

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

**Tuesday, 1 May 2018
(Extract from book 5)**

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

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	Naphthine, Dr Denis Vincent ³	South-West Coast	LP
Blackwood, Mr Gary John	Narracan	LP	Nardella, Mr Donato Antonio ⁴	Melton	Ind
Blandthorn, Ms Elizabeth Anne	Pascoe Vale	ALP	Neville, Ms Lisa Mary	Bellarine	ALP
Britnell, Ms Roma ¹	South-West Coast	LP	Noonan, Mr Wade Matthew	Williamstown	ALP
Brooks, Mr Colin William	Bundoora	ALP	Northe, Mr Russell John ⁵	Morwell	Ind
Bull, Mr Joshua Michael	Sunbury	ALP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ⁶	Gippsland South	Nats
Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
Burgess, Mr Neale Ronald	Hastings	LP	Pakula, Mr Martin Philip	Keysborough	ALP
Carbines, Mr Anthony Richard	Ivanhoe	ALP	Pallas, Mr Timothy Hugh	Werribee	ALP
Carroll, Mr Benjamin Alan	Niddrie	ALP	Paynter, Mr Brian Francis	Bass	LP
Clark, Mr Robert William	Box Hill	LP	Pearson, Mr Daniel James	Essendon	ALP
Couzens, Ms Christine Anne	Geelong	ALP	Perera, Mr Jude	Cranbourne	ALP
Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
D'Ambrosio, Ms Liliana	Mill Park	ALP	Richardson, Mr Timothy Noel	Mordialloc	ALP
Dimopoulos, Mr Stephen	Oakleigh	ALP	Richardson, Ms Fiona Catherine Alison ⁷	Northcote	ALP
Dixon, Mr Martin Francis	Nepean	LP	Riordan, Mr Richard ⁸	Polwarth	LP
Donnellan, Mr Luke Anthony	Narre Warren North	ALP	Ryall, Ms Deanne Sharon	Ringwood	LP
Edbrooke, Mr Paul Andrew	Frankston	ALP	Ryan, Mr Peter Julian ⁹	Gippsland South	Nats
Edwards, Ms Janice Maree	Bendigo West	ALP	Ryan, Ms Stephanie Maureen	Euroa	Nats
Eren, Mr John Hamdi	Lara	ALP	Sandell, Ms Ellen	Melbourne	Greens
Foley, Mr Martin Peter	Albert Park	ALP	Scott, Mr Robin David	Preston	ALP
Fyffe, Mrs Christine Anne	Evelyn	LP	Sheed, Ms Suzanna	Shepparton	Ind
Garrett, Ms Jane Furneaux	Brunswick	ALP	Smith, Mr Ryan	Warrandyte	LP
Gidley, Mr Michael Xavier Charles	Mount Waverley	LP	Smith, Mr Timothy Colin	Kew	LP
Graley, Ms Judith Ann	Narre Warren South	ALP	Southwick, Mr David James	Caulfield	LP
Green, Ms Danielle Louise	Yan Yean	ALP	Spence, Ms Rosalind Louise	Yuroke	ALP
Guy, Mr Matthew Jason	Bulleen	LP	Staikos, Mr Nicholas	Bentleigh	ALP
Halfpenny, Ms Bronwyn	Thomastown	ALP	Staley, Ms Louise Eileen	Ripon	LP
Hennessy, Ms Jill	Altona	ALP	Suleyman, Ms Natalie	St Albans	ALP
Hibbins, Mr Samuel Peter	Prahan	Greens	Thomas, Ms Mary-Anne	Macedon	ALP
Hodgett, Mr David John	Croydon	LP	Thompson, Mr Murray Hamilton Ross	Sandringham	LP
Howard, Mr Geoffrey Kemp	Buninyong	ALP	Thomson, Ms Marsha Rose	Footscray	ALP
Hutchins, Ms Natalie Maree Sykes	Sydenham	ALP	Thorpe, Ms Lidia Alma ¹⁰	Northcote	Greens
Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
Katos, Mr Andrew	South Barwon	LP	Victoria, Ms Heidi	Bayswater	LP
Kealy, Ms Emma Jayne	Lowan	Nats	Wakeling, Mr Nicholas	Ferntree Gully	LP
Kilkenny, Ms Sonya	Carrum	ALP	Walsh, Mr Peter Lindsay	Murray Plains	Nats
Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
Languiller, Mr Telmo Ramon	Tarneit	ALP	Watt, Mr Graham Travis	Burwood	LP
Lim, Mr Muy Hong	Clarinda	ALP	Wells, Mr Kimberley Arthur	Rowville	LP
McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Elected 31 October 2015

² Resigned 3 September 2015

³ Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴ ALP until 7 March 2017

⁵ Nats until 28 August 2017

⁶ Elected 14 March 2015

⁷ Died 23 August 2017

⁸ Elected 31 October 2015

⁹ Resigned 2 February 2015

¹⁰ Elected 18 November 2017

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms D’Ambrosio, Mr Morris, Ms Neville, Ms Ryan, Ms Sandell, Mr Scott, Ms Springle 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*): Mr Gepp and Ms Patten.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward. (*Council*): Ms Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Blandthorn, Mr J. Bull, Mr Dimopoulos, Ms Kilkenny and Mr Pesutto. (*Council*): Ms Bath and Mr Dalla-Riva.

CONTENTS

TUESDAY, 1 MAY 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	1033	APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT 2018–2019) BILL 2018	
RULINGS BY THE CHAIR		<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1055
<i>Member conduct</i>	1033	<i>Statement of compatibility</i>	1055
<i>Acting Speaker comments</i>	1043	<i>Second reading</i>	1055
<i>Constituency questions</i>	1043	BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Questions without notice</i>	1043	<i>Adjournment</i>	1056
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS		<i>Program</i>	1059
STATEMENTS		MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Fire services</i>	1033, 1034, 1035, 1036, 1037	<i>Castlemaine Secondary College</i>	1062
<i>Ministers statements: road infrastructure</i>		<i>Anzac Day</i>	1063, 1064, 1065, 1066, 1069
<i>projects</i>	1034	<i>Bentleigh Secondary College</i>	1063
<i>Ministers statements: education funding</i>	1036	<i>Silo Art Trail</i>	1063
<i>Ministers statements: water security</i>	1037	<i>Sunraysia Multicultural Festival</i>	1064
<i>Privatisation policy</i>	1037, 1038	<i>Robinvale Villers-Bretonneux memorial</i>	1064
<i>Ministers statements: employment initiatives</i>	1038	<i>La Faya Festival</i>	1064
<i>Bus industry</i>	1039, 1040	<i>Budget</i>	1064, 1065, 1067, 1068, 1069
<i>Ministers statements: metropolitan road</i>		<i>Anam Cara House Geelong</i>	1064
<i>upgrades</i>	1040	<i>St Mary's Sporting Club</i>	1065
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS		<i>Reclink Australia</i>	1065
<i>Bayswater electorate</i>	1041	<i>Member for Clarinda</i>	1066
<i>Narre Warren South electorate</i>	1041	<i>Oakleigh Primary School</i>	1066
<i>Ovens Valley electorate</i>	1041	<i>Oakleigh electorate community facilities</i>	1066
<i>Broadmeadows electorate</i>	1041	<i>Level crossings</i>	1066
<i>Brighton electorate</i>	1041	<i>Victoria State Emergency Service Cobram unit</i>	1066
<i>Essendon electorate</i>	1042	<i>Yarrawonga Health</i>	1067
<i>Morwell electorate</i>	1042	<i>Cobram Secondary College</i>	1067
<i>Frankston electorate</i>	1042	<i>Nepean Highway–Bay Road, Cheltenham</i>	1067
<i>Eildon electorate</i>	1042	<i>Shepparton education plan</i>	1068
<i>Yuroke electorate</i>	1043	<i>Macedon electorate schools</i>	1068
STATE TAXATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2018		<i>Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School</i> ...	1069
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1043	<i>Sunbury electorate schools</i>	1069
PETITIONS		LONG SERVICE BENEFITS PORTABILITY BILL 2018	
<i>Yarck speed limit</i>	1044	<i>Second reading</i>	1070, 1107
UNIVERSITY OF DIVINITY		<i>Third reading</i>	1107
<i>Report 2017</i>	1044	JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ACCESS TO JUSTICE) BILL 2018	
BUDGET PAPERS 2018–19	1044	<i>Second reading</i>	1095
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE		<i>Third reading</i>	1107
<i>Financial and performance outcomes 2016–17</i>	1044	ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Parliamentary Budget Officer appointment</i>	1044	<i>Fairhills High School</i>	1107
SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS		<i>Maribymong Park Football Club</i>	1108
COMMITTEE		<i>Sea Lake Mallee Rally</i>	1108
<i>Alert Digest No. 5</i>	1044	<i>Embrace Diversity campaign</i>	1108
DOCUMENTS	1045	<i>Irabina Autism Services</i>	1109
FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS		<i>Craigieburn railway station car parking</i>	1109
COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES		<i>South Kensington railway station</i>	1110
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM)		<i>Yan Yean Road duplication</i>	1110
BILL 2017		<i>Belvoir Special School</i>	1111
<i>Council's rejection</i>	1046	<i>Broadmeadows police resources</i>	1111
ROYAL ASSENT	1046	<i>Responses</i>	1112
APPROPRIATION MESSAGES	1047		
APPROPRIATION (2018–2019) BILL 2018			
<i>Introduction and first reading</i>	1047		
<i>Statement of compatibility</i>	1047		
<i>Second reading</i>	1047		

Tuesday, 1 May 2018

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:04) — We acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land on which we are meeting. We pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future, and elders from other communities who may be here today.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Member conduct

Ms KEALY (Lowan) (12:05) — On the last day of sitting an event occurred in this chamber, which you have ruled on, where the member for Clarinda was found to have made an offensive gesture within this house, and he then apologised to the house. Following that incident there was another occurrence within the Parliament which was taken to you. The member for Clarinda verbally abused and threatened the member for South-West Coast in an elevator. My understanding is that this complaint was taken to you immediately. We have got a situation where in the Parliament a female MP was put in a very compromising position and was threatened. There were visitors to the Parliament who were very shaken by these events. Could you please provide an update to the house as to whether there has been an investigation regarding this incident, and if there has not been an investigation, why there has not been an investigation?

