been profound. Responding to family violence and gender inequality are now firmly on the agenda here in Victoria. As the Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona led the enormous push, the momentum, for social, cultural and legal change, heralding the need for all of us, men and women, to break the cycle of family violence and address gender inequality.

The doors have now opened on Victoria's first-ever dedicated family violence prevention agency, Respect Victoria, as it is now known. It will work to combat gender inequality, which we all know to be the main driver of family violence. Legislation to enshrine Respect Victoria in law has already been introduced into Parliament. A family violence prevention agency with a primary focus on changing bad attitudes, social norms and gender stereotypes about women and girls was something Fiona felt very strongly about. Thank you, Fiona, for your strength and unwavering commitment to improving and saving the lives of Victorian women and children.

Hawthorn Voices of a Generation

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (09:54) — On Friday, 3 August, I held my annual Hawthorn Voices of a Generation public speaking competition, hosted by Swinburne University, together with competition partner *Progress Leader*. I established this competition to encourage all students to believe strongly in their individual potential to contribute to a better world. I congratulate all 10 contestants. In the junior school division were Madeleine Shaw, Auburn High School; Amy Wright, Camberwell High School; Joshua McLeod, Scotch College; and winner of the junior school division, Chloe Plant, Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School. In the senior school division were Lily Benson, Auburn High School; Andy Gordon, Bialik College; Angus Streat, Camberwell High School; Rion Ahl, Scotch College; Laura Moorfoot, Swinburne Senior Secondary College; and winner of the senior school division, Natasha Hawkins from Strathcona Baptist Girls Grammar School. We had a distinguished panel comprising Victorian of the Year, Susan Alberti, AC; Swinburne University's vice-chancellor, Professor Linda Kristjanson, AO; Boroondara mayor, Cr Jim Parke; Lauren Hilbert from 3AW; and Dr Sarah Curtis, president of Hawthorn Community Chest.

Auburn Bowls Club

Mr PESUTTO — I was honoured to attend the Auburn Bowls Club Le Pines Triples tournament on

Saturday, 18 August. Auburn Bowls Club is a fantastic club in my electorate that does so much to support our local community. The event was attended by 24 competing teams and is a friendly way of getting back into competition mode for local bowlers. I was proud to present the club with a Victorian flag to fly proudly on behalf of all Auburn Bowls Club members. I wish to congratulate and thank the president, Michael Walker; the greens director, David Pisterman; the secretary, Scott Bartel; the treasurer, John Quinn; the senior vice-president, Paul Bowditch; the junior vice-president, Julie Drummond; the bowls secretary, Sue Zidziunas; and committee members Mike Lalor, Christine Diorites, Andrew Ford, Damien Ryan and Michael Edgoose.

Indian floods

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (09:55) — I raise the serious flooding tragedy which is currently happening in Kerala, India. Some 350 people have lost their lives, and that affects many members of my community who were born in Kerala, specifically Thomas Jacob of the Berwick Ayalkoottam community group. He is currently in Kerala and recently sent me a message trying to highlight the very difficult situation that the community in Kerala is going through. He was there on holidays but is currently assisting in camps and the like. Many camps have been set up.

Presently the flooding appears to have reached a peak. I understand the heaviest impact of the monsoons is expected to pass, but this is a state with 44 rivers passing through it and 30 dams. It presently does not have an early warning system, unfortunately, which the federal government of India is being urged to look at. This is the first time in 100 years that this level of flooding has occurred. Later this year Thomas Jacob of the aforementioned community group will be setting up a fundraiser in Bunjil Place in Casey. We will provide further information on that, but it will be very much about assisting the marvellous community in the state of Kerala, India.

AGL Crib Point gas terminal

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (09:57) — Following a long but ultimately successful fight together with my community to stop the Brumby Labor government's bitumen and urea plants being forced onto the foreshore at Crib Point, we now face a similar attack on our community from AGL and the Andrews government wanting to force a gas facility on us. On 10 August last year and again this week the Andrews government made it very clear that it is behind AGL's push to force its facility on the Crib Point community. After a great

deal of consultation with my local residents I have made it very clear to AGL that, if they continue to force their facility onto Crib Point constituents and we are elected in November this year, we will stop them. More than a decade ago during the fight to stop the bitumen plant, the federal member for Flinders, Greg Hunt, and I made the commitment that we would fight any reindustrialisation of Crib Point, and we intend to keep that promise.

Not only will the proposed gas facility and pipeline have a damaging effect on amenity and local property prices, it will also make it virtually impossible to fight any other toxic industry locating at Crib Point, or even the state Labor government's relocation of Coode Island down there, as has been rumoured. I have held public meetings and invited representatives of AGL and asked them to explain their plans, and it is fair to say that they have been unable to do so. The 40 local jobs that AGL were spruiking have been shown not to exist at all. Rest assured I am opposed to this project, and so is my community.

Jodi Dack and Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (09:58) — I just want to start by acknowledging a couple of fantastic women.

Firstly, I want to acknowledge Jodi Dack and her recent death. She was such a resilient and strong person and every moment fought to live longer to be there for Una. I offer my condolences to Una and Brendan. I know they will be feeling this for a long time to come.

Also on Friday in Geelong I was able to be there as part of the opening of The Orange Door safety hub. It was a really important opportunity that we all reflected on the great contribution and legacy of Fiona Richardson. What she left behind will continue to save lives for many years to come.

Drysdale sports precinct

Ms NEVILLE — On another matter, on Friday I joined with the Premier to make some really significant and important announcements. Our first stop was the Drysdale sports precinct with the Drysdale Hawks Football Club, the soccer club and cricket clubs, and our announcement was to commit a further \$5 million to deliver stage 2 of this precinct. This is on top of the \$3.5 million we spent in this particular term. We also committed \$50 000 right now to begin the master planning process, because unfortunately council have not come up with that money. This is a great win, and it was welcomed by the community.

Portarlington safe harbour

Ms NEVILLE — We also went down and visited the \$15 million Portarlington safe harbour, where the ferry operates from, and announced an investment of a further \$550 000 to build a much-needed covered passenger walkway to the ferry berth.

Government performance

Mr WATT (Burwood) (10:00) — With crime in Burwood up by 17.65 per cent since the Andrews Labor government closed Burwood police station, I once again implore the minister not only to open the police station but to remove the graffiti that is on the wall and on the sign. It is a disgrace that we have a police station with graffiti — and it is a disgrace that the minister is leaving the chamber.

The latest data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research shows you cannot trust Labor and you cannot trust the Andrews Labor government. Government-funded student numbers have dropped by 31.7 per cent under the Premier. It is a decline from 460 500 students in 2014 to 314 600 in 2017. A report from the Productivity Commission released earlier this year revealed that Labor underspent student training budgets in 2016 by a staggering \$502 million.

Toorak Road, Camberwell

Mr WATT — I call upon the Minister for Roads and Road Safety once again to fix Toorak Road. Toorak Road is a disgrace. I understand that there are issues with regard to Yarra Trams and VicRoads, but nonetheless, get your act together and get it fixed. I raised the state of the road some time ago in this chamber — a couple of years ago — and noted that within a couple of days they had filled some of the potholes, but they really only half-filled them. What they need to do is fix the road.

Mernda rail extension

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (10:01) — This Sunday I will be attending the official opening of the long-anticipated Mernda rail extension with the Minister for Public Transport. It will be an absolutely wonderful day. Only a Labor government would have ever delivered this project. This extension is part of \$580 million of funding towards public infrastructure in the north and will extend the South Morang line to the newly built Mernda rail. A lot of our northern suburbs residents got a sneak peek last Saturday at a community open day, and the feedback was resoundingly positive. I

would like to thank all of the staff for hosting over 6000 community members and making sure everyone was warm, engaged and well fed. The project is a real exercise in what Labor does for communities right across the state. We bring infrastructure, we bring jobs and we deliver to the community as we promise. The northern suburbs certainly have come a long way, and I am very proud to stand with a government that understands the needs of communities and the need to promise projects that will make a transformative difference and to then get on, do it and deliver it.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I want to also acknowledge the anniversary of Fiona Richardson's passing. As Victoria's first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona is remembered as an authentic voice and champion for women and children who suffer family violence and for promoting the need to eradicate this scourge from our community.

Jodi Dack

Ms D'AMBROSIO — I also want to acknowledge the passing of Jodi Dack. Jodi Dack was a member of the Labor family for many, many years, was well-regarded and a lovely person. I do give my condolences to Brendan and Una on her very, very tragic passing.

Samantha Fraser

Mr PAYNTER (Bass) (10:03) — When you need help with something you turn to good people, and thankfully on Phillip Island there is no need to look far. Last Saturday morning close to 1000 people walked up the main street of Cowes to the football oval to honour the memory of Samantha Fraser. It also provided the opportunity for the community to make a strong stand against men's violence against women and to say, 'That is enough'. We will no longer be bystanders and accept violence as an ordinary part of our community. We will work together to ensure that everybody feels safe going about their lives. People are free to make decisions about how they live their lives, and nobody should live in fear of violence. Phillip Island will provide a safe haven for those who choose to live on the island sanctuary.

The walk was followed by a talk from White Ribbon ambassador Luke Ablett, who challenged men to change their behaviours and stop the violence. Both football and netball clubs joined on the ground before the games for a minute's silence. It was a beautiful and moving moment in time. The day would not have

gotten off the ground if it was not for the dedication and enthusiasm of Chris Ross and Casey Cleeland. These two wonderful people not only work tirelessly for the club but have a genuine care for the community in which they live and display outstanding leadership. The Inverloch-Kongwak Football Netball Club should also be congratulated for not hesitating in jumping on board to participate in both the walk and the White Ribbon match. I would also like to thank Boomerang Bags Phillip Island and San Remo for the hours spent making the goalpost covers. It was very much appreciated. Thank you.

Hon. Fiona Richardson

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (10:04) — It is hard to believe that today marks the one-year anniversary of the passing of our friend and colleague Fiona Richardson. Fiona would have been very proud of her work, which continues today, in family violence and the promotion of women's issues in Victoria. My thoughts are with Stephen and his family today.

Jodi Dack

Ms SULEYMAN — I would also like to acknowledge the sad passing of Jodi Dack. My deepest condolences again to the federal member for Gorton, Brendan O'Connor, and his daughter, Una Rose, on this very sad passing.

President of Poland visit

Ms SULEYMAN — On Saturday, 18 August, I joined with the Victorian Polish community at Government House to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Poland regaining its independence. I was deeply honoured and humbled to receive the Knight's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland from His Excellency, the President of Poland, Mr Andrzej Duda. This was the very first visit by a President of Poland to Australia, and we look forward to the continued contribution and relationship between Poland and Australia.

I would also like to note the integral contribution of the Polish community in Victoria, in particular in my electorate of St Albans. The Polish Club Albion has a very rich history in Albion and Sunshine in particular. Of course the Western Eagles soccer club as well has a truly rich history in my electorate of St Albans.

Pakistan Independence Day

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (10:06) — Happy Independence Day to the Pakistani Australian

community, particularly in the northern suburbs, for 14 August this year —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! The time for making statements has concluded.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (10:06) — I move:

That in relation to the order for the production of documents agreed to by the house on 29 March 2018:

- (1) Documents provided in response to the order may be lodged with the Clerk on a day on which the Assembly is not sitting;
- (2) If documents are received by the Clerk on a day on which the Assembly is not sitting:
 - (a) the documents are deemed to have been tabled under SO 171(2) upon receipt by the Clerk;
 - (b) the Clerk must notify each Assembly member of the receipt of the documents and make the documents available as soon as practicable; and
- (3) Documents received by the Clerk in response to the order are taken to have been published by authority of the Assembly.

I want to make a few brief comments on what is really a fairly simple and straightforward procedural motion. I am asking all members of the Assembly to support this motion, given it is a straightforward procedural matter, and I will outline the reasons why I make that case.

If you look at paragraph (1) of the motion, this paragraph is entirely consistent with what already occurs. The lodgement of documents with the Clerk on a day other than a sitting day is standard practice, and it is a practice we are all very familiar with.

Paragraph (2) of the motion is one that I want to spend a little bit of time on this morning. Typically the Clerk presents documents received while the Parliament is not sitting on the next sitting day. This is by convention only, and you could argue it is a quirk of practice as much as anything, and I will come in a moment to the reasons why I make that case.

I refer to the standing orders that we are particularly drawing on for the content of this debate. They are standing order 171, which is in relation to the orders for documents, and standing order 175, which outlines the tabling provisions. I put it to you, Acting Speaker, to consider standing order 171(2), which says that:

When such documents and records are received they will be tabled by the Clerk.

You could consider that that section already provides for these documents to be tabled. However, what we are doing through this motion is affirming the intent that when documents are received they will be tabled by the Clerk. The proposed motion is therefore consistent, I would say, with what would be a plain reading of standing order 171.

Paragraph (3) of the motion provides:

Documents received by the Clerk ... are taken to have been published by authority of the Assembly.

That allows for the simple and immediate effect of standing order 177, which is:

The house may order a document to be printed.

This part of the motion is simply necessary, again to make it absolutely clear. It is consistent with the practice relating to documents that are already tabled out of session. This gives the tabled documents parliamentary paper status.

I mentioned before that there are already a large number of examples in this place where documents can be tabled out of session and be made available immediately to members of the Assembly and through the papers office. I have a very long list that I could go to, but I draw attention to the Inquiries Act 2014 under which a report of a board of inquiry can be tabled out of session. Reports by IBAC, the Victorian Law Reform Commission, the Public Interest Monitor, the Auditor-General and the Disability Services Commissioner are the sorts of examples that we have become used to in this place now as standard practice for documents that are tabled when the Parliament is not sitting being made available to the house.

I also point to other jurisdictions where this is standard practice and indeed has formed part of the standing orders and procedures that govern the operation of those chambers and those parliaments. I mentioned before that on a plain reading you could argue that we do not necessarily need this motion because the standing orders give provision for documents to be tabled out of session and be made available immediately. However, we are wanting to put any potential ambiguity beyond doubt. For various reasons you could argue that there is some quirk of our history in the development of our standing orders that we have not adopted this as a formal part of our standing orders. I point to the examples of the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the New Zealand Parliament, the Queensland Legislative Assembly, the New South Wales Legislative Council and indeed our own Legislative Council, which all have this explicit

provision in their standing orders to allow documents tabled out of session to be made available. That is why I would argue very clearly that this is not an exceptional motion that we are moving in the Parliament today. We are simply making it clear that the documents can be tabled out of session and made available immediately.

I will simply conclude by recalling why this motion has been moved and is being considered by the house today. The Assembly has already passed a motion for documents to be produced by the Premier, referred to in a motion of the house on 29 March. I remind the house of the motion. It required the Premier to produce to the house:

- (1) documents considered by or relating to the investigation into advice provided to the office of the Minister for Planning by the Department of Planning and Community Development in relation to land development at Phillip Island conducted under the Ombudsman Act 1973;
- (2) documents relating to the Bass Coast planning scheme amendment C125 not otherwise included in ...

the other documents, including the cover note to the brief reference provided to the house previously. It also required production of documents relating to matters before the Supreme Court in the case of *Carley Elizabeth Nicholls v. The Minister for Planning and the State of Victoria*.

This house has already passed the previous motion. This is an extension of making documents available to the house and, as I have said, making them available immediately to all members of the Assembly and therefore also available publicly through the papers office.

Given we have heard, particularly in most recent days and weeks, numerous loud vocal calls by particularly members of the Liberal-National opposition for accountability to the Parliament and for transparency, for making information public, I look forward to their support for this motion. To do anything otherwise would be hypocritical. If they do not support this motion, I think we would otherwise have to ask the direct question: what do they have to hide and what does the Leader of the Opposition fear these documents will reveal?

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (10:14) — What a shemuzzle! What a complete bungle on the part of the government that they cannot even organise their own trashing of cabinet-in-confidence conventions without messing it up. It is no wonder the government cannot keep the community safe, it is no wonder the government cannot keep energy prices under control

and it is no wonder the government cannot do anything effective to tackle congestion and overcrowding when they cannot even organise their own stitch-up attempt.

Here we have a government that thought back in March this year what a you-beaut idea it would be if they trashed every standing convention about cabinet in confidence, if they put huge pressure on duties of legal professional privilege, if they tore up every standard of decent and normal behaviour, if they disregarded centuries of Westminster convention — if they did all that — so they could get access to cabinet-in-confidence documents of the previous government, then made them public and used that to try to embarrass the Leader of the Opposition. They make all these great plans, they force a resolution through this house, they get all ready to do a great big dump of the documents and then they say, ‘Whoops! We can’t do it. Whoops! We haven’t got a motion. Whoops! We can’t have this suddenly turn up in the media on some day of our choosing when we’ve got something to hide from because we haven’t given ourselves the power to do it’.

For heaven’s sake, if the government cannot organise a stitch-up, what can they organise? It is like the bank robbers who suddenly discover they have left the balaclavas behind or the safe blower who does not bring their gelignite along or the scammers who use an identifiable telephone number when they attempt their scams. I mean, what an embarrassment for the Leader of the House and what an embarrassment for the government. Of course they have got form on this. This is about the third or fourth strike that they have had, and they have got each and every one of them wrong.

Their first grand idea was that they would go out and accuse the former government of some sort of impropriety over staff leave. And what did they do? They went and breached conventions, and indeed potentially laws, about private information about former government employees and gave out a list of the names and salaries of every former ministerial staffer in the previous government. They sent shock waves through the public sector and sent shock waves through their own ministerial staff who thought, ‘Crumbs! What have they landed us in?’. We still do not know whether the Deputy Premier knew what was happening, whether he was set up for it or whether it was just a shemuzzle and a stuff-up rather than a conspiracy.

That was their attempt number one. Then they thought they would double down. They had the Deputy Premier go out and say, ‘Well, we’re making a report to the police of very serious breaches by opposition MPs of misuse of staff entitlements; we’ve got a dossier and we’re going to give it to the police. Isn’t this terrible?’.

Then he fronts up at a press conference in which he is going to tell the press about all of this scandal and he says, 'No, no, no, I can't tell you anything. We've given it to the police'. The media walk away, quite rightly, and say, 'Well, wow, wasn't that a fizzer'. They need to put up or shut up, yet they were completely incapable of putting up.

Then in the third go they had again we had the Deputy Premier coming along and putting forward this extraordinary —

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I seek your guidance. This is, I would argue, a narrow procedural debate about providing for documents to be made available to the house out of session. The manager of opposition business, in the first 4-and-a-bit minutes of his contribution, has not gone near that matter. I can understand how some latitude in this debate may be considered. However, he does, I would argue, need to come back to the motion that is before the house.

Mr R. Smith — On the point of order, Acting Speaker, in the Leader of the House's closing comments she made reference to the fact that the opposition had been calling on the government to show examples of integrity, and the manager of opposition business is simply responding to the comments that were made by the Leader of the House.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — I will certainly take some advice from the Clerk in relation to these matters. I am allowing the manager of opposition business to continue, but it would help the running of the house if he referenced the motion moved by the Leader of the House.

Mr CLARK — My illustration is to reference the lack of competence of the government in bringing this motion to this house at this stage and to set the context for it. It is a context, as I was in the middle of saying, where the Deputy Premier had sought to convince this house that for some reason members on this side of the house were active participants in a conspiracy that undermined our own ability to get re-elected. That just needs to be stated in those terms to see what lack of credibility it has. They have failed in all of those attempts to try to discredit this side of the house, to try to distract attention from the red shirts rotting, the Ombudsman's findings and the police investigation — it has been one desperate roll of the dice after another to try to impugn other people as a way of distracting attention from their own wrongdoing.

This motion today simply compounds the extraordinary abuse of, as I said earlier, centuries of practice within Westminster parliaments in order to trash conventions about cabinet in confidence. As I said when we debated the motion on 29 March, it is not just our side of the house that is pointing to this; the commonwealth shadow Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus, has expressed his support for the conventions of cabinet in confidence. Professor George Williams, a good friend of the Labor Party, has expressed similar views. As I have said previously, any government without the numbers in the upper house that wants to shred conventions of cabinet in confidence is like a turkey looking forward to Christmas, because how on earth could the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council refuse to produce cabinet-in-confidence documents if the Council were to ask for them when the government in this house is rushing to trash the convention of cabinet-in-confidence documents? But let me of course add the disclaimer that, contrary to the assertions of the other side of the house, in fact the Legislative Council respects and has always respected cabinet in confidence. It is this government in this house that wants to trash that convention and is having to bring this motion to the house today in order to do so.

It is yet again a sign of the desperation of this government and their determination to try to distract attention from their own wrongdoing that they are putting so much emphasis on this stunt that they started to put in place back on 29 March. No doubt they have now finally decided what they going to do with it. They have suddenly realised that they cannot achieve what their plans are; hence this motion before the house. It is yet again a manifestation of their desperation, a manifestation of their guilt, a manifestation of their incompetence. As I said at the outset, if the government cannot even organise an attack on the opposition properly without bungling it, how on earth can the community expect this government to keep them safe, to keep energy prices down, to tackle congestion and to tackle all the other pressing problems of the community?

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (10:23) — There are a couple of sides to this motion. Obviously this motion is allowing the documents that the house has ordered be produced to be tabled out of sitting. With regard to the principle of the matter, obviously the Greens are very supportive of this house and the other house's right and ability to order documents. Obviously this motion gives further powers in terms of when those documents can be produced, so in principle strengthening those powers is something the Greens support. I guess on that basis we will be supporting this motion, but it is probably not as benign as increasing those powers. The Leader of the

House has put that these are powers other jurisdictions and I think the other place have. If that is the case, I would love to think that this is part of the government's new-found support of the house's ability to produce documents and apply greater scrutiny and whatnot, but if that was the case, I would suggest that rather than narrowing it down to just one set of documents, why not just change the standing orders and the sessional orders for that to be the case in this place? It is obvious that is not the case, because obviously there are political considerations behind this.

Obviously there have been some documents requested by this house with a motion that the Greens supported. They are documents that relate to the Ventnor rezoning, and that is very politically sensitive for the Leader of the Opposition, who was involved in the Ventnor saga. I just say that, on the reading of this motion, this essentially gives the government the power to table those documents or release those documents at a time that is most politically expedient to them. We will be supporting this motion because we support the house's right to request and table documents, but I would say that if the government has the documents, why not table them now? Why wait? I think it would be better, really, if this was part of the government's new-found desire to see documents able to be tabled out of sitting. Why not simply change the sessional or standing orders rather than have them apply only for these particular documents that have been requested? We will be supporting this motion, but it certainly has given me an indication of there perhaps being further changes to this house's standing orders that could be made in relation to the tabling and the production of documents.

Motion agreed to.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2018

Second reading

**Debate resumed from 9 August; motion of
Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs,
Gaming and Liquor Regulation).**

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (10:28) — Today I rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. This is a far cry from what was mooted in the press prior to the Northcote by-election. We have over 130 reforms here, and I have only half an hour to touch upon them. It is not possible to do it justice, but I will do my best. At the outset, let me be very clear. We understand the majority of renters and landlords have wonderful relationships and both parties comply with their obligations under rental agreements. That is not in

dispute. However, if there are changes to an act, we always need to ensure that those changes are fair and reasonable for both parties.

Some of the reasoning behind the bill and some of the amendments in the bill appear to be reasonable and fair, and we have no objection to them. These include residential rental agreements to be in a standard form, clarifying invalid terms, provisions relating to prohibited terms, helping those who live in a caravan or part 4A park, and issues relating to discrimination, misleading and deceptive conduct, restricting solicitation of rental bidding, mandatory safety-related obligations — although we do not exactly know what they are going to be — and implementation of some of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, just to name a few.

However, we do have issues with certain provisions. The change in terminology has been a bit bamboozling from a tenant and landlord to a renter and residential rental provider, hereon known as a RRP. Why change the status quo? I am not sure why that is necessary. Many provisions lack detail. We do not know what some of the prescribed and prohibited terms will be, what the minimum standard will be or what the prescribed modifications will be. Also there is no hint as to what the director of Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) guidelines will be or what animal can be called a 'pet'. There are so many unknowns in this circumstance.

In the lead-up to this bill we have consulted with dozens of groups and sought feedback from many more. We wanted balance and fairness for all, knowing that potentially making this legislation one-sided would have horrendous ramifications for housing affordability in this state. I acknowledge the groups who wrote to me supporting the bill but note that each one of them supported it due to it assisting their area of special interest. However, it is incumbent upon me, as a member of this house, to look at all sides of a piece of legislation and investigate whether it solves some minor problems or creates much bigger ones. Unfortunately I believe this bill clearly falls into the latter category.

I want to start with the proposed solution to each problem that may and will arise, and that is the referral of just about everything in this bill to VCAT. At the departmental briefing on this bill, when I asked about the huge increase of work about to be thrust VCAT's way and what extra resources would be allocated to the tribunal, after some silence, mumblings and nervous glances by staff in the room, I was given an answer that was delivered with very little confidence. If VCAT needed extra resources to cope with the flood of cases

about to come their way, there would need to be a separate budget bid made. This is duckshoving at its most arrogant, and this government is setting the entire system up for time blowouts and dismal failure.

I will go through some of the matters that will be referred off to VCAT as I get to them, but I want to start fairly early by reading some of the feedback into *Hansard*. One lady wrote to me, saying:

Many of these proposed changes appear to be driven by a small minority of landlords and agents who do the wrong thing. With my 21 years involvement in the property industry, I have found that the vast majority of landlords and agents do the right thing.

Far too many landlords of residential property are discussing selling their properties if these amendments are introduced. Therefore, this will result in significant shortage of rental properties, spiralling rents.

She also makes mention — it is relevant a little bit further down, but I might as well put it in now — of part 3, new section 64(2)(1E), which states:

A residential rental provider may require that any modification permitted under this section is to be completed by a suitably qualified person.

But if you look at things that a residential rental provider or landlord is going to have to do in amended section 68 of the principal act, new subsection (4) states:

The residential rental provider must ensure that any person who carries out any repairs or works to discharge the residential rental provider's duty under subsection (1) is a suitably qualified person.

She has very quickly picked up on the fact that there are anomalies in this bill which have simply not been dealt with.

As I said, we have consulted with many people. We have sent this out to hundreds of people, and I think most telling is the response that we have had to a petition online. I checked it this morning, and nearly 26 500 people have signed the petition to say this is in fact not fair. It was touted as 'Rent Fair' by the government, and they do not believe that this is, in any shape or form, fair.

I want to go through some of the provisions in the bill. Clause 49 amends section 64, and it is about modifications to rented premises. This of course has hit the papers and the airwaves a lot. As I stated earlier, we do not know what these prescribed modifications will be. These will be determined by the Governor in Council. Substituted section 64(1) provides that renters can make any modifications to rented premises

that are prescribed modifications without the landlord's consent. As I said, we have not been given a list of these prescribed modifications. We will only get these upon implementation, and that is making the industry very, very nervous. New section 64(1A) states that a provider — so a landlord — requires written consent for the installation of fixtures or the making of alterations, renovations or additions that are not prescribed modifications. New section 64(1B) states that a provider or landlord must not unreasonably refuse consent to modifications that do not penetrate or permanently modify surfaces or fixtures or the structure of the property. If we take that at its most literal, picture hooks penetrate a wall. We are going down to the very basics, and when I mentioned that in the briefing I was told that there are lots of picture hooks that do not require banging things into walls. If we are not going to allow people to bang a picture hook into the wall, what are we going to allow them to do without having to ask permission first?

The new section also says that the landlord must not unreasonably refuse consent if the changes or modifications that are required are for health and safety purposes or are reasonable security measures or necessary for family violence or to increase the thermal comfort of premises or reduce energy or water usage costs. Does that mean a split system air conditioner or heater can be installed? If so, will the restoration of the wall be covered by the additional bond for modifications set out in new section 64(4) that has to be less than \$500? There is provision to charge more, proportionate to restoring the premises to the original condition, but how is this determined? This is really concerning, because obviously sometimes restoring a premises to its original condition is going to be far more than the cost of modifying it in the first place.

Where does all of this get sorted out? Again VCAT is going to be in the firing line for this. New section 64(5) allows a renter to apply to VCAT for a determination of a claim if they believe the provider — the landlord — has unreasonably refused consent to modifications, and the landlord needs to go to VCAT if the bond has not been enough to restore their asset. There is a double whammy either side of this installation of whatever this product may be.

On multiple occasions the Premier has mentioned in public that there would be a compensation fund to assist landlords in upgrading premises for family violence victims, but that is not covered anywhere in these amendments. New section 64(1C) provides only a few valid reasons to refuse consent, and of course there is so much nervousness about all of that.

Clause 52 inserts section 65A, which relates to prescribed rental minimum standards, and again we will not know what these are until their implementation.

Clause 340 amends section 511(1) of the act to provide authority for the making of regulations. I refer particularly to section 511(1)(a)(ac), which is very broad. It states:

(ac) prescribing rental minimum standards, including but not limited to the following—

(i) the cleanliness and state of repair of rented premises;

One would say that that is fairly subjective:

(ii) the privacy, security and amenity of rented premises;

Again, I would like a definition on that:

(iii) prescribing or requiring compliance with any other standards prescribed under any other Act or law in relation to, or applicable to, the condition of any residential premises, including energy and water efficiency standards ...

Believe it or not the minister's second-reading speech is actually more detailed than the amendments. The speech included things like a functioning toilet; a vermin-proof rubbish bin; adequate hot and cold water connections in kitchens, laundries and bathrooms — I do not have a problem with any of that; a functioning oven, sink and food preparation area; a functioning deadlock on external entry doors, and I have had a fair bit of feedback on whether that is viable on all types of doors; a functioning heater in the main living area; and window coverings to ensure privacy in bedrooms and the main living area, and I do not have an issue with any of that. We would not be opposed to these requirements, but without seeing the full list we cannot know the full extent of these modifications, nor can a property owner.