The SPEAKER (12:06) — The member for Lowan is correct that there was an incident reported to me following the incident in the house in the last sitting week. A complaint was lodged with me by the member for South-West Coast, and I also received a complaint from the member for Clarinda in relation to the behaviour going the other way as well.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I spoke to both members, and both members were aware that I would speak to them about their behaviour in the parliamentary precinct. I have spoken to both of them.

Ms Britnell — On a point of order, Speaker, did you ask me to alter my behaviour in that conversation? I do not recall that. I did not think that was part of the discussion.

The SPEAKER — Order! I apologise to the member for South-West Coast; that is not what I just said.

Ms Kealy — On the point of order, Speaker, in recent weeks at Parliament House we have had an incident where it was alleged there was a butterknife brandished and another person was threatened within the parliamentary dining room. We have now had an incident which I think is very concerning, that there would be any female member of Parliament or member of the public who would be bailed up in a lift and unable to escape — and that is not worthy of an investigation? This is a very, very serious matter; it is a security event. We need to have an investigation, and it is not just a matter of having a chat. It is clear there have not been any further ramifications. I ask that you please, for the sake of every member of Parliament and particularly female members of Parliament, undertake a full investigation so we can ensure the security of each other.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will take the member's request on notice, consult with the member that she is speaking on behalf of and come back to the member concerned.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Fire services

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:08) — My question is to the Premier. Almost two weeks after Peter Marshall's now infamous ABC radio performance he has continued to allow speculation to fester that there is an incriminating tape of you or that you made secret deals with him that you are yet to disclose publicly. At best they are designed to make Victorians think —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Deputy Premier!

Mr GUY — At best they are designed to make Victorians think you are being blackmailed by him; at worst Peter Marshall's comments confirm you are indeed being blackmailed by him. Premier, given Peter Marshall has implicated you in an unprecedented blackmail conspiracy and made public threats against you, why have you not directed your staff, ministers, senior public servants and MPs to have nothing further to do with this man?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:09) — There is a third option: it is budget day and you have got nothing

better to ask about — that is what it is; that is the best you can do. I have made my position on all of these matters abundantly clear, and I have nothing to add.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:09) — A supplementary to the Premier: blackmailing or attempting to blackmail a public office-holder such as the Premier of the state is a serious criminal offence. Premier, knowing this, why have you not asked Victoria Police to investigate Peter Marshall's direct threats towards you?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:09) — We have covered some of this ground in the past where the Leader of the Opposition seems to think that Victoria Police need to be told by politicians how to do their job. That is not how it works.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members on both sides will come to order. The Minister for Police!

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance. It was a very straightforward supplementary question to the Premier: knowing the behaviour where the Premier was being blackmailed by the head of the United Firefighters Union, why has he not asked for this matter to be investigated, or is Peter Marshall's claim to the tape true?

The SPEAKER — Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Premier was answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS — As I was saying very directly, Victoria Police, with more resources than they have ever had and without the burden of ministers interfering and undermining police command — about the only thing you ever did —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The house will come to order. The member for Warrandyte!

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, on the question of relevance. This was a question about why the Premier has not himself reported to Victoria Police criminal conduct of which he is aware. That is the question he needs to answer, and I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier is answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS — As I was saying, Victoria Police are better resourced than they have ever been, and they are perfectly free to investigate any matter they think is appropriate. They will not be interfered with, as they were by the previous government.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I ask the Attorney-General and the Leader of the Opposition to assist with the smooth running of the house.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is continuing to avoid answering the question and to not being relevant to the question. As I said, this is a question about why he has not made a report to Victoria Police about criminal conduct of which he is aware, and I ask you to bring him back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER — I do not uphold the point of order, but the Premier did start to attack the opposition. I ask the Premier to come back to answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS — It was not my intention to attack the opposition. My answer stands: Victoria Police are free, with more resources than ever before, to investigate any matter they see fit to investigate.

Ministers statements: road infrastructure projects

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:12) — I am delighted today to be able to inform the house, including the member for Warrandyte — happiness himself over there — that in the budget the government is investing more than has ever been invested in regional roads and outer suburban roads. While some people talk about these things, we are getting it done — \$2.2 billion for 13 arterial road upgrades across Melbourne's north and south-east, of course coming on top of \$1.8 billion worth of investment in arterial roads in Melbourne's west that was funded in last year's budget and of course \$941 million on better country roads. We are not talking about it, we are getting on and delivering the road network that regional Victoria needs, suburban Melbourne needs and in fact the whole state needs.

Those opposite hate every minute of it because they could not do anything when they had the chance. They abrogated their responsibility and now they are terribly upset to be out of government and mere spectators to record investment in better roads, safer roads and more productive roads — not talk, but actual money, actual

funding — that along the way creates thousands of jobs, all part of a strategy that gets things done.

Fire services

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:14) — My question is again to the Premier. When asked directly in this house on 8 June 2016, and I quote, ‘What are the details of the agreement you have made with Peter Marshall?’, you claimed the question was littered with errors and was wrong. Premier, who is lying? You then or Peter Marshall now?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn members again about the use of that word in parliamentary debate. The Premier to answer the question.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:15) — I would simply remind the Leader of the Opposition that we were very clear about recruiting 450 additional firefighters. We were very clear about putting forward —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — These are our commitments. You asked about commitments.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier to resume his seat.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I asked very clearly for the Premier to answer, ‘Who is lying — the Premier now or Peter Marshall then?’. The Premier answered to this house very clearly —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The Deputy Premier is warned.

Mr Guy — ‘What are the details of the secret agreement you made with Peter Marshall?’, and his response was, ‘The question is littered with errors’, and that it was wrong. Who is the liar? That is the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr ANDREWS — As I was saying, we have been very clear about our commitments to firefighters, both career and volunteer — 450 additional firefighters, doing something serious about Fiskville and, what is more, introducing and trying to pass, not voting against by lying that they are at church, presumptive rights. It is

a long list. We have been up-front about it. We are proud of those commitments, and we will do everything we can to deliver them for career firefighters and for volunteer firefighters.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:17) — Peter Marshall has openly declared that the Premier has secret deals with him. He is publicly using the menacing language of a blackmailer against the Premier personally. He is attacking you, your ministers and your government for not honouring the promises he said you made. Premier, do you condone his conduct, yes or no?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:17) — I am so pleased to be lectured on conduct by the Leader of the Opposition, who is proud that two of his best and brightest lied about being at church, lied about God, lied about praying and then turned up for a vote. They are in no place to lecture anyone.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, the supplementary question was very clear. It was around Peter Marshall’s conduct towards the Premier, threatening the Premier and the conduct that he has used, particularly his behaviour towards ministers of the past. It was a clear question to the Premier: does he condone this conduct, yes or no? I ask you to bring him back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier had strayed from answering the question. The Premier to answer the question that was asked.

Mr ANDREWS — I will quickly say to the Leader of the Opposition, as I have on numerous occasions, that all Victorians in public life or in private should behave appropriately, and that of course extends to those who would offer a pair and then lie about being at church and turn up and vote. Those standards apply to you.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The level of shouting in the chamber —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Members may wish to stay in the chamber for events following question time, but

they will be asked to leave the chamber if they continue to shout.

Ministers statements: education funding

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) (12:20) — I rise to inform the house that 28 new schools accommodating more than 15 000 students will be built and planned for across the fastest growing parts of the state, giving families peace of mind that their kids will be able to go to a great local school close to home. They are now part of 70 new schools that we are rolling out across Victoria.

In the latest package that we have announced \$353 million will be invested to build 12 new schools, planning and early works will start on another nine new schools and additional stages of seven new schools that are opening in 2019 will be built as part of a massive funding boost from the Andrews Labor government. This includes three new schools in the City of Casey, three new schools in the City of Wyndham, a new primary school in Lucas in Ballarat and a new primary school in Beveridge in the Mitchell shire. This is on top of \$271 million to purchase land for new schools in some of the fastest growing parts of the state. Our state is growing faster than any other state, and we need to invest now to meet the demand in the future. That is why we are making the biggest investment ever in building new schools, buildings and classrooms in our history.

It was not always like this. The enrolment growth was there, the population boom was there, but in the last budget of those opposite not one dollar was set aside to purchase land — not one dollar — so we have been playing catch-up. Labor’s investment in school infrastructure this year is the same as that by those opposite in four —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (12:22) — Order! The member for Burwood will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. I have warned members that I will not have members shouting across the chamber.

Honourable member for Burwood withdrew from chamber.

Fire services

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (12:22) — My question is to the Premier. Prior to the meeting between you, Peter Marshall and Trent Kear in April 2016, you had backed the member for Brunswick’s view that the United Firefighters Union (UFU) enterprise bargaining agreement claims were outrageous and could not be

agreed to. Premier, what did Mr Marshall say or do at or following that meeting that made you change your mind?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members will come to order. The member for Ferntree Gully is warned. The Minister for Police is warned.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:23) — I do not think there was any changing of minds at all. There was a negotiation that had gone on for a very long time, and a meeting was had where we discussed the fact that significant progress had been made in that negotiation with the support of Industrial Relations Victoria, the Department of Justice and Regulation, and fire service chiefs, and again —

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr Battin — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was specific to a meeting and the changing of minds. The Premier says he did not change his mind. I ask the Premier to turn around and look at the member for Brunswick in the background there, who obviously ended up resigning because he did change his mind after that meeting in April 2016 and he blatantly misled the house —

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr ANDREWS — The member for Gembrook is getting a little bit carried away, I think.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, speaking of looking people in the eye, he could look those firefighters up at Bunyip in the eye and apologise to them, maybe. Would that be a good thing to do?

I have dealt with the question. It was a negotiation, and progress was made; that is how negotiations work.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Supplementary question

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (12:24) — My supplementary question is to the Premier. UFU secretary Peter Marshall told ABC radio on 18 April that undisclosed promises that you made to him and the UFU had been broken, leaving professional firefighters now shattered. Premier, will you tell Victorians what these promises are, or do they have to wait for Peter Marshall to reveal them?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:25) — I would simply direct the member to the list of well-publicised —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — Well, you are asking me about the government's commitments, and I am indicating to you that the government has made commitments in relation to supporting our fire service. They are a matter of public record, and I have concluded my answer.

Mr R. Smith — On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier's answer in which he said that they are on public record shows that he has not answered the question that the member for Gembrook specifically asked about undisclosed promises. In the Premier's answer he has clearly not addressed the undisclosed promises. I ask you to have him, in written form, bring an answer that is relevant to the question to the house.

The SPEAKER — I thank the member for that point of order. I will consider that matter and report back to the house.

Ministers statements: water security

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Water) (12:26) — I am very pleased today to update the house on another amazing investment we are making in improving water security and strengthening Victoria's water grid, particularly in our rural and regional communities. After those opposite did absolutely nothing for four years to secure water security across the state we are providing millions of dollars to ensure the future of communities and agricultural production and to ensure jobs and prosperity.

Yesterday I again visited the East Grampians region, meeting with community members, farmers and councils from the region to announce funding of \$32 million for our share of the East Grampians pipeline. It is an investment that will provide affordable, reliable water to over 1500 rural enterprises — enterprises like Mount Langi Ghiran vineyard, who can expand and ensure highest quality

wine for the future; Braebrook Pastoral, a piggery that is relying on poor quality and reduced groundwater; or the Dobie lamb producers, who during dry times have to sell off their lambs in order to continue their business. These businesses were so happy, so pleased yesterday; there were tears in people's eyes. This is about their future and the future of the region and their ability to continue to thrive and grow their businesses.

As we are getting on with ensuring the health of our regions, the health of these communities, what we have is those opposite focused on their own health and wellbeing — the preselections on the weekend, the fights over who is in charge of the Liberal Party. That is the focus of those opposite. Or some of those out there who are just whingers — whingers who do nothing around water. We have delivered a business case to the commonwealth government. They have it. I ask those opposite to stand up for the health of our communities, our regional communities, and get that money from the feds.

Privatisation policy

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:28) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, in January you said that privatising the energy system was a mistake and that all Victorians are now paying the price with higher costs and worse services, but since coming to office you have sold off the port and reprivatised our public transport. Now your government is also planning to privatise the land titles office, privatise disability group homes and sell off public land on our public housing estates. Premier, when will you take your own advice on privatisation and stop selling off our state just to prop up your budget?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:29) — I do thank the member for Melbourne for her question, and I thank every member of our team who knows and understands, whether it is in West Heidelberg or other proud communities where people do it tough, that more public housing is critically important. I would say to the member for Melbourne: I am happy to go on a tour with her and she can show me all the public housing that the Greens have ever got built. It will not take us long because there is not one unit of public or social housing in this state that the Greens have ever constructed.

The member spoke about the port of Melbourne. We took a commitment to the people, and we have delivered on that. We have taken opportunities elsewhere to recycle assets where there is no prudent purpose in terms of public policy served by public ownership to redirect those funds into jobs and the

infrastructure that our state needs, not as commentators on the sidelines but instead as active participants in driving economic growth, skills, jobs and the services that are so important to families right across Victoria.

If the member for Melbourne is wanting me to apologise for having sold a long-term lease to the port of Melbourne so we could get rid of 50 dangerous and congested level crossings, then with the greatest of respect, do not hold your breath waiting for me to apologise for that, because we are proud to have delivered that infrastructure. We do not talk about delivering infrastructure; we get on and get things done — and in so many areas. When the Treasurer stands up in just a few moments to deliver a budget, he will be able to talk about those investments and the difference that they are making in people's lives, in communities that are different — an actual difference, that commentators in the cheap seats up the back there could only dream of making, a difference you could only dream of making. Well, dream on all you like. Dream big even, if you want to, and leave the hard work to those who do it best — a Labor government.

Supplementary question

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (12:31) — My supplementary is also to the Premier. Premier, many of this government's privatisation projects were never taken to the last election. Will you now at least be up-front with the community and tell Victorians what else you plan to privatise if you are re-elected in November?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:32) — I do thank the member for Melbourne for her supplementary question. The government has outlined a clear plan. We took a clear plan to the election in 2014. That is why we were able — despite the fact that we inherited literally not one project ready to go from that lot over there — to make a fast start, because we had a positive plan on day one. Similarly, if we are given that great gift and are returned at the end of the year, if that honour is bestowed upon us, we will also have laid out a clear and positive plan to continue building — not to continue commentating, but to continue actually building the things that our state needs. No-one in this state gets the life opportunities they are entitled to from commentary from those up the back. They get those opportunities through hard work and partnership and a government that gets things done. If you would like a briefing on that record, I am more than happy to arrange one.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (12:33) — Order! The member for Warrandyte has been warned. The member for Warrandyte will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Warrandyte withdrew from chamber.

Mr Hodgett — On a point of order, Speaker, surely on a day as important as budget day suspensions from the house today should be in the order of 15 minutes, because surely the greater punishment is having the member return to listen to the Treasurer's budget.

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

Ministers statements: employment initiatives

Mr CARROLL (Minister for Industry and Employment) (12:34) — I rise to update the house on the number of jobs being created under the Andrews government's record infrastructure program. Three times the number of jobs have been created under this government as those under those opposite. It is a great day for the government, but today is a great day for the manufacturing sector. Released this morning was the Australian Industry Group's Australian performance of manufacturing index. What does it say?

For the first time in over a decade, under the Andrews Labor government manufacturing has grown for 15 consecutive months. It has never been done before. Why has that happened? The \$110 million invested into the manufacturing sector. Let us underscore these facts: this has happened on the back of the closure of auto manufacturing. Through the work of my predecessor, the member for Williamstown, and our advanced manufacturing statement we are getting out there and supporting workers and making sure we have got the jobs of the future.

But I am very proud that we are not leaving anyone behind. Only last week with the Minister for Finance and the Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure, Mr Shaun Leane, we launched an Australian first: *Victoria's Social Procurement Framework*. We will make sure that this landmark policy supports Aboriginal Victorians, the long-term unemployed and the disability sector — any social enterprise out there — through our procurement programs, and we have got the runs on the board through the Major Projects Skills Guarantee and our Victorian Industry Participation Policy. We are going to make sure that the social enterprise sector — we have got 3500 social

enterprises in Victoria — benefits from our record infrastructure investments.

Whether it is the Metro Tunnel, the level crossing removal program or the infrastructure coming in the north-east link and the West Gate tunnel, we have got the track record. We are going to make sure our disability sector, Aboriginal Victorians — everyone — gets to benefit. In our manufacturing sector — we will always be the heart of manufacturing — no matter what the Liberals do with the defence contracts, we will continue to support this sector and grow jobs.

Bus industry

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (12:36) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. You botched compensation for taxi families and to this day refuse to even meet with them. Today family bus companies are here at Parliament because of your plans to steal their assets and destroy generational family businesses. Minister, will you show some courage and compassion and go out to the steps of Parliament to meet these families and justify your decision to seize their assets?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (12:36) — I thank the shadow minister for roads for his question. Just as those opposite in the Liberal Party lied to the taxi industry, it appears that they are continuing their campaign of lies to the bus industry as well. The content of the question —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members have been warned.

Ms ALLAN — The content of the shadow minister's question was wrong on many fronts, and I am very happy to correct the record so that he does not continue to spread misinformation. I am sure he would not, just like I am sure he would not continue to cuddle up to people who say terrible things online about members on this side. I am sure he would make sure he distances himself from that sort of behaviour.

We have been working very hard over the past —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Ms ALLAN — I am wondering if the member for Lowan will stand up and defend me against this outrageous attack.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order!

Ms ALLAN — I have made the point. We have been working very hard over the past three and a half years with the bus industry. Do you know what we have been working hard on? Rolling out over —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — To roll out over \$100 million in new bus services —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Caulfield and the member for Kew are warned.

Mr Hodgett — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the minister was asked: would she show some courage and compassion and go out and meet with them on the steps of Parliament — meet with these families — and justify the decision to seize their assets? I would ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question.

The SPEAKER — The minister was answering the question. The minister to continue.

Ms ALLAN — In answering the question, I am providing information to the member opposite that we have provided over \$100 million in rolling out new bus services right across suburban Melbourne and into regional Victoria. We are doing that because those opposite slashed bus routes when they were in government. They cut funding to bus services. What we have been doing over the past year or so is negotiating with the metropolitan bus owners on the new set of contracts that need to be put in place because the current contracts expire at the end of June.

What we have been determined to achieve is a better performance outcome for passengers. That is what we have been determined to achieve, and I am pleased to report to the house that so far over 75 per cent of the metropolitan bus network — the operators who operate that bus network — have signed up to these new arrangements. They support these new arrangements. They support that. The claims that those opposite are making about assets are wrong. They are plainly wrong.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — They may want to continue to shout and scream, but the information is wrong. I have told the Bus Association Victoria that they are wrong, and the campaign of misinformation needs to stop.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — I warn the member for South-West Coast.

Supplementary question

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (12:40) — Minister, given the massive impact of your plan to nationalise bus services and confiscate the assets of generational family businesses — a plan you told no-one about before the 2014 election — will you commit to the bus families who are here at Parliament today that you will delay signing any more of these contracts and take this unprecedented policy to the November state election?

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (12:41) — I am pleased to inform the member that no-one was told that this was happening because it is not happening. What he is claiming is simply wrong. I have told representatives and I have told —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — I hope you are not trying to intimidate and bully members on this side.

The SPEAKER (12:41) — Order! The minister will resume her seat. The member for Kew will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Kew withdrew from chamber.

Ms ALLAN — No operator is being asked to give up the assets that they currently hold. The bus industry have been clearly told this and understand this. As I said before, nearly 80 per cent of the operators in the current network in metropolitan Melbourne have signed up to these new arrangements because they also want to deliver better services. They want to put more bus services into local communities. They want an arrangement that gives them the flexibility to do that. We are determined to build a better bus network as opposed to those opposite who slashed and cut funding to bus services.

Ministers statements: metropolitan road upgrades

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (12:42) — I rise to update the house on this government's massive investments in suburban upgrades. I was with the Premier on Sunday announcing a \$2.2 billion exercise — major arterial road upgrades, 13 of them in the north and the south-east of the city. As we know, for many Melburnians this is how they get to work and get home, and it is so important for local businesses.

In the north we are doing Craigieburn Road, and I know the member for Yuroke has been at me for a long period of time to get that done, and so she was overjoyed. There are many others, whether it is Sunbury Road, Bridge Inn Road, Epping Road, Fitzsimons Lane or Childs Road. In the south-east — great news for everybody — there is Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road, Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road, Lathams Road, Pound Road West, Hallam North Road, Golf Links Road and Thompsons Road.