Clause 55 amends section 68. Under subsection (1), the provider has a duty to maintain the premises; they must be in good repair and in a reasonably fit and suitable condition for occupation. That seems reasonable enough. New subsection (1A)(c) states that this applies despite the age and character of the rented premises, and we would question exactly what that means. If you have a property that is heritage listed, where is that taken into consideration? Once damage is done or once modifications are made, restoration is actually not possible, especially if it is heritage listed; cosmetically, yes, but not to its true heritage status.

Clause 61 inserts new division 5B. This is the bit about pets, and it is one that has come onto the agenda constantly. New section 71A provides that a renter may keep a pet at a rented premises with consent or a tribunal order, but the owner — the landlord — must consent in writing. There is a note in the legislation that says the owner's consent will be assumed unless within 14 days of receiving a request they make an application to the tribunal. Again it is VCAT deciding these matters under section 71C(2). Therefore a landlord has no ability to refuse a pet unless they make an application to VCAT within that 14 days. What if the person moves in and makes that application a day or two before Christmas? Are we talking 14 calendar days or 14 working days? Either way, over the holiday period that is really not going to be practical.

A pet bond is only allowed if both parties agree. If somebody wants to come into my premises with a pet and they do not agree to putting up a pet bond, then — you know what? — that is a problem, because they do not have to, according to this legislation. Pets can of course cause significant damage and extra cleaning, and we should not forget about the ramifications for the next renters. What happens is that when somebody moves out and they have had a cat — I am certainly not picking on cats; I had a beautiful cat until recently — the cat can leave odours and they can also have a great effect on people with allergies. What happens if there is an asthmatic child or somebody who has an allergy to pet fur who comes into that rented premises as the next tenant? Where does the landlord stand as far as the new tenant then breaking their lease by saying, 'I cannot live here'. This is all for VCAT. A tribunal order for the refusal of pets will not be a blanket ban on all pet requests. The renter can go back to the tribunal for a determination on each pet that they want in their home.

Who is going to pay for all of this? It is a good question. The cost for applying is obviously going to be borne — I would imagine — by the person trying to keep that person from having a pet. Again the landlord coughs up. We question the practicality of VCAT being able to hear all of these matters in a timely manner, knowing that most items that go to VCAT are not heard in a timely manner. They do not have enough resources, and of course if matters are heard within seven days, it is generally just to be deferred off. How does that fit within the 14-day time period?

Clause 62 inserts new section 72AA, 'Renter must report damage and breakdown of facilities to residential rental provider', but there is no penalty if they do not do that.

In regard to urgent repairs, under clause 63, there is now no longer a cap on the cost of repairs to be reimbursed to a renter. We also do not know what the prescribed amount will be yet. What if a person's husband, cousin or a tradie comes in and says, 'I can do all of this and I can issue you with a bill; you sling me 50 bucks, but I'll put on there that it's 500 bucks'? I can smell a rort happening from a mile away, and I am sure others in this house can as well — those that are not involved in perpetrating them.

The time frame has been reduced on that from 14 days to seven days, but what happens if the repair takes longer — for example, if the roof has been blown off in a storm or a tree has crashed on the house? Substituted section 72(3) says:

If urgent repairs are required to an appliance, fitting or fixture with a rating in a prescribed efficiency rating system, and the appliance, fitting or fixture cannot be repaired, the renter may replace it with an appliance, fitting or fixture with a rating that is of or above a rating in the efficiency grading system.

This is without the landlord's consent. You have only got to have a quick look on the internet. We have questioned how the cost is determined, because there are lots of different prices. What is a reasonable price in this case? I would love a top-of-the-line dishwasher — not that we use it at all that often, but I would love one of those. Miele clocks in at \$2499, but Aldi has one that actually has a 5-star rating for water efficiency for \$299. There is nothing in this legislation to prevent the tenant from going out and buying a \$2500 dishwasher and saying, 'Here you go, landlord; here's the bill' — very, very wrong.

I would also question what happens to goods if they have to be replaced and might still be under warranty but cannot be fixed in a certain amount of time. The provider should be afforded the same provisions as renters in relation to financial hardship. If there is an extension of time needed, then so be it, but I think common sense needs to prevail, and it certainly has not here.

Clause 66 substitutes section 75 and is in regard to non-urgent repairs. The provider has 14 days to carry out those repairs once notified. But again, what happens if that does not happen? The tribunal must hear an application, and we are going back to VCAT, copping it all over again. Bearing in mind that the department told us that there would need to be a separate budget bid for this, this has not been provided for VCAT. I am thinking that the members must be sitting there shaking their heads.

There are amendments to rooming houses. There have been many objections to these new provisions. Some of them I think are probably okay, but the ones that were objected to were especially around new section 142W, 'Notice of intention to vacate room', inserted by clause 237. The two-day and 14-day notices are seen as unfair by providers in the industry, as you would expect, but I think they do have some valid concerns. There are some of the same concerns around caravan parks and site agreements.

I want to go to part 8, 'Amendments relating to termination', and subdivision 3 regarding termination and new agreements because of family violence or personal violence. So clause 236 inserts new section 91V(4) of the act so that a provider does not have the ability to consent or refuse. We are not against provisions in relation to family violence — I need to stress that — and we share a bipartisan approach to implementing the royal commission's recommendations. There is concern that the practicality of these provisions may have a negative effect, though, on providers offering up their homes because they face uncertain obligations around these provisions. As I said, the Premier mentioned compensation for some of these provisions, but that is nowhere to be seen in these amendments. New section 91X(2) states that no compensation will be awarded because of an agreement — that is, a lease — being terminated due to family violence. What about the reletting fee? What about all of those other things that are now going to be another cost imposed upon the landlord?

On non-payment of rent, this is a doozy. This is an absolute doozy. Of all of the legislation I have seen come into this house over 12 years this would have to be right up there. Even the departmental representative stated, 'It's complicated', during a briefing. Well, if it is complicated for the people who wrote it, imagine how complicated it is going to be for the rest of Victoria. A renter will have five strikes before a possession order can be granted — so, in other words, before they are turfed out. On the first, second, third and fourth occasion of non-payment of rent they can be given a notice to vacate, but if they pay the rent back, there are no more strikes against them, until they get to the fifth one where an application can actually be made for them to vacate the premises.

But by order of the tribunal — again VCAT — they could be asked to go onto a payment plan. There could be an adjournment of the application for the possession order. Now, that is great, but who is going to pay for the financial counselling? Some of that is free, and I know that there are some good services out there, but if that payment plan is in place, how does that affect the

landlord who is now no longer having that income coming in, who will probably rely on it? We know about the investor level, and I will get to that in a second, but how do we go about justifying that to the people who are putting this property up for rent? If they take it off the market because this is all too uncertain, what happens to that rental stock? It dries up.

If the tribunal places a renter on a payment plan under new section 91ZM(1)(d)(i) and the renter complies with the terms of the payment plan and has paid the unpaid rent, the tribunal is to dismiss the application for the possession order. So on the fifth strike they can go, 'Oh, here you go, here's the money; I don't know why I didn't pay it the last four times, but I want to save the home I'm in'. If the tribunal places a renter on a payment plan under subsection (1)(d)(i) and the renter does not comply with the terms of the payment plan, the tribunal may make a possession order — but note the use of the word 'may', not 'must'. They have to be given a notice to vacate with not less than 14 days, and it just gets messier from there. I invite everybody to read through that section because it really is quite crazy.

This is about what is going to happen to VCAT and the amount of time that is going to be taken up on these types of cases. Obviously as the cost of living soars, as I said, the bills keep accruing for the landlord, and that is not going to change. But if they are not being paid, how are they going to make their repayments? This is very, very one-sided.

On amendments relating to gaining possession orders and warrants, clause 245 amends section 330 and orders the tribunal can make, and talks about what is 'reasonable and proportionate'. I want to know exactly how that is going to happen. It is very broad and, as I said, there are so many things that could be taken into account here, but we do not know what they are going to be.

Again going back to financial counselling — that is fine, that is semi-defined. But if we look at clause 248, which inserts new section 332A, it allows the tribunal, VCAT, to dismiss a possession order and instead make a compliance order in certain circumstances, such as if there is damage, danger or threats to the landlord. We question how an agreement or lease could continue when a relationship has been strained due to violence or damage. It would be unworkable.

Proposed section 333(1B) allows a renter who has been told to vacate a property because of certain circumstances like threats or damage or violence more time to vacate if they have special requirements, including access to public or social housing. Public

housing waiting lists are already out of control and some who come into my office have been on the list for many, many years, so where does this leave the landlord?

Amendments relating to the goods left behind by renters is also an interesting one. The goods must be stored for at least 14 days, and obviously some compensation can be asked for in payment for storage for those 14 days, but again you are going to have to go to the tribunal — VCAT again — for an order for a higher amount to be paid. What happens if the tenant decides they are going to come back and say, 'Yep, all right, after 14 days I want my goods'. What happens if they do not have the money to pay for the storage the goods have been put in? What happens to the cost of the removal van, the time the landlord has taken off work or wherever, to give them some justification? They are already way behind the eight ball on this. The landlord can sell or dispose of the goods left behind after a reasonable amount of time, but new section 392 allows for a renter to request proceeds of sale of goods for up to six months after the sale. I am not even going to go there. Again, what about the time involved in removal and also the amount of money spent on that?

There are all sorts of things about occupation fees for storing goods and there not being enough money to cover the cost of storing goods, but there is a repeal of sections 402 and 403 of the act, which allowed owners compensation when they relied on the director of CAV's statement of how to dispose of goods. And obviously one of those clauses was around payment of compensation out of the Residential Tenancy Fund. The landlord can no longer rely on a direction from CAV on how to dispose of the goods because any goods with a monetary value must be kept. There are so many things to this.

I want to move on to the blacklist for residential providers and landlords — a rental non-compliance register. If the provider has failed to comply with provisions within the act, they can be put onto a register. Of course there may be negative effects for the real estate agent, who might in fact be doing the right thing, and it might be a bad provider. I am not saying 100 per cent of landlords out there are good. I have never said it. There are bad ones, and we need to bring them into line. But there are already implications on real estate agents from other things that are going on in this state, which at the moment I will leave for the upper house to deal with. What they are doing now is leaving the poor providers in a state of flux. There are transitional provisions, and I do not know how this is going to work with people who might have older buildings that are not quite up to the minimum

standards with current fixed tenancies. I think that is something that needs to be looked at.

There are floodgates that are going to be opened all around the place. The minister during her second-reading speech stated:

... the reforms are framed around the reality that a growing proportion of Victorians are priced out of home ownership and likely to rent for longer periods of time.

Well, clearly the minister has failed to realise that there is an unfair balance between a renter and a landlord. This will have a negative impact on rental prices and availability. As I say, I have had hundreds of complaints from property owners stating exactly this. They are going to remove their properties from the market because of these reforms. This is something the Liberals and The Nationals would never do. Reducing supply will affect pricing. It is not rocket science. Many investors are mums and dads trying to support their families. According to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) 25 per cent of taxpayers aged 25 to 49 own an investment property. Anecdotally, this cohort is also most likely to be first homebuyers. In addition, the ATO data shows the average rental losses claimed by investors was \$8700. Let us not forget that property owners are not fat cats sitting pretty with millions of dollars in the bank.

The government needs to remember who is in the firing line here. It is average Victorians. We believe both the renter and landlord deserve fairness and equality, and this bill does not deliver that, and for that reason I wish to move a reasoned amendment to the second reading.

I desire to move:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until further consultation takes place with all affected stakeholders'.

We are very concerned that only some interest groups were consulted on this. There has not been nearly enough consultation. There has not been nearly enough thought put into the ramifications of what this government is trying to ram through before an election. They talk all the time about dodgy side deals and all sorts of things. This is being rammed through. In 2015 changes were first mooted, but they have waited until a couple of sitting weeks before this Parliament is dissolved to ram this through.

This needs to go into committee in the upper house. We do not have time for it — we simply do not have time for it. And for that reason, the reasoned amendment must stand in this house so that the

mum-and-dad investors — the ones we have heard about, our average Victorians — have a fair chance to have their say. Because if they had had a chance to have a say, we certainly would not have the dog's breakfast that is here on the table in the lower house of the Parliament of Victoria at the moment. It is not fair. It is not balanced. I think the government need to hang their heads in shame for trying to unfairly disadvantage Mr and Mrs Average out there, and that is exactly what they have done.

I hope this house supports the reasoned amendment that I have put forward, and I hope that when it gets to the upper house, the upper house sees sense, blocks this ridiculous proposed legislation and allows us to come back to the table to draft it properly so that there is true fairness and true justice in the space of residential tenancies in this state.

As I said, there are bad landlords. They need to be dealt with, but we do not need to throw a whole heap of extra work onto VCAT. We certainly do not need to punish the investors who put their lives on the line by making investments to secure their future so they do not have to live off the public purse later in life. They have made that choice, and now the state Labor government wants to punish those people. It is reprehensible.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) (10:58) — It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak in support of this monumental piece of legislation that is currently before the house, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. I want to thank the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation for the outstanding job she has done in bringing this bill before us after enormous consultation.

I will just make it clear after what was, to be fair, incoherent drivel from the shadow minister that we will not be supporting the reasoned amendment that the honourable member moved in her contribution, that being that 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until further consultation takes place with all affected stakeholders'. This bill has been the subject of enormous consultation. This bill has been the subject of an outstanding process of consultation, led by the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, engaging stakeholders from right across the entire spectrum of real estate owners, tenants, social housing providers, community organisations and others so as to give real form to the process that has brought this bill before us.

In that regard, and with the expectation that my contribution might well in the very near future have to be put on ice, I would nonetheless commend —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines) — Order! The minister will have the call when this matter resumes.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER (11:01) — Order! It gives me great pleasure today to welcome to the gallery two distinguished delegations from overseas. One is from Vietnam, led by Mr Nguyễn Đức Hải, chairman of the Finance and Budget Committee of the National Assembly of Vietnam. Welcome to our Parliament. I also welcome a parliamentary delegation from New Zealand, across the ditch: the Social Services and Community Committee, led by Mr Gareth Hughes, MP. Welcome to the Parliament. We have welcomed them into the precinct on the basis that they do not mention the Bledisloe Cup.

HON. FIONA RICHARDSON

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (By leave) (11:02) — I rise to mark one year since the loss of our friend and colleague, Fiona Richardson. Bold and brave, frank and fearless, Fiona never did things by halves. Those who knew her in her youth remember Fiona as bright, brilliant, protective of her tribe and, as a person, quite simply going places. Not that Fiona sought power merely for power's own sake. Rather, she sought power with a very real purpose. We, each of us, see that legacy live on in her much-loved community of Northcote. Because of Fiona, work is underway to widen the Chandler Highway. Because of Fiona, that notorious level crossing at Grange Road is gone, and because of Fiona, students at Croxton School will have the play spaces and the therapy rooms that they need.

Fiona carried that sense of purpose with her to the cabinet table as well. As our nation's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence she devoted herself to keeping every victim-survivor safe. As our state's Minister for Women she dedicated every day to challenging a culture that told women they were less capable, less deserving and less worthy.

As many in this place know, though, Fiona was a very private person. She was central to public life in our state, but a very private person. She chose to share her story, though, in order to help others share their stories too. It was these most personal experiences that meant Fiona was far more than just a spectator. She herself was a survivor. It also meant she understood precisely how much was at stake, and she knew the profound importance of getting it right. That is why, as part of

Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence, the stories of victim-survivors were central. They resulted in 227 recommendations and 2000 pages of testimony and truth. Because of Fiona, not only were these stories told but these stories were heard. And because of Fiona, our state is on the way to a different system, a different set of laws and a different standard.

We saw that last week with the opening of our state's first support and safety hubs, located in Barwon, Bayside Peninsula, the Mallee and Melbourne's north-east. These hubs will fundamentally change the way we respond to family violence and its victims. Fiona's work continues in lots of other ways as well, recognising that victims should not have to choose between their safety and the streets. We have extended our flexible support packages to help more than 8000 women and their children. Understanding that our systems were fundamentally flawed, we have established a dedicated family violence agency to drive that much-needed transformational change. And because, as Fiona told us, better outcomes for Victorian women begin with better attitudes towards Victorian women, Respect Victoria, our state's new prevention agency, opened its doors earlier this month.

Of course for every day that we have missed Fiona, her loved ones have missed her even more. To Stephen, Catherine, Marcus and Fiona's entire family, we are thinking of you on this day. Fiona understood better than most that you cannot separate the politics from the personal. I stand here today of course as the Premier of our state — a great honour — but also as the parent of a daughter. I know that because of Fiona Richardson and because of her work, Grace will come of age in a state that is better and safer and fundamentally fairer.

Ms THORPE (Northcote) (By leave) (11:06) — On behalf of the people of Northcote I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Fiona Richardson for her community. I often hear lovely stories about Fiona. There are still a couple of constituents who would prefer to meet me in a cafe rather than come into the office, out of respect for Fiona. Fiona Richardson's passion to improve the lives of women experiencing family violence is something I am personally thankful for, and I pay my respects to Fiona's children, husband, family and colleagues at this time.

The SPEAKER — Members, I think it is appropriate we rise in our places for a brief reflection on our parliamentary colleague who we lost last year.

Honourable members stood in their places.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and
MINISTERS STATEMENTS**

Electorate office staff

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:08) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, I refer to the practice identified in the Ombudsman's report of Labor MPs signing time sheets for persons who were Labor red shirts campaigners, and I ask: did you ever sign time sheets for casual electorate office staff who were also Labor red shirts campaigners?

The SPEAKER — I know that members will recall my previous rulings on this matter, but just to refresh people's memory: the employment of electorate officers is not government business, the actions of previous administrations are not parliamentary business, but items contained in an Ombudsman's report are. I ask the Premier to answer in regard to the Ombudsman's report.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:08) — Thank you very much, Speaker. Further to your ruling and the series of rulings that you have made this week, I would simply refer the Leader of the Opposition to the Ombudsman's report.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The level of shouting in the chamber is excessive. Members will be removed without warning.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:09) — Premier, you will not stand down six ministers who fraudulently signed multiple time sheets and whose conduct is now under investigation. Is that because, just like them, you have done it yourself?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Without the assistance of the Leader of the House. Some members seem intent on not remaining here through the remainder of question time.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:10) — I am very pleased to thank the Leader of the Opposition for today of all days asking questions about ministers standing down. The whole cabinet has gone in Canberra. You are a joke.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:10) — Order! The member for Eltham, the member for South-West Coast and the member for Kew will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable members for Eltham, South-West Coast and Kew withdrew from chamber.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, we will see how things go in two weeks time and whether people can live up to the standards that they would require of others.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:11) — Before calling the Leader of the Opposition on a point of order, the member for Geelong and the member for Ripon will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable members for Geelong and Ripon withdrew from chamber.

Mr GUY — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very straightforward. It was: is the Premier refusing to stand down these ministers because he did the same thing himself? Now, if this crook does not want to just admit to the truth —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Guy — Just come to it, you crook.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — The answer to your question is no. And how is your week going?

Ministers statements: solar homes program

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:12) — I am delighted to be able to rise and update the house that as part of the government's commitment to putting solar panels on 650 000 roofs with no up-front costs to save households \$890 every single year — that is called the government working rather than being a circus, focused on itself and itself only, which is what is, of course, sadly going on in Canberra — a new agency much like the Level Crossing Removal Authority, called Solar Victoria, will be established, and that agency will be located at the Labor government's GovHub in Morwell.

We have committed to deliver those 150 Victorian government jobs and hopefully a further 150 from the commonwealth, and we will add yet another 50 jobs to that GovHub as part of this rollout to give to families across the whole state control over their power bills —

not the National Energy Guarantee. Literally no-one can understand or keep up with the number of changes in the revolving door of energy policy and prime ministers, it would seem. We have a clear plan to give households power and control over their power bills and to create 5500 jobs along the way.

What is more, we know and understand that the Latrobe Valley has a very proud history in relation to energy. We want to make sure they have got a just as proud and bright future, and that is why this agency to coordinate, roll out and deliver this important policy will be located at the GovHub in Morwell in the Latrobe Valley. Compare and contrast that to others who could not even turn up when the mine was on fire; they could not turn up and abandoned the Latrobe Valley at every opportunity. Shame on them. Our priorities are much clearer and much better.

Electorate office staff

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (11:14) — My question is to the Minister for Police. On page 76 of the Ombudsman's report the minister is listed as a beneficiary of the Labor red shirts rorts scandal. Field organiser Jake Finnigan has stated publicly that despite being paid by the Minister for Tourism and Major Events:

I worked five days a week out of her Bellarine electorate office; I did not work out of John Eren's office at all.

Given the minister knew she was not paying Jake Finnigan and she knew she was not signing his time sheets, why did the minister allow this practice to continue given that she knew it was against the rules?

The SPEAKER — Order! I simply renew my ruling that I have made to this house a number of times in relation to how this matter should be treated. The minister should respond in relation to the Ombudsman's report.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (11:15) — Can I just suggest to those opposite, refer to the Ombudsman's report.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I refer you to sessional orders empowering you to require a minister to give a written response when an answer has not been responsive to a question. This is blatantly an answer that was not in response to a very straightforward factual question about the minister's

own conduct, and I do ask you to require her to provide a written response.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's ability to respond was restricted by my ruling in terms of directing her to respond in terms of the Ombudsman's report, which is exactly what she did. The answer was responsive.

Supplementary question

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (11:16) — With Gavin Jennings giving evidence to the Privileges Committee that all Labor MPs were briefed on the Labor red shirts rorts campaign, a scheme that the Ombudsman has of course now found was against the rules and which is the subject of a police fraud and extortion squad investigation, given that the minister's former staff located in her own office revealed as early as 2015 that the red shirts rorts scheme was based on a falsification of time sheets and other documents, why did the minister not report it to the police?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I am going to ask the member for Box Hill to re-ask that question, because the minister has indicated that she did not hear the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:17) — Order! The member for South Barwon will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. The level of shouting is excessive in the chamber. Members will continue to be removed from the chamber.

Honourable member for South Barwon withdrew from chamber.

Mr CLARK — With Gavin Jennings giving evidence to the Privileges Committee that all Labor MPs were briefed on the Labor red shirts rorts campaign, a scheme that the Ombudsman has found was against the rules and which is now of course the subject of a police fraud and extortion squad investigation, and with minister's former staff located in her own office revealing as early as 2015 that the red shirts scheme was based on a falsification of time sheets and other documents, why did the minister not report it to the police?

The SPEAKER — Order! I renew my ruling in terms of what is government business and not government business. I ask the minister to respond to the question.

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (11:17) — Can I firstly dispute a number of the Cluedo parts of those questions — ‘X went here and Y went there’. I dispute that, but again can I just refer those opposite to the Ombudsman’s report, where everyone acted in good faith.

Ministers statements: solar homes program

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:18) — I am absolutely delighted to update the house on the Andrews Labor government’s latest initiative in renewable energy. A re-elected Labor government will create a new agency, Solar Victoria, based in Morwell, delivering jobs to the valley. Jeff Kennett and his party ideologues across the chamber said privatisation would make power cheaper, but it has not. They flogged off Victoria’s assets to their corporate mates, and the CEOs are still laughing all the way to the bank. They are laughing all —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:18) — Order! I ask the minister to resume her seat. I ask the member for Burwood to leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Burwood withdrew from chamber.

Ms D’AMBROSIO — Solar Victoria will roll out our game-changing \$1.3 billion solar homes program, working with industry, safety regulators and training organisations to deliver up to \$890 of savings on families’ energy bills every single year. Solar Victoria will provide information to families about eligibility and about rebates, approved products and approved installers. It will also provide advice to industry on accreditation and audit programs, delivering the high-quality standards we need to keep workers and Victorians safe.

Only the Andrews Labor government will create 50 jobs in the valley with our Solar Victoria agency. Only the Andrews Labor government will give power back to the people of Victoria. The opposition leader has now told us that he has solar panels on his own roof, but he opposes our program. Solar is good enough for him, but it is not good enough for the nine out of 10 eligible Victorians who will save hundreds of dollars off their energy bills each and every year. While others talk and carp and moan and groan, we are about delivering for all Victorians. That is the hallmark of this government: we say what we will deliver and we deliver what we say.

Electorate office budgets

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:20) — My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. On page 76 of the Ombudsman’s report you are listed as a nominating MP in the Labor red shirts rorts scandal.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! There is too much shouting across the chamber.

Mr GUY — My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. On page 76 of the Ombudsman’s report you are listed as a nominating MP in the Labor red shirts rorts scandal. An email dated 2 October 2014 sent to every MP, including yourself, from the Parliament’s Presiding Officers states:

In the run-up to the November state election members are reminded of their obligation to use electorate office budgets and resources only as appropriate to discharge their electorate and parliamentary duties and not for party political or electioneering purposes.

Minister, signing multiple blank time sheets and handing them to a Labor field organiser was clearly against this direction and not done in good faith. Minister, why did you knowingly break the rules?

Ms D’AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:22) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. This is no different to the question that was asked yesterday, but what I will say is that all of the relevant matters and all of the necessary information that the Ombudsman needed to determine her findings were provided to her. She reached the conclusions that she did and I have nothing further to —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:22) — Order! The member for Warrandyte will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, this question is nothing similar to what has been asked of this minister before and refers to an email that was sent to her by the Presiding Officers. I simply asked the minister, having quoted that email, why did she knowingly break the rules. She has not addressed that

point at all, and I ask you to bring her back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER — I renew my earlier ruling about what is government business and what is parliamentary business. The minister is to answer in relation to government business, but I do ask her to come back to answering the question that was asked.

Ms D'AMBROSIO — The matters were before the Ombudsman for her consideration. She considered all of the relevant facts she needed and as were provided to her, and she made her findings. That is the end of the matter. She has made a clear conclusion that everyone acted in good faith. There is nothing further to add and I will add nothing further.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I did not ask a question about the Ombudsman. I asked a question about why the minister broke the rules. It was a very straightforward question which the minister has sought to answer. I ask you to bring her back to actually being relevant to what I asked her.

The SPEAKER — I do understand the point of order. The minister, though, is not able to answer questions in relation to parliamentary administration or the employment of electorate officers or matters relating to a previous administration. The minister has been responsive to the question that was asked.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:24) — On page 142 of the Ombudsman's report:

... evidence indicates that Mr Lenders (in consultation with the ALP campaign committee) implemented a strategy to persuade other ALP members of Parliament to engage field organisers as casual electorate officers.

Minister, who was it who asked you to engage field organisers as casual electorate officers as part of this red shirts rotting?

The SPEAKER — Again I renew my earlier ruling about what is and what is not government business, and I ask the minister to respond.

Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change) (11:24) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the supplementary question. Speaker, I refer you to my previous answers. These are matters that have all been considered by the Ombudsman. Her findings are there on the public record, her recommendations are there on the public

record and the matter has been concluded. I have nothing further to add.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, this was a question that related directly to the contents of the Ombudsman's report, as the Leader of the Opposition quoted. It sought further information about this passage in the Ombudsman's report. It was squarely within your guidance in relation to government business. The minister has made no attempt to answer it, and I do again ask you to require her to provide a written answer to the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The question referenced the Ombudsman's report but related to matters that were not entirely government business.

Ministers statements: federal health funding

Ms HENNESSY (Minister for Health) (11:25) — I rise to update the house about this government's many, many healthcare achievements and some of the really significant challenges we have had in terms of our relationship with the commonwealth government. As I have advised this house and I continue to update, we have worked very, very tirelessly to ensure that Victorians have access to one of the best healthcare systems in the world. We have achieved the best ambulance response times on record. We have delivered the lowest elective surgery wait list times. We have employed 1500 new doctors, 2900 new nurses and 1000 new paramedics, and we have got 600 nurses to come. We have invested twice the amount in infrastructure that those opposite did when they were in government.

But we continue to feel very, very challenged by the fact that the commonwealth government continue to attack the Victorian healthcare system. What do we see today? We see the circus unfolding in Canberra when it comes to good governance in this country. We do not even know if we have got a commonwealth health minister at the moment. I understand Mr Hunt has tendered his resignation to the current Prime Minister. What choices are Victorians going to be faced with? We are faced with a potential Prime Minister in Scott Morrison who oversaw a budget —

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister may want to talk about anything other than her own government's performance —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:27) — Order! The member for Oakleigh will leave the chamber for the period of

1 hour. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety is very close to following him.

Honourable member for Oakleigh withdrew from chamber.

Mr Clark — but the minister does need to relate her remarks to her portfolio and to making a ministers statement, and I do ask you to bring her back to compliance with sessional orders.

Ms Allan — On the point of order, Speaker, given the federal government's direct role in funding health services in this state, the minister is entirely compliant with standing orders and sessional orders to canvass these issues, given the federal government's involvement in the health system.

The SPEAKER — Order! I think matters of federal health governance are appropriate. I hope the minister is not heading down the path where she is going to make gratuitous political attacks on her opponents.

Ms HENNESSY — Indeed not. I am more concerned about the gratuitous funding attacks on our health system at the hands of the federal government, and of course Mr Morrison has delivered us a budget that cut \$2.1 billion from our health system. Our other choice of course is in fact Mr Dutton —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:28) — Order! The member for Hawthorn will leave the chamber for 1 hour.

Honourable member for Hawthorn withdrew from chamber.

Ms HENNESSY — who as health minister was voted one of the worst health ministers we have ever had in this country, and, boy, there has been some competition from those on the other side of the fence. He attacked GPs with an attempted \$7 tax on GP visits.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, I do ask you to ask the minister to heed and comply with your ruling and to make at least some effort to relate her remarks to her own portfolio.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister to come back to making a statement.