Let us be very clear what the response has been to this — unadulterated joy, to put it mildly. Budget boogie dancing in the streets — I can see it everywhere. I noticed that the mayor of Whittlesea called it a 'road party'. 'I am very excited', the mayor said — a bit like Ken Bruce. 'The state government has delivered'. And you have only got to look at what the RACV, the Committee for Greater Frankston, the Committee for Dandenong and those people who drive in the outer suburbs each day have said.

This is very much an A-grade program, an A-grade list and an A-grade dance, but there are always the bad news Barrys who go out there and do the same old east-west dance and have nothing else to say. But I have received two emails from a member on the other side, because he is extremely excited about the upgrade of Golf Links Road — that is the member for Hastings. He is very desperate to get a briefing, because he knows this major project is a great project for his area, and it had to be delivered by a Labor government.

Mr Clark — On a point of order, Speaker, on 6 February this year I asked a series of questions on notice of the Minister for Health regarding various statements and commitments that she had made and given during the course of the debate on the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017 and in relation to palliative care, including statements relating to inducements to lead members to vote for that legislation. The vast majority of the questions that I asked on that date have not yet been answered. They are now well overdue, and I ask you to follow up with the minister and ask her to comply with the standing orders and provide a reply to those questions.

The SPEAKER — Thank you for that point of order. We will follow that matter up. If the member could provide the clerks with the specific question numbers that would be appreciated.

Mr Katos — On a point of order, Speaker, I raise the constituency question of 29 March with regard to why the Minister for Roads and Road Safety is proposing to put a land acquisition for the Barwon

Heads Road through the living room of a house. That has not been answered, and I ask you to direct the minister to answer the question: question number 14 211.

The SPEAKER — Thank you for that point of order. We will raise that matter with the relevant minister.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Bayswater electorate

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (12:45) — (14 259) My constituency question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. In relation to the Dandenong Creek in Heathmont near H. E. Parker Reserve, what action is being taken to find the people responsible for polluting the creek on 7 April 2018, and what steps are being taken to ensure that further incidents of industrial polluting are prevented?

There have been a huge number of incidents of chemical pollution. This one saw large amounts of white chemical foam spilling out of the creek onto the banks near the tennis and netball courts. This foam was traced up to a stormwater drain near Marie Wallace Park, which services the Bayswater industrial estates. Many separate complaints have been raised with Environment Protection Authority Victoria about various incidents; however, no real resolutions have been forthcoming. An incident which occurred on Melbourne Cup Day last year nearly wiped out all of the aquatic life within 5 kilometres of the spill.

Those responsible for polluting are continuing to dump into our beautiful waterway because there is very little deterrence. The danger to the community and wildlife is very clear, and action by this minister and this government needs to be taken.

Narre Warren South electorate

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (12:46) — (14 260) My question is to the Minister for Health, and concerns Casey Hospital in my electorate. When will the next stage of the expansion of Casey Hospital begin?

The Andrews Labor government was the one that committed to a much-needed \$106.3 million expansion of Casey Hospital. The new facilities will allow the hospital to treat an extra 25 000 patients per year, perform 8000 more surgeries and support 500 more births: we are the baby boom capital in Victoria. For a growing area like Narre Warren South, this further expansion will certainly be a lifesaver. These new

developments will ensure our doctors, nurses and paramedics have the resources they need to help them when they need it most, when we all need it most. They and I are eagerly awaiting these new facilities and look forward to hearing about their progress.

Ovens Valley electorate

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (12:47) — (14 261) My question is to the Premier on behalf of Alan White, president of the Jubilee Golf Club in Wangaratta. The Premier will be very familiar with this club as he is aware that it has a dam onsite and a pipeline from the Ovens River to fill it. This dam is also identified as a water storage for bushfires in the Warby Range. The problem is that the diameter of the last 3.5 kilometres of pipeline, when built, was reduced from 150 millimetres down to 100 millimetres. It is not large enough. We ask the Premier, with his knowledge of the Warby Range bushfires and golf club security, to assist financially in increasing the diameter of this pipeline to 150 millimetres.

Broadmeadows electorate

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (12:48) — (14 262) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Is VicRoads investigating the possibility of constructing a pedestrian and cyclist bridge at Broadmeadows railway station?

The proposal was outlined in my strategy, *Creating Opportunity: Postcodes of Hope*, and has been echoed by the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board as part of an attempt to upgrade the entire railway station. This is an emblematic proposition in the community. Broadmeadows is the designated capital of Melbourne's north, and this would be part of how this upgrade would work for this area, which is undergoing booming population growth. Within two decades Melbourne's north will have the same population size that Adelaide has now, so this would be part of an important inclusive strategy to address this landmark site.

Brighton electorate

Ms ASHER (Brighton) (12:49) — (14 263) My question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. When will a signalised pedestrian crossing in Glen Huntly Road near Elwood Primary School be funded? The background to this is that VicRoads has developed a proposal to replace the existing crossing with a signalised pedestrian crossing. All that we are waiting for is funding.

I have written to the minister and have raised this with him in the Parliament previously. There is significant community support, as evidenced by a very, very large online petition and loads of correspondence to my electorate office. It will definitely improve safety in the area. I call on the minister to fund it, and I suggest today would be an excellent day.

Essendon electorate

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (12:50) — (14 264) I direct my constituency question to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: what is the latest information about the improvements to Racecourse Road, Flemington, to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists?

I want to place on record my thanks to and appreciation of Stephen Alomes, who I met with and who raised this issue with me in terms of lengthening the time of traffic signals at Newmarket Plaza shopping centre. We have had meetings onsite with VicRoads. Funding was allocated late last year, and construction is due to commence shortly. I am really pleased and delighted to be working with the community on this issue.

I compare and contrast this to some of the comments made by the member for Melbourne, who will fire off tweets or put something on Facebook but is not actually prepared to work with the community or with VicRoads to get the outcome required for the community. I would welcome an update from the minister in relation to this matter.

Morwell electorate

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (12:50) — (14 265) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. Minister, what is the latest information with respect to your government improving the reliability and travel times of V/Line services for Gippsland commuters? It seems that most days Gippsland commuters have to contend with disruptions, delays, cancellations, overcrowding on carriages and trains continually being replaced by buses. This is simply unacceptable for a major regional rail service.

Governments delight in spruiking how much funding they have provided for rail projects such as the level crossing removal program and sky rail; however, one has to ask what benefits Gippsland commuters will actually derive from these works. Gippslanders are bearing the brunt of ongoing disruptions, but the government seems silent on whether travel times will ultimately improve on the Gippsland line. In the late 1990s the then Labor government promised a fast rail

service for Gippsland and a travel time of approximately 90 minutes from Traralgon to Melbourne. This promise turned out to be a mirage. Gippsland commuters deserve to know if travel times are going to improve into the future as a result of current works, and if so, by how much.

Frankston electorate

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (12:51) — (14 266) My constituency question is for the Minister for Multicultural Affairs. I ask on behalf of my community whether the minister could look into the issue of aiding the new and emerging refugee community, predominantly South Sudanese, with their homework and support initiative (HSI), which operates out of the Brotherhood of St Laurence building in Frankston. The HSI runs in partnership with MiCare's New Hope Foundation, the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Woodleigh School. MiCare's New Hope Foundation is a registered charity, and the club has been running for over eight years. Every Tuesday after school approximately 60 to 80 children from primary to upper secondary school level meet at the club for assistance with their homework.

In my opinion it is essential for the community to have access to out-of-school support with a youth worker who understands their heritage and language, who demonstrates that it is possible to attend tertiary schooling in Australia and have a successful career, and who is in constant contact with families to ensure that no child misses out on opportunities. I ask the minister to look into this issue, and I await the minister's response.

Eildon electorate

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (12:52) — (14 267) My question is directed to the Minister for Water. What action are you taking to protect our creeks and streams from infestation by noxious weeds? In my electorate creeks are choked, particularly by blackberries, which are out of control. In the Yarra Valley alone there are many creeks already infested with blackberries, which are overtaking native flora and creating a haven for foxes and rabbits. These include Steels Creek, Stringybark Creek, Badger Creek, Coranderrk Creek, Picaninny Creek, Hoddles Creek, Sheep Station Creek, McCrae Creek, Shepherd Creek and Little Yarra River.

Residents are concerned by the lack of investment in and maintenance of our river banks and adjoining land. Equally the more our streams are fenced off, the greater the risk of full blackberry invasion. Property owners

that have maintained land adjoining creeks are now advised that:

A person must not cut, clear or take any live or dead vegetation from Crown land.

With this direction comes heightened concern by residents about fire risk and the invasion of noxious weeds. I understand that at Thomson Dam these weeds are in gigantic proportion and action needs to be taken.

Yuroke electorate

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (12:53) — (14 268) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. Craigieburn residents are thrilled with the announcement of \$24 million for the new Craigieburn South secondary college. My question is: what is the time line for the delivery of this new school?

With significant population growth in the Yuroke electorate, local families have expressed a strong desire for an additional secondary school to both ensure that our schools can continue to provide a great learning environment and deliver more options for students. This investment shows that the Labor government listens and is delivering on what is important to residents in my community. This approach is in stark contrast to the Liberals, who did not plan for a single new school in the Yuroke electorate in the previous term, despite knowing that growth was only going to continue in the coming years. I know that residents are very keen to hear more about this fantastic local investment and would greatly appreciate any further information that the minister can provide.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Acting Speaker comments

The SPEAKER (12:54) — Before moving to the introduction of bills, on 29 March the member for Ripon raised a point of order to draw my attention to a comment made by the Acting Speaker at the time to the gallery during the previous day's grievance debate. The Acting Speaker's remark could be seen as commenting on grievance contributions and was not appropriate. I will discuss this with the Acting Speaker involved and remind all those who take the chair of the conduct required.

Constituency questions

The SPEAKER (12:55) — On 29 March the member for Burwood asked me to review the member for Yan Yean's constituency question on the basis that it was a request for action rather than a question seeking

information. The question requested that agencies work together to deliver a pedestrian crossing in Diamond Creek, which is a request for action, so I uphold the point of order and rule the question out of order.

Questions without notice

The SPEAKER (12:55) — Three points of order were raised about the responsiveness of answers in question time on 29 March, and I committed to reviewing the transcript and reporting back to the house. The first was about the responsiveness of the Premier's answer to the third substantive question from the Leader of the Opposition. In addressing the question the Premier refuted the claims made in the question, which is a response to the question asked.

The second point of order was in relation to supplementary question 4, asked of the Minister for Sport. In allowing the question I had directed the minister to answer insofar as it related to his previous answers or to the Ombudsman's report, which he had discussed in the answer to the substantive question, but not to matters of parliamentary administration which are outside his ministerial responsibility. The minister's answer was quite brief, with several interruptions. While the minister's comments were brief, I rule that his answer was responsive as he confirmed his comments to the Ombudsman's report and his previous answer.

Finally, there was a point of order in relation to supplementary question 5, also to the Minister for Sport. The answer referred to the Ombudsman's report, which was raised in the question, and I consider that the answer was responsive.

STATE TAXATION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (12:56) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to amend the Duties Act 2000, the Payroll Tax Act 2007 and the Unclaimed Money Act 2008 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

PETITIONS**Following petition presented to house:****Yarck speed limit**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents and visitors in Yarck, Victoria 3719 draws to the attention of the house the speed limit in Yarck township.

Yarck is a growing regional town and is a very popular place for travellers to stop, rest and buy food and drinks.

The intersection of Maroondah Highway, Wrights Road and Yarck Road can be very busy with traffic passing through at 80 km/h, travellers and trucks stopping/parking and local traffic turning left or right.

The recent changes to this intersection now allow traffic travelling through at a speed of 80 km/h to pass a stationary vehicle waiting in the middle of the intersection to turn left or right without slowing down.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria change the speed limit through Yarck from 80 km/h to 60 km/h.

By Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (113 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition be considered next day on motion of Ms McLEISH (Eildon).

UNIVERSITY OF DIVINITY**Report 2017**

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education), by leave, presented report.

Tabled.

BUDGET PAPERS 2018–19

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer), by leave, presented budget paper 1, ‘Treasurer’s Speech’; budget paper 4, ‘State Capital Program’; 2018–19 ‘Overview’; budget information paper, ‘Suburban’; budget information paper, ‘Rural and Regional’; and budget information paper, ‘Gender Equality Budget Statement’.

Tabled.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**Financial and performance outcomes 2016–17**

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) presented report, together with appendices and transcripts of evidence.

Tabled.

Ordered that report and appendices be published.

Parliamentary Budget Officer appointment

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) presented report.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE***Alert Digest No. 5***

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) presented *Alert Digest No. 5 of 2018 on:*

Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018

Education Legislation Amendment (Victorian Institute of Teaching, TAFE and Other Matters) Bill 2018

Engineers Registration Bill 2018

Guardianship and Administration Bill 2018

Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018

Legal Identity of Defendants (Organisational Child Abuse) Bill 2018

Liquor and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS

Tabled by Acting Clerk:

Bendigo Kangan Institute — Report 2017

Box Hill Institute — Report 2017

Centre for Adult Education — Report 2017

Chisholm Institute — Report 2017

Deakin University — Report 2017

Falls Creek Alpine Resort Management Board — Report 2017

Federation Training — Report 2017

Federation University Australia — Report 2017

Financial Management Act 1994:

Budget Paper No 2 — Strategy and Outlook 2018–19

Budget Paper No 3 — Service Delivery 2018–19

Budget Paper No 5 — Statement of Finances 2018–19 incorporating Quarterly Financial Report No 3

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Amendment to Category 1 Public Lottery Licence under s 5.3.19

Gordon Institute of TAFE — Report 2017

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE — Report 2017

Holmesglen Institute — Report 2017

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 134/2017 (*Gazette G9, 1 March 2018*)

La Trobe University — Report 2017

Melbourne Polytechnic — Report 2017

Melbourne University — Report 2017

Monash University — Report 2017

Mount Buller and Mount Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board — Report 2017

Mount Hotham Alpine Resort Management Board — Report 2017

Municipal Association of Victoria — Report 2016–17

Ombudsman:

Investigation into Maribyrnong City Council's internal review practices for disability parking infringements — Ordered to be published

Investigation into Wodonga City Council's overcharging of a waste management levy — Ordered to be published

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 — Government response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee's Report on the 2017–18 Budget Estimates

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

Ballarat — C209

Buloke — C37

Colac Otway — C95

East Gippsland — C128

Glen Eira — C153, C180

Greater Dandenong — C198

Greater Shepparton — C190

Hume — C222

Manningham — C123

Melbourne — C313, C315, GC89

Moira — C85

Monash — C125 Part 1, C136

Moonee Valley — C169

Mount Alexander — C73

Port Phillip — GC89

Surf Coast — C121

Victoria Planning Provisions — VC138, VC140, VC145

Wellington — C84

Yarra Ranges — C167

RMIT University — Report 2017

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Building Act 1993 — SR 38

Constitution Act 1975 — SR 43

County Court Act 1958 — SR 34

Criminal Procedure Act 2009 — SR 46

Domestic Animals Act 1994 — SR 35

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — SR 45

Family Violence Protection Act 2008 — SR 36, 42

Greenhouse Gas Geological Sequestration Act 2008 — SR 41

Judicial Proceedings Reports Act 1958 — SR 37

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — SR 42

**FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
(REFORM) BILL 2017**

1046

ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 1 May 2018

Sheriff Act 2009 — SR 44

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — SR 40

Victoria Police Act 2013 — SR 39

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Notice under section 3.6.5A, fixing the value of the supervision charge

Road Safety Act 1986:

Determination of the cost recovery fee for participants in the first-stage behaviour change program

Order declaring offences against the laws of other States and Territories to be corresponding interstate drink-driving offences

Wildlife Act 1975 — Ministerial Order No 1 — Wildlife (Commercial Fisheries — Interaction with Protected Wildlife)

Southern Alpine Resort Management Board — Report 2017

South West Institute of TAFE — Report 2017

Sunraysia Institute of TAFE — Report 2017

Swinburne University of Technology — Report 2017

Victoria University — Report 2017

Wildlife Act 1975:

Wildlife (Prohibition of Game Hunting) Amendment Notice (*Gazette S169, 11 April 2018*)

Wildlife (Prohibition of Game Hunting) Notice (*Gazette S152, 29 March 2018*)

William Angliss Institute of TAFE — Report 2017

Wodonga Institute of TAFE — Report 2017.

The following proclamations fixing operative dates were tabled by the Acting Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 24 February 2015:

Bail Amendment (Stage Two) Act 2018 — Whole Act (except Parts 2 and 3) — 5 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Children and Justice Legislation Amendment (Youth Justice Reform) Act 2017 — Remaining provisions of Part 4, 6 and 8 — 5 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018 — Parts 1, 4, 5 (except Division 3) and 6 — 11 April 2018 (*Gazette S164, 10 April 2018*)

Crimes Legislation Amendment (Protection of Emergency Workers and Others) Act 2017 — Part 1, Part 2 (except ss 21, 22 and 23), Part 3 (except s 24(2)) and Part 4 — 5 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Real-time Prescription Monitoring) Act 2017 — Whole Act — 1 July 2018 (*Gazette S190, 24 April 2018*)

Family Violence Protection Amendment Act 2017 — Part 2 (except ss 32 and 41), Part 6 and Division 1 of Part 9 — 29 March 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Justice Legislation Amendment (Body-worn Cameras and Other Matters) Act 2017 — Whole Act (except Part 2) — 1 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*); Part 2 — 18 April 2018 (*Gazette S178, 17 April 2018*)

Justice Legislation Amendment (Protective Services Officers and Other Matters) Act 2017 — Parts 1, 2, 5 and 7 and s 59 — 1 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Justice Legislation Amendment (Victims) Act 2018 — Remaining provisions — 5 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Transport Legislation Amendment (Road Safety, Rail and Other Matters) Act 2017 — Part 3.4 — 2 April 2018; Part 2.2 (except s 6), ss 42 and 43, Division 1 of Part 2.7 and ss 72, 74 and 75 — 30 April 2018 (*Gazette S136, 27 March 2018*)

Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 — Part 1 (except ss 4, 6, 7 and 8) and Part 9 (except Divisions 4 and 5) — 1 July 2018 (*Gazette S190, 24 April 2018*).

**FIREFIGHTERS' PRESUMPTIVE RIGHTS
COMPENSATION AND FIRE SERVICES
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (REFORM)
BILL 2017**

Council's rejection

Message from Council read rejecting bill.

ROYAL ASSENT

Message read advising royal assent on 10 April to:

Children Legislation Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2017.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGES

Messages read recommending appropriations for:

Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018

Liquor and Gambling Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018.

APPROPRIATION (2018–2019) BILL 2018

Message read recommending appropriation and transmitting estimates of expenditure for 2018–19.

Estimates tabled.

Introduction and first reading

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (13:04) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of the government for the financial year 2018–19 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time; under standing order 87, ordered to be read second time immediately.

Statement of compatibility

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

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) (Charter Act), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018.

In my opinion, the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter Act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of Bill

The Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 will provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund for the ordinary annual services of Government for the 2018/2019 financial year.

The amounts contained in Schedule 1 to the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 provide for the ongoing operations of departments, including new output and asset investment funded through annual appropriation.

Schedules 2 and 3 of the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 contain details concerning payments from advances under section 35 of the Financial Management Act 1994

(Vic) and payments from the Advance to Treasurer in the 2016/2017 financial year respectively.

Human Rights Issues

1. Human rights protected by the Charter Act that are relevant to the Bill

The Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues.

2. Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)

As the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the Charter Act.

Conclusion

I consider that the Appropriation (2018–2019) Bill 2018 is compatible with the Charter Act because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Tim Pallas, MP
Treasurer

Second reading

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (13:08) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Speaker, from the moment we took office, we haven't wasted a day.

We think big. We act quickly. We get things done.

This budget holds true to our values and to our promises.

We said we would deliver a strong economy, and we have.

Victoria is the fastest growing economy in the nation.

We have delivered the highest average surplus of any Victorian government in history, we've kept debt levels below what we inherited, and we've maintained our prized AAA rating.

Crucially, they're the means by which we build the state and we deliver for all Victorians.

Speaker, this budget encapsulates everything the Andrews Labor government stands for.

It captures the essence of good government.

Good governments have a vision. They think decades ahead.

They manage the present, but act as custodians of the future.

They make tough decisions.

They build something bigger than themselves, something that endures for generations, something that leaves an indelible legacy.