Ms HENNESSY — The bottom line is this: despite the circus unfolding in Canberra, the vicious attacks on funding to Victorians will continue to go on and we will continue to highlight them.

Rob Gibbs

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:29) — My question is to the Premier. Rob Gibbs, a Gippsland Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteer, has a cancer that should be covered under presumptive rights legislation. Diagnosed in 2015, his cancer is worsening, and he has recently had surgery where part of his foot was amputated. Premier, when you personally rang him in late 2015 you told him he would be taken care of, yet your presumptive rights legislation would not even cover him despite your personal assurance to him that it would. This man has cancer. He has served our state as a CFA volunteer for years and now just wants to protect his family's future. If you cannot even honour your word to a CFA volunteer who has cancer, how can any Victorian, including Rob Gibbs, believe a word you say?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:30) — I do thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The circumstances of any person who has fought bravely to keep our state safe and has then been harmed in the process, whether it be through a cancer they have contracted in connection with their firefighting or any other injury they might face, diminishes all of us. That is why the government, rather than denying the link between some forms of firefighting and some forms of cancer for four long years, actually made commitments and introduced legislation into this chamber, and it passed this chamber. That legislation —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Oh, no, you asked the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Premier to resume his seat. The member for Frankston is warned, as is the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Battin — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is deliberately misleading the house on this legislation. Rob Gibbs was personally called by the Premier to say he would be covered, and the date of the legislation that he introduced would not cover Rob Gibbs. It would not cover him. You cannot ring him and give him your word about cancer —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook will resume his seat. The Deputy Premier will assist in the running of the house. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — As I said, that legislation passed this house, as it should have, in full delivery of our

election commitment. That bill then moved to the other place, and after a long debate — in fact maybe even a record-setting debate — a couple of people decided that they would tell everyone they were off to church.

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, on the issue of relevance, the question to the Premier was very clear: why did he ring Rob Gibbs and give him the Premier's personal assurances that he would be looked after and then not deliver on that promise? The question is very clear: why would any Victorian ever believe the Premier when he cannot keep his word to a CFA volunteer who has cancer?

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

Mr ANDREWS — The question relates to promises made and whether they are kept. The point is: I will not today or any day be lectured on probity and honesty and keeping your word from a man who directed two of his colleagues to lie about God and faith and church to break a pairing arrangement and defeat the very compensation he shamefully pretends to care about today.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier is warned.

Mr GUY — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the Premier was asked a clear question about the case of Rob Gibbs, a man he rang personally and told that this legislation would cover him. It does not cover and it never covered Rob Gibbs's case, and the question was clear: why would anyone believe the Premier's word when he would lie to a CFA volunteer suffering cancer?

The SPEAKER — I understand the point of order but the question at the end of his long question was a very broad one, and the Premier is being responsive to that question.

Mr ANDREWS — But of course directing your colleagues to break a pairing arrangement is an act of integrity! The Leader of the Opposition seems to forget that as part of the arrangements we put to the Parliament there was a fund and a process on a case-by-case basis to deal with anyone who was not directly covered by the scheme we put forward, because with any new scheme you need to be sure to accommodate those who might not qualify, and that is what our arrangements did.

It begs the question and the observation: why was a new scheme required? A new scheme was required because those opposite denied the link between firefighting and some forms of cancer for four long years. The Leader of the Opposition may seek to lecture people on integrity. He has no place doing so, nor does the member for Gembrook.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hastings is on very thin ice.

Mr Battin — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier continues to mislead the house. The legislation he brought into this place and through the other place was never, ever going to cover Rob Gibbs. I know you said it was a broad question. The question is about one person who is currently recovering at the moment, getting treatment today for part of his foot being amputated —

Ms Neville interjected.

Mr Battin — You are saying that is wrong? The Minister for Police says that is wrong. He is at home with a nurse getting treatment, and you must answer your direct question: why did you lie to Rob Gibbs?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I understand the issues being raised by the member for Gembrook, but the question was around what Victorians can believe. The Premier is being responsive to that question.

Mr ANDREWS — I would again point out to those opposite that not only did they vote against these measures — they defeated them — but they conveniently forget that as part of these arrangements and the package of measures the government announced there was a case-by-case process to deal with those who might not fall directly within the scope of the scheme, a scheme denied to them for four long years by those opposite. Shameful hypocrites, every single one of them.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (11:36) — Rob Gibbs, a volunteer firefighter for 15 years, is watching this broadcast today, Premier. He was denied compensation from the CFA and from your government, yet now you are using the full force of government to fight him in the Supreme Court to deny him and his family any compensation, a volunteer who has spent years protecting our community, and despite

your personal promise, your personal commitment, that you would look after him. Premier, will you keep your promise, will you drop your legal fight against Mr Gibbs and his family and will you now guarantee he gets the compensation you personally promised him three years ago?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals will come to order. The member for Bass! The Leader of The Nationals, please! The Leader of the House is not assisting the smooth running of the house.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:37) — The member for Bass can leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Bass withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — If members persist in shouting across the chamber, they will leave the chamber.

Ms Graley interjected.

The SPEAKER (11:38) — The member for Narre Warren South can join the member for Bass for 1 hour.

Honourable member for Narre Warren South withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — I remind members in this place of the sub judice convention. If this matter is before the courts, I remind members of that convention. I ask the Premier to answer the question.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (11:38) — I simply say in response to the Leader of the Opposition that I reject the assertions made in his question, but I would also —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — No, I would make the point that advice I have received indicates that there are productive, good faith discussions going on with Mr Gibbs — that is the advice that I have — between the department and his representatives to come to an arrangement that is hopefully beneficial to him in his very difficult circumstances. I would again take this opportunity to say to all Victorians that we will not be taking lectures from those who denied these matters for four long years and who defeated them in the other place.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Sandringham is warned.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the question was very clear to the Premier: will he keep his promise and will he drop his legal fight against Rob Gibbs? I was not asking the Premier anything beyond those two very simple points, and I ask you — and in fairness, on behalf of Rob Gibbs, who is watching — to bring the Premier back to giving some clarity to those questions.

The SPEAKER — I understand the point of order, but the Premier was being responsive to the question and he has finished his answer.

Ministers statements: *Social Enterprise Strategy*

Mr CARROLL (Minister for Industry and Employment) (11:39) — I rise to update the house on how the Andrews Labor government's *Social Enterprise Strategy* and social procurement framework are changing lives right across Victoria. Today may not be a good day to be a moderate Liberal, but it is a great day to be a social enterprise in Victoria because the sector is booming. There are 3500 social enterprises and 60 000 jobs supporting an over \$5 billion investment in our economy. There are also 12 000 jobs for people with a disability, 4000 jobs for the long-term unemployed and almost 1000 jobs for Aboriginal Victorians. We are also proud of the strong leadership and the strong female entrepreneurship that is in our social enterprise sector. Fifty per cent are led by women and, as the member for Macedon knows, over 40 per cent are in regional Victoria, just like Social Foundry, which we visited in Kyneton very recently. They have great food, great coffee, and when you purchase something at Social Foundry you are investing in young people at risk in regional Victoria.

Just last week I announced over half a million dollars in funding for 23 social enterprises right across the state. The member for Richmond knows about Lentil as Anything, a social enterprise we are getting behind. I am also reliably informed they have got a great potato curry on the menu. If the Prime Minister in waiting is looking for one, he should get down to Lentil as Anything. We are very pleased; this is a great hospitality success story. The Andrews government will do everything it can as the largest procurer of goods and services in the state to make sure everyone participates in the sharing economy.

While it is Lentil as Anything in Richmond, a social enterprise, it may be mental as anything in Canberra right now. I just got the message — I guess they are

pretty good at texts over there — that Parliament has been adjourned today in Canberra. I do not even know where my federal minister, Michaelia Cash, is at right now. She is still trying to look at Victoria's space industry and everything we have got going. We are doing everything we can and will continue to support social enterprises.

Bus contracts

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:41) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. I refer to the Treasurer's answer yesterday when he said that you had identified and achieved greater efficiencies in bus contracts to offset the public payments your government has agreed to make to resolve a private industrial dispute between bus companies and the Transport Workers Union (TWU). Minister, what specific efficiencies did you identify and implement and at what amount have they been valued?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ringwood!

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (11:42) — Isn't it great to be talking about investment in the bus industry, as opposed to those opposite who cut funding to the bus industry? I was particularly interested to note, and I am sure the member for Ivanhoe did not let this escape his attention either, that the Leader of the Opposition this week in criticising the operator Transdev was in fact criticising the very contracts he and his government signed that involved cutting funding and cutting bus routes to northern and western Melbourne.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was about the efficiencies the Treasurer referred to yesterday that are being used to pay off the TWU's wage claims. The question was: what are those specific efficiencies and how much are they worth? I ask you to draw the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — Order! I uphold the point of order. The minister to come back to answering the question.

Ms ALLAN — Part of getting the greater efficiencies that the Treasurer spoke about yesterday was driving new arrangements through the metropolitan bus contract negotiations that we have successfully concluded in recent times.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — I am coming to that. Don't worry, I am coming to that.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister, without the assistance of members opposite.

Ms ALLAN — They are an impatient lot over there.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Without the Leader of The Nationals' assistance.

Ms ALLAN — I know they are very keen to get back and watch the TV. I know they are very keen to get back and make sure that —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — Yes, I am sure you are. Thank you. You don't think I didn't work that out.

Speaker, there are efficiencies that we have driven through the bus contract negotiations. We are proud to have driven these efficiencies, because — do you know what? — it is going to lead to the provision of more bus services and greater flexibility to deliver bus services for our growing regions.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (11:44) — Order! I know we are on the last question, but I am going to have to ask the member for Ringwood and the member for Essendon to leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. There is still too much shouting in this chamber.

Honourable members for Ringwood and Essendon withdrew from chamber.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, relating to relevance. The question was about what specific efficiencies were identified and what the specific value was of each of those efficiencies. The minister has not answered that. I ask you to bring her back to answering that.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has been responsive to the question asked.

Ms ALLAN — The Treasurer touched on this yesterday in his answer to the auditioning shadow Treasurer in terms of talking about how part of those efficiencies and part of the operation of our bus network also rely on the good work of bus drivers.

They have a difficult job. They have a challenging job, and they deserve a pay rise in accordance with the —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, with 2 minutes and 10 seconds gone of the minister's time to answer, the shadow Treasurer asked a very specific question about efficiencies that the Treasurer referred to yesterday. The question was about efficiencies and the cost, and not once, despite mentioning the word 'efficiencies', has the minister detailed what the efficiencies actually are. If she does not know her own portfolio, maybe she wants to take it on notice, otherwise in the next 50 seconds could you please direct her to answer it.

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

Ms ALLAN — Indeed, Speaker, I was. As I said, part of operating —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Without the assistance of the Leader of The Nationals.

Ms ALLAN — Part of returning in terms of the delivery of our bus system, the bus drivers deserve the support. The efficiencies that were achieved through the bus contract negotiations amount to some tens of millions of dollars, and it is only fair —

An honourable member — What are they?

Ms ALLAN — I just told you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! If members who would like to hear an answer to this question want to hear that answer, they should be quiet rather than shouting across the chamber.

Ms ALLAN — What this question is all about, as the question was all about yesterday, is it is yet another Liberal attack on public sector workers or private sector workers. Whether you drive a bus, work in a hospital or drive an ambulance, the Liberal Party will come after you every single time.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (11:47) — On a supplementary question, I remind the minister that we are not talking about the public sector, we are talking about private bus companies. Minister, if you have been able to identify and achieve financial efficiencies in private bus contracts, why is your priority to pay off

unions just before an election rather than putting those efficiencies into delivering better bus services for the people who actually ride on them?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (11:47) — Under the Premier's leadership the Andrews Labor government is driving significant reform through the bus industry. We are proud to stand with the workforce to support their rights to negotiate fairly with their employer and gain a wage rise. We are proud of the efficiencies that we have driven through our bus contracts so we can deliver more bus services to the growing suburbs. We are proud of the work that we are doing to mop up the mess that those opposite left us with the Transdev contracts, and we will continue —

Mr Walsh — On a point of order, Speaker, fortunately the Sky News watchers will be spared the embarrassment of seeing —

The SPEAKER — Order! Does the Leader of The Nationals have a serious point of order?

Mr Walsh — But for those of us who are in the chamber I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question that was asked.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister is being responsive to this question.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — Speaker, I think someone needs to get the Leader of the Opposition some smelling salts. He is getting a bit hysterical over there. We will continue to work very hard to support the bus industry across Victoria —

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance. It is a very simple question: why has this government decided to take public money and give it to settle private industrial claims rather than improving public services? I ask you, in the 11 seconds left, to bring her back to give us one answer to that question.

Ms Hutchins — On the point of order, Speaker, the minister was being very relevant. Obviously those opposite do not understand industrial relations in this state. That is why they were unable to reach agreement without industrial action and going to war with our nurses and ambos.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Public Transport was being responsive but had strayed from

answering the question. I ask her to come back to answering the question. The minister has concluded her answer.

Ministers statements: regional rail infrastructure

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (11:50) — I am very pleased to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's ongoing program of works to invest in regional public transport, upgrading every regional passenger line in regional Victoria. Of course members of the house will recall that the \$1.75 billion worth of work that is going on is part of a program that I was really pleased to negotiate with the former federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Darren Chester. Of course we all remember what happened to poor old Darren; he got dumped by his National Party colleagues.

I just remind the house too that in the last three years I have worked with now six coalition infrastructure ministers in Canberra — six ministers. It looks like pretty soon that number is going to get to at least seven. Do you know what? Every time there is a change we book a flight to Canberra, we roll a map of Victoria up and put it under our arms and we go up and explain a few things to the federal government in Canberra. I am going to again have to explain the map of Victoria to the federal government and how we do not get our fair share. I am again going to have to explain that Victoria has the strongest economy in the nation and the fastest growing population in the nation, that it is creating more jobs and that we deserve our fair share of funding. Along the way I am again going to remind some of those National Party MPs in Canberra about the previous betrayal of their National colleagues in Victoria, closing country train lines and cutting funding to V/Line. That will be part of the story.

And again I am going to explain where Shepparton is, where Warrnambool is and where Gippsland is.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Leader of The Nationals will come to order.

Ms ALLAN — While I am up there I will even drop in on the shadow minister for infrastructure, Anthony Albanese. He has been there for a long time. He understands Victoria. He has got a detailed knowledge about the public transport system, and that is what we will continue to work on.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Questions without notice

The SPEAKER (11:53) — The member for Malvern yesterday made a point of order about the responsiveness of the Treasurer's answer to his substantive question about bus contracts. In responding that the figure requested was confidential to the parties, the Treasurer was responsive to the question asked.

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Speaker, I wish to renew my point of order that I made last sitting week regarding constituency question 14 495, directed to the Minister for Education. It was asked 11 weeks ago, so it is almost seven weeks overdue, and I would request that you follow that up for me.

The SPEAKER — I will follow that matter up for the member.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Rowville electorate

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (11:54) — (14 866) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Minister, now that the Liberal-Nationals have committed to a public transport overlay on all public land for the land corridor needed for the Rowville rail, can you advise the Rowville electorate residents what funding you will provide to match the federal government's recent announcement of a \$475 million funding commitment? Minister, at a recent public forum on Rowville rail attended by more than 300 local residents the vast majority were in favour of a full rail service and not the tram plan floated by your government. It was made very clear at the forum that Rowville rail must be given the green light as a matter of priority.

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (11:54) — (14 867) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. When will the Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships initiative be rolled out to Craigieburn Secondary College and Mount Ridley College? I am delighted that both government secondary schools in the Yuroke electorate will be participating in this fantastic program, which will open up a whole range of career opportunities to young people, allowing them to pursue a qualification while ensuring they also complete their secondary education. This complements this government's work to rescue TAFE, and I know that many students in the Yuroke electorate and their

parents will be eager to learn more about when they can benefit from this innovative new program.

Bayswater electorate

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (11:55) — (14 868) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. When will the rail pedestrian crossing at Devenish Road, Boronia, receive an upgrade? Tragically a constituent reports that there was a fatality in the vicinity of this crossing recently. It is unclear as to the circumstances of that fatality. However, the appearance of emergency crews served as a reminder to the community in the area and generated the questions about this crossing. One constituent had been involved in a near miss there. He stopped for the train heading one way and was surprised to find a train heading the other way as he stepped out. He is seeking the following improvements: the removal of the graffiti around the crossing, especially the graffiti on the warning signs; and the painting, straightening and lengthening of the poles that create the crossing barrier. Ultimately he thinks there should be automated gates there, but we will happily take that on advisement as to what is best. He has contacted Metro Trains but is not getting anywhere. Minister, when will this be done?

Macedon electorate

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (11:56) — (14 869) My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. In this year's budget the Andrews Labor government committed \$400 000 to upgrade the pedestrian crossing on Main Road in Riddells Creek. Minister, can you please advise when works will commence on this project? Riddells Creek locals Robyn and George Franciscutti and the Riddells Creek community ran a sensational campaign in support of this project, and while they were ignored by the previous Liberal government they are delighted now to have a government that listens. Minister, scarcely a day goes by that I do not get questions regarding this much-needed road safety project, and I look forward to works commencing as soon as possible.

Euroa electorate

Ms RYAN (Euroa) (11:57) — (14 870) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. When will the state government order new long-haul trains for the north-east and Shepparton lines to improve reliability for travellers on the Seymour, Shepparton and north-east lines? As we know, to date this government has been all words and no action on trains. Samantha McCormack of Clonbinane emailed me this week after the 5.11 p.m. Southern Cross to

Seymour service broke down just outside North Melbourne on Friday evening. This incurred a 3-hour delay while a crew was sent to repair the broken train as it was holding up metro services. Samantha said:

I left work at 5.00 p.m. and arrived home at 8.30 p.m. The problem is that this is not an isolated incident. Our trains are old and are constantly being delayed or cancelled due to train faults.

What is the point of having a timetable when the trains never arrive at their allocated time? I never know if I will get to work on time or how long it will take to get home any more.

I moved to Wandong 12 years ago because at that time there was a reliable train service to the city.

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (11:58) — (14 871) My constituency question is to the Minister for Suburban Development. When is construction of the Meadowlink shared trail project due to commence? The Andrews Labor government is working hard to get planning right in Broadmeadows and to fast-track construction of this Meadowlink shared trail project. The Minister for Planning has streamlined zoning for the trail — an important milestone for the \$2.15 million project. It will feature a 3.2-kilometre shared walking and cycling path connecting Merlynston Creek to Seabrook Reserve and the Broadmeadows railway station. It is going to be a great asset for the community and a key component of the Labor government's Broadmeadows urban revitalisation project, which includes \$7 million towards the Broadmeadows town hall redevelopment, \$4 million for the Broadmeadows railway station and Pascoe Vale improvements, \$1 million for land acquisition to provide new open space around the railway station and other money for planning to ensure the local community has better access to jobs, schools and public transport closer to home.

Eildon electorate

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (11:59) — (14 872) My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Education. The St Andrews Primary School community are keen to access the School Pride and Sport Fund announced in this year's budget but are unsure how to go about this. Can you please provide the appropriate advice and support to the school so they can access this fund to get their desired project moving? I note that in the current budget \$10 million was allocated to this statewide initiative with a bit less than half to be expended during this financial year. St Andrews is a small school situated in the bush on the outskirts of metropolitan Melbourne. The school has strong ties

with the local community, many of whom were impacted by the fires on Black Saturday. For many the school is the only place in town for kids to gather and play. As such, the school is looking to replace the old playground, used by the preps, grade 1s and grade 2s, and set the scene for regeneration and renewal as we approach the 10th anniversary of the Black Saturday fires. This is very important for this small school.

Bentleigh electorate

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (12:00) — (14 873) My question is to the Minister For Public Transport. The Liberal candidate for Bentleigh and former property council head has been caught out telling fibs about the opposition's position on the Ormond station development. I refer to media reports today that the developer has written to the government claiming he met with the Leader of the Opposition and secured his support for the development prior to the Liberal Party passing the permit in the Legislative Council. Are these media reports accurate?

Polwarth electorate

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (12:00) — (14 874) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. What will she do to help low-income public housing families in Polwarth, people on pensions and those who struggle to keep warm in winter who have poorly flued gas heaters that the State Coroner yesterday recommended should be removed from homes and removed from sale? This week the minister announced \$1.2 billion for some of the most affluent people in Victoria to have solar panels put on their homes. In the same week the poorest Victorians have been told that their old, inefficient and dangerous heaters should not be used. It is estimated that over 70 000 Department of Health and Human Services clients rely on these heaters for warmth over winter. It seems that these heaters are not only potentially dangerous but also generally the least efficient and most costly to run. This government's rhetoric on renewables and energy costs can only be seen as an act of complete pork-barrelling to find so much money for people who already own multimillion-dollar homes. People who can earn up to \$180 000 a year will be gifted thousands from the taxpayer so this government can continue its unplanned renewables crusade.

St Albans electorate

Ms SULEYMAN (St Albans) (12:01) — (14 875) My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. When will the minister provide the next update about the airport rail link? This investment of

\$5 billion is a long-awaited game changer for my electorate of St Albans. This would see Sunshine and other areas of my electorate benefit from more access to Melbourne Airport and, of course, regional Victoria and other parts of Melbourne. Building a brand-new super-hub station in the heart of my electorate of Sunshine is a priority for my electorate, and I ask the minister: when will she provide the next update for the airport rail link?

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr FOLEY (Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing) (12:02) — To resume my brief contribution in this regard, what this bill reflects is that this is a government that is about delivering reforms that secure the future of the people of our state in a changing world. Our jobs plan, infrastructure agenda, health investments, public transport reforms and social policy reforms all share a consistent vision around making sure that Victorians get the kind of government that not only gets things done but prepares for the changing world we are a part of.

This bill proudly reflects those themes in this particular area — the area of residential tenancy rights and the obligations of both tenants and owners alike in a changing world. It is a measured and balanced set of changes for renters and landlords alike. The more than 1.5 million Victorians who currently rent need these changes as the rental market moves from what was once seen as perhaps a transitional phase of renting in our lives, in a time of life primarily seen as an issue for young singles or couples saving for their first homes, to now a modern rental market where more and more people from a wide and diverse set of backgrounds rent for longer periods, if not as lifetime renters.

These changes in the bill before us are a balanced response to this new world. It is a new world that we find ourselves in where we need to deliver better outcomes to reflect those 1.5 million — and growing — Victorians who look to the protections of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. This package of reforms, as set out in both this bill and the minister's second-reading speech, are worthy of the support of this Parliament, and we should not consider the contribution of a reasoned amendment from those opposite.

The wider context of this policy is to be found in the Andrews Labor government's *Homes for Victorians*

policy, which of course this commitment was set out in and which has led to this bill. It is fair to say that this bill acts as an important part of our efforts to deliver safe, affordable, secure housing in the face of that growing group of renters who struggle with rising rents in the face of both stagnant wage growth and increasing demand for rental properties, especially in that bottom quartile sector of the private sector rental market where there is a lot of competition around the affordable rental space.

Material provided by the National Association of Tenant Organisations recently reports something along these lines: some 80 per cent of renters see themselves as having no long-term rental security, while 62 per cent of renters are scared to ask for a long-term lease. Some half of all renters believe they have suffered discrimination in the rental market because they are renters. One in five have had to wait for more than four weeks for urgent repairs to their homes. Half of the 1.5 million renters in Victoria do not think they will ever be able to afford to buy their own home.

So against this background, how do we make sure our renters know that they have more than just a roof over their heads and that they know that the laws of this state deliver them, as far as they can, the protections of a home — somewhere that is secure, somewhere they can safely take the reasonable steps that define where we live as our home? This bill helps in that regard. This bill sets out those important prospects for making sure that Victorians, the 1.5 million renters in Victoria, are able to secure a home wherever they might rent.

In terms of some of the specific provisions that I might turn my mind to — and in this bill that has over 100 significant reforms, just to pick out a few is perhaps a bit unfair — I will just focus on some of the more significant ones that I have been able to identify from my discussions with my community. In my community the majority of residences are in fact rental properties, and that is growing in numbers, which makes it well and truly above the statewide average and an area where this set of reforms will be particularly welcome.

One goes to the ‘no reason to vacate’ prospect. This Labor government is delivering on its promise to remove the no reason to vacate provision. This clause in the act can sometimes have chilling effects on tenants exercising their rights throughout the rest of the act. Removing the no reason to vacate provision is essential to stop renters being kicked out for demanding their rights around basic livable standards. For people on low incomes asking their landlord to carry out obligatory maintenance under the act always comes with the implied risk of eviction. Our reforms change that.

Our reforms also introduce minimum livability and safety standards as a wider obligation under this act, well beyond the recent rooming house reforms that this government introduced into the act earlier in this parliamentary cycle. This is important because this government does not believe that just because you are poor or because you are renting you do not have the entitlements to the protections of the set of legislation provisions that allow you to enforce your rights freely. Unfortunately, whether it is on the renewal of public housing or ensuring basic standards in rental properties, it is those opposite who seek to deny poor people, particularly those in the private sector rental market, from being able to access these standards. We should not have to put up with substandard housing not fit for 21st century standards, whether it be in the private sector rental market or in the public sector rental market. That is the way we have voted, and this bill will be a significant test for all honourable members of this place and the other place as to whether they support that principle.

The bill also restricts rental increases and cracks down on rental bidding. The practice of rental bidding is particularly pervasive at the bottom end of the market, where sometimes dozens of people can turn up for a rental property. We regularly see people having to attend multiple inspections, fill out multiple forms, waste countless hours, only to find that the property they attended was never really available at the price it was advertised. It makes it so much easier under this practice to fall over the edge into housing poverty, into therefore a reliance on social housing and into homelessness. If all honourable members of this place care about reducing the public housing waiting list or the numbers of people sleeping rough on our streets, they need to see this reform as part of that process. Making sure that the options for private sector rental, particularly in the lower quartile part of the private sector market, are decent options that can make people secure is an important part of this reform.

Whether it is the other aspects of the act, whether it goes to protections for pet owners and the opportunities for special bonds or whether it is the whole range of other bits and pieces of substantial reforms to this act — the more than 100 reforms that we see in this bill — this is a piece of legislation that defines the future for 1.5 million and growing Victorians. It sets out the values of this government clearly and it will test the values of those opposite as to whether they want to protect the rights of 1.5 million Victorians.

Ms KEALY (Lwan) (12:10) — I am very privileged to be able to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. I had the portfolio of

consumer affairs as shadow minister when this was first mooted a couple years ago. I know that even at that time there were deep concerns held by landlords who had contacted me at the time. There were deep concerns by real estate agents. Those inquiries were coming through thick and fast. The main cut and thrust of that is that they were concerned that if you look past the ideology of what is being said about what will be achieved through the changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 — that there would be more protection for renters, that renters would have a safer environment and would therefore have this longer term ability to stay in the same home and have greater rights and responsibilities — you are actually in fact taking away a lot of those rights and responsibilities from the people who own these homes: the landlords. These are people of course who are not big fat cats and moguls. People who own a lot of the housing stock which is up for rent in the state of Victoria are actually people who are not doing that well. They are mum-and-dad investors. In fact one-quarter of 25 to 39-year-olds own an investment property, and most rental property owners are on incomes below \$150 000.

If you look at the economics of this, we are putting more pressure on landlords to pay more for minimum standards within a house. This is a great aspiration but we have got to look at the impact of it. The bill is looking for landlords to pick up some of those responsibilities — it is looking at landlords picking up the responsibility for any damage done by pets to their property and they are to take responsibility for any changes that renters may put in place through modifications. I know it is stated in the bill that these are minor modifications, but who is going to explain that to the renters? How are we going to have a really clear definition as to what is a minor modification and what is a substantial modification that may cause a lot of structural damage to the home and therefore put an additional cost on the landlord?

We have also got this four-week bond cap. That would be okay, but we are also putting that in with the extra thing of minor modifications being allowed, which may have to be fixed. We are allowing all pets to come in without any questions asked. They can cause a lot of damage to the property, and of course can put some additional risk onto landlords. There are also allocations. And something the minister who just spoke referred to was the withdrawal of the 120-day, no reason notice to vacate provision. There is also responsibility now within this bill for landlords to dispose of any abandoned goods and furniture. These are additional costs and additional risks that landlords will have to carry.

If they are taking on this additional risk — additional financial risk — then of course they are going to look at the value of their investment. They are going to look at whether they continue to rent their property or whether they sell their property or whether they look at other avenues that can return some revenue and pay off their interest on these homes. This is where it becomes a little bit complex, but it really is basic economics. I have already had local people — local real estate agents and local landlords — who have come to me and have already put a home which has been used as a rental property for many, many years on the market, therefore taking a property out of the rental housing pool.

I have also spoken to and heard from people in my own electorate who are now taking a property out of the rental market and instead are going to put it on Airbnb. On Airbnb they can rent their property out for one or two nights a week instead of having to be locked into a long-term rental, and they see that as a way of reducing their risks but still being able to make the interest payments on their investment property. Of course those two outcomes — and they are very, very real; they are things I have heard from my own people — are the net effect of taking rental properties out of the market in western Victoria. I know this is something that is happening right across the state.