Speaker, since 2014 this government has invested more than \$48 billion to build the schools, the hospitals, the roads and the public transport system our state needs.

During this time, hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created.

Indeed, one in every 10 jobs in our economy today was created over the past three and a half years.

While the previous government was artfully idle, we haven't wasted a moment in getting things done.

In the coming year, \$78.9 billion of state capital projects will commence, or are underway.

But when all the numbers are crunched, this budget is about the fundamental building blocks of any fair and prosperous society — more skills, more jobs, more schools, better hospitals and a better transport network.

It's about making people's lives easier.

Speaker, our economy will have grown by \$48 billion, in real terms, over the four years since 2014.

This growth has been driven by strong economic management, record investment, and increased productivity and participation in the labour market.

Indeed, nearly \$1 in every \$7 of economic value in Victoria today was created under this government.

This strong growth comes with inherent challenges.

Each year, we welcome more than 100 000 new Victorians, many coming here for a better way of life and to make the most of our booming economy.

We don't control migration targets, but we do control how we tackle both the challenges and opportunities of population growth.

We can invest in all Victorians, from our newest residents to the Kulin nation people on whose traditional lands we stand today.

We can invest in the roads Victorians will drive on, the schools they'll send their kids to, and the healthcare

professionals who'll look after them when they're unwell.

We can invest in the industries that will employ them in the future, ensuring they have the right skills for the right job.

It's what good governments do. And it's at the core of this budget, one that builds on our strengths, addresses pressing concerns and positions us well for the future.

Speaker, at the heart of the 2018–19 budget is a landmark \$644 million investment to ensure Victorians can get the skills they need for the job they want.

This is part of our unprecedented \$8.8 billion investment in the Education State, with a further \$1.3 billion to build and upgrade more schools and facilities.

The budget also includes a record \$4.2 billion to ensure quality health care for all, including historic action on mental health.

It provides more than \$4.3 billion for some of the biggest road projects in the history of our state, projects that will significantly reduce congestion and get Victorians home safer and faster.

It provides an additional \$1.9 billion to improve the efficiency and amenity of our public transport system, building on the more than \$25 billion we've already invested.

The budget maintains our commitment to every corner of the state, with more than \$4.3 billion for regional Victoria.

And it includes measures designed to ease cost of living pressures, particularly for our most vulnerable Victorians.

Speaker, this budget produces an operating surplus of \$1.4 billion in the budget year, with surpluses averaging \$2.5 billion over the following three years.

Net debt as a proportion of the economy is projected to be lower than the previous government's final year in office.

Real GSP is forecast to grow by 2.75 per cent in 2018–19 and continue at that growth rate over the next three years.

Indeed, Victoria's GSP saw the highest growth of all the states in 2016–17 — one of the many economic indicators where we lead the nation.

This year, we're also leading on population growth, full-time employment growth, wages growth and retail trade growth.

And we enjoy the strongest consumer sentiment and business conditions of all the mainland states.

These numbers only tell a fraction of the story of course.

But suffice to say, they underpin everything we do.

Without them, we wouldn't be funding new schools, laying new roads and building new hospitals.

They've also helped create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Nearly 334 000 have been created since we were elected, more than anywhere else in the nation during this time.

That's thousands more engineers, construction workers, apprentices, teachers and nurses.

These aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet.

Each is a story of hope, of opportunity, of progress.

Each job engenders a sense of purpose and belonging.

Every time we build a school, excavate a tunnel, open a hospital, it means more jobs for Victorians.

Since 2014, Victoria has contributed more than a third of the nation's total employment growth.

It's been a broad-based growth across gender, skill levels and regions.

Labour force participation, particularly for women, has increased to record levels.

And crucially, 41 000 of these jobs have been created in regional Victoria — more than double what the Coalition managed in their four years.

We also recognise the role the private sector has played in this economic resurgence.

This includes our small business sector, which accounts for nearly half of the state's private jobs, and which has experienced a fourth year of uninterrupted growth.

This budget contains a raft of measures, totalling almost \$500 million, which provide a boost to Victorian businesses — allowing them to access new markets, pay less tax, grow their operations and reduce red tape.

Speaker, we're particularly determined to make it easier for our regional businesses to operate, to grow and to take on more employees.

That's why, having already reduced the payroll tax rate in our regions last year, we're cutting it again to half that of metropolitan Melbourne — giving Victorian regional businesses the lowest rate in Australia.

This is expected to slash costs for around 4000 businesses, create jobs, encourage people to move to regional Victoria, and ensure every region shares in the benefits of our economic growth.

It's the third year in a row this government has eased the payroll tax burden.

And on 1 July this year, the payroll tax-free threshold rises again to \$650 000 — providing tax relief for about 38 000 businesses right across the state.

It also brings the total value of business tax cuts announced under this government to more than \$742 million — more than three times what our predecessors delivered.

Speaker, to continue this success, we not only need to invest in the projects our state needs, we need to invest in the people to deliver them.

From level crossing removals to classroom upgrades, from refurbished hospitals to resurfaced roads, it's TAFE-qualified workers who are building our state and caring for our families.

But the demand for these workers is outstripping supply.

Speaker, when we were elected, we promised to save our TAFE system. And we have.

Now we'll make it stronger than ever before — to meet our skills shortages and give every Victorian the opportunity for a good job.

To get that done, we need to invest in their skills, in their talent and in their ambition.

And we need to better align our workforce with the skills and experience employers are demanding.

That's why this budget invests in the biggest shake-up of vocational education and training in Victoria's history.

It includes \$644 million for training initiatives and \$184 million for skills programs in schools.

It's the single biggest investment in Victoria's TAFE system since its inception in the 1970s.

Speaker, too often cost has been an impediment to young people getting the skills for a good job.

This budget breaks down that barrier, by making priority TAFE courses free.

From 1 January 2019, 30 priority TAFE courses and 18 preapprenticeship courses across the state will be free.

These courses will focus on the skills our state needs.

To make sure every Victorian who wants a job can get a spot at TAFE, we'll open new classes and create 30 000 new TAFE and training places across Victoria.

And to make sure every corner of our state has access, we'll upgrade and redevelop three TAFEs in regional Victoria.

Speaker, we can't afford to slow down.

A stronger TAFE system means we can continue our momentum.

It means we can build on our Skills First program, an essential step towards fixing the broken system we inherited and restoring the confidence of students, employers and industry.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS — No, we are boring you to tears.

This will transform our apprenticeship programs.

The new Head Start apprenticeships and traineeships program will give secondary school students the opportunity to learn their trade at school and get a job sooner.

We're also investing \$109 million to boost careers education.

Ultimately it means all young Victorians will have the best advice to make the best decisions about their future.

This is all in stark contrast to the TAFE cuts of the previous government, which saw thousands of young people starved of opportunity and left gaping holes in our talent pool.

We, on the other hand, are ensuring Victorians are armed with the right skills for the right job.

Speaker, since 2014 we've invested \$8.8 billion building the Education State — more than double what the previous government managed.

Across Victoria that means more than 4000 new teachers, 70 new schools and upgrades to more than 1200 others.

We make these investments because we believe a strong education system is the best way to tackle inequality.

Indeed, we regard a modern and inclusive education system as the cornerstone of both a strong economy and our society as a whole.

Over the next five years Victoria's school-aged population will increase by about 90 000.

It's why we've spent the past three and a half years modernising our current buildings and investing in our state-of-the-art facilities.

We recognise that our education system must keep pace with rapid economic and technological change.

That's why the 2018–19 budget commits \$272 million to buy land for 19 new school sites in Melbourne, with a further \$483 million towards upgraded schools across Victoria.

From vertical schools in the inner suburbs to expansive new sites in the outer suburbs, this ongoing investment will enrich young lives and help educate the workforce of the future.

And from Mortlake College to Moolap Primary School, from the Surf Coast to the alpine region, we're investing more than \$180 million to build, upgrade and plan for 60 regional schools.

But, Speaker, there's more to the Education State than simply building new schools.

We're focused on improving science, technology, engineering and mathematics outcomes, with funding for 200 new maths and science specialists in our primary schools.

And we're ensuring Victorian students living with disability get the opportunities they deserve, with more than \$167 million to enable all students to participate in all aspects of school life.

Speaker, the importance of a good education starts early.

Every February thousands of pint-sized Victorians walk hand in hand with their parents on their first day of kinder.

From the very first day they deserve the best education possible.

They deserve an environment that fosters a lifelong love of learning.

They deserve an opportunity to create, to connect, to simply be kids.

That's what this budget delivers.

It builds on our previous investment in early childhood education and delivers a significant boost to kinder infrastructure.

Our \$122 million commitment will help kinders meet the growing demand for enrolments, provide access to the latest equipment and ensure that they are accessible and inclusive for kids of all abilities.

Kids like five-year-old Henry, from Gowrie kindergarten, whose blindness presents significant obstacles to learning.

This funding means he has access to a braille typewriter.

It means that he's ready for school. It affords him the same opportunities to grow, to learn and to contribute as every other Victorian kid.

Speaker, a healthy state is every bit as important as an educated one.

Access to universal health care goes beyond the concept of good government.

As the party of Medicare, it's one of Labor's greatest legacies.

It's about fundamental decency.

We've already invested \$1.8 billion building and expanding acute and residential health facilities across Victoria so our loved ones can get the care that they need.

And we've now got almost 500 more doctors and 2600 more nurses than we did three years ago.

This budget provides a massive \$4.2 billion to ensure Victorians continue to receive world-class health care.

It's funding that will make it easier and more convenient for Victorians to get the care they need, when they need it.

And it's funding that invests in the capacity and accessibility of our healthcare system, particularly in growth areas.

We don't shut hospitals. We build them.

This budget includes \$495 million for major metropolitan hospitals, including the Alfred and Sunshine hospitals, as well as the new Victorian Heart Hospital.

That's in addition to a \$2.1 billion boost to meet demand for health services and improve access to elective surgery, including emergency departments, intensive care units and palliative care services.

There's also \$124 million for the Peter Mac, Melbourne Health and the Royal Women's Hospital to design and develop a state-of-the-art electronic medical record system.

This will improve the safety and quality of care for patients, boost capacity for groundbreaking medical research and cement Parkville's reputation as one of the top biomedical research precincts in the world.

Having already achieved the fastest ambulance response times in a decade, we're funding a further 90 paramedics to support their life-saving work.

Contrast that with the previous government, who went to war with our paramedics and gutted our ambulance service.

In regional Victoria there's \$462 million for the redevelopment of the Ballarat Base Hospital, which will include a new emergency department and intensive care unit.

And there's \$115 million to upgrade the Wonthaggi Hospital's facilities, including a new emergency department and new and upgraded operating theatres.

Speaker, it's essential that we not only increase public awareness and reduce the stigma around mental health, but back this up with meaningful and decisive policy.

That's why we're providing a record \$705 million for mental health and alcohol and drug services.

This funding will directly assist more than 12 800 people and provide an additional 89 acute inpatient beds.

For too long these Victorians have been marginalised and misunderstood.

But good governments fund a healthcare system that recognises each patient is a parent, a child, an employee, a loved one.

We're also taking decisive action on ice, an insidious drug that ruins lives, tears families apart and puts an enormous strain on our health system.

That's why we're investing \$40.6 million towards three rural facilities to continue our support for regional communities dealing with the impact of ice.

Building on our Ice Action Plan, six emergency department crisis hubs will also be established across Victoria to help those in urgent need.

Just like our unprecedented initiatives to address family violence, this will save lives.

It's what we were elected to do. Whether it's essential health services or key infrastructure, we keep our promises and we get things done.

Speaker, since we were elected we've invested more than \$35 billion on transformative road and rail projects.

They create tens of thousands of jobs, ease congestion in the suburbs, better connect our regions and make it easier to move freight.

It's critical we balance the immediate needs of passengers and commuters with the long-term realities and priorities of a growing state.

From Mordialloc to Mernda, we're widening roads, making them safer, reducing congestion and getting people home quicker.

It includes \$2.2 billion for the suburban roads upgrade, a targeted package of upgrades to some of the most congested arterial roads in the south-eastern and northern suburbs.

There's also a further \$712 million for the Monash Freeway upgrade, together with \$110 million for the planning stages of the north-east link, the biggest transport infrastructure project in Victoria's history.

Likewise, the West Gate tunnel will create thousands of jobs, take trucks off residential streets and provide a vital alternative to the West Gate Bridge.

This budget also allocates \$50 million for detailed technical investigations into an airport rail link and a fast rail service to Geelong.

Speaker, roads are the lifeblood of our regions and are particularly crucial to our tourism and agricultural industries.

Before the last election the message from regional Victorians was loud and clear. The roads weren't up to scratch.

We listened and we have acted. We committed to spend a minimum of \$1 billion over eight years to repair and upgrade roads in regional communities.

Speaker, we've not only met that commitment; we've more than doubled it.

We've drawn heavily on local knowledge and have already rebuilt nearly 1000 kilometres of deteriorating roads in regional Victoria.

The 2018–19 budget commits \$941 million for our regional and rural roads.

A new authority for regional roads — based in Ballarat — will oversee a \$333 million boost to road maintenance and rebuilding across the state.

We're also investing \$98 million towards the Beaufort and Ararat bypasses along the Western Highway — a primary freight route between Victoria and South Australia and one of the busiest highways in the country.

For our Western District farmers, grain producers, tourism operators and manufacturers, this will be a game changer.

There is also \$100 million to assist rural and regional councils with the maintenance and restoration of roads in their communities.

But it's not just about roads. This government's commitment to public transport in this state is without peer.

We've already invested upwards of \$25 billion to ensure Victorians have more frequent and reliable services.

It's essential we invest in a system that is focused on the network in its entirety — a modern, safe and reliable system that puts passengers first.

At the heart of this is the Metro Tunnel, the most important public transport project in Victoria since the construction of the city loop.

And of course work continues on the removal of 50 of our most dangerous level crossings, with 38 expected to be completed or underway in 2018–19.

Meanwhile the new Sunbury and Cranbourne-Pakenham lines will be transformed as part of a major rail corridor upgrade.

The next stage of this investment will see \$572 million for a range of signalling, power and infrastructure upgrades along the corridor as well as planning works on the Sunbury line.

These upgrades will increase capacity and accommodate a fleet of new high-capacity Metro trains.

\$89 million will go towards extending services from South Morang to new train stations on the Mernda rail extension project and additional services on the Hurstbridge and Dandenong lines.

Speaker, public transport in regional Victoria was neglected by the previous government.

The problem was then exacerbated by the federal government's intransigence over infrastructure funding.

The 2018–19 budget builds on the work of the Andrews Labor government to rectify this, providing upgrades to every regional passenger line and creating jobs across regional Victoria.

There's \$313 million to upgrade infrastructure and enable VLocity trains to operate on the Shepparton line.

This will deliver faster journey times, a business case for nine return services a day, as well as improvements to signalling, tracks and platforms.

These and other critical works will ensure more comfortable, frequent and reliable train journeys, and make it easier for regional Victorians to access jobs, education and other essential services.

Speaker, every Victorian has the right to feel safe in their communities and in their homes.

In the past 19 years, 7000 additional police officers have been funded — all of them under Labor governments.

Having already committed to the biggest recruitment drive in the history of Victoria Police, this budget

invests a further \$1.4 billion towards community safety measures.

Despite the rhetoric and scaremongering on this issue, Victoria is the safest it's been for a decade, with ABS figures confirming —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr PALLAS — I will start again.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn will come to order. The member for Hawthorn is warned. The member for Malvern is warned.

Mr PALLAS — Despite the rhetoric and scaremongering on this issue, Victoria is the safest it's been for a decade, with ABS figures confirming the fourth successive annual fall in crime.

This budget includes a raft of measures to further reduce crime and support those who protect us.

It includes a \$689 million expansion of the Lara prison precinct, and a new bail and remand court.

But it isn't just about putting more police on the beat and throwing more crooks in jail.

It's also about establishing new courts, upgrading facilities and boosting resources to ensure a more responsive justice system.

And it's about acknowledging the role of disadvantage as an underlying cause of crime and better integrating our mental health, education and justice sectors.

Speaker, this government recognises Victorians are increasingly burdened by cost-of-living pressures.

It's why we're investing \$48 million in the power saving bonus to encourage and assist Victorian households to get a better deal from electricity providers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Hawthorn has been warned.

Mr PALLAS — Not only will they receive a \$50 bonus for using our Energy Compare website, they could save hundreds of dollars a year off their electricity bills.

We'll also provide \$22 million to boost the utility relief grant cap from \$500 to \$650 — helping those suffering

unexpected hardship to pay their water, gas or electricity bills.

For our outer suburban areas, this budget also invests in the Growing Suburbs Fund, building on the \$150 million already provided, with an extra \$50 million to fund vital local community infrastructure.

That's in addition to the \$30 million for the Pick My Project grants program, which allows locals to decide on their own funding priorities.

Importantly, we're also committing \$20 million to improve the financial efficiency of rural local governments.

This budget addresses our susceptibility to drought and the challenges presented by population growth and climate change.

It's critical we properly manage our water resources, which is why we've allocated \$42 million to ensure greater water security for households, agriculture, industry and the environment.

From Mildura to Mallacoota, from our inner-city parks to Port Phillip Bay, we're also investing \$141 million to protect our marine and coastal treasures, and maintain our parks and forests.

For Aboriginal Victorians, we're providing a further \$116 million to progress cultural, economic and social self-determination, and work towards closing the gap in health and socio-economic outcomes.

This will continue the delivery of Victoria's Aboriginal justice agreement, strengthen employment and business opportunities and provide ongoing support for Aboriginal families and young people.

The budget also invests \$29 million to ensure Victoria remains Australia's digital technology leader, with funding to boost cybersecurity and remove mobile blackspots.

It provides a \$246 million boost to our visitor economy, which attracts millions of domestic and international visitors each year, and injects billions of dollars into the economy annually.

And to further enhance our status as the nation's cultural capital, it includes \$37 million to redevelop the Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

Speaker, as the sporting capital of the world, our major sporting events showcase everything that makes Victoria great, attracting millions of visitors each year and boosting our local economy.

The 2018–19 budget invests more than \$231 million in our major sporting venues, including redevelopments to Etihad Stadium and Moorabbin Oval, and planning for further upgrades to Ballarat's Eureka Stadium.

But it's essential that we also invest in grassroots sport, so often the focal point of local communities and the foundation of a healthy, active lifestyle.

That's why we're investing more than \$242 million in community sport and participation.

This includes an unprecedented \$82 million to upgrade women's sporting facilities and venues across the state to make it easier for women and girls to participate in all forms of sport.

There's also \$64.6 million to redevelop the State Netball and Hockey Centre, including six new indoor netball courts.

Speaker, we're a government grounded on fundamental, unstinting values — a government that celebrates our diversity, that delivers for all Victorians.

We're a government that's ensuring our economic prosperity doesn't just benefit a privileged few.

And we're certainly not an idle government.

As the great Welshman Lloyd George said nearly 100 years ago, 'The finest eloquence is that which gets things done; the worst is that which delays them'.

Our government believes in decisive action, in generational, transformative projects that benefit all Victorians.

In public office — just as in life — you are what you do, not what you say you'll do.

We promised Victorians we'd get on and deliver, and we're doing that at pace, with a focus like no other government before us.

This budget is the culmination of four years of growth, of prudent economic management and of good government.

It's our blueprint for Victoria's future, a Victoria that leads the nation, a Victoria that aims high while reaching out a helping hand to its most disadvantaged.

It's about getting things done.

I commend the bill to the house.

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

Debate adjourned until Tuesday, 8 May.

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT
2018–2019) BILL 2018**

Message read recommending appropriation and transmitting estimates of expenditure for 2018–19.

Estimates tabled.

Introduction and first reading

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport)
(13:47) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act for the appropriation of certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the Parliament in respect of the financial year 2018–19 and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time; under standing order 87, ordered to be read second time immediately.

Statement of compatibility

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) tabled following statement in accordance with Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006:

In accordance with section 28 of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) (Charter Act), I make this statement of compatibility with respect to the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018.

In my opinion, the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018, as introduced to the Legislative Assembly, is compatible with the human rights protected by the Charter Act. I base my opinion on the reasons outlined in this statement.

Overview of Bill

The purpose of the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 is to provide appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament in respect of the 2018–2019 financial year.

Human Rights Issues

1. Human rights protected by the Charter Act that are relevant to the Bill

The Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues.