As we heard earlier from Labor, there are 1.25 million renters in Victoria. We already know that many of these renters are struggling with the rising cost of living. They are struggling with electricity prices going through the roof after Labor put such a huge brown coal tax on Hazelwood that it was forced to close down. We have also got increasing competition for affordable rentals, given that there is nearly a public housing crisis; it is nearly impossible to get any home in public housing at the moment. What Labor should be doing is not targeting this private rental sector, shifting this out and either causing these rental properties to be removed from the market or the alternative of landlords pushing up costs — pushing up the rent — and making housing less affordable. People who can least afford to save up for home deposits and people who can least afford to cope with an increase of even \$10, \$20 or \$50 a week in their rent cannot afford it. It is going to push them out onto the streets. I am deeply concerned about this, as we are talking about the people who rely on our rental market.

There are of course people who love the rental market. I have been a renter for most of my life — it is only in the last couple of years that I have bought my first home — and some of that was due to the flexibility. I have worked all around Australia. I would move to where my job was. That was a much easier way for me

to live rather than to make a commitment to buy a home and therefore be connected to that area for a longer period of time. It suited me, and I know that is something that a lot of other Victorians are looking at. They are looking at a permanent rental market to secure their own housing rather than purchasing a home. However, what we are going to see through this legislation is a net effect of fewer houses in the rental market and rental prices going up. Because of the cost of living increasing and the increase in competition for affordable housing, we are simply going to see more people who are unable to buy their first home or we are going to see more people end up on the streets.

It has been exceptionally disappointing that this government has refused to listen to the many, many people who have deep concerns about the impact of this legislation. I realise there is an ideology about trying to appeal to people who are renters, but these renters need to understand that living is going to get a lot more expensive for them if this bill comes into being. Certainly I think we need to see greater consultation from the government. It needs to listen and understand what impact this type of legislation would have on the availability of rental properties within the state of Victoria.

I would like to ask the government to undertake further consultation, which is why I support the reasoned amendment that was put forward by the member for Bayswater that further consultation takes place before this bill is considered. That is really to understand what the net impact will be for all affected stakeholders — for the landlords, for those lower end renters who will not be able to afford an increase in their rent from week to week and for people who are already struggling to make ends meet because it is so expensive to live in Victoria at the moment. Energy prices are going through the roof. Gas prices are going up and electricity prices are going up, and our salaries are basically stagnant, and this is something that could have a serious net negative effect on housing in Victoria.

I would like to thank local real estate agents and landlords who made the effort to provide their input to me. I was amazed to see the strong response arising from some of the Facebook posts put up by real estate agents in my area, not just from landlords but from renters as well. There are some serious concerns out there over what this is going to do to the rental market in Victoria. People are worried that if this legislation comes into place, they will not be able to afford to continue living in their home, that their house will turn into an Airbnb. This is going in completely the wrong direction if we are looking at housing stability. Rental properties today are being moved into the Airbnb

market, which provides even less security for our renters. We need to look after the mum-and-dad investors. We need to make sure that everybody gets a fair deal, whether it is renters or landlords, and I ask that the government consider supporting the reasoned amendment so that further consultation can take place with those key stakeholders so that we can ensure that there is no net negative impact on rental properties and the rental market in Victoria.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (12:21) — I take pleasure in joining the debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. It should come as no surprise that the member for Bayswater has proposed a reasoned amendment that is clearly in opposition to the bill and talks about more consultation. This bill has been the subject of almost two years of consultation within the sector. I commend the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation on the time she has taken to do that. The contributions from the member for Bayswater and the member for Lowan reminded me that every time there is a bill before this house that deals with the rights of working people in their workplaces or with health and safety, the other side always scream that there is not a level playing field. But they are never actually committed to a level playing field. They are actually committed to a master-servant relationship, whether it is in the workplace, whether it is to do with safety or whether it is in the home.

I did hear most of the contributions from the member for Bayswater and the member for Lowan, and I apologise to them if I missed something, but I do not believe I heard either one of them mention family violence and the impact this has on families in the rental sector. A number of women find themselves in precarious housing, and the biggest contributor to homelessness in this country is family violence. I am really proud that there are provisions in the bill — and I will come to the section in a moment — that specifically refer to according rights to those who are having difficulty with family violence.

Reform 93. That the proposed reforms implement each component of recommendation 116 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence to better protect and support family violence victims living in rental accommodation. Reform 93 is the key element, enabling VCAT to adjudicate terminations of residential agreements in situations of family violence. It can terminate an agreement or require creation of a new agreement that does not include the person who committed the violence.

Under this reform the Residential Tenancies Act include provisions that:

enable a renter who has been subjected to family violence to challenge the validity of a notice to vacate issued on a range of grounds including danger, threats

and intimidation, failure to comply with a VCAT order, successive breaches of duty, use of premises for an illegal purpose, where the offending conduct was caused or committed by the person who subjected the renter to family or personal violence;

enable a victim of family violence who is a co-renter to apply to VCAT for an order to terminate a fixed term or periodic tenancy without requiring consent from the other co-renters;

require VCAT to consider the relative impacts and hardship of each party to the residential rental agreement prior to making an order;

enable VCAT to make an order requiring the residential rental provider (RRP) or agent to ensure that the victim of family violence has access to the rented premises to remove their belongings where this is necessary ...

and a range of other provisions.

Some of the other provisions that are earlier in the bill pertain to property condition. In a First World country it is not beyond the pale to say that there should be minimum standards and that premises should be reasonably fit and suitable for occupation despite the age and character of the property. This reform is intended to address a mistaken belief amongst some residential rental providers and their agents that it is unnecessary to undertake repairs to premises that are old and run-down and that a renter should accept a property in disrepair if they have agreed to pay lower rent. Minimum standards will be prescribed and will include basic yet critical requirements relating to amenity, safety and privacy, such as providing a vermin-proof rubbish bin and a functioning toilet. I have had situations of people coming to me and saying that they have a toilet that only allows for the disposal of one type of human waste and not the other one. They have had to actually go off the premises to a public toilet with themselves and their children. I mean, in a First World country this is disgraceful.

The minimum standards also include adequate hot and cold water connections in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry and external windows that have functioning latches to secure against external entry. This is really important for the safety of any family, but if you think of a family that has been the subject of family violence, this is a critical thing. I think those opposite really have not thought about it. The member for Lowan said, 'Renters should be concerned and should be worried'. It is almost like a threat — that if this bill passes the house, something bad might happen to you. Well, at the moment renters very, very often feel that if they even ask for the most minor of repairs and maintenance, they risk eviction.

I am a member of many local Facebook pages. One in particular is Doreen Community Voice. There are 10 000 people on that page. I would say there are probably about a dozen requests every week — it would actually be more; it is probably closer to 20 people asking — for moving boxes. I see families who are constantly having to move because they do not have security of tenure, have been evicted for spurious reasons or have not been given long-term tenancy. It impacts on their children's connections to friendship networks, to child care and to schooling, and it is simply not good enough. I think we should be part of a civilised jurisdiction that gives security of tenure and longer term tenure for renters, because we are talking about families here. When you hear those opposite speak, you would think they are talking about some subhuman species.

I have had a long history of involvement with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. I actually worked in the Ministry of Consumer Affairs in the early 1990s and managed the ethnic tenancy program there, and I dealt with landlords and with tenants. A function of much of the tenancy law in this state has been all about compliance for renters and nowhere near enough about compliance in relation to standards for landlords. I understand there are some landlords that have concerns, but when damage does occur or when something does go awry with the small number of tenants that do do the wrong thing, landlords have access to insurance and they have access to tax deductions on their losses. Tenants do not have any of that. I see families who every 12 months are having to find the money for yet another bond. The timing of one lease ending and another starting never lines up, so you see families that are just never able to get ahead. There are kids doing without and parents going without food.

The other reform that I, as a dog lover, really love in this bill is the reform to make it much more possible for children and families to have a pet. It really is important for socialisation, for mental health, to ease loneliness and to deal with trauma. Many in my community have experienced trauma in a range of ways but particularly post Black Saturday. Having a pet that is part of your life can be great for a child to feel that connectivity. I want to thank Starting Over Dog Rescue for introducing me to the most wonderful dog, Bailey, who has become part of our life since last Friday following the untimely death of our beautiful staffy, Bella, on the preceding Monday. So I have lived that experience myself. I actually live in a rented premises, and I am really grateful that my landlord allows me to have a pet in the premises. But I have seen many that do not.

In relation to access to the property by agents and landlords, I have heard some appalling stories of people's beds being photographed without their permission or people having to take a whole day off work every three months to wait for their regular inspection. Imagine that. With the number of people in casual work these days, it should not be that a tenant has to give up a day's pay to fulfil the unreasonable request of waiting all day. There should be reasonable behaviour by landlords and agents to make a proper time with tenants. I commend the minister and the public servants who have developed this bill, and I commend the bill to the house.

Ms THORPE (Northcote) (12:31) — I rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. The Greens are passionate about renters rights. For too long many renters have had to put up with living in dwellings that are substandard by anyone's measure, with little recourse to change it. They could live with mould growing on the walls, with basic facilities such as hot water in bathrooms not working or with inadequate locks on the doors and windows, undermining their safety. They could live in houses with dysfunctional or no heating or in houses with no window coverings, no insulation and gaps under the doors, and there is nothing they can do about it. They can be refused permission to have their cat or dog in the house, no matter how long they have owned the pet and how much they cherish it. There is also a raft of other shortfalls in the act that mean renters can get a raw deal.

I have lived in many homes that have lacked basic comforts. I still rent today, and when I moved into my property there were no water pipes or gas pipes, so I was not able to live to a minimum standard. Also my sister still lives in a rental property that has no heating, where she uses the oven every day to heat her home.

Unfortunately it is not a renter's market, with competition for rental properties and rent rates so high that people cannot afford or cannot find better properties. People on low incomes have little choice regarding their homes, as there are few affordable properties. In my electorate of Northcote and indeed across all of Melbourne, Anglicare Victoria research found that in 2018 there are no longer any rental properties affordable to people living on Newstart, Youth Allowance or other government allowances.

The Greens, together with many community organisations, have been calling loudly for something to be done. We believe that everyone deserves a decent home where they can live with basic safety, comfort and affordability. I want to acknowledge that for over a decade organisations and community groups have been

calling for reform in this area. These organisations include the Victorian Council of Social Service, Environment Victoria, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Tenants Victoria, the Consumer Action Law Centre, the Alternative Technology Association and the Moreland and Yarra energy foundations.

They have worked together under the banner of One Million Homes as well as individually. They have worked very hard to bring us to where we are today, and I congratulate them on their persistence and for never giving up on their fight for the rights of low-income and marginalised people and for our environment. I am sure they will keep on working until the regulations, including for energy and water efficiency, put forward in this bill are locked in at a decent standard.

I also want to acknowledge the leadership and hard work of retired Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber, who in the last two parliaments, as far back as 2009 and 2013, introduced legislation into the Legislative Council to create reforms that would enable minimum standards for rental properties to be set, and that would remove no-grounds evictions. At that time these changes were rejected by both major parties. The Greens member for Melbourne again tried to introduce these reforms in 2017, but the government would not even permit that bill to be debated. So at the eleventh hour the government has finally introduced this promised bill into Parliament to make renting fairer.

On the whole the Greens welcome the measures in this bill. We do not welcome it being introduced so late in the Parliament's schedule that it risks not passing due to there not being enough sitting days left in the year. We are also concerned that there is no time for amendments to be passed, and we would have liked to make a few. This is really poor form, and it shows the priorities of a government that are more about regressive law and order measures than measures that will make a real difference to the lives of the 30 per cent of Victorians who rent.

Now I want to turn to the measures in the bill. I will not outline them all as there are too many, but I will focus on what the Greens see as the key reforms. As I previously mentioned, this bill introduces a power for the minister to create minimum standards for rental homes. The minister in her second-reading speech has indicated a number of areas in which the government intends to set standards, and these are welcome. Renters should have the right to ensure their home has a functioning heater, a toilet, hot water in the kitchen and bathrooms, functioning stovetops, window coverings and so many other basic facilities.

Beyond basic comfort and services, homes should also include some energy-saving measures like weather sealing and window coverings, with the ability to ramp up over time. The Greens believe we must look seriously at measures such as ceiling insulation, basic standards for hot-water systems and heaters, energy-saving lighting and more to ensure the low-hanging fruit in energy efficiency can be taken up to save energy costs for households and help reduce the environmental impact. The Greens will continue to fight for energy and water minimum standards and affordability in the regulations, which we hope will be consulted on and determined early in the next term of government.

While not a minimum standard, the addition of mould and pest infestation to the list of urgent repairs is an important health and safety enhancement of this bill. It will certainly improve conditions for renters, so we are pleased this has been included.

The proposed legislation makes it far more likely that animals can be kept in rental properties, as it requires landlords to apply to VCAT to not permit pets in a property once a renter requests a pet. It also allows renters to make minor and prescribed modifications to rental property. These two changes are welcome and supported by the Greens. With so many of us now renting long-term, it is important that we can be at home in our rental properties, including by keeping a pet and making minor changes such as adding picture hooks or weather sealing.

It is also important that renters have greater security. We have been calling for an end to no-fault and no-specified-reason evictions. As I said earlier, former Greens leader Greg Barber included this in his bills in 2009 and 2013. We are pleased to see this change has been made in this legislation. We also welcome that the bill includes a new test that evictions must be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances. There are a range of legitimate reasons why landlords can evict tenants, including selling, renovating, damage to the rental property, rent being chronically overdue and so on, so landlords are not being put in a difficult position by this change. This change strikes the right balance.

Mandatory safety-related obligations such as electrical and gas appliance servicing and compliance with smoke alarm and pool fence regulations are essential changes that really should have been made many years ago. This bill creates the power for such regulations, but we still have to wait for the detail to be set to ensure they are adequate.

In 2010 young boys Chase and Tyler Robinson, who lived in a property where the gas heater had a blocked flue, very tragically died from gas poisoning. Their mother survived, but I cannot imagine her grief. Their deaths resulted in a public awareness campaign but no legislative change. Back in 2013 Greg Barber highlighted this story to explain why we desperately needed minimum standards and reform to the act to ensure basic safety standards are met. It is quite appalling that it has taken so long to introduce these changes, and we still have to wait and see if they get a chance to pass this Parliament and whether the next government sets decent regulations. I hope that this can happen so that parents Vanessa and Scott Robinson and all their family and friends can get some peace from it.

Many of the current laws with respect to rental properties have failed to ensure decent behaviour, including that protecting the residents' health and safety. They have been balanced too far in favour of landlords. This and other minimum standard measures are starting to change this, which is desperately needed.

Now moving to other measures in this bill, there are affordability measures in this bill which are important. These include automatic bond repayment in 14 days unless parties are in dispute, faster reimbursement where tenants have paid for urgent repairs, stopping rental bidding and providing for yearly instead of six-monthly rent increases. These are measures that may not be good for affordability. Removing the bond cap of \$350 per week and replacing it with a figure to be set in regulation leaves question marks there. Also, allowing a second bond to be negotiated if the resident wants to make any modifications together with requirements to return the house to original condition may not improve affordability, but it does increase flexibility, which may be a priority for some renters.

We welcome the non-compliance register for landlords and agents that fail to meet their obligations and other measures to protect tenants from dodgy landlords, such as prohibiting misleading or deceptive conduct inducing a person into renting a property.

Mandatory precontractual disclosure of material facts such as an intention to sell the rental property or other things is to be set in regulation. The government has indicated the known presence of asbestos could be one of these required disclosures and we would very much welcome that. Also they have specified mandatory condition reporting to ensure the state of rented premises is accurately recorded at the beginning and end of a rental relationship. This could benefit both renters and landlords and lead to less disputes.

Finally, the bill implements a raft of changes recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence. These changes include that a lease can be quickly ended and the victim and their children be given a new lease where appropriate and that they be protected from debts caused by the violent perpetrator. We are pleased to see these measures implemented in a timely way after the royal commission.

Now moving to our concerns with the bill, while on the whole we see this proposed legislation as a step forward in a raft of areas, what it fails to do is think outside the box. One of the major issues in our current rental system is that renters are too afraid to complain about an issue, let alone take it to VCAT, which is an intimidating prospect. They are concerned that asking for repairs or calling landlords out on problems will result in rent rises, a bad relationship or other consequences. This bill fails to address this. It works within the existing VCAT system for managing disputes or problems in the relationships between the renter and the rental property provider. It continues with the adversarial approach, which we know full well does not favour renters. I note that in the minister's second-reading speech she acknowledged the need for further reforms to make the system less adversarial. The Greens will continue to push for this. Whether it be via an ombudsman or within a different arm of VCAT, we need a better way to manage this.

This legislation also does not deal with the fundamental affordability challenge, which is rising rents. Every few months a new report seems to come out that indicates just how unaffordable renting is. Just this week, a Compass Housing Services report indicated that a household needs to earn \$130 000 to afford a three-bedroom rental property in inner Melbourne and not be in housing stress. That is \$50 000 above the average wages of most families living in a rental property. The government needs to seriously examine capping rent increases to inflation if we are going to have any impact on rent blowouts for lower and middle-income families and have any hope of reducing the cost of living. Such a measure will not deal with rental poverty, which now clearly can only be dealt with by a massive scale up in social housing, something which successive Victorian governments have deprioritised, despite the desperate need.

Moving now to caravan parks, we welcome measures to compensate residents if the caravan park is sold. Having said that, we are concerned that the sector, including the Consumer Action Law Centre, has identified a number of gaps and loopholes in relation to these parks. Many part 4A residential parks are now charging residents a deferred management fee, which is

an exit fee traditionally charged to retirement village residents. There is no regulation of these fees and they can be applied very unfairly. We need regulatory powers in relation to this to protect tenants.

Further, despite part 4A residential parks often being home to older and vulnerable people, unlike retirement village operators these owners are not required to register with Consumer Affairs Victoria. This means we do not know how many residential parks there are in Victoria, nor can potential residents search to see if a part 4A park is properly registered. Unlike for retirement villages, there are also no minimum standards relating to who can operate a part 4A park. This means that previous bankrupts or people convicted of fraud or dishonesty offences can manage a part 4A park.

Also compensation is not required to be paid to residents if the caravan park owner or part 4A site owner is not the owner of the land and the closure of the park is due to the expiry of a head lease of that land. While this might feel reasonable for the site owner, it leaves residents high and dry. It is also peculiar given site owners are not allowed to enter into a site agreement with a site tenant that is for a period of occupancy which exceeds the expiry date of the head lease.

We are disappointed that we are not in a position to amend this bill, due to the government's late introduction of it and the lack of time if we want to see this pass. The Greens will continue to stand up for renters and ensure the regulations associated with this bill are of a high standard, and if further legislative changes are made in the next term, we will do what we can to address problems with the act.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (12:47) — Can I just say in relation to the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018 that the ultimate goal of this amendment bill, on the part of the government and I would like to think on the part of the Parliament, is to see fewer Victorians experience homelessness. That is absolutely and fundamentally what drives our work in relation to the amendments in this bill.

I would like to quote in particular from the eNEWS of 23 August of the Council to Homeless Persons (CHP). They make some particular points in relation to the bill. To quote from them:

CHP is enormously pleased with the outcome of the Residential Tenancies Act review, which has been a huge part of our work, and that of many of you, over the past three years. We have worked closely with partner organisations including Tenants Victoria, Justice Connect Homelessness Law and VCOSS to ensure that the new-look act will protect those who are homeless and those who are vulnerable to it.

Like many campaigns, this success is a testament to the strong partnerships and collaborative work across our sector, and to the great efforts of all the #MakeRentingFair supporters.

I think that is a reflection on the very significant work that the government has needed to undertake. While with the bill itself we do not feel the width but feel the quality, it is a substantial piece of work with many very significant stakeholders in the community. Yes, this work takes some time but to get it right and to bring people with you, given the complexities that are involved, is very significant.

We have come to this part of the cycle and now it is in the Parliament. We are not walking away from our commitment to make renting fairer and more just for people in the community and to give greater certainty to those landlords who need and desire it. What we have done is made sure that we have sought with this substantial piece of work to garner as much support in the community as possible, particularly from a range of advocacy organisations that speak for those who do not have a voice themselves. Through their experiences and those of those who come through the doors of our constituencies and our electorate offices, we understand that this bill, these amendments, go to the heart of addressing many of the unjust practices that have been allowed to fester and be maintained for far too long.

Like many people here, we have had experiences of renting. From May 1996 right through until 2011, when we finally became home owners in the Ivanhoe electorate, we were renters. That is a very significant portion of time — some 15-odd years — when we were in the rental market. We had different experiences. We rented a one-bedroom place in Geelong, when I was working at the *Geelong Advertiser* and going to the footy down the street. One hundred dollars a week does not sound like a lot of money, but at a time when you are earning very little it is a very significant portion of your income. That place did not have heating. The landlords lived next door, and they were great people. The engagement over that six-and-a-half years was largely positive, but everyone's experiences are different.

Then of course to rent through a real estate agent provides a different engagement. We were back in Melbourne in the Ivanhoe electorate, in Graham Road, and we were dealing with a different engagement with the obligations and the arrangements that are in place around payments and bonds and getting repairs dealt with and done effectively.

Then for seven years we were renting in Goodenough Court in Heidelberg West. It was a fantastic place to

live. There were great public housing neighbours who kept an eye on everybody and everything. It was a community that made you feel welcome and people looked out for each other, which I think was very significant in its difference from places that we had rented previously.

These are experiences that can be very positive for people. If you have your wits about you, if you have some other capacities and resources, you can stand your ground a bit when things are difficult in relation to repairs or things are difficult in relation to payments or things are difficult in relation to the engagement that you have with either the landlord or the agents who act on their behalf.

We now live in a community that is very expensive, in the electorate of Ivanhoe. It provides great services. It is close to the city, it has a train line running through the middle of it and there are great services and parklands. There are significant freeways and arterial roads that you can get around on. It is a place where people want to live, and that means it is very expensive to live there. That provides great opportunities for those who are already there in the community where we live, but it provides challenges for the next generation of people. In Rosanna families want to see their kids study and live locally, and they want them to maintain those connections in the community where they have grown up. That can be a real struggle because of the expense that is now required to rent properties in an electorate like Ivanhoe.

Part of the work the government has done for first home buyers as well — some of those policy areas that we have dealt with — are also reflected in the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill. The government has sought to introduce initiatives to provide better opportunities for those trying to get their foot in the door and make a start in life. If you can have a good experience and not be ripped off as a tenant — whether that is because of the way in which your utilities are dealt with or because of water services that are not metered individually to take account of how you pay your bills — all those sorts of experiences are important because people in a rental market are often also trying to save where they can to own a place of their own.

As a Banyule city councillor I found that housing variety was really important, as I have in more recent times working with the Minister for Planning. Having planning schemes in Victoria, and certainly in metropolitan Melbourne, that promote different types of housing dwellings is critical to giving opportunities not only to those who want to own their own dwelling —

whether it is an apartment, a unit, a flat or a house — but also to those in the rental market so that there is a greater variety of places that they can choose to rent at different cost points. It is okay in some parts of Heidelberg and some parts of traditional Ivanhoe, where there might be the units and flats from the 1940s and 1950s and the opportunities and challenges that they provide to tenants. But it is critical that we provide housing for people in the community who are young, the new generations in the community who want to live in the Ivanhoe electorate. They need housing choice, and that comes from our planning schemes, which provide opportunities for different housing types, whether they be dual occupancies or whether they be units or flats or other housing.

We need to provide people with opportunity and choice around where they rent and what they rent at different price points. That is also critical for those who have made a big contribution to the community and want to stay in the area where they have grown up and raised a family but cannot find a smaller housing type to do that. Often they may choose to invest the money from the property that they have sold, and then they want to downsize and rent to have more financial capacity to live their lives into the future.

So there is a range of different challenges that I believe we need to deal with in relation to the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill and some of the key points that people have raised in terms of those specific initiatives that give greater rights and security to tenants. I will not elaborate too much on some of those.

The point I want to add that I think is a challenge in our community and in our electorates that are close to Melbourne — they are not outer suburban; they are inner suburban electorates — is that the cost to live there is very significant. People have made a contribution there. They want to keep their families together and provide their children with the opportunity to live where they have been raised, and the challenges there are quite difficult because of a lack of some housing types. We are seeking to address that, and that will provide opportunities for landlords to invest in properties that provide different choices to those who seek a home. There is also some work we are doing around the renewal of housing types in public housing in West Heidelberg.

It is also critically important to make sure, whether it is public housing or community housing, that aspects of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill will also apply to and work with social housing providers, because we know that of course the tenants there have different rights applying to them from those applying to

public housing tenants of the government per se. These are some of the other challenges we need to make sure we address when we are providing housing types. The government, as one of the biggest landlords in the state, has an obligation not only through the public housing it provides but also through the social housing it seeks to provide to the community to bear this in mind when applying the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (12:57) — I rise to make a very brief contribution on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. The bill is a culmination of the government's proposed fair rent reforms, which were first touted during the by-election of November 2017, as announced by the Premier. That has caused some concern and uncertainty in the sector, as many mum-and-dad investors feared their property rights would be severely eroded. The initial reforms were 14 and have now grown to 130. The proposed amendments go a great way to securing the rights of tenants but also do cause some erosion of property owner rights, and a number of the provisions that are proposed will undoubtedly shift the balance of power clearly into the realm of the tenant to the detriment of the property owner. While some of the provisions seem reasonable and fair, a great many of them will have some negative effect on the property owner and will in turn have consequential effects on the rental market and the availability of housing for rent. It is this that I do want to talk about.

Currently in Mildura the real estate agents tell me that there are zero houses for rent and that in fact there are waiting lists, so the last thing we really need to do when we are changing the residential tenancies arrangements is in any way affect those people who supply rental accommodation to the market. That is the concern from the real estate agents in Mildura — that right now they do not need any interruption to market supply or any hesitation from investors to create a pool of housing for renters. Even people who have been transferred into jobs in Mildura — a couple of them have been to my office — are somewhat amazed that there are zero rental opportunities for them regardless of what their social or economic standing is.

This bill is making some serious changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 and the lives of many Victorians. It is important to look at this with a great deal of care because of the impact it has, particularly in a market like Mildura. Perhaps if our economy does cool a little in the next 12 months, that market may ease, but right now there is a critical shortage of rental accommodation, and there are very many concerns that this bill will further increase those difficulties in finding

somewhere to rent in Mildura. With those words, I think we are just about due for lunch.

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

Mr LIM (Clarinda) (14:01) — I notice that the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation is departing the chamber, but I just want to add to the chorus of speakers on this side who have been singing her praises for this fantastic bill, on which she has put in so much, and also for the extent of the consultation. It is just incredible. In that regard, I am very, very delighted to rise today to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018.

More than one in four Victorians rent their home, a number that is increasing as it becomes more difficult for many Victorians to break into the housing market. In my electorate, for example, there are more than 6000 renters in Clayton and Clayton South alone. There are another 2500-plus in Springvale and around 1000 living in the Clarinda-Oakleigh South area. All of the renters in my electorate and across the state need and deserve better protection, and that is what this bill is all about. This bill also delivers on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to fairer, safer housing for Victorians who rent. This government is all about fairness, and I am delighted to see the more than 130 reforms that will strengthen renters' rights and better protect vulnerable tenants.

The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill is based on a long and comprehensive review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997, the RTA. The review comprehensively examined how well Victoria's rental laws work in the modern rental market and how to balance the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. The review has been a critical part of the government's broader Fairer Safer Housing work program, and we can see here some of the resulting amendments, amendments that are appropriate to meet the needs and expectations of tenants and landlords now and into the future.

As the minister has mentioned, this is a significant opportunity. These regulatory settings have been in place since 1997; however, the rental market has changed significantly over the last 20 years. Growing numbers of Australians are delaying purchasing a home and are renting for longer, so these amendments are very timely. These reforms will ensure every rental home meets basic standards, with a functioning toilet, functioning stove, heating and locks. It will also require landlords to meet basic safety standards for gas, electricity and smoke alarms and provide adequate hot and cold water connections in the kitchen, bathroom

and laundry, as well as external windows that have functioning locks to secure against break-ins. These are basic yet critical requirements, which will ensure safety, comfort and privacy for all Victorians.

We are talking about 130 reforms here. That is a very significant number. The list of reforms includes changes to bolster security of tenure by ending no-fault evictions; providing for the early release of bonds with the consent of both parties and enabling automatic bond repayments; providing for faster reimbursement where tenants have paid for urgent repairs; requiring mandatory precontractual disclosure of material facts, such as an intention to sell the rental property or the known presence of asbestos; and prohibiting misleading or deceptive conduct inducing a person into renting a property.

That last one is particularly relevant to many of my constituents from culturally diverse backgrounds. Reports of misleading conduct to induce international students, working migrants and those whose first language is one other than English are unfortunately not uncommon. So I look forward to seeing that provision in force and look forward to the work that some of the culturally and linguistically diverse organisations in my electorate might be able to do with the tenancy assistance and advocacy program.

Improving conditions and security for renters has been a real priority for this government. Back in October 2017 the rental fairness package was announced to give tenants more rights, to help them stay on longer leases, to make bonds smaller and fairer and to crack down on dodgy landlords. And we are continuing that here today. This legislation will also crack down on rental bidding, limit rent increases to once a year and cap bonds at four weeks rent.

To make it quicker for renters to get their bond back, tenants will be able to apply for the release of bonds without written consent from their landlord, who will have 14 days to raise a dispute before it is repaid automatically. Further to this, something that I am particularly happy to see is that people will be able to terminate rental agreements in situations of family violence. Family violence is a serious issue for some of our diverse communities. Some of the multicultural community organisations in my electorate have experienced considerable increases in cases of family violence during the last couple of years. This is particularly concerning, given the barriers that culturally and linguistically diverse communities often face in seeking support in this area. However, I am also proud to see some of the work that is being proposed to combat this. There are some really fantastic initiatives

and partnerships that are starting to take shape, and I look forward to following and supporting these initiatives.

During the last sitting week I was very happy to see the Prevention of Family Violence Bill 2018 up for debate. That is a fantastic bill that will drive part of the implementation of Victoria's *Free from Violence* primary prevention strategy and action plan, as well as implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, and we are building on that here today. Importantly this bill implements each component of recommendation 116 of the royal commission to better protect and support family violence victims living in residential rental housing.

Consideration of family violence has also been interwoven with relevant provisions of the act to avoid further victimisation of vulnerable renters while ensuring continuity of housing. That is very positive. The main focus of the bill is of course on improving protections for vulnerable renters and greater security of tenure. However, there are also provisions which clarify renters' responsibilities. These include provisions around serious threats to rental providers, their agents, contractors or employees, as well as existing termination grounds and repeated non-payments. Regarding non-payment, tenants who receive four notices to vacate for being 14 days or more in arrears in any 12-month period risk being evicted the next time they receive another notice to vacate, unless they can pay the arrears, satisfy the terms of a payment plan or demonstrate that it would not otherwise be reasonable or proportionate to end the rental relationship. So there is also greater clarity here.

As the minister has mentioned, the bill is the first step towards the government's broader vision for the RTA. I look forward to next year and to further reforms to dispute resolution for residential tenancy matters. So, again, this legislation is delivering on the government's commitment to fairer, safer housing for all Victorians. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (14:11) — About half of the 1.5 million renters in Victoria do not think they are going to be able to buy a home. This is an incredible time that we are in, and this is also significant because of stagnant wages growth. This bill is important on a range of different levels. It has more than 100 different reforms, and it is also a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revisit some of the regulatory settings put in place in 1997 and to ensure that the needs of participants in today's modern rental housing market are addressed.

One of the key principles that was involved in drafting this bill was that it would deliver on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to ensure Victorians who rent have access to fairer, safer housing. The bill therefore is regarded by many as a watershed in Victoria's regulation of the residential rental market. It implements, as I said, a package of more than 130 reforms to ensure that the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 meets the existing needs of residential rental market participants while remaining adaptable to future change. Just going to another of the key propositions, the reforms are framed around the reality of a growing population of Victorians. The way I have described it is that Melbourne is becoming a metropolis, and how we address affordable housing is really important. There are an increasing number of Victorians who feel priced out of the housing ownership market and are therefore likely to rent for longer periods of time. The consequence of this is a need to rebalance the market through additional protections for a highly diverse population of renters.

A number of the reforms were part of the Andrews Labor government's Rent Fair campaign in October 2017. There is a whole host of different key propositions from allowing animals to be kept in rental premises to allowing renters to make prescribed minor modifications to a rental property, bolstering security of tenure by ending no-fault evictions and by removing the no specified reason notice to vacate and restricting the use of end of fixed-term notices to vacate to the end of an initial fixed-term agreement. What I am saying there is that some are about the human factor or about minor issues of comfort and then others are more about specific rights.

The bill also establishes a non-compliance register for blacklisting residential rental providers and agents who fail to meet their obligations; so there is a compliance factor involved there as well. It provides for the early release of bonds with the consent of both parties to the tenancy agreement. It restricts solicitation of rental bids by residential rental providers and agents, and provides for yearly instead of six-monthly rent increases. It also provides for faster reimbursement where tenants have paid for urgent repairs, and it increases the number of properties to which a statutory maximum cap of four weeks for bond and rent in advance applies.

Then there is another set of reforms in the bill that address enabling automatic bond repayments, which will be available to a renter within 14 days where the parties are not in dispute over the apportionment of the bond. It requires mandatory precontractual disclosure of material facts, such as an intention to sell the rental property. I know that has been problematic for a

number of people that have brought this issue to me as an MP. They were not aware that this was a consequence; they made the move, and then they had to move out within a short period of time with all the disruption that that can cause to families. One of the other issues addressed by this legislation is the known presence of asbestos — obviously a critical health issue. It will also prohibit misleading or deceptive conduct inducing a person into renting a property.

That is the way that these reforms are aiming to get a fairer deal, and the protections are rounded out with other important changes aimed at improving the state of rented premises and ensuring that renters have a safe and sustainable living environment. Part of these reforms relates to mandatory condition reporting to ensure the state of rental premises is accurately recorded at the beginning and at the end of a rental relationship — so this is better scrutiny and better accountability — mandatory safety-related obligations, notably electrical and gas appliance servicing every two years and compliance with smoke alarm and pool fence regulation; that is about safety. I addressed this issue with another piece of legislation yesterday about how the government is trying to enhance safety particularly around pools. We know the consequences involved; within the blink of an eye a pool can cause the death of a child. So that is important. The bill provides for the power to prescribe in regulation minimum standards for residential rental properties as well. This goes to what people's minimum expectations should be and how they should be met. Such standards would be prescribed, and they include critical requirements that — put it this way — no reasonable person could object to.

There is a whole range and I will not go through the fine detail of that, but I think that is the balance that the government is trying to find here: to set the minimum and allow the parties to have an agreement on that, get rid of any false advertising or deceptive behaviour, give greater scrutiny, accountability and then compliance. These powers describe minimum standards. They have been designed to have a degree of flexibility so that they can be incorporated and imposed in other Victorian legislation. Some of these items include energy and water efficiency requirements, and obviously with the cost of living being such an important issue to households and families, that could give them greater surety on how that is done. Also, with the rapid change that we have in the energy and water markets, that could hopefully provide a cut to the cost of living.

A failure to comply with the standards will trigger a variety of responses including a fine, urgent repairs to

the premises or termination of the parties' agreement before a renter has even moved in. The proposition there is that this is really making sure that there is a compliance regime and that the standards will be upheld.

Importantly the bill implements each component of recommendation 116 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence to better protect and support family violence victims living in residential rental housing. Consideration of any family violence has also been interwoven with relevant provisions of the act to avoid further victimisation of vulnerable renters while ensuring continuity of housing.

Just on that point, I want to use this occasion to acknowledge that today is the first anniversary of the death of the former member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson. I want to acknowledge how her work was so significant in this area, and what this will mean to provide greater safety for families and for women who are victimised by family violence, to give them and their families greater opportunities in life. I would like to commend the bill to the house, but also to end on that point about the people who actually drive reform and drive a better, fairer deal for people and what that takes over a long period of time. I think this is another piece of legislation that has come partly as a consequence of the dedicated work over a long period of time by a member of Parliament whose legacy will last for generations. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:20) — I rise today to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018 and I am very, very pleased to see that this bill has come before this house before the end of this term of Parliament. I was not sure if we would get there in the end but we have, which is great. The commitment was made, I think, some time ago during the Northcote by-election, so I am glad to see that this bill has been brought before this Parliament before the end of its term. Hopefully, should it pass this house, it will pass through the other place as well, but I know they have got a big backlog of bills to get through.

The reason I want to speak on this bill is that it is important to many people within the Prahran electorate. This bill will have a positive impact on renters in the Prahran electorate. I know that 60 per cent of people in the Prahran electorate are living in rental accommodation. I think that is the highest proportion of any electorate in the state. Improving the rights of renters is absolutely critical to keeping Prahran livable. The reality is that long-term renting and renting for life are a reality these days, notwithstanding that renting is always going to be an important part of someone's life

before they own their own home, which of course because of poor housing affordability is more and more out of reach.

I have heard from renters in Prahran about some of the problems that they face: high rates of rent and struggling to pay rents, concerns about security of tenancy, the low quality of people's rental units, delays and poor responses from landlords when repairs are requested, and struggling to find properties to rent because of a pet. These are significant but common issues across renting in the Prahran electorate.

One of the reasons I want to speak as well is to really draw a contrast, because what we have been hearing from the Liberal Party is that they do not support this legislation. From what I have heard from previous speakers they have called this legislation 'a disgrace, a dog's breakfast'. They have cited ordinary people and said this will disadvantage ordinary people, yet they are forgetting all those people that are renting and how it would advantage them.

By sheer coincidence, I happened to be looking on Reddit yesterday — the Melbourne subreddit — and what had made it to the top of the list was a Liberal Party flyer that had circulated in the Prahran electorate. I remind members that that is not a good thing for the Liberal Party. It was a piece of material with a list of things saying what the Liberal Party would do. It was rightly described within that subreddit as feeble, generic and non-committal. It was just a vague list of unspecified and generalised things that they would somehow magically do. This party has said, 'Look, you can only achieve things if you're in government', yet when it comes to putting out material, theirs has empty motherhood statements.

I would contrast that — and if people are still wondering from that piece of material what the Liberal Party stands for — with what is happening right here in this house. We have got a bill that is so important to the lives of many people within the Prahran electorate and we have got the Liberal Party here opposing it, wanting to block it, wanting to delay it, calling it a disgrace and calling it a dog's breakfast. We have got the Greens in here who have campaigned for rental reform, who are supporting this bill and who will continue to fight for rental reform. That is the big difference here. When the rubber hits the road, we are standing on the side of renters. We are standing on the side of all those people in the Prahran electorate who need and want better rights for renters. When we have got a bill that will go to fixing housing, a bill that changes the law in favour of those who do not own a home instead of those who own multiple homes, we are standing on the side of

those who do not own a home, for the better rights of renters, and the Liberal Party are trying to delay, block and stop this bill. That is the big difference here. I have heard from people in Prahran about the issues they face with renting, and I am really proud to support this bill and to continue to fight for better rights for renters.

Just securing a rental place can be difficult in itself. We have got people facing systems of rental bidding. We have got dwellings that simply do not meet the standards that people would necessarily expect. I welcome the changes that this bill introduces and the minimum standards that it sets to introduce. I welcome preventing residential rental providers from refusing a pet without seeking an order from VCAT. We have got tenants funds used for urgent repairs to be recouped quicker and faster through a system of reimbursement. We have got quicker access to bond payments. We have got rental increases capped at once a year, which will provide some stability. That is obviously not a cap on the cost or the increase, just the frequency, but it helps.

We certainly welcome the change to the no-fault or no specified reason eviction, which will provide more stability for renters. Ending no-grounds evictions has been something that the Greens have been calling for for almost a decade now. In fact I believe Greg Barber of the other place previously moved a bill to remove that, which was voted down by the other parties.

These are good changes. They will benefit renters in Prahran, and I am really proud to support them, but there is more to do. As the member for Northcote would have suggested, there need to be further standards for energy efficiency such as insulation and efficient light fixtures, hot water systems, heating and more. This would save people money and of course be environmentally friendly. Again, we introduced a private members bill just after the member for Northcote was elected, but that bill was voted down in this place. We have called for an annual cap on rent increases of 2.5 per cent, in line with the national cash rate. Housing affordability has got to the point where the state does need to intervene and cap rent increases.

It is clear that the housing market is broken. This bill goes a long way to address rights for renters. There is more to do, and we are going to keep fighting for those changes. We also need to do things to improve housing affordability, like abolishing negative gearing and those unfair tax breaks and addressing the homelessness crisis with massive investment in public housing to fix those massive housing waiting lists and to prevent homelessness. So I certainly support this legislation. The Liberal Party seem determined to block, oppose and stop this legislation. That is a disgrace. So many

people in Prahran are going to be better off with this bill. I support it.

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) (14:28) — I am very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. This government stands for fairness. We stand for equality, and we stand for giving every Victorian the best possible chance in life as they move through society. We on this side of the house know that what is required for people to have that opportunity in life — the best opportunity — is a high-quality education, affordable health care, world-class public transport and of course the core of this bill, and that is a roof over their head.

A person's home is very much reflective of their life. A person's home, where they live, impacts how they live, their health, their wellbeing, the health and wellbeing of their families, the educational opportunities that are provided to them and of course their opportunity for a quality life. What we know and what we understand is that not every person can live in the biggest house on the street. I sure do not. My place in Sunbury is certainly not the biggest house in the street, I have to say, but it is a place that I am very proud of and a place that I am very proud to call home. It is safe, it is warm and —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr J. BULL — It is. It is my castle. And, as I said, it is a place that I am very proud of. Every Victorian should have the right to a safe home — a home free of danger, a home free of harm and of course a home free of violence. This in itself is reflective of a society that is equal, a society that is fair and a society that cares for each and every Victorian. The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill is of course the culmination of a four-year broad-based review of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to revisit the regulatory settings that have been in place since 1997 to ensure that they meet the needs of participants in today's modern rental housing market.

That is a dynamic market. We have heard this afternoon a number of members discuss the changing nature of the market and the various pressures and strains that are in place on the family budget. What we know and what other members have spoken about is that there has been a significant increase in population — more people wanting to come to this state each and every year, and 140 000 each year over the last couple of years —

Mr Edbrooke — Why wouldn't you?

Mr J. BULL — Absolutely, member for Frankston, why wouldn't you? But what we need to ensure is that fairness and equality are at the forefront of not just the residential tenancy market but each and every piece of legislation, each and every bill, that comes before the house. This government must ensure the rights and the values of those people we represent — each and every Victorian, whether you live in the city, whether you live in the suburbs or whether you live in the great parts of rural and regional Victoria. We must ensure that the bills that come before this house are underpinned by values that represent fairness, equality and of course safety.

This bill is a watershed moment in Victoria's regulation of the residential tenancy market. There are some 130 reforms that are in place to ensure that the Residential Tenancy Act meets the existing needs of the residential rental market participants while remaining adaptable of course to future change. We know that in October 2017 the Andrews Labor government foreshadowed the Rent Fair campaign. This included a whole suite of reforms around how individuals can live and have the best opportunities and how those that rent are given the protections, the safeguards and the quality of life that each person is rightfully entitled to.

These include a whole range of measures. There are those that have been mentioned, including allowing animals to be kept in rented premises; allowing renters to make prescribed minor modifications to the rental property; bolstering security of tenure; establishing a non-compliance register, blacklisting residential rental providers and agents who fail to meet those obligations; providing for the early release of bonds, with the consent of both parties to the tenancy agreement; restricting the solicitation of rental bids by residential rental providers and agents; and providing for yearly instead of six-monthly rent increases. This is really important stuff.

I had the opportunity yesterday in the house to discuss the impacts of penalty rate cuts through an inquiry that was conducted, and I spoke in that contribution about the ability to pay rent and the ability to pay other costs, whether they be gas, water, electricity, uniform costs, school fees or sporting fees. These are core issues to people's lives. If this house, if this government, does not take action to support those who find these bills tough — and we know there are significant amounts of Victorians that do — then unfortunately our society is worse off for it.

The bill goes on to provide for faster reimbursement where tenants have paid for urgent repairs. There are a whole series of provisions that work to give protections and to support renters. We know these provisions are

rounded out with other important changes aimed at improving the state of rental premises and ensuring that renters have a safe and sustainable living environment. That comes to mandatory condition reporting; mandatory safety-related obligations, notably electrical and gas appliance servicing every two years and compliance with smoke alarm and pool fencing regulations; and the power to prescribe regulations for minimum standards for residential rental properties. Minimum standards that are prescribed, yet critical, include vermin-proof bins; functioning toilets; adequate hot water connections in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry; external windows that have functioning latches; a functioning cooktop; functioning single-action deadlocks; functioning heating in the main living area; and window coverings to ensure privacy in every room.

We know that if you live in good surrounds, there is the chance that these things are just taken for granted — that people can more than often afford repairs, more than often would not worry about a lack of heating, a broken-down cooktop or window latch or whatever it might be in your home. These are really important items that you are rightfully entitled to that make your quality of life better. This is why I support the bill. It is why it is a very important piece of legislation to ensure that there is a higher standard, a better standard of care and a better standard of minimum safeguards that ensure that those who rent have the very best opportunities to have a minimum set of standards in place that have not previously existed.

This is certainly a significant and comprehensive piece of legislation, with those 130 reforms that I mentioned, to ensure that the government's Fairer Safer Housing plan works for each and every Victorian — that it works for those who come to our state as new arrivals or those who have been in our state for a very long time. I am incredibly pleased to support this bill because it is a bill that stands for fairness, for equity and for equality, and this government stands to give every Victorian the very best possible chance at life.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) (14:38) — It is great to follow on from the member for Sunbury's contribution. However, it is disappointing to not have followed on after a member from the other side — a member of the Liberal Party or anybody in the coalition — speaking on this bill. It is very disappointing indeed that so few members of the coalition have seen the need to speak on this very significant bill, because this, as the bill is named, is the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018 and amends the act to address what we know is so important to ensure that we get that right balance of

protecting those people who find that they need to rent their accommodation because they either are not in a position yet or have not been in a position ever to purchase a property. We know there are lots of people out there who are renting, and it is important that any good government reviews legislation regularly, especially when it relates to the ongoing lives of people and the housing they are living in for a period of time. So it is very disappointing that the coalition — the Liberals and The Nationals — have chosen not to see this as an important bill and make significant contributions.

As we have heard from previous speakers, this bill reviews the Residential Tenancies Act 1997. When you are looking at a bill that was established some time ago, there is clearly a need to see how relevant it is. There are significant changes that needed to be made. There are 130 reforms overall, as we heard from the member for Sunbury, and they attempt to ensure that if somebody is renting a place, they are dealt with fairly and can plan their future confidently under that rental arrangement. Of course, as we can see, the bill is not all one way. It recognises that tenants do have responsibilities.

The range of things that are identified in this bill in some ways seem so basic, so sound and so sensible that it is a shame that they were not addressed some time ago. People may know that it was under the Andrews Labor government that we last year undertook the Rent Fair campaign where we identified a range of things that people had been telling us they wanted to see if they were renters in a property. They wanted more opportunities to have pets in their rental property and not just have that possibility blacked out. They clearly have responsibilities in regard to those pets, but we want to open up more opportunities for people to have pets because we know that pets can be so helpful to individuals, older people, families and so on. They can be great to have, providing tenants do the right thing by them.

We wanted to ensure that landlords were made responsible for doing the right thing. Sadly everybody in here has probably had occasions when constituents have come to them to share their concerns about a tenancy arrangement with their landlord, who is now to be called a residential rental provider. We are taking away that old feudal term. We recognise that some residential rental providers have not done the right thing in the past and have rented out properties that have been totally substandard. When things have gone wrong in the house — a stove, a heater or a hot-water service has broken down — they have been tardy in their response to deal with those things. According to

the proposed changes to the legislation, renters will be responsible for acting in a more proactive way and addressing those concerns.

We are also proposing to remove the opportunity for residential rental providers to push people out of properties when there is no specified reason. If a residential rental provider asks tenants to leave a property, they have to show sound reason for doing so. Rent cannot be put up on a six-monthly basis, it can only be put up at best on an annual basis. There are a number of other sensible things in the legislation. When I read it I was somewhat shocked to see that the previous legislation was not more specific in ensuring that any property that is put up for rent must meet some basic standards. This bill is now trying to put in place those basic standards which we would have thought were obvious, including that a property has to have a functioning toilet, for example, and adequate hot and cold water connections to the kitchen, bathroom and laundry — all those things that most people, including anybody in here, would expect as basics in our own homes. We should therefore expect that anybody who rents a property can expect all of those things to be in place too.

The bill also looks to ensure that we have mandatory safety regulation options to ensure that electrical and gas appliances are serviced regularly and that smoke alarms are in place and serviced properly, along with pool fencing and so on if the residential property happens to have a pool. These are all very sound changes.

I was pleased to hear the member for Prahran speak a little while ago. It is good to see the Greens speaking on this bill and recognising its importance. It was a little bit of a shame that the member for Prahran did not quite congratulate the Labor government on bringing this bill forward, but he did recognise it was a good bill that was worth supporting. I guess it is a good start to have the Greens recognising that this is a good bill brought forward by the Labor government — not by them, despite what they would like to say.

As the Premier regularly says, it is —

Mr Battin — Acting Speaker, I draw your attention to the state of the house.

Quorum formed.

Mr HOWARD — I am pleased to continue speaking on this terrific legislation. I recognise that this bill contains balance. While the main focus of the bill is on improving protections for vulnerable renters and providing greater security of tenure for those renters,

these reforms also recognise that renters have responsibilities. We are increasing those.

We will also be working with VCAT over the coming year to ensure that they can respond quickly and appropriately to disputes, that we have an effective dispute-resolution process in place and that both renters and residential rental providers will be in a position to follow up on matters of concern.

This is very sound legislation. It will be welcomed, no doubt, by tenants in the future. It also should be welcomed by landlords who know that they do the right thing, and it might give those landlords who do not do the right thing a message to ensure that they know that they have to act or else they will be fined. It is clearly an intention of this bill to ensure that everybody has good, sound housing in our community.

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (14:48) — I am delighted to rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. I start by congratulating the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and her team on pulling this together. It is a really important piece of legislation. In my electorate of Geelong we have got around 6000 private renters living in our community. On average they pay \$350 to \$400 a week. When we talk about private rental, for my community the changes are quite significant. There are some people who choose to rent. I would suggest that that is probably a small percentage of our community. There are those who rent while they are saving for their own home, like a lot of people do, but there are those who rent because they have to and because they have no other choice.

We have heard about family violence and about many women who require private rental as a means of escaping family violence. We also have many vulnerable people in our community, and it is particularly difficult for vulnerable people who rely on the private rental market. Often we have people living in substandard housing because nobody else would live in that housing, but because they are desperate to obtain a private rental they take up whatever property is available to them.

There are many issues faced by private renters, who are not necessarily renting because of choice. We know that housing costs have been a real issue. They have been for my community. There are the difficulties in saving for a deposit to buy a home. We have brought out first home buyer grants and stamp duty reductions for people in regional areas, such as Geelong. This has been going gangbusters for my community. But we still

have those people in our community that only have private rental as a housing option.

We need to rebalance the market through additional protections for a highly diverse population of renters. A number of these reforms were foreshadowed as part of the Andrews Labor government's Rent Fair campaign in October 2017, so we have been working on these amendments and changes to the legislation for quite some time. Many people have had input. I have received many emails from constituents in my electorate saying, 'Please get this legislation passed. Please implement it. We're relying on it in terms of our own private rental circumstances'.

Allowing animals to be kept in rented premises is I think a really reasonable part of the legislation. In the past we know landlords and agents have been selective in allowing people to have pets. For me, the issue is that if you are paying for the property, then you are paying to live in it as you see fit, and that includes having an animal on the premises. A lot of people, particularly elderly people, have support animals. We know that that is a good thing for many, many people, and not just people with disabilities or mental health issues but elderly people as well, who will often have support animals that give them the company they need.

Mr J. Bull — Companion cats.

Ms COUZENS — Yes, companion cats, and companion dogs or support dogs — all of those things. They are great for those people in our community. The bill will allow renters to make prescribed minor modifications to a rental property, like being able to put hooks on the walls and things like that. People should not be prevented from doing that. As I said, people pay to rent that property. They rent the entire property, so they should be entitled to make those minor adjustments to suit their living needs.

Bolstering security of tenure by ending no-fault evictions by removing the 'no specified reason' notice to vacate is a really important one. It adds to security of tenure for tenants. We know that often there have been landlords out there who have given people limited notice to move on for whatever reason and not necessarily the right reasons under the act. I know many of the people in my electorate are very pleased that they will have a bit more security of tenure and will be able to remain in their properties and not have to leave unless there are real reasons for them to have to leave that property.

With establishing a non-compliance register to blacklist residential rental providers and agents who fail to meet

their obligations, it is about time for this. Having worked in the housing sector for a very long time prior to coming into politics, often people were homeless because they were on what was called Tica at the time — I am not sure whether it is still called that — and they were blacklisted by agents and landlords and were not able to get a rental property. More often than not they were blacklisted for unfair reasons. There was no reason for them to be blacklisted; it was just that the agent did not like the fact they took them to VCAT or they complained about the property because it was substandard. So I think it is really important that we provide a fair and equitable system whereby tenants are not being blacklisted at the whim of a landlord. Now that tenants can put landlords on a blacklist, hopefully that will change things considerably and will make a significant difference.

Providing for early releases of bonds with the consent of both parties to the tenancy agreement is important. It is tenants' money, and they may need that to move on, so I think that is a really important part of the amendments here today. Restricting the solicitation of rental bids by residential rental providers and agents means that the wealthier tenants have been able to outbid the lower income tenants and those that did not have the capacity to put in the highest bid. I think this amendment is a good thing. Fortunately we have not seen too much of that in Geelong. There is a little bit, but I think that is a really important factor for tenants in my electorate as well.

Providing yearly instead of six-monthly rent increases is an affordability issue. I think it is really important that we ensure that rent increases are reasonable and fair. That is not to say that landlords should not be able to put up the rent, but doing it on an annual basis is much fairer than putting it up on a six-monthly basis. Providing for faster reimbursement where tenants have paid for urgent repairs is another one that I, back in my housing career, had to deal with fairly regularly. Hot water services were not working or ovens were not working — essential equipment in the house — and in the end the tenants would have to pay, but then trying to get that money back from the landlord or agent was particularly difficult.

Increasing the number of properties to which the statutory minimum cap of four weeks for bond and rent in advance is a good thing for low-income earners. Enabling automatic bond repayments should be happening in today's world. There are also protections and other important changes aimed at improving the state of rented premises, ensuring that renters have a safe and sustainable living environment. Mandatory condition reports, mandatory safety-related obligations

and a power to prescribe in regulation minimum standards for residential rental properties — all these are significantly important for constituents in my electorate.

As I said, many are living in substandard housing, housing that the landlord or agent would not live in themselves but think is okay for other people to live in it. Well, it is not, and these amendments will go a long way to addressing some of those issues. Things like vermin-proof rubbish bins; a functioning toilet; adequate hot and cold water connections in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry; external windows that have functioning latches to secure against external entry; a functioning cooktop, oven, sink and food preparation area; a functioning single-action deadlock on external entry doors; functioning heating in the property's main living area and window coverings for privacy — all of these are things that most of us would expect living in our own homes, so why should it be any different for private rental tenants who are paying rent? I commend the bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (14:58) — It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak about the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018, which I wholeheartedly support. Just off the bat I would like to acknowledge that the Greens do support this Labor bill, and it was great to see the Greens member giving his very vocal support of it recently. I would like to thank the minister and her team for all their hard work.

Mr Wynne — Didn't they force us into this?

Mr EDBROOKE — No, they did not force us into this. It might say that on Facebook tonight, but they did not force us into it.

I would like to thank the minister. Obviously a power of work has taken place to get us to this point, including the Rent Fair campaign, and her staff as well have done a great job.

The bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 to implement a comprehensive set of reforms relating to residential tenancies, including the modification of premises, the regulation of pets in rented premises, compensation, notices to vacate and protections for renters against unlawful discrimination.

The bill strengthens existing penalties for non-compliance, including the introduction of a pecuniary penalties scheme, and contains measures to implement recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence most importantly. These measures include enabling victims of family violence to leave a tenancy where a co-resident is a perpetrator of that violence and to reasonably modify a rental property in

order to improve security as well — things that I know in my community will be welcomed. The bill also provides a mechanism for the apportionment of liability so that victims of family violence are not held liable for debts attributable to perpetrators of the violence.

It is with some disappointment that I stand here this afternoon on a bill that speaks to several human rights — including the right to receive recognition and equality before the law, the right to privacy and reputation, the right to freedom of expression, the right to family, property rights, the right to a fair hearing and the right not to be punished more than once — and we see empty coalition benches. I ask you this question: today, what does the Liberal brand stand for? What does the coalition brand stand for? I will just leave that out there, because this is a bill that benefits their communities — every community in Victoria — and none of them are here to actually speak on it. People who are the victims and survivors of family violence will be the beneficiaries of this bill, and not one person is here in this chamber on those back benches ready to speak, and I think it says all we need to know. I would like to draw a parallel. I would say they are probably all in their offices wondering who in the hell they back at the moment, if they have backed the wrong horse, when they should be in here helping govern for Victoria.

I would like to go on to talk about two distinct parts of this bill; one involves modifications and the other one involves pets. So why are we making it easier for renters to make modifications such as picture hanging or anchoring down furniture so that it does not injure small children? It is because the existing requirements for the residential rental provider approval of property modifications impact on a renter's ability to make a rental property feel more like a home, and that is so important when you rent a property, whether it is for 12 months, whether it is for four years. In my community I know people who have been living in the same rental property, which no doubt is their home and they have made it their home, for decades. These requirements are a barrier to ensure that private rental conditions also, particularly in older housing, are better suited to supporting people of different needs.

As people are increasingly remaining in the rental market for longer periods for various reasons, there is certainly a need to balance the property owner's interests with the renter's flexibility to make restorable modifications to the house or the unit. This reform creates a presumption that certain categories of important modifications are reasonable. We heard the previous speaker, the member for Geelong, talk about dodgy landlords and whatnot, and I would just like to detail a case that came through my office.

We had one particular individual ring up who was a victim of family violence in the past and had had to move from house to house, sadly. She came to us and said, 'I think I've been blacklisted'. I have to say as a former renter and someone who has also rented out a property, I actually thought this was an urban myth. We see now that it is not. The reason she was told that she was on the blacklist — of course she was told this off the books — was that she was suspected of being a sex worker and undertaking illegal activity in the home. Of course she was put on this blacklist with no evidence of illegal activity, with no charges and with no court case; it was just some rumour that had been told. In actual fact, having known this person for quite some time now, I am pretty sure the reason there would have been men going in and out of the house was actually that her family members — her male family members — were making sure that she and her family were looked after. So I am very glad to hear that we are actually evening the odds there, and it was with some disdain that I actually learned that that blacklist was in actual fact real.

Of course you have got to look at the other side of the scales, and we need to make sure that people who rent their houses out are not liable for the damage that renters cause and that, whether a modification is authorised or unauthorised, any resulting damage will be covered by the remedies associated with the renter's duty to prevent damage to the property, and that includes that bond, obviously. When we are talking about large modifications, a suitably qualified person is going to be needed to do the work. That includes someone who is registered, licensed or has the relevant experience to actually do the job. That is also very, very important. We need to make sure as well that we are not damaging the landlords in this scheme, but we do need to make sure that we are evening the odds.

Another issue that was brought up by many members who spoke previously was pet ownership. We heard about people who require animals for assistance — that is, assistance dogs — and cases such as people with post-traumatic stress disorder who have animals. I would like to say that in my opinion a home has always included animals, whether they be cats, dogs or goldfish, as we have had. We have also had guinea pigs and rabbits. I have been the bloke who goes down to the pet shop to find a rabbit that looks the same as the one that just passed away. They are part of our home. They are what makes the home, just as much as the picture on the wall and just as much as the people sitting in the home.

In the past, as a renter myself, I have seen reasonable landlords go from a stance of no pets to realising that there is responsible pet ownership and they have come

to embrace that. As a former landlord I did that. I rented out a property through an agent which had a strict no pets policy. I made the time to actually meet the potential tenants and said, 'I haven't got a problem with it as long as you clean the place up. It is your home as long as you are renting it'.

I think that is the basis of the argument for this bill coming through today, that when you do rent a property it is not just a hotel room. It is somewhere where you bring up kids, it is somewhere where you have your pets, it is somewhere that you make a home. That is fundamental to most people in our community. It does not matter what culture you are from around the world and it does not matter what you call it, most people will have some kind of home that is their base, that they are comfortable in and that is secure. I think this bill goes a long way to ensuring that people actually have that.

In the limited time I have left I would like to just touch on the Royal Commission into Family Violence aspect of this bill. Obviously Frankston was over-represented in the statistics for family violence in the state of Victoria. Obviously there is a lot going on behind the scenes and front of office at the moment to ensure that we are stabilising those statistics and protecting people, especially vulnerable people. I think this bill goes a long way to ensuring that people who are trapped in those relationships can actually get out of them cleanly and that they are not liable for pecuniary interests that have been bestowed on them as a party to the leasehold. I am sure that not many people in my community are listening to Parliament today, but this will go a long way and be appreciated a hell of a lot by members of my community who have been in these situations. They come to my office, talk about these issues and say how much of a puzzle it is to get out of them, how much of a web of legalities there is to make that break from an abusive partner. It goes without saying that this bill has my support, and I commend it to the house.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (15:08) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. It is interesting. There have often been times since I have been a member of this Parliament when I have spoken to people in my community and people have said to me, 'You know, there's not much difference between the major parties. You're both the same'. In sharing this anecdote, I do not think I am telling you, Acting Speaker Williams, or other members something you have not already heard. If you want to compare and contrast this government and those opposite, this bill brings that difference into sharp focus. The battle between capital and labour is clearly enunciated in a bill

like this that has been brought to this place and the opposition of those opposite to this bill.

The fundamental social compact that has existed in Australia for decades is under serious strain if not under siege. There was always this deal — and I say this having grown up, like you, Acting Speaker, as a bogan from Wantirna — that if you went to work and you worked hard and you did not blow all your money on booze at the Burvale or the punt on Saturday, then you would have a house. It might not be the best house in the street, it might not be a great house, but you could get 10 squares of paradise on 700 square metres of land, 20 kilometres from the second largest city in Australia and you were just fine. That was the deal. That always was the deal: show up, do your job, work hard, don't blow your dough and there is a prize for you at the end of the line.

Well, that is gone, because what we are seeing are rising levels of inequality, not just in Melbourne or Victoria or Australia but right across the OECD. The reality is that increasing wealth is being concentrated within a smaller cohort of our society and our community. The OECD in its recent report titled *In it Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* talks about this quite specifically. Looking at the executive summary:

... the richest 10 per cent of the population earn 9.6 times the income of the poorest 10 per cent. In the 1980s, this ratio stood at 7:1 rising to 8:1 in the 1990s and 9:1 in the 2000s.

Those of us on this side of the house recognise that that is a serious problem because not only is it a lag on the rights and the ability for a child growing up in a poorer household to achieve their potential; it is actually a lag on the economy — something which those opposite fail to grasp or understand. Those opposite fundamentally do not understand markets, they do not understand the economy and they do not understand how things work.

Mr D. O'Brien interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I note that the member for Gippsland South mocks and laughs. I would have thought, given he has recently graduated in economics, he would appreciate the fact that when you condemn a significant cohort of the population to poverty, by its nature that has a lag on the growth of that economy. One of the reasons why Australia has traditionally done better than other OECD nations is because of the portability of education, the ability for poor smart kids to get an education and do well. But when you have got a set of circumstances where people are being locked out from accessing equity — and the reality is that for the average worker the easiest way they can access equity in their working life is through the ownership of

a home — then that has a deleterious impact upon the economy and it ensures that people are not able to reach their potential.

I refer to a paper by Lauren Tyler-Harwood from the University of Auckland. This is a paper I got from the website of the Treasury in New Zealand, it refers specifically to New Zealand:

To what extent do you think policymakers should be concerned about growing wealth and income inequality here in New Zealand?

What Ms Tyler-Harwood found — and again she is referring to OECD research — is:

The rising distance of the poorest 40 per cent from the rest of society is said to account for ...

rising levels of inequality and the adverse impacts that will have on long-term economic growth.

Disparities in human capital investment explain this, as high-inequality countries produce larger gaps in education outcomes, with the poorest 40 per cent being hindered in accessing quality education. The result is wasted potential and an economy deprived of potential talent. Wealth inequality in particular was also found to weaken potential growth. Wealth concentration can limit investment opportunities, as the low and middle class have low asset holdings, inhibiting investment in human capital and other investments.

When you concentrate wealth and exclude people from being able to participate in the economy, this has a deleterious impact upon the way in which the economy can be managed and governed and the way in which the economy can grow.

I am not suggesting for a moment that as a consequence of introducing this bill it is going to become the subject of an OECD piece of research. What I can tell you is that if you are poor just because of what your parents do, just because of where your parents live, then a bill like this is really important, because maybe it might just give you a bit of stability. Maybe if you have got a stable home, maybe you might not worry about supporting your parents, consoling them when they have to pack up and move. Maybe you can hit the books, maybe you can finish high school and maybe you can go to TAFE and get a qualification.

We get this because we understand the economy. We understand working people. We recognise that those of us on this side of the house, representing the labour movement, are on a sacred cause. It is a cause to advance working people, and we are consistently opposed by those opposite, by the interests of capital — by money interests, represented by the Liberal Party — and by the interests of the landed gentry, represented by the National Party. The National Party do not care

about the peasants working in the fields in regional Victoria. They want to condemn them to poverty, which is why they are lining up with the interests of the landed gentry.

This bill is important. It is really important because it starts to set in stone our ability to ensure that working people can have a decent existence and a sense of certainty and security about the way they go about living their lives. This helps to restore the balance. We are trying to honour that sacred deal, that sacred social contract, that existed for decades. It is the right thing to do and it is the fair thing to do. It is about making sure that if you do apply yourself and you do work hard, then for you there is a benefit and there is a reward.

I think that restoring the balance in the interests of renters, as a bill like this seeks to do, starts to bring the pendulum back to where it should be. I have been around long enough to watch public policy debates, and there is always a swing back and forth between greater levels of regulation and greater levels of deregulation. There has always been, to some extent, a healthy balance, as a general proposition. You want to try and find that place in the middle which will enable an economy to grow and create wealth and prosperity for all of us while, equally, protecting the most vulnerable in our community from the unfettered forces of extreme capitalism. That is just what we have to do.

We have all been beneficiaries of globalisation, but the reality is that some of us have benefited more than others. I have got no doubt that people who come from a humble background have benefited from being able to buy cheap goods off eBay, which once upon a time would have cost far more, and I understand, for example, that the cost of food in a relative sense is probably better now than it was 30 years ago. That is certainly the case with some manufactured goods. But that does not compensate if you have got no access to equity and no home that is yours, despite how hard you work and how much you put yourself out there each working day.

I grew up at a time when my father worked incredibly hard to build a better life. He always put himself out there because he knew that there would be a dividend — not for him, but for me. That was the deal; he signed up to that. I am the beneficiary of his labour and his endeavours. But that is not the case now. That is why a bill like this is so important. Forever we will be pursuing bills like this. We will be seeking legislation like this to provide a safety net for working people.

I know that long after I am gone we will continue to be opposed by the forces of capital and the landed gentry

opposite because their sole mission is to stop us. That is what they are here for. They have come to stop us. They will not stop us. We have come to rule them. We have come to rule the interests of capital and the landed gentry. Bills like this ensure that we will be able to do that, and we will continue to do so because we are here to ensure that working people have a decent existence. We are bringing dignity back to our society and our economy, and we will continue to fight those opposite us.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (15:18) — What a privilege it is to rise to speak after the member for Essendon, who has made so many important points here this afternoon.

An honourable member — As he often does.

Ms THOMAS — As he so often does. But let us be very clear that this bill is an absolute indication of the very clear philosophical differences between this party, the Labor Party, the party of government here in Victoria, and that rabble on the other side. This is a bill that fulfils one of our commitments in a substantial package of reforms. This is not an isolated reform. This bill forms part of our *Homes for Victorians* package. This package contains 27 reforms, and I congratulate the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the Minister for Planning and the Treasurer for their boldness and their vision in tackling an issue that those on the other side would have no clue how to approach, and that is the housing shortage that we face in this state.

There are a number of reasons that we have a housing shortage at this time, not least of which is that we are the most popular state for people to move to from other states and indeed for migrants to choose as their home. That is because this is the state that is leading the nation in economic growth, that has low unemployment and that is investing in skills, investing in creating jobs and investing in health care and education. Why wouldn't many, many thousands of people want to choose Victoria as their home? They are doing that, and we have had the foresight and the policy vision. That is what we do on this side of the house. We take these complex public policy problems and we work through them. We work through them with vision, with optimism and with boldness. Those on the other side will sit on their hands. They do not have a policy brain between them. They will sit there and they will just let the problems balloon and blossom.

This bill today is a beautiful example of the very clear differences between the Labor and Liberal parties and

what can be achieved when we have Labor governments here in Victoria. As I said, there are 27 fabulous reforms that are helping people to buy their own homes, increasing the supply of housing through faster planning, promoting stability and affordability for renters, increasing and renewing social housing stock and improving housing services for Victorians in need — what a great, comprehensive package.

Like many in this place, I have my own rental horror stories to share, mostly from my time as a student in the early 1980s, whether it be a lack of heating, a bung hot-water system that we could not get fixed, windows that could not be locked or indeed, in one instance, a landlord who would appear without any warning in the backyard, so there was no sense of privacy or control. I might say too, like many others in this house, that I had my own fair share of secret cats. I had a cat, I might tell you, in the inner city, and I needed it as a mouser, such was the state of some of the accommodation I needed to live in as a student.

In recent times when I have also rented I have in particular railed against a requirement to pay for a full professional clean when vacating the premises when it was very apparent to me that no such clean had taken place before I had signed the lease and moved in.

The reforms that are before us today recognise that for far too long our Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) has been written by and for landlords. It has favoured landlords and has really treated tenants as nothing short of a nuisance in many ways. For too long tenancy has been seen as a sort of temporary state that everyone would be seeking to shift out of as quickly as possible, but what we do know is that increasingly tenancy is a long-term option for many, many people. I was in the chamber yesterday listening to the member for Bayswater decrying our reforms creating the opportunity for long-term leases. She was having a shot at that, and I just thought, 'Well, here is a person that is really very out of touch with what is going on in the real world'. The member for Bayswater demonstrated yesterday that she, like her colleagues on the other side, is out of touch with what is going on in the real world.

In my electorate of Macedon there are 3000 families and individuals who are renting, and they have every right to turn that rental accommodation into a home. What I love about the bill that is before the house is that for the very first time we have rental legislation that recognises that tenants also have the right to create a home, to have certainty and security. It may be that they have been seeking to have a rental agreement in place for a long time. Tenants, as I said, have for too long been treated as second-class citizens and treated with

suspicion and derision by landlords and real estate agents alike. This bill turns the tables. It puts more control and power back into the hands of renters. It treats renters with respect.

While we have got our *Homes for Victorians* package and we are doing everything in our power to make housing more affordable, let us remember that it is the broken industrial relations laws of the federal Liberal government — God knows who the Prime Minister is right now; we do not know — that mean we increasingly have more and more workers in precarious employment. They do not know from week to week how much they will be earning; therefore they cannot get a home loan. They are restricted from entering the home ownership market because their income is so insecure. It is for people who are precariously employed that I rise to speak today in support of these significant reforms.

The bill before us implements a package of over 130 reforms to ensure that the Residential Tenancies Act meets the existing needs of residential rental market participants while remaining adaptable to future change. I am very glad to see that the minister undertook comprehensive consultation from June 2015 to February 2017. This, let us be clear, was an election commitment that we took to the people of the state, and the minister responsible, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, has been consulting on it for some time.

Key reforms in the bill include: amending the Residential Tenancies Act to modernise terminology in respect of landlords, rooming house owners, tenants and tenancy agreements; amending provisions covering the termination of a tenancy, including the removal of the 'no specified reason' notice to vacate and restricting the use of the 'end of fixed-term notice' to vacate; prohibiting false, misleading or deceptive representations and misleading and deceptive inducements to enter tenancy agreements by landlords or agents about rental premises; amending provisions relating to modifications, bonds and the payment of rent; providing for new tailored fixed-term rooming house agreements; providing for the establishment of a landlord and agent blacklist; providing tenants with protections against unlawful discrimination consistent with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010; providing for the circumstances under which a tenant is permitted to keep a pet at rented premises; introducing rental minimum standards and safety-related maintenance for rental properties; providing compensation for the closure of part 4 caravan parks and part 4A residential parks; strengthening existing penalties for non-compliance, including the introduction of a civil penalty regime for

certain offences under the Residential Tenancies Act; and making consequential amendments to the RTA and various other acts.

This is, as I said, a very significant reform. I am very proud to be a member of this place serving in the Andrews Labor government, a government that is bold in its vision and stands firmly on the side of the renters, who for too long have had insecure housing, have been treated very poorly by some unscrupulous landlords and have not had anywhere to turn. Can you believe that this bill for the first time introduces minimum standards for rental properties, including heating? I have got to tell you, if you are renting a property anywhere in Macedon, good heating is an absolute essential.

This is an excellent bill. I commend the minister for bringing it to the house. It is one that all of us in the Andrews government can be very proud of.

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (15:28) — I am very pleased to rise and add my contribution to the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. This bill delivers on the Andrews Labor government's commitment to ensure Victorians who rent have access to fairer, safer housing. As someone who rented for many years, both as a young person and as a single parent, I am particularly thrilled this bill addresses what I experienced to be an inherent power imbalance between the landlord and the tenant. Not only will this bill change the language of this relationship — from 'landlord' and 'tenant' to 'residential rental provider' and 'renter' — but it makes the systemic changes that will readjust this relationship whereby renters are not severely disadvantaged by the power imbalance, but nor does it shift to disadvantage rental providers.

A number of the reforms were foreshadowed as part of the Andrews Labor government's Rent Fair campaign in 2017, and these include, and I will just go through the list:

- allowing animals to be kept in rented premises;
- allowing renters to make prescribed minor modifications to a rental property;
- bolstering security of tenure by ending 'no fault' evictions by removing the 'no specified reason' notice to vacate and restricting the use of 'end of the fixed-term' notices to vacate to the end of the initial fixed-term agreement;
- establishing a non-compliance register 'blacklisting' residential rental providers and agents who fail to meet their obligations;
- providing for the early release of bonds with the consent of both parties to the tenancy agreement;

restricting solicitation of rental bids by residential rental providers and agents;

providing for yearly, instead of six-monthly, rent increases;

providing for faster reimbursement where tenants have paid for urgent repairs;

increasing the number of properties to which the statutory maximum cap of four weeks for bond and rent in advance applies;

enabling automatic bond repayments, which will be available to a renter within 14 days where the parties are not in dispute over the apportionment of a bond;

requiring mandatory pre-contractual disclosure of material facts such as an intention to sell the rental property or the known presence of asbestos; and

prohibiting misleading or deceptive conduct inducing a person into renting a property ...

all fantastic initiatives.

The protections are complemented by other important changes aimed at improving the state of rented premises and ensuring that renters have a safe and sustainable living in that property. These include:

mandatory condition reporting to ensure the state of rented premises is accurately recorded at the beginning and end of rental relationships;

mandatory safety-related obligations, notably electrical and gas appliance servicing every two years, and compliance with smoke alarm and pool fence regulations; and

the power to prescribe in regulations minimum standards for residential rental properties.

It is also really important that this bill prescribes minimum standards for rental premises, which include a vermin-proof rubbish bin; a functioning toilet; adequate hot and cold water connections in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry; external windows that have functioning latches to secure against external entry; a functioning cooktop, oven, sink and food preparation area; a functioning single action deadlock on external entry doors; functioning heating in the property's main living area; and window coverings to ensure privacy in any room the owner knows is likely to be a bedroom or a main living area.

These all sound like really reasonable, common-sense requirements that all rental properties would have anyway. However, that is not the case. Let me share an experience I had not long after I became a single parent. I went looking for somewhere to rent. Like many in that situation, I needed somewhere quickly and I needed somewhere cheap. The image of the place that I was first taken to look at by an agent is still burned in my memory. Quite frankly, it would have made the

pre-Block Gatwick Private Hotel look fancy. This was the dive of all dives. The floor was on an angle — you could visibly see that. The two bedrooms were each the width of a single bed. There was what I hoped was vomit on the walls. The bathroom and toilet had no door and the fixtures were stained. The kitchen, or rather the 1 metre bench, had no doors on the cupboard below and the portable electric oven was on the bench next to the sink. There were no cupboards or wardrobes, no laundry facilities, no heating or cooling and no lounge or living area, just a two-seater table in the so-called kitchen. There was certainly no deadlock. I did not check but I am pretty confident that there were no smoke alarms fitted.

Fortunately I was in a position where I could turn down that property, but I went home and I was infuriated. Although I was able to say no and find somewhere else, someone would have been in a position where their circumstances meant they did not have the option to say no, so they would have been living in this horrendous place and someone would have been making money from that tenant's absolute desperation. What is worse is that there were five units in that block, so not only was one group going to be living in what was absolutely substandard conditions, but there were four other properties, and no doubt the people living in those units were equally in incredibly disadvantaged situations.

I also want to talk a little bit more about the provision that allows for animals to be kept on premises and tie this in with what is often seen as a power imbalance between renters and rental providers based on my experience. I really do want to commend the provision in the bill that allows for pets. As someone who has many pets and sees the value in these family members, I am thrilled about this reform. But I am also thrilled because it is another factor that can rebalance that relationship between renter and rental provider. I recall another property that I rented. Underneath that property was a garage and room that the owner of the property used for storing their own goods, and that was fine. I had no problem with that. Otherwise it was a very good property in a great location.

After the agreements were entered into, I asked the real estate agent if I could please get a cat. That was agreed to by the owner and everything was good — except not long down the track, rather than the owner giving notice of when he was going to come and access his goods at the property, he just started coming whenever he wanted to. There was no notice given; he would just turn up, say hi and wander around, with zero privacy for me. When I approached him, saying, 'I didn't get notice that you were coming today', he said, 'That's okay. We've got a little bit more of a flexible

relationship now because I let you have the cat'. I am not suggesting that his behaviour to me was intended in any way to be untoward, but he felt that was allowed because in that power relationship he could do what he wanted, and he had done me a favour.

It is for that reason that I do think it is really important to have these provisions locked down. Rightly or wrongly, I did not feel I had the power in that relationship to go to the agent and insist upon the terms of the agreement being enforced. I was not in a position where I could up and move on and choose to be somewhere else. What I am sure about though, because I have heard similar concerns from other people, is that I am not the only person who felt that the power relationship between tenant and landlord was such that you probably let them get away with things which were not necessarily to the strict letter of the agreement. Yes, they might wander past, they might want to do things around the property that are not necessarily in the agreement, but as the tenant you do not feel that you have the power to say no.

As I previously mentioned, the great value I see in this bill is that it does provide a readjustment where that power balance is shifted, and it provides security to renters. It does not, in my opinion, go so far as to provide rights to the renter to the detriment of the rental provider. That is a claim that is made by those who enjoy the current superior landlord and inferior tenant relationship. I am pleased that the bill implements each component of recommendation 116 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. It is fantastic that has been included and it has also been interwoven with other provisions throughout the bill, which avoid further victimisation of vulnerable renters while ensuring the continuity of housing.

As I said before, I do not believe that this bill is one-sided. It addresses the current imbalance in the relationship between renters and rental providers. The bill provides security. It provides financial equity. It addresses the previously discriminatory actions that we have seen occur. It allows those who are renting to enjoy their premises as a home. There has been extensive consultation in the preparation of this bill. I thank the minister for her work and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (15:38) — It is a pleasure to rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018 and follow speakers who have outlined exactly why this bill is yet another example of the values of the Andrews Labor government and the work we do in our communities to support vulnerable

people and their families to get ahead and for fairness in their local communities.

This bill is four years in the making. It started under the previous Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, the member for Brunswick, and has carried through to the current minister and member for Kororoit. They both have done an extraordinary amount of work to get to this point in time, with some 130 recommendations and some substantial reforms across a range of different areas.

The bill was some 21 years in the making. The current act is dated 1997, and a lot has changed in that time. Australia's population was 18.5 million; we are now at 25 million. Victoria is the fastest growing state with 25 per cent of the population. To be fair, 1997 was a simpler time in Victoria, particularly for the Liberal-Nationals coalition. It was a time when John Howard was Prime Minister. It was a time when Jeff Kennett was in his second term. It was an easier time for Victorian Liberals. Wouldn't they like to go back to 1997? Wouldn't they like to go back and rewind to that time where they had a little bit of stability? They did not have the questions of who, what, how when it comes to the Prime Minister or Premier, or opposition leader for that matter. It was a simpler time in 1997.

But a lot has changed to get to this point of reform, and while we are still finding out who might be Prime Minister this afternoon. Who knows? I am sure the member for Bulleen and the member for Malvern are eagerly awaiting, given one of them will contest this Victorian election in the next 13 weeks. And we will see whether they support these reforms, either the member for Malvern or the member for Bulleen. The member for Kew rates himself as well as a contender or a sneaky chance. I think the member for Kew was listed a little while ago as talking about the difficulty of home ownership. He owns the chair. He is not quite on the front bench yet, but he gives it a fair shake and a fair go. I think he said that he is still renting because he cannot buy into his area. But who knows who will be the leader in 13 weeks to come.

This bill is very significant. It comes after four years of work to get to this point and 21 years since the act was implemented. There are a few key things that I want to focus on, particularly recommendation 93 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which deals with supporting people who are experiencing family violence. One year since the sad passing of the former Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona Richardson, it was a key part of recommendation 116 to ensure that people who are subjected to family violence are not then further burdened and their trauma, grief

and suffering compounded by having archaic rental laws prevent them from seeking assistance, being able to break a lease or being able to move on with their lives. That is an important reform and recommendation. You can see in the different types of bills that we are bringing forward that there is a lot of whole-of-government stuff going on in the prevention of family violence space that touches a number of different portfolios and areas, and this is another substantial part of that and ensuring that we are supporting families who are fleeing family violence.

I am the youngest member of the government, and I have never had any home ownership. That is a generational thing that confronts my generation and my community. One in three people in my area rents, and that power and equity that the member for Essendon eloquently went through are things that we really need to deal with, because my generation does not have those options. In my area the median house price in, say, Chelsea is now \$1 million. The median income in my electorate is around about \$80 000 a year; it is substantial pressure. Unless you are trying to purchase one of the apartments that are going up in my local community, it is very difficult to realise the Australian dream of home ownership.

These reforms are very critical given the amount of people who will be renting, and that will only expand into the future. This bill is squaring the ledger. It is not to go after landlords, who are now listed in this bill as rental providers; it is to acknowledge their important role in the supply to the market. But we see some of those stories — some that I have experienced and some that others in my community have experienced — and significant challenges that are only enhanced and brought out by some of the changes in this bill.

This includes things like the changes around rents and bonds, and I think that is some really important work that has been undertaken, particularly the requirement to not restrict the return of bond when someone is moving on. People, sadly, live pay cheque to pay cheque; that is the struggle that people face. Cost of living is a substantial issue. If you are moving house and trying to list yourself with a new rental or even realise the dream of home ownership and purchasing a property, it is very difficult then if that bond is tied up in requirements. I remember my wife, Lauren, and I were tied up with our former property in Chelsea Heights for cleaning for weeks and weeks. Sometimes we hear stories of renters waiting for months on end, which is just a way of shackling the bond to keep that as long as possible so that not the landlord but the real estate agent acting on behalf of them just frustrates that

situation and puts more pressure on. We see that time and time again.

The other thing is gaming of rent and rent bidding, and that is something that we hear about in our local community — trading off between families who are desperate to get into their local area — or they might have a situation where a property has been sold and they need to move quickly, trying to settle their kids back into the local school that they attend, and in their desperation to find a property they are then bidding with other families who are in that same predicament or same environment. So it is critical that we ensure that that is prohibited and make sure that we are always supporting families. The fact that rents can only increase on a once-a-year basis provides certainty for families. Some of the work that we are doing around fairness and squaring the ledger for renters is so very important.

Going to some of the reforms, people have talked about the pet reforms. I think there has been a lot made about this and a lot of conversation about this, but I want to assure residents in my community who are rental providers as well. There is a clear process to go through and circumstances where it is determined reasonable to refuse consent to keep a pet. They are listed and talked about in this bill, and they are clearly provided to ensure that where it is not appropriate there is a clear system in place.

I think the member for Yuroke summed it up perfectly. Through the journey of a family and a life, you raise children or you have your first experience of pet ownership. Whether it was when I was in Frankston or Chelsea Heights and now in Woodbine Grove in Chelsea, you go through that process. It is about raising a family and the journey that you undertake, and it is more than just an investment. It is more than just a house and more than just an asset on someone's balance sheet. For people in my community and for me it has been about where I have raised a family and where I have shared the memories and joys that all of us cherish as we go through life. That is the rental story.

For people in my generation, young Victorians, who are priced out of the market and just cannot find a footing — Chelsea Heights has a median price of around \$800 000, in Chelsea it is \$1 million and it is \$1.5 million in Mordialloc — that dream gets harder. Where that inequity between price and ability to purchase exists, we need to square the ledger and ensure that people who are doing the right thing are not taken advantage of where that power imbalance is even greater than it was 20 years ago.

That is a critical point that is outlined in the bill. The Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation has done a substantial amount of work. We need only to look at the work involved in the bill briefing alone. I almost had to grab a trolley just to bring a copy of the bill to the chamber, it is so substantial. There has been so much work done over this period of time. It is an absolute credit to the work of the minister and her dedication in consulting with the industry and working hard to ensure the delivery of another key reform of this government.

A review was launched in 2015 under the former consumer affairs minister, and it was a substantial challenge to carry that through and to get it to land right. We had to balance complex and difficult priorities that had been avoided for a number of years, and being able to achieve that balance is an absolute credit to and another example of the hard work of the Andrews Labor government and the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation to deliver for all Victorians. I am very proud and glad to commend the bill to the house.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (15:48) — I rise to support and speak on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018. As the previous speaker, the member for Mordialloc, was saying, this represents a massive overhaul of residential tenancies legislation, probably the largest review and overhaul for at least 30-plus years. I think the last review of the residential tenancies legislation was under the Cain government back in the 1980s. That went some way towards improving the rights for tenants. This bill is about 10 centimetres thick. It is very comprehensive. As the member for Yuroke said, it really allows for a more even and equal power relationship.

When you look back, in the past in Australia we have had some of the highest rates of home ownership in the whole world. Maybe because of that there seemed to be a bit of a view that if you rent, it is probably just some temporary thing that you do for a little while. It did not really matter if you had to go through some hardship and did not have all the basic needs while you were living there, because in the end you would be saving up and you would own your own home. That is not the case anymore. As we know, prices have gone through the roof. Wage increases are flat and not moving, and there is a real acknowledgement and a sense of great concern, especially from the Labor state government and also the federal Labor Party, that into the future there will be less and less opportunity for people to buy their own homes.

While we are doing some really important things around helping first home buyers, whether it is with exemptions on stamp duty and home ownership grants — and federal Labor are promising changes around negative gearing and so on — it is also acknowledged that there will be more people renting for perhaps all of their lives. We need to make sure that if that is the case, then people know that there is nothing wrong with renting. It can be a good experience, and it can be very satisfactory for families and others. If people are going to do it, they need to know that they have the right to be provided with the basic essentials of life in that rented property. They have the right to live the way they want to live as long as they are not damaging property. It is not really up to the landlord to be telling people whether, for example, they can be a pet owner or not or whether they can hang a picture on the wall or not when this is a place in which they may be living for many, many years.

I was shocked to hear that the opposition is actually opposing this legislation. They raised things like, as I have just mentioned, not being allowed to have pets in rented properties. The fact is there are also protections in this for landlords, because if a pet does somehow or other cause damage to a property, then under this legislation it is up to the person renting — the tenant — to actually make good with that. There are still bonds that are kept in order to be used if there is damage to property and as a security to ensure that a place is treated properly and properly looked after. Yes, this legislation does allow for pets in rented properties, but it is also saying that in the event that a pet causes damage the landlord is able to deduct the bond or seek compensation from the tenant.

That is the same with one of the other really big changes, which is around modifications. We have the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) under which people are getting all sorts of support for living with disability, but if they are in a rented property, they are probably unable to make use of half of that NDIS funding — for example, they may need a handrail in the shower. I know of cases where landlords have actually refused to allow families, who may have a child with a disability, to make any kind of modification to the house. Under this legislation that family will have the right to make such modifications at their own cost. It is up to them, and it is written into the legislation, that they must make good with the property once they vacate. At their cost they would have to remove that handrail and make sure that they had fixed up the wall so that it was back as it was when they first moved into the property. We hear all this scaremongering, and I just find it incredible and amazing that the Real Estate Institute of Victoria or the

opposition could in any way think that this legislation is one-sided and is not also protecting landlords.

I know that speakers have comprehensively gone through many of the changes in this legislation. I am just picking out a few, because it is so big. It is just impossible to talk about them all, but another one that I think it is timely to talk about is the fact that there is also provision for situations where women may be experiencing family violence. Before going through what those changes are, I just make the point that as a result of the work that the state Labor government is doing and the work that the former member for Northcote, Fiona Richardson, did as the first Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence — and I acknowledge and commemorate her and, with great sadness, again pass on my condolences to her family — we are now seeing that work permeating through all parts of our life in terms of either addressing the issue or preventing family violence. Even with legislation around residential tenancies we are also looking at it through the lens of family violence. Therefore when we start looking at reviews and making changes to things such as this legislation we are also creating provisions for those that have been victims of family violence.

In the case of the residential tenancies amendments that we are talking about, for example, if a family has experienced family violence and they are in a rented property, there is a provision — and it is not automatic; for example, they may need to go to VCAT — where the lease may be terminated early without penalty. The person would be able to leave without having to pay massive amounts of money or lose their bond. Perhaps they have to leave for safety reasons or due to the breakdown of the family. So again it is really good that we are looking at all aspects of Victorian law to find ways to address the scourge of family violence and make it easier for victims to get out of such situations and also prevent it.

People have talked about the need for properties to have just basic things like a stove or a heater that works. These are all very basic, essential items that surely no-one would think a landlord should not supply. My son is now trying to get into the rental market. I think he has been to about 800 viewings and inspections, and unfortunately he and his two 22-year-old friends have been unable to secure a property. He has told me that there are up to 40 households going to these home inspections and some of the houses are without heating, have cracked windows and have dangerous uneven floors. This is the sort of thing that we are expecting people to live in. It is not good enough. Landlords do have responsibilities. The capital gains on properties are incredible, and certainly they ought to at least be giving

something back to society and to others in terms of ensuring that properties are habitable.

The Thomastown electorate, which includes Epping, Lalor, a bit of Reservoir and Wollert, has one of the highest levels of renters. There are a lot of people in transition who may rent a property for a short amount of time and then move on somewhere else. Therefore I think I am obliged to stand up here on behalf of the many, many residents of Thomastown that are renting and fully support this legislation and to counter the ridiculous arguments from the opposition that somehow or other landlords should have all the power while tenants have none. This legislation I believe will really improve the lives of many people, including residents of Thomastown. I have been to properties that residents are renting, and I have been appalled at the state of them — ceilings falling down, doors that do not lock. This bill will address all of those problems and make renting better for everyone.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms WARD (Eltham).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

GAMBLING REGULATION AMENDMENT (WAGERING AND BETTING) BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Mr PALLAS (Treasurer).

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) (15:59) — I rise to make a contribution on the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Bill 2018 and just to put a few comments rather briefly on the record, as I know that in the hour we have remaining there are a few on our side who would like to contribute. The elements of the bill that I would like to speak on relate to the point-of-consumption tax where it is relevant to the Victorian racing industry.

It would be remiss of me, as the shadow Minister for Racing talking on this bill, not to put on the record what a fantastic racing industry we have in Victoria and note the fact that it is a key economic driver for our state and also indeed a key employer for our state. It contributes just on \$3 billion annually to the Victorian economy and employs around 30 000 people. When you think about that, in anyone's language, that is a very, very significant industry in this state. The racing industry has also become entrenched in a number of our communities across the length and breadth of Victoria. Being at a country race meeting on cup day is just the

best atmosphere in a country town you can have. I guess it is very similar to the big show that is held at Flemington each year.

The member for Malvern, in his contribution, went through the details very, very well on the point-of-consumption tax and explained why the states should retain revenue from bets that are placed in those states. He put on the record an enormous level of detail and explained it very well. What I would like to briefly focus on is the distribution of the 8 per cent point-of-consumption tax that we have here in Victoria and the commentary that has been provided from the government that 1.5 per cent of this overall 8 per cent tax will go to the industry.

There are a couple of points that I do wish to make on that figure. The first is to get an undertaking that there will not be a reduction in funding to the racing industry from any other area. When I talk about that I am primarily talking about the Victorian Racing Industry Fund (VRIF), which has been a very important fund that has contributed to the upkeep of racing facilities right around Victoria. From an infrastructure perspective there have been a lot of very positive oncourse improvements and developments that have been a result of that Victorian Racing Industry Fund, and it would defeat the purpose of even having that if the additional funds from the point-of-consumption tax came in at the expense of a reduction in that. Whilst I did not hear all of the debate when this bill was in the chamber yesterday, it would be pleasing, I guess, to have speakers from the government side just put on the record that these moneys going to the industry from the point-of-consumption tax will not replace any existing industry funds but particularly those of the VRIF.

The second point I would like to make is that, following this guarantee, we need some guarantees that appropriate discussions will take place with the various elements of the racing industry on where this money is best expended. The minister of the day, whoever that may be when this is introduced, needs to talk to each of the sectors in Victoria to ensure that this money is channelled into the right area. When I talk about each of the sectors, across the racing industry we have got obviously our riding fraternity; we have got our country and metropolitan race clubs; we have got a very, very significant breeding — what would you call it? — industry burgeoning in this state, improving bloodlines with some of the stallions that are standing; and we have a whole army of stablehands that are every morning getting out to the stables and on the track doing the great work they do. What we need is obviously investment in the right areas. This will come only from discussions with those within the industry.

I do note that prior to the introduction of this bill the Victorian racing industry did raise some concerns that New South Wales racing will benefit from a better return from their point-of-consumption tax. It obviously sits at 10 per cent, which has been well documented, whereas Victoria's is at 8 per cent and in New South Wales 2 per cent goes to the racing industry there. The Victorian racing industry has already put on the record that it would like to be on a level playing field with New South Wales. I do note that there are other states in Australia and territories, I might add — Queensland, the ACT and South Australia, to name a few — that are looking at a 15 per cent point-of-consumption tax. Some of those other states have not indicated as yet if there will be any returns to the racing industry. At least Victoria and New South Wales have earmarked that there will be returns to the industry. I understand where the Victorian racing industry is coming from in relation to wanting to be on a level playing field, and there are obviously some discussions that can take place.

In finishing up, I just want to endorse the remarks of the shadow Treasurer, the member for Malvern, when he said that in government we would be very happy to sit down with the industry to sort out any anomalies and work with the industry if there are any hiccups, any bumps in the road, that need to be sorted out. I think that is a very important undertaking, and I certainly would join with both the shadow Treasurer and, I am sure, without putting words into his mouth, the shadow minister for gaming, that we would be more than happy to sit down and talk with the racing industry and the sector more widely about the most appropriate way to manage any concerns that pop up.

We have a not-oppose position on this. The point-of-consumption tax looks like it is coming in nationwide, with a number of states adopting this to ensure that the taxes on bets placed in that jurisdiction stay in that jurisdiction. I think it makes good sense, and we need to make sure that returns to the industry are protected and are delivered to where the industry wants them to be.

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (16:07) — I am also very pleased to rise to make a contribution on the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Bill 2018. It is pleasing to note that there is such bipartisan support for our racing industry, as mentioned by the member for Gippsland East. We know over on this side of the house that we are absolutely committed to Victoria remaining the absolutely pre-eminent racing state. As previously mentioned the racing industry is of course a very major part of our sporting and cultural landscape, and we want to keep it that way. It supports over 140 000 jobs

and participants. We have committed that the racing industry collectively and individually as codes will be no worse off as a result of the introduction of the Victorian point-of-consumption tax, which of course is what this legislation goes to.

The tax in fact has been designed to reduce potential adverse impacts on the Victorian racing industry, contrary to what has just been mentioned by those opposite. The bill provides that the government will contribute a portion of the amount of wagering and betting tax received to the Victorian racing industry, this will represent a new source of funding, and that is of course on top of what already exists in funding, and that is the \$72 million Victorian Racing Industry Fund. In fact the Victorian racing industry spokesman and Racing Victoria chief executive, Giles Thompson, said:

Our discussions with the government have been very positive and we are pleased that they have considered our principal and fundamental position that the VRI and each racing code within it should be no worse off as a consequence of the introduction of the new point-of-consumption tax.

So we are absolutely making sure that the Victorian racing industry is not worse off and in fact will be better off. This legislation will be in effect on 1 January 2019, should it pass this house, and it will replace the current wagering and betting tax structures with, as I said, a point-of-consumption wagering and betting tax. This will apply at a rate of 8 per cent of the net wagering revenue derived from all wagering and betting activity by customers located in Victoria.

Currently Victorians spend approximately \$1.2 billion annually on wagering and betting on horses and greyhound racing, on sports and on other events. Increasingly this wagering is with online corporate bookmakers who are licensed outside of Victoria, and they do not currently pay wagering tax to the state of Victoria. Wagering and betting in Victoria is currently taxed on a place-of-supply basis and only applies to Tabcorp Wagering Pty Ltd. Tabcorp is the Victorian wagering and betting licensee. Whether a customer wagering with Tabcorp is located in Victoria or another state or territory, it does not matter. It is of no relevance to the way wagering taxation is imposed under Victoria's current taxation framework. We are changing that.

We went along a long path of consultation before we introduced this legislation. We sought stakeholder input and views on policy design and consideration and of course on potential industry and customer impacts of the point-of-consumption tax. A number of submissions were received in response to the consultation paper, and all of those inputs have informed the Victorian

government's final decision on the point-of-consumption tax.

Each state and territory across Australia has different legal and regulatory frameworks, taxation structures, wagering markets, industry considerations and licensing arrangements. Through the Board of Treasurers, Victoria has been working with other states and territories to ensure that any point-of-consumption tax framework introduced is nationally harmonised — although there is not a lot of national harmonisation at the moment — as much as possible while having regard to differences in the wagering and betting industry in each jurisdiction. We will continue to do that. We will continue to work with other states and territories on extending common point-of-consumption tax models to other jurisdictions.

The Victorian point-of-consumption tax will be payable by wagering and betting operators on the revenue derived from wagers and bets or on facilitated wagering and betting activity — that is, of course, of all customers in Victoria. It will better reform and align Victoria's current wagering tax system with the increasing amount of digital betting we are seeing within our current environment. Wagering and betting operators will be required to assess their taxable revenue and prepare monthly returns once the operator is liable to pay point-of-consumption tax.

These are important measures, and one of the reasons I was keen to speak on this bill is that I am a board member of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. I have spoken in this house in the past of our concerns about the increasing number of particularly young people who are online betting, not just on sport but on a whole range of different areas. I have spoken about the dangers of this to young people's mental health, particularly young males, and to of course their financial situation, and about what we can do to make that better. Given that the market was enabling these international wagering companies to not pay tax, this will bring them all into line. It will mean a source of revenue for Victoria, but it will also mean a bit more control and legislative framework around the whole situation in relation to online betting.

The consultation paper that I talked about earlier was a very important part of this process because the three peak bodies representing the Victorian racing industry, Racing Victoria, Harness Racing Victoria and Greyhound Racing Victoria, all had very significant contributions to make to the process around introducing this legislation. As we know, the point-of-consumption tax in its full year of operation is anticipated to be approximately \$30 million. All additional revenue

collected will go to the state's Hospitals and Charities Fund, as it has always done, and nothing will change in that respect.

Just in the last few minutes remaining to me I would like to point out the Andrews Labor government's record of reforming the Victorian tax system. We have invested over \$1.6 billion in tax cuts for businesses, first home buyers and farmers. We have halved the payroll tax in regional Victoria to create jobs. Victorian regional businesses now have the lowest payroll tax in Australia — 2.425 per cent. This will reduce the payroll tax liability for regional businesses by \$167 million over the budget and forward estimates period. This is expected to slash costs for around 4000 businesses, create jobs, encourage people to move to regional Victoria and ensure every region across the state shares in the benefits of our economic growth. It is the third year in a row that this government has eased the payroll tax burden. On 1 July this year the payroll tax-free threshold increased again to \$650 000, providing tax relief for about 38 000 businesses right across the state. All up this government has invested over \$740 million in tax cuts for Victorian businesses compared to just \$246 million under the previous government.

We have abolished stamp duty on all homes worth less than \$600 000 and introduced a concessional rate for homes worth between \$600 000 and \$750 000. We doubled the first home owner grant to \$20 000 for new homes in regional Victoria. In the first year of *Homes for Victorians* more than 22 000 first home buyers across Victoria paid no stamp duty, while 5500 received a stamp duty concession, seeing nearly \$510 million returned to the pockets of hardworking Victorians. We also doubled the stamp duty-free threshold for young farmers, from \$300 000 to \$600 000, helping more young Victorians looking to buy their first farm. I think our record stands for itself, and this piece of legislation is just another example of the Andrews Labor government getting on with important tax reform. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (16:17) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Bill 2018. This is a bill I am genuinely interested in, and I value the opportunity I have here today. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 and the Taxation Administration Act 1997 to replace the existing tax arrangements for wagering and betting with a point-of-consumption tax, and this has been canvassed quite heavily by earlier speakers.

If we look at the context here, we know that there has been huge growth in online gambling and in online wagering and betting. There has been huge growth in the online presence, particularly of our younger people. We see this everywhere. We hear a lot about it. Unfortunately for Victoria I guess a lot of this wagering sits outside Victoria's current taxation structures. Our tax laws have been based on where the services are supplied. Historically this would have been okay. If we look at what wagering and betting was like 40 years ago or 20 years ago, it was quite a different space than it is today. We were just starting to see the presence of overseas or interstate bookmakers, but this became so much more prevalent once the online system really kicked in.

As I said, the landscape for wagering and betting has changed substantially, which means the legislation around it needs to be considered. As has been said, there is significant spending in the state of Victoria on the three codes: racing, chasing and pacing. Those three codes are well and truly alive in my electorate. It is interesting to see the figure for that spend — \$1.2 billion. In my electorate I have a couple of larger tracks, and I had them as the member for Seymour as well. Yarra Valley Racing actually has harness and the gallops. I have many picnic tracks but also a really great straight dog track at Healesville. The value of the racing industry in my electorate is really quite high, particularly in the small towns that rely on these big days.

As has been said, for any type of wagering that can take place — it does not matter if you are at a course in Healesville or at a course in Yea — you have the opportunity to place bets online, and the money actually ends up going out of Victoria. What this bill does is introduce a new 8 per cent point-of-consumption tax on net wagering revenue which will arise from the bets and wages placed by consumers in Victoria. From a coalition point of view and from a Liberal point of view, this is another new tax. We heard the previous speaker, the member for Bendigo West, talk about taxation reform. This is simply about raising a new tax, but when you unpack it, my concerns about having a new tax implemented are somewhat alleviated, because it really is a lot about rejigging and perhaps making fairer some of the taxes that are here. Let us have a look and do that unpacking now.

The bill will replace the existing 7.6 per cent tote tax, the 4.38 per cent fixed odds tax and the 10.91 per cent Trackside simulated racing tax. The 10 per cent betting exchange commission tax will become 8 per cent. With this 8 per cent point-of-consumption tax you can see that it looks as though it is somewhat of a midpoint between those existing taxes. Under the current

legislation operators pay wagering taxes based on where the operator is located, not where the services are located. So if the operator is interstate — and we know there are many operators in the Northern Territory — the tax is linked to that location. With some of the big international online bookmakers the tax does not necessarily ever even get paid to Australia. What this means is that the only Victorian wagering and betting licence-holder is Tabcorp, and it is taxed under the framework while corporate bookmakers, usually located in the Northern Territory, are paying no Victorian tax. They may pay Australian tax, but we in Victoria miss out on that. That is where I think one of the key problems is, and I think the bill does address that. So whether you punt in person or online, where you are will be that driving factor for the point-of-consumption tax.

This tax-raising exercise is a fair tax grab. It is anticipated that there is going to be another \$30 million raised from this, and I would certainly like to see the racing industry — all three codes — benefit from that additional tax. Under this bill all providers of betting and wagering services to Victorians will be taxed at an equal rate. That seems to be fair and reasonable. Other states have introduced or are proposing to introduce a point-of-consumption tax, and different rates will apply in different states. These are quite interesting when you have a look them. New South Wales is actually at 10 per cent — we are talking about 8 per cent in Victoria — and South Australia, Queensland and the ACT have got 15 per cent.

We have been told through this process that no code within the racing industry will be worse off. Now, that is not guaranteed, because there is nothing in the legislation that brings about the guarantee. I do have concerns, because we have seen many examples of where what the government say is not what they do. What they say is not always believable. That is a little bit of a concern for me.

We have some industry payments from the consolidated funds, and a proportion of this point-of-consumption tax revenue will be paid monthly to the Victorian racing industry. That is designed to offset the likely reduction in sponsorships. As we know, there are a lot of these larger corporate bookmakers, and they are involved in sponsorship at many different levels. So now a monthly payment will be made to try and offset any losses in this field. The proportion of it is to be determined by the Treasurer. The government said it would be 1.5 per cent in the beginning and will be reviewed a little bit later on. The government also says that this payment is additional to the current Victorian Racing Industry Fund

arrangements. I know that many of the clubs in my electorate, particularly the smaller picnic clubs, very much rely on funds generated through grants and things like that and through the government's support, because they do not have that capacity to raise an enormous amount of money themselves. With regard to consultation, the industry has indicated that they are fairly comfortable with this.

The opposition is choosing not to oppose this bill. As I have said, the bill is introducing a new tax — a considerable slug of \$30 million — but I am probably happier to see that tax come to Victoria rather than go to the Northern Territory. Interestingly the commencement of the bill is New Year's Day 2019, the day of the Merton Cup. Merton has one race meeting a year, and it is on 1 January. That is a very well patronised cup, so hopefully next year Merton Race Club and many other racing clubs, whether they be harness, greyhound or the gallops, will be no worse off through this bill and will actually be beneficiaries of additional support.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (16:25) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Bill 2018. In commencing my comments I do want to say that the member for Malvern raised a number of points in his contribution to the second-reading debate which I will address on behalf of the government. As the Treasurer stated in his second-reading speech, the government is committed to the principle that the racing industry collectively, and individually as codes, will be no worse off as a result of the introduction of the Victorian point-of-consumption tax. The government will continue to be mindful of the viability of individual racing clubs, as it is currently. As part of the implementation of the point-of-consumption tax, the government will look at its impact on the racing industry as a whole, individual codes and individual racing clubs. The government confirms that the Victorian racing industry's point-of-consumption tax payment is a new funding source. Its introduction will not impact upon other government funding for the racing codes.

There has been considerable discussion around the issue of free bets and bonus bets. The treatment of free bets in this bill is in line with the treatment applied to the current wagering tax framework. Other jurisdictions have taken a variety of approaches to the treatment of free bets. The government can commit that the definition of 'net wagering revenue' will be considered as part of the statutory review, in particular the treatment of free bets and bonus bets. I did want to use

this opportunity to address those issues that were raised by the member for Malvern.

The bill is an important piece of legislation before the house. I do note the member for Eildon's contribution. While she could not resist making a point about this being a new tax, the reality is that what this seeks to do is to ensure that taxes which are paid by Victorians end up in Victoria. If you go back to the late 1990s and early 2000s when internet betting first came onto the scene, the then government of the Northern Territory was handing out gaming licences and online betting licences like they were confetti for a fraction of the revenue. You then had that pressure on the TAB outlets and the pub TABs because people were able just to sit at home and bet from home, and as a consequence of that a lot of that revenue went to other jurisdictions or went into the pockets of the online betting companies or the corporate bookmakers.

The bill is very important because it seeks to ensure that Victoria does not miss out on this revenue. The racing industry is a fantastic industry in Victoria. It is certainly a major employer in the state district of Essendon. My electorate is very fortunate to have the Moonee Valley Racing Club within its boundary, and the Victoria Racing Club, while it is in the state district of Melbourne, is immediately adjacent to my electorate. Many people who live in my community are employed by the racing industry. So I think that a bill like this plays a really important role in underpinning the financial viability of the sector going forward and making sure that it is able to continue to operate as best it can.

I do note it is 4.30 p.m., I have got 6 minutes to speak and obviously all bills will be dispatched by 5.00 p.m. The Greens political party are constantly going on about the rights of animals and constantly going on about the sins of wagering. Honestly these people are the anti-fun party writ large. They are the nearest thing this place has to a bunch of wowsers. I would hope they would actually bother to come into the chamber and tell us all about the sins of the industry and how terrible the racing industry is. I suspect though that they have clocked off for the day and they will be nowhere to be seen. But as soon as there is another issue about animal welfare in any of the racing codes, they will be out there condemning the industry, condemning the government and condemning the Labor Party.

The real issue I have got with the Greens on these sorts of questions is that they are not prepared to come into this place and really explain to the people that elected them and to the institution of the Parliament why they feel a certain way. They are not capable of doing

that — not capable at all. The reality is that one of the issues I have with the Greens political party is that they just do not appreciate the fact that many of us quite enjoy having a punt. That is not to say there are not issues with problem gambling. Indeed I was in Puckle Street at a street stall a couple of weeks ago, and a woman came and saw me. She would have been a woman probably not much younger than my mother, and she was telling me her story about the pain she had with her father being a problem gambler.

So while I am making these comments against the Greens political party, I am not suggesting for a moment we should have no support for the problem gambler. I think if you look at the way in which we have devised various regulatory regimes for this sector and other forms of betting, we have got the funding available to try to support problem gamblers to get the treatment and help that they need. I think about 2 per cent of the population are problem gamblers, so certainly there is a role to be played in providing support. I know you have spoken in the past, Deputy Speaker, on some of these matters in previous contributions about supporting problem gamblers, and I think that is a really important thing to do.

But not everyone who has a punt is a problem gambler, and that is the point I think that the Greens political party miss. Not everyone is going to bet online and with a click of the mouse will lose their house. That is not the case. I take the view that we should have a system in place whereby if 2 per cent of gamblers are problem gamblers they should get the support and help that they need, but if I want to turn around and spend \$20 on the greyhounds on a Friday night or I want to spend \$20 on a sixpack of beer or I want to spend \$20 on a movie and a pizza, I should be allowed to do what I like. I should be allowed to pursue those different pursuits as I see fit without having the wowsers from the cheap seats telling me that I cannot do that, because I just find that that is repugnant and offensive. It should be up to the individual to determine how they choose to spend their time and their money.

As we have all said, it is wonderful to be able to talk on a bill like this. We all, or most of us, like to have a punt. I did say on Tuesday in the government business debate that the member for Malvern was on 23 votes in the Liberal Party meeting room. I am not quite sure what the odds would be; I think they may well have shrunk considerably since Tuesday afternoon with the woeful performance by the Liberal Party in this place. The Leader of the Opposition's performance has certainly been found wanting and lacking, and I would have to say that the odds of the member for Malvern leading the Liberal Party in November have shortened

considerably. I think he is certainly odds-on to lead the party to the polls in November.

Mr D. O'Brien — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, while we always find the member for Essendon's contributions amusing, I believe he has strayed considerably from the bill. If he has finished, which I suspect he has, then he can happily sit down and I will take over; otherwise he should come back to the bill.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Member for Essendon, I do encourage you to speak on the bill.

Mr PEARSON — Far be it from me to test your authority, Deputy Speaker, I was merely warming up and just saying how we all like to have a punt. I am not quite sure what the online betting markets would be showing for the federal leadership contest tomorrow. I am not quite sure at what point in time the odds shortened. I notice that the foreign minister, Julie Bishop, has now entered the race. I think it would be fabulous to have a second female Prime Minister. I think most of us, even the member for Gippsland South, would much rather Ms Bishop lead this nation than have the member for Dickson do so.

Coming back to the bill in the last few moments, it is important to make sure that we shore up our taxation base and that we do not have taxation leakage to mendicant territories like the Northern Territory or mendicant states, as the case may be. It is about making sure that we have a solid budgetary position so that we are able to do the things we want to do. It is incredibly important to make sure that the state of Victoria gets its fair share from its punters so that we can continue to do the things that we have been sent to do and keep on building a progressive state. It is about making sure that we have got an appropriate regime in place to address problem gambling and to support people who may have an issue.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I note the contribution of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, who is at the table, that Julie Bishop is \$2.10. Maybe this particular contribution might go down —

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr PEARSON — And Peter Dutton is \$2. Maybe in years to come people will look at this contribution and say, 'Hey! Maybe he was onto something. Maybe something was going to happen'. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (16:35) — It is always a pleasure to follow the member for Essendon, particularly on legislation like this and after a contribution like that. The member for Essendon often goes to great lengths in his bill preparation, but he clearly did not have much time for this one in particular. After his contribution on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2018, I think they are calling him the Karl Marx of the Labor government over there now.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — He's more Lenin, says the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, who is the minister at the table. After that contribution, I am very surprised. The member for Essendon talked about supporting the industry. He was talking about the racing industry, which of course is the sport of kings, and I would not have thought that for the member for Essendon, given his contribution on the residential tenancies bill before where he was running the arguments of Karl Marx from about 1858, the sport of kings would have been his thing.

The member for Essendon did not miss the Greens, as always. It is always a pleasure to hear him getting fired up about the Greens political party, as those opposite like to refer to them. Indeed, he is correct on some of the things he said. This legislation, the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Bill 2018, is about the regulation of our betting industries. They are legitimate industries, despite what many say. I do agree in general with the member for Essendon, that people can go and have a punt and do it without harm, but we must also ensure that we are looking after the interests of those who do suffer harm.

I might add that as the shadow minister for gaming and liquor regulation I have been a little bit perplexed, indeed perhaps annoyed, at some of the reporting of the recent electronic gaming machine figures. It is bemusing to me that the media reports the figures that come out as losses all the time. No matter how much money has been put through a poker machine, it is reported as a loss: \$130 million was lost in a particular region through poker machines. We do not say that \$100 million was lost at the movies or \$100 million was lost at the shopping centre. At the end of the day that is what it is: people pay for a service, an entertainment, just as they do in gambling, whether it is on horses, dogs or harness racing.

Yes, there is harm; there is no question about that — and the industry acknowledges there is harm from gambling. It is our job as the Parliament to ensure that

we assist those who suffer from harm, who cannot handle having just a casual bet and who cause themselves and their families considerable harm. That is why we on this side are proud to have established the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF). With respect to the legislation that we are debating here today, that is an area I would like to see the VRGF do more work on, particularly online gaming, to get a better understanding of the extent of problem gambling by people who are using a smart phone or are sitting at home and just gambling. I remember hearing the former minister, the member for Brunswick, comment at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) hearing a couple of years ago that we do not know what those people are doing because they are not at the racing venues and they are not in a gaming machine venue; they are at home doing it. I think we do need some more research on that and the VRGF is very well placed to do that.

On this bill, as previous speakers on the opposition side have indicated, we are not opposing the legislation. While we do point out it is another of the additional taxes introduced by the Labor government, this is one that is being brought out across the country. It does indeed make sense to ensure that wagering is taxed at the point of consumption, where it is outlaid, rather than in the Northern Territory or wherever else the online betting companies are located.

At PAEC this year, literally a few days after this tax was announced by the government, I had the opportunity to ask the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation a few questions on it. Indeed it was surprising. The first question I asked her was, given that the announcement came some two or three weeks after the budget was handed down, why this tax was not included in the budget. The answer was, of course, that this is a matter for the Treasurer, which was quite surprising, given that the minister's name was also on the press release that went out. We did not have the opportunity to quiz the Treasurer because he had already been before PAEC when this announcement was made about the point-of-consumption tax. It is somewhat peculiar that a tax like this, which was foreshadowed in last year's budget and so the industry was well aware that it was coming and the community was aware that it was coming, was not included in the budget papers for 2018–19. It is quite strange, and I did not get a clear answer on that.

Another question that I asked the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation at the time was whether any consideration had been given to the rate at which the tax had been struck and what

that would mean, particularly for advertising in Victoria. Given that we have set the rate of the point-of-consumption tax here in this legislation at 8 per cent and other states have set other rates — with 15 per cent in South Australia and Queensland, 10 per cent in New South Wales and 15 per cent in the ACT — I asked the question: will this lead to an influx of advertising, because the market here in Victoria will be more lucrative? That is something the government has not considered. As we have said previously, there is some sense in introducing a point-of-consumption tax for wagering, given the change in technology and the changing nature of betting, so the opposition parties are not opposing this.

We do need to ensure though that the promise of no net impact on the racing industries is kept. As previous speakers, the member for Malvern and the member for Eildon, have pointed out, there is no guarantee of that in this legislation. I say that from my own perspective of Gippsland South. We have some wonderful racing clubs in the electorate of Gippsland South. The Sale Turf Club in my own home town is one of country Victoria's premier turf clubs, and it does a fantastic job. It provides a lot of employment. It has recently attracted from South Australia a new trainer with I think some 50 horses in work, and that has been great for the local area.

I take the opportunity to give a brief shout-out to David Wilson, the president of the club, who has had some health issues recently. David has been the president and involved with the club for a number of years and has done a fantastic job. I wish him all the best, as I do Brad Evans, who is the relatively new CEO and who has come from being a former committee member and previously was principal of the local school. His favourite joke at the moment is about trainers, jockeys and owners being not too dissimilar to parents, students and teachers — not necessarily in that order. I wish them the best.

I would also like to mention Stony Creek. We need to ensure that there is no particular impact on clubs. The Stony Creek Racing Club, just out of Meeniyan in South Gippsland, is a fantastic club. It is run by volunteers, and it is very close to the community. They lost a meeting in the first year or two of this Labor government, but I think they have got it back now. There are now five meetings operating. My message to the government but particularly to Country Racing Victoria and Racing Victoria is: you must continue to support clubs like the Stony Creek Racing Club. They are the heart and soul of the region. Those country turf clubs provide such an attraction for people to go to. Yes, they might not have the biggest turnover, they might not be the most important and they might not

attract the best horses, but they provide an opportunity for people coming through the industry to learn their craft. They provide that wonderful atmosphere for punters and probably more importantly for non-punters, for the public, to go along and enjoy a day at the races. I have been at the Stony Creek Cup every year since I got elected. It is a fantastic day.

Likewise, in the other codes, Sale greyhounds in my electorate is also a fantastic facility. There are 174 jobs associated with greyhound racing in the East Gippsland district of Greyhound Racing Victoria (GRV), which is effectively the Sale Greyhound Club. There are 469 trainers, breeders and owners, and there are 767 participants involved in Sale greyhounds when you include volunteers and the like. Pete Johnson and Des Dooley do a fantastic job there as well. Bernie Dillon, now working with the Gippsland greyhound clubs in Traralgon and Warragul on behalf of GRV, is also doing a great job. They do great work supporting our local community groups as well, and that is why I reiterate the importance of making sure that with the introduction of this point-of-consumption tax there is no net impact on clubs such as these.

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (16:45) — It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on the Gambling Regulation Amendment (Wagering and Betting) Bill 2018. I want to begin my contribution by making a number of personal observations. I would have to say that for myself, those around me and the many, many people in my electorate, the opportunity to gamble in so many ways on so many things is of deep concern. This bill is really important to make sure that whilst there has been an incredible expansion of the ways to wager and game in our community, at least with this point-of-consumption tax, the money that Victorians are using to game comes back to Victoria and is used for more purposeful, beneficial means. This bill is actually making sure that wagering and betting companies pay their fair share of Victorian tax, no matter where they are based. It really is time that this happened. We have to make sure that those gaming companies are paying a much fairer and proper contribution.

I say that not because I am a wowser. I do enjoy a day at the races, and I do not mind people going down to the pub and having a parma and a go on the pokies. But I think there is some real concern out there in the community about the number of ways that people can game and how it is done, the ease with which it is done and its accessibility. People can just click a mouse and lose their house, I have got to say. I have had that experience in my own electorate. Support services report to me about gambling-induced poverty,

homelessness and incidents of family violence. I think as legislators we have to be incredibly alert to the problem of problem gambling.

The total cost of gambling to the Victorian community in 2014–15 was \$7 billion. Sports betting losses rose by 8.2 per cent in Victoria between 2015 and 2016, and the average sports betting losses per Victorian adult doubled in five years from \$29.50 to \$59.87. That is a good couple of healthy meals around the family kitchen table.

I have got to say that I have been increasingly alarmed. I am a big footy follower, and I know lots of people bet on the football now — they are very much encouraged to wager on the football. You turn up to Etihad Stadium, as I often do, and one of the things that appears straightaway where the scoreboard is supposed to be — where we are supposed to be looking at the footy highlights — is some very enticing advertisements encouraging us to go and have a bet. I actually think that going to the footy is a family affair and to have that sort of inducing advertising — seductive advertising in many respects — on the big scoreboard where everybody can see it is not helpful for our community. Indeed we know that it has an impact on children because one in four children can name four gaming brands or more, and 75 per cent of kids watching sport on TV think that gaming is part of sport. They actually think it is part of sport.

I hesitate to suggest that we have an alarming issue here. I do applaud the AFL's efforts to make sure that there are some restrictions on gaming advertising. The Love the Game program that the AFL has introduced, in which 10 football teams have undertaken to restrict and reduce — some of them to zero — the number of gaming machines that feed their balance sheet is a very constructive step in the right direction. But I have got to say that it is probably not enough, and we seriously have to say that when you turn on your TV at 7.30 on a Friday night and the family is sitting around with their pizzas, looking forward to the game, they should not be subject to gaming advertising.

That is a personal opinion, but I know it is very widely held in my electorate. One of the reasons why we hold that opinion is that in the Casey area there is an enormous issue with gaming. I go back to pokies — in the Casey area \$348 202 is spent on pokies per day, and \$127 million is spent on pokies per year. We have the second-biggest pokie venue in the state. Frankly, for my liking and for the liking of many people in the community, there are just far too many poker machines in the city of Casey. Currently we have the second-highest pokies expenditure in Victoria. I think

only Wyndham or Whittlesea is higher. What is most disconcerting about these statistics is that these are communities and these are families that cannot afford these losses.

So it is very important to support this legislation, because even though we may be spending more money on gaming than ever before, more people that probably cannot afford to game are gaming than ever before. What we need to do is make sure the Victorian government gets its fair share of revenue with this point-of-consumption tax so that we can invest it — though not so much in extra services for problem gamblers, because we are doing a very good job in that space, and I note that some of the industry backing our legislation acknowledges that. Even the Victorian InterChurch Gambling Taskforce, which is highly critical of governments on the issue of gaming, says this is a very good step forward. The reason why it is a very good step forward is that it will mean that the operators will be taxed at a rate of 8 per cent. We believe that this strikes a really good balance between collecting our fair share from online bookmakers — I mean, don't they run the ads? Every time you turn on the TV there is an ad for them — protecting Victorian jobs and also ensuring that our racing industry continues to thrive.

I am a big fan of the Victorian racing industry and the Australian racing industry in fact. Who did not stop at 3.30 p.m. last Saturday and watch Winx gallop down the straight in Sydney? It was just a fantastic experience, and I noticed how many young people there were in the crowd enjoying their day at the races. We have a responsibility as legislators and decision-makers to make sure that if people are gaming, we get for Victorians our fair share, the correct amount, right back here in Victoria so we can invest it in good infrastructure. As I said, a lot of gaming revenue is coming from people in the outer suburbs, and they more than most people in Victoria actually need further investment by Victorian governments in their hospital infrastructure, their mental health infrastructure and their social welfare infrastructure, so it is excellent that the Treasurer has decided that the additional revenue collected will go to the state's Hospitals and Charities Fund.

As I said, this is a landmark piece of legislation. It brings up to date a very strong, burgeoning industry that needs to have a few more leaders on its back so we make sure that it operates more efficiently, fairly and does not overlook the problems that we have with gaming in Victoria. I commend the ministers involved with this bill, and I wish it a speedy passage.

Mr WATT (Burwood) (16:55) — I rise to speak on a bill whose principal act is the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, and having read through the second-reading speech and listened to many of the speeches in here, I am a little surprised I have not heard more members talk about the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. I note that you, Deputy Speaker, did mention the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, but only in so much as to say that you are a board member of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. I am concerned that we have a bill here that is introducing a new tax which you would have thought the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation would have been consulted about. You would have thought so. Then you would think that if they were consulted, you would have had members of the government actually come in here and make the point that they were consulted.

There are other states that have similar taxes — South Australia has 15 per cent, Queensland has 15 per cent, New South Wales has 10 per cent and the ACT has 15 per cent. I am not going to argue the point about whether the rate is high enough or not, but I just would have thought that the government would provide some information as to why they settled on the rate that they did and whether or not the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation was comfortable with that level of taxation. It is not only the industry, but we have a body which is responsible — the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation — and we have members here who are on that board, and as a member of the board I would have thought that there would be more respect paid to that foundation by the government when justifying the rate that they have gone with here.

On a further point — I do not have much time — I would just like to talk about taxation in general, noting that the member for Bendigo West talked about taxation. Only a Labor government would increase taxes and then call that reform. Only a Labor government could actually increase taxes and then talk about how they have reduced taxes — only a Labor government. It is interesting that on the night before the election the now Premier was interviewed on Channel 7 by Peter Mitchell. Peter Mitchell said:

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

Mr Foley — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the forms of the house require the honourable member to refer to members by their appropriate titles, and I would ask that you bring him back to that point.

Mr WATT — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I was quoting a news report. I cannot quote the news report and then use —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — That is fine, member for Burwood, thank you. I just encourage all members to refer to other members by their correct titles.

Mr WATT — Thank you. Peter Mitchell said:

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

The now Premier said:

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

Regardless of whether or not you actually think this is a good tax or whether it is the right rate, this is a clear broken promise, and it goes with all of the other broken promises around taxes. It goes with the tripling of the brown coal royalty; the new annual property valuation to increase land tax; the new stamp duty on property transfers between spouses; the increased stamp duty on new cars; the new stamp duty on off-the-plan purchases; the new so-called vacant home tax; the new land tax surcharge, which was tripled for absentee owners; the new stamp duty surcharge, which was later increased for foreign purchasers; the increased fire services property levy; a new city access tax for the West Gate tunnel; and the introduction of the Uber and taxi fare levy. This is a clear broken promise. Whether or not you think this is a good tax, clearly it is a broken promise by the Andrews Labor government, and it proves once again you cannot trust them.

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

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — As the required statement of intention has been made under section 85(5)(c) of the Constitution Act 1975, the third reading of the bill must be passed by an absolute majority. As there is not an absolute majority of the members of the house present, I ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

Members having assembled in chamber:

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

**BUILDING AMENDMENT
(REGISTRATION OF BUILDING TRADES
AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2018**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**OWNER DRIVERS AND FORESTRY
CONTRACTORS AMENDMENT BILL 2018**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 August; motion of Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations).

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT
BILL 2018**

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms KAIROUZ (Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation); and Ms VICTORIA's amendment:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until further consultation takes place with all affected stakeholders'.

The SPEAKER — The question is:

That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question.

Those supporting the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Bayswater should vote no.

House divided on question:

Ayes, 47

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

Noes, 35

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

Question agreed to.

The SPEAKER — The question is:

That this bill be now read a second time and a third time.

House divided on question:*Ayes, 47*

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

Noes, 35

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

Question agreed to.**Read second time.***Third reading***Motion agreed to.****Read third time.****Business interrupted under sessional orders.****ADJOURNMENT****The SPEAKER** — The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Melbourne Water landholdings

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (17:12) — (14 876) My adjournment matter tonight is directed to the Minister for Water. I refer the minister to Melbourne Water's disposal of land in Christmas Hills, and the action I seek is for the minister to ensure that transparent and robust consultation takes place and that the community is listened to. I think it is fair to say that many are suspicious of Melbourne Water's motives and that trust levels are not as high as they could be. The community has a number of really good suggestions, and it would be great if the minister could take those on board.

The minister would be aware that some 1000 hectares of green wedge land previously reserved as the proposed Watsons Creek storage reservoir are now being considered surplus and are up for grabs. Of course this is of major interest to the local and even to a slightly more broader community. Input from people not living in the immediate vicinity is a cause of angst for some, and certainly there are lots of opinions around this.

I am aware that some sessions were convened last year and again towards the end of May this year, and these were promoted as community consultation sessions. While I was unable to attend the sessions, one of my staff members who lives in the area did go to two on my behalf. Many people have contacted me following those sessions. Some people said they found out about the sessions after the event and they had no prior knowledge. Some said that there were few in attendance on occasions and that those few people became the voice of the community. The community has not been particularly enamoured of the process — that is, the consultancy process or the options presented. The consultants used — Spiire, an urban and regional planning consultancy — were engaged to develop a number of precinct options, and they developed seven precincts. Within each precinct two options were presented to the community.

Interestingly it became apparent that a third option for each precinct had been developed but not presented. That third option was kept from the community, and it tended to keep the land in larger allotments. Some constituents are concerned that the process to conceal the third option indicates a preference by the government to turn this green wedge area into a more densely populated area with smaller allotments most likely increasing the market value. Many people want agricultural land to be protected. In addition, this land is subject to a number of environmental overlays as well as a bushfire management overlay. The issue of the green wedge and maintenance of the green wedge is a concern and has been raised.

Nillumbik council are concerned that they have not been involved or engaged in the drafting of any of the planning scheme amendments given that they will be a key player in this space in having to decide permit approvals. It has been suggested that the land should be sold with appropriate approvals so that people know what they can and cannot do. There is a great deal of angst out there that this land will be sold and people will think that they will be able to build on it but that may not be the case, and I think these sorts of things should be known in the first place.

Minister, keep in mind that the core business of Melbourne Water is not that of a developer. Subdivision and planning are not their areas of expertise, and further work needs to be done here.

Essendon Hockey Club facilities

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (17:15) — (14 877) I direct my adjournment debate to the Minister for Education, and the action I seek is for the Victorian School Building Authority to meet with the Essendon Hockey Club to discuss what potential role the Essendon Hockey Club can play in relation to the development of the Flemington education plan. Just briefly, the schools in my community are experiencing rapid population growth. It is a built-up, inner-urban area, and there is an opportunity to try and better utilise some of the public open space in the surrounding vicinity for the benefit of the students. I have spoken with David Landgren from the Essendon Hockey Club, and he would welcome the opportunity to discuss what role the club can play as a potential site for schoolchildren and students to be able to utilise during the course of the school day.

Drought assistance

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (17:16) — (14 878) My adjournment matter is for the Premier, and the action I seek from the Premier is for him to come and visit central and East Gippsland to see the rapidly worsening drought conditions that are occurring in our part of the state. My electorate is a tale of two regions at the moment. South Gippsland almost literally along the border of South Gippsland shire is looking good. We have had reasonably good rainfall there and I think that area should have a good season. However, the Wellington shire and further east into East Gippsland shire are particularly dry. Indeed I thank the government for today providing a briefing to opposition members on the dry conditions which highlighted that in the period 2 August 2016 to 31 July 2018 that area that I talked about, largely central and East Gippsland, has experienced the lowest rainfall on record.

While we had rain at probably just the right time in my electorate last year to get us through the season reasonably well, for dryland farmers in particular the situation is getting critical. We have lots of livestock producers who are having to feed stock and have been doing so for many months — some of them probably getting close to 12 months now, which is a serious concern. With feed and fodder prices in particular escalating it is a serious concern. There is some concern coming out of East Gippsland about the subsidies available in New South Wales, which are helping to draw the available feed and fodder, particularly hay, out of Victoria to New South Wales and forcing up prices, to the detriment of our local producers.

So this is a serious issue. I am pleased that there are rural financial counsellors on the ground. I think it is probably getting to the time when we may need to be considering more. I think it is important that the Premier, as the leader of the state and the leader of the government, understands the issues that we have and comes to see East Gippsland and central Gippsland, and note that it is not just New South Wales and southern Queensland that are in drought.

I think the member for Gippsland East extended a similar invitation to the Minister for Agriculture last night to visit his electorate. I would add to that and suggest that both the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture come to both central and East Gippsland to see the extent of the worsening conditions, and to then come back to Melbourne and work out what the government is prepared to do to provide further assistance. If we do not get significant spring rainfall in the next six to eight weeks — and the forecast is not good, according to the bureau — then we will be in for a serious problem. So it is incumbent on the Premier and the Minister for Agriculture to visit our region, understand the issues firsthand and ensure that the government is ready to provide a response.

Fawkner Primary School

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (17:19) — (14 879) My adjournment request is to the Minister for Education. The action I seek is for the minister to visit Fawkner Primary School with me. This is one of 500 schools across Victoria that serves free and healthy Victorian-produced breakfasts. School breakfast clubs have been providing 50 000 free meals each week at 500 of Victoria's most disadvantaged schools since 2016. The program has proved to be an outstanding success. Research has shown that since it started nine out of 10 teachers have seen improved student concentration in the classroom; seven out of 10 teachers have noted improved attendance; and more than eight

out of 10 teachers have said they now have better relationships with their students. Those statistics speak for themselves. The research also found that in 2017, 87 per cent of schools felt they were meeting the breakfast needs of their students, a dramatic increase from only 43 per cent who felt they were meeting breakfast needs prior to the program. That speaks highly of its importance and significance, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The program has been delivered to 18 local schools in the Broadmeadows electorate. Another reason that I want to show the minister Fawkner Primary School is that this is a school that is now in my electorate but was previously outside of the Broadmeadows district. When the previous Labor government came up with the schools regeneration program this was transformative to the community: \$110 million was spent over five years, it merged 17 schools into nine, and resulted in 17 run-down facilities being replaced with high-quality new buildings.

A number of these mergers involved co-locating early childhood facilities with primary schools, which was a great initiative. These schools have moved from previously reflecting low aspirations and poor quality relative to other areas of Melbourne to now being tangible symbols of high community value and aspiration. That is the investment and attitude to education and opportunity that only Labor delivers, and is critical. The principals in these schools are working hard to capitalise on the significance of these investments and to provide lifelong learning and better opportunities for the families that I represent. I would like to show the minister just how this could be part of building the Education State, which he has championed.

Public housing heater replacement

Mr WATT (Burwood) (17:22) — (14 880) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. I have been contacted by a number of public housing tenants in my electorate with regard to open-flue gas heaters. I also note the coroner's report yesterday about open-flue gas heaters and note recommendation 1 that essentially there needs to be a strategy and a plan to phase out all open-flue gas heaters.

I note that there are more than 6500 open-flue gas heaters in public housing across the state. I also note that I have a little more than 1400 public and social housing units in my electorate. The issue that I want to raise is the replacement of those gas heaters, and I call upon the minister to inform my constituents as to when that will come about. I have a number of constituents

that have been told they should stop using them. I note that the supplier of these particular heaters, Climate Technologies, who manufacture Vulcan heaters, said in a statement that it would review the findings. It urged all households with Vulcan Heritage or Pyrox Heritage heaters not to use them.

So I have constituents who are being told not to use these heaters. My constituents have been told by the department that they probably should not use them and they have been provided with electric heating. This is not a suitable long-term solution. I note that my office has contacted the department today and the information that the department had was negligible. They were unable to inform us as to what would be the time line for the rollout of replacements. This is a very serious concern for public housing tenants. I note the fact that the government is spending \$1.2 billion on handouts to property owners who own \$3 million properties and are earning \$180 000 a year, while we have public housing tenants with dangerous gas heaters still installed in their properties. I know that public housing tenants in my electorate are very, very concerned about this.

I am getting a number of people contacting me about these dangerous heaters. I struggle, as a member of Parliament and as a former public housing tenant, to try and equate people earning \$180 000 in \$3 million properties getting \$1.2 billion in handouts from a Labor government while we have dangerous gas heaters still in public housing properties. I call upon the minister to please deal with this. Set out a time line to fix this problem and let my constituents know what is going on.

Sanitary products goods and services tax

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (17:25) — (14 881) My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer and concerns the removal of the GST on sanitary items. The action I seek is that the Treasurer support removing the GST on sanitary items at the next Council of Australian Governments meeting. The fact that these products have been taxed since 2000 is quite frankly ridiculous. If items like sunscreen, toothpaste, lubricants, condoms and even Viagra are exempt, then why not sanitary items? The revenue generated from the GST on sanitary items is estimated at around \$30 million — that is \$30 million that women in Australia are forced to pay simply for being women. It is a tax on our biology and it is fundamentally unfair. These are essential items that women need, and they should be available to everyone no matter their financial situation.

I would like to take this opportunity to also thank the team at Share the Dignity for all their hard work in

ensuring that women who are homeless or suffering from family violence have access to these sanitary items. On any given night in Australia one in 200 people are homeless, 44 per cent are female and 27 per cent are children under the age of 18. These are alarming statistics, and family violence is the number one reason for women finding themselves homeless. You may see Share the Dignity's pink-and-white donation boxes in offices and local shopping centres during August. I would like to thank Sue Smeaton in Narre Warren for working so hard to promote this very worthy cause. I have got a box in my office, and I encourage all my constituents to come in and donate. These are very important items for so many women.

With the new leadership in Canberra — what a mess — especially if it is the socially regressive, far from inclusive Peter Dutton, it is more important than ever to keep ScoMo's promises to abolish the GST on sanitary items, so I urge the Treasurer to be in full voice and to ensure that he supports abolishing this gender-selective tax.

Public transport

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (17:27) — (14 882) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is for the minister to put in place a long-term plan to transform our ageing, unreliable public transport network into a reliable, frequent, high-capacity system. I enjoyed debating with the minister at the Melbourne town hall the other day, so what I am about to say probably will not come as much of a surprise, but the reality is at this moment this government does not have a transport plan —

Mr Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Essendon!

Mr HIBBINS — and in fact we have not had a transport plan for many years. The absence of such a plan is why we are seeing these mega toll roads like the West Gate tunnel, which is only there for Transurban. We see these pop up and we have at times just piecemeal investment in other forms.

Mr Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER — The member for Essendon has been warned.

Mr HIBBINS — Overcrowding on public transport is getting worse. I think it is overcrowded even on the Craigieburn line, which I think runs through the

member for Essendon's electorate. It is getting worse, and there is no long-term plan to improve it.

Mr Pearson interjected.

The SPEAKER (17:28) — Order! I am going to ask the member for Essendon to leave the chamber for the period of half an hour.

Honourable member for Essendon withdrew from chamber.

Mr HIBBINS — Thank you, Speaker. We have put forward our proposal: extend the Melbourne Metro to as many people as possible, which — credit where credit is due — is something that this government has done, a project that was cancelled by the previous Liberal government; include an interchange with South Yarra; extend out to the outer suburbs and Clyde; electrify out to Melton; and upgrade stations along the way at South Kensington, Caulfield and South Yarra. With our population growing we cannot afford to wait another decade — or, heaven forbid, for another Liberal government to put the whole thing on ice again — before we maximise the full potential of the Melbourne Metro.

We have also put forward our position to start planning for Melbourne Metro 2 now.

Mr Watt interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — Member for Burwood, that is actually the Liberals adopting the Greens policy of connecting it to South Yarra. You guys cut it out in 2010. You cut it out, and if you had not, we would not be arguing over it; it would actually be being built right now. We want to start Melbourne Metro 2 now. This is a city-defining project that needs to be built over the next decade to connect those overcrowded lines from South Morang and Werribee. We need more services, new trains and high-capacity signalling for those lines; new stations at Fishermans Bend, essential for that high-growth area, that massive growth area; a new station at Fitzroy; and a connection at Parkville. This is the sustainable alternative to those mega toll roads that Labor and the Liberals are putting forward and that are springing up in the absence of a long-term plan to transform our public transport network. I urge the government to develop that plan.

Wallan sporting facilities

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (17:30) — (14 883) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, and the action I seek is for her to seriously give consideration to the funding application

through the Growing Suburbs Fund by Mitchell shire for improvements at the Greenhill sports precinct in Wallan. Wallan has been a socially disadvantaged area in the past. It is rapidly changing now with population growth, but it still needs support for improved sport and leisure facilities, whether for organised or passive recreation. I have been pleased to secure funding of \$421 000 for a female-friendly pavilion for the second oval at Greenhill Reserve, and I was rapt to open that on 12 April this year. Also in this year's budget was \$150 000 for the planning for aquatics facilities at Greenhill Reserve, and I have also been able to secure funding for the synthetic bowling green at the bowls club. I want to commend the bowls club for submitting an application for Pick My Project. I know that they are going really hard to try and get lights over their greens to expand usage there.

The council have also applied for improvements in the ovals. For oval 1 they are seeking \$90 000 for drainage works, \$280 000 for sports lighting and \$150 000 to improve the changing rooms to make them more inclusive and female friendly, as has been done at oval 2. At oval 2 they are looking for irrigation and drainage work of \$390 000, some perimeter fencing and access improvements. For the netball courts they are looking for lighting for two currently unlit courts. There are also cricket net renewal and playground renewal improvements required. It is really across a range of sports, both passive and organised sport.

While I am on my feet, I would like to congratulate 10-year-old Logan Kemp, who plays for the Wallan Junior Football Club. He did not just play a key role in the under-11 premiership win last Sunday against Mernda but showed amazing sportsmanship by stopping to commiserate with a Mernda player who was shattered at his loss. Logan knew how that felt because he had lost last year. It shows that great things are happening at Wallan junior football and netball clubs, and I urge the minister to consider this.

Natural disaster information sharing

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (17:33) — (14 884) My adjournment matter is for the Special Minister of State in the other place. The action I seek is for the minister to provide details of how government agencies can share information on victims who have been affected at times of natural disaster in light of the strict provisions in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014. Following the devastating fires in Polwarth this year on St Patrick's Day it is becoming apparent that the government has a greater role to play in facilitating the recovery of many communities, particularly those across the Moyne and Corangamite shires. I have

spoken to many agencies and support services who are working across the region. It is becoming apparent that without a consolidated and available list of people and families who have suffered loss it is near impossible to get the right information and support to people that need it. Despite many visits and contacts with people across the devastated area, still more people come to the fore, and without the people who need to know knowing who needs help, help cannot be given.

Agencies that are seeking to assess loss, calculate compensation and provide financial support, food and mental health and general wellbeing support are all being hampered severely in their jobs. It is certainly clear to me that at such a devastating time in a person's life, such as the aftermath of a horrific fire, where your home is lost, your farm is lost, your business is lost and your community is lost, it is almost impossible to expect that person, those communities, those people, to have the capacity to fully and actively advocate effectively on their own behalf and on that of their community. Particularly in a farming context, people lose their homes, workplaces and their sense of community. Fighting a secretive bureaucracy is an added burden that is not wanted. It frustrates the recovery process and it means that people are sitting at home, often around their kitchen tables, in their living rooms, in their sheds and on their farms in complete despair not knowing where to go.

I had the very unfortunate situation only in the last week of visiting with support workers many of these people, only today to get a phone call from a family that was only 100 metres away from me and the people I was with, and yet we did not know they were there. It is disappointing that people such as I and other support people that might be able to advocate for and work with people just do not have access to those who need help. It is something that could be simplified and sorted. Local council has access to the information but cannot share it. Power companies who have had homes disconnected know who has been devastated but cannot share that information. Insurance companies have bits of information and cannot share it. It is left in the hands of people to try and pull it together, but it is an impossible task when communities are so devastated and so distracted with the enormity of their recovery task.

Edgars Creek Secondary College

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (17:36) — (14 885) My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer and is in regard to the new Edgars Creek Secondary College and the need to build stages 2 and 3 of this newly opened school. The action I seek is for the Treasurer to visit with me Edgars Creek Secondary

College to tour the state-of-the-art, beautiful building that students have moved into this term but also for him to see firsthand how important it is to have stages 2 and 3 built as soon as possible. The former Liberal government did not fund one new school in the growing suburbs of Epping and Wollert, and to address the urgent need the Andrews Labor government worked very hard to open this school well ahead of time on the first day of first term this year. In fact the school opened at a different site and buses were paid for to transport students to a vacant section of Mernda Central College. I thank the member for Yan Yean, who is sitting over there.

Labor listened to parents who were desperately trying to find a secondary school for their children. Edgars Creek Secondary College is now open at the Epping-Wollert site and has 90 year 7 foundation students who are working so hard along with teachers and staff under the excellent leadership of the principal, Joanne Camozzato. But more and more families are moving into newly built homes every day, and the school needs more space and all the facilities for 21st-century learning. They can only be delivered in stages 2 and 3 of the project, so I ask that the Treasurer visit the school community to discuss their concerns sometime this year.

Responses

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (17:38) — I am delighted to respond to the matter raised by the member for Prahran. I know the Minister for Planning in particular will be listening in his office and will be very keen for me to keep my remarks brief, which will be a challenge because there is so much to tell the member for Prahran about what is going on in the public transport portfolio. But I will do my best to be brief.

I did have a sneak preview of the member for Prahran's adjournment debate action request when we were together on Monday a week ago at the Melbourne town hall for our metropolitan transport forum debate, and I appreciate the manner in which the member for Prahran conducted himself during that debate. It is a shame the same could not be said for the shadow Minister for Public Transport, who did not perform with such grace and dignity. In the member for Prahran's contribution then and indeed today he called for a long-term plan for our public transport network, and I am absolutely delighted to tell the member for Prahran that that is exactly what the Andrews Labor government has been delivering over the past nearly four years now. Can I flag to the member for Prahran that we intend to continue the approach we have taken over that period of

time if given the opportunity to do so beyond 24 November.

I can point to so many examples of the \$30 billion of investment that we are making in the portfolio. The one outstanding example I will highlight is that this Sunday the member for Yan Yean and I and many others in her local community will be up there at Mernda celebrating the operationalisation of the Mernda rail line. The member for Prahran can jump on one of the 984 new weekly services that will be running to and from Mernda from Sunday and experience what a transport plan looks like. It looks like real projects on the ground being delivered.

But I understand where the member for Prahran is coming from on this matter. He wants to see a pipeline. He wants to see this effort continued and maintained and going on into the future. That is why the Andrews Labor government has committed to the Hurstbridge line works, of which you are very fond, Speaker. I know you are very fond of that Hurstbridge line project, Hurstbridge line stage 2. We can only have a stage 2 because the Andrews Labor government has delivered stage 1.

We are working with the Waurn Ponds community on expanding passenger rail services there through infrastructure upgrades. We have got many, many more plans in the pipeline. We have already announced our airport regional rail project with a preference to go through Sunshine so we can bring the regions closer to Victoria's airport. Of course there is so much more that has been going on behind the scenes around policy reform that has put passengers at the front and centre of every single thing we have done in this portfolio.

I said I would endeavour to be brief, and I will. I can assure the member for Prahran, who has urged us to have a plan and to continue this long-term investment, that we will stick to it. We are absolutely determined to stick to it because we know it is the right thing for public transport users, the right thing for a growing Melbourne and Victoria and the right thing because it creates so many jobs across Victoria as well.

The remaining nine members raised matters for various ministers, and they will be referred to them for their action and response.

The SPEAKER — The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 5.41 p.m. until Tuesday, 4 September