2. Consideration of reasonable limitations — section 7(2)

As the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 does not raise any human rights issues, it does not limit any human rights, and therefore it is not necessary to consider section 7(2) of the Charter Act.

Conclusion

I consider that the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 is compatible with the Charter Act because it does not raise any human rights issues.

Tim Pallas, MP
Treasurer

Second reading

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport)
(13:50) — I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

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

I move that this Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 be read a second time.

The Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 provides appropriation authority for payments from the Consolidated Fund to the Parliament in respect of the 2018/2019 financial year, including ongoing liabilities incurred by the Parliament such as employee entitlements that may be realised in the future.

Honourable members will be aware that other funds are appropriated for parliamentary purposes by way of special appropriations contained in other legislation. In addition, unapplied appropriations under the Appropriation (Parliament 2017–2018) Act 2017 have been estimated and included in the budget papers. Before 30 June 2018, the actual unapplied appropriation will be finalised and the 2018/2019 appropriations will be adjusted by the approved carryover amounts under section 32 of the Financial Management Act 1994 (Vic).

In line with the wishes of the Presiding Officers, appropriations in the Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 are made to the departments of the Parliament.

The total appropriation authority sought in this Appropriation (Parliament 2018–2019) Bill 2018 is \$154 293 000 (clause 3) for Parliament in respect of the 2018/2019 financial year.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr CLARK (Box Hill).

Debate adjourned until Tuesday, 8 May.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (13:50) — I move:

That the house, at its rising, adjourns until Tuesday, 8 May 2018.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (13:50) — The opposition opposes this motion. This is yet again a year in which the government is trying to escape scrutiny of its budget by having this house sit for only one day. It is a sign of their lack of commitment, their lack of accountability, their lack of confidence in their own budget and their lack of support for an open, democratic process, that they should convene this Parliament for one day and then scuttle away without being prepared to stand up in this house and be accountable for the budget and allow the budget to be scrutinised and for the government to be questioned about their intended financial initiatives. We believe it is completely unacceptable that that be the case.

The opposition will of course be making very clear our views in whatever ways are available to us, but it is complete disrespect to the house and to the community whom this house represents that the government should be not continuing the sittings in the longstanding way in which they have over previous years. This is an innovation that takes parliamentary democracy in completely the wrong direction, and it is one that we will continue to oppose.

The further reason of course that the government this year, as indeed last year, has for not wanting to have this house sit is the scrutiny to which it would otherwise deservedly be subjected over the ongoing rorts and abuses of office under the current government, which have of course been compounded by the report of the Ombudsman just recently, on top of the abuses and issues relating to the conduct of the former Speaker and the former Deputy Speaker as well as the continued issues regarding the Deputy President of the Legislative Council.

At the risk of repeating myself, it is absolutely extraordinary that these senior officers — including the member for Melton, who I think has a nerve to interject on this issue — should so abuse not only the allowances that are made available to them as individual members of Parliament but also the office, which should be one of respect and dignity and which had been entrusted to them to uphold the standards of this house rather than to debase them. I have said before and I will continue to say it: those matters should have

been referred to a select committee for investigation of the contempt of Parliament which, on the available evidence, would seem to have been committed by the former Speaker and the former Deputy Speaker. That select committee should have been empowered to get to the bottom of what went on and to take evidence from the relevant parties so that the community could know the full facts, so that the report could be presented to this house and so that if a finding of culpability were to be confirmed by that select committee this house could take appropriate action.

Needless to say, exactly the same course should be being followed in relation to the Ombudsman's report. This house has traditionally had responsibility and been given the community's confidence to take responsibility for upholding the standards of the house. Over many decades in the Victorian Parliament and over centuries in the Westminster Parliament the house has had responsibility for upholding its own standards. Certainly in Westminster in the 19th century that was confirmed, and well-established practices were put in place to stop the rorting and abuse of office that had previously been occurring in that Parliament.

Similarly, up until very recent times this Parliament and this house have also upheld the standards expected of us. Yet the current government refuses to act. It wants to run away from dealing with motions such as that of which notice has been given by the Leader of the Opposition to establish a select committee. We should be dealing with that matter, and therefore the coalition opposes this motion.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (13:55) — I want to make a few brief comments, and I rise in support of the motion moved by the Leader of the House. It is the right and the prerogative of the government to establish the sitting schedule. That is the right of any elected government that holds a majority in this house. This government has determined that we wish to have one day where the budget is handed down, and then many members, like me, are quite looking forward to going out into our electorates and talking up the great news that this budget brings to our communities.

I can understand why the member for Box Hill would not want to do that. I can understand that those opposite would much rather be here, locked up in the fetal position in their offices downstairs in the dungeon or upstairs, rather than having to go out and face their communities and say all the good things that this government has delivered in this budget today, but we will not be diverted from our task as an elected government. I have got a responsibility to my community to be out there tomorrow and later

throughout the course of this week to talk to my community about the benefits that this budget brings.

As I indicated, it is the right of the government to establish the sitting schedule of this place. It is not a matter for the opposition to determine these matters. We have made it very clear that we want to have one day today and we want to go back out into our communities to celebrate all the good that is in this budget. That is why I support the Leader of the House's motion.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (13:57) — I oppose the Leader of the House's motion to adjourn. I think we should sit for the whole week this week. As the member for Essendon was saying about going out and selling the good news, on my quick estimation of the budget I actually have not got much good news to go and sell because as usual this is about a Premier for Melbourne, not a Premier for all of Victoria. There is basically very, very little in the budget for regional Victoria.

Ms Allan — That's a lie.

Mr WALSH — There might be some business cases and some studies. This mob has been in power for three and a half years —

Ms Allan — What about Shepparton? What about \$313 million for Shepparton? That's pretty big.

Mr WALSH — They do not need to be doing business cases and studies. They actually need to be funding real projects. On the interjection from the Leader of the House, I do not notice a new train fleet for regional Victoria in the budget. Something that we have is the \$633 million that we have committed to a train fleet.

Ms Allan — That's because you must have missed the 87 we've already done.

Mr WALSH — That was actually ordered in the Hamer days; that is how old the trains are. This government has actually done nothing about replacing those trains.

I actually came down on the train on Sunday night, and if they would wash the windows it would be a good start. The windows are actually absolutely filthy on the train from Swan Hill. When I was on there recently with the Leader of the Opposition and his family, we spoke with a conductor and he actually apologised for the condition of those trains and said the same thing. At least if they would wash the windows it would be a good start.

So I think we need to be in this place. We need to do our job in debating the budget. It is not all about going out and talking to our constituents in this case. It is about the Parliament scrutinising the executive government. That is what the role of the Parliament is: it is to scrutinise the executive government and to hold the executive government to account. But the fact that the Leader of the House has moved a motion that we only sit for the one day this week shows that those opposite are actually ashamed of their budget. They actually want to go out and talk to other people rather than expose themselves to the scrutiny of Parliament in talking about the budget.

If the Treasurer actually believed the rhetoric in his speech today, the house would sit for the whole week. The shadow Treasurer would have the opportunity to do his budget response on Thursday, as has been the tradition except for last year when we had this same debate at that time. The parliamentary tradition here in Victoria is to have a full sitting on a budget week, to have the budget delivered on a Tuesday, as has happened, and to have the shadow Treasurer do his budget response on the Thursday. That way I think the Parliament is working how it is designed to work, where the Parliament is actually using this forum here to examine and to hold the executive government to account for the decisions they are making. The fact that we have got a one-day sitting and we are not coming back until next week for the shadow Treasurer and for the shadow ministers to do their budget responses says to me that the Andrews government wants to hide. They want to run away from scrutiny.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr WALSH — You might laugh, but that is the signal that is being sent to those people out there who expect us and who pay us to do our job in this place, and not just employ spin doctors to spin everything and not have Parliament examine things.

I absolutely oppose what the Leader of the House has put forward in relation to only having a one-day sitting. We most definitely should be sitting for all of this week to give the opportunity to have proper scrutiny of the budget. It is appalling that we will not have that. I think the Andrews government and all the members of Parliament that sit on that side of the chamber should hang their heads in disgrace that they will not actually let the Parliament perform its role. This is about showing total disrespect to the Parliament. I suppose for someone who has got absolutely no respect for the Country Fire Authority volunteers —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! Members on my right! The member for Yuroke is warned.

Mr WALSH — I am not surprised that there is no respect for the Parliament. There is no respect for the systems of Victoria. It is all about bullying and intimidation, and what they can get away with in rotting the system here.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (14:02) — I rise to support the motion moved by the manager of government business. I do so because the opposition talk about accountability, but when we talk about accountability we are accountable — yes, of course — to the Parliament, but we are accountable more so to our communities. Our communities, as the member for Essendon said, are expecting us to go out there and explain the budget, and share the news and communicate with those people who elected us to put us here about the most significant event in the calendar of a government — that is, delivering the budget. That is what we should be doing tomorrow and the entire week. Understandably those opposite do not want us to do that, because the budget is a very, very good budget. Of course, politics gets in the way. They say, ‘No, no, no. We don’t want you out there selling a good budget. We want you in here’.

But, on the second point, it is interesting that the Leader of The Nationals talks about how we should be supporting sitting for the rest of this week because that is the design of the Parliament — that is how Parliament is designed to work. We thought that too with pairing arrangements in the upper house. We thought that was the design of how Parliament has worked for 700 years of the Westminster system. But no, when it suits the opposition, Parliament just works the way their politics decides it works on any given day.

In concluding my brief contribution in supporting the manager of government business’s motion, I want to say, if they talk about accountability to the Parliament, I give them three things. One is, as the member for Essendon said, that Parliament’s very own committee, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, will absolutely scrutinise the budget for an intense few weeks; two, they have the rest of this year to scrutinise the budget; and three, because we have had so many prebudget announcements they could have done it in question time today but they squandered that opportunity. I support the motion moved by the manager of government business.

Ms ASHER (Brighton) (14:04) — I wish to say a couple of words. I have been prompted to get to my feet by the member for Oakleigh and by a number of things

that he has put to the Parliament which are absolute nonsense. First of all, I oppose the motion put by the Leader of the House. The house should sit for obviously Tuesday budget day, Wednesday and Thursday, as has been the case for time immemorial. It is particularly important that the house sits this week because, first of all, the opposition should be given the choice should it wish to respond on Thursday. Sometimes that has happened; sometimes the opposition has chosen to respond later. But the opposition must have the choice, in my opinion, of responding in budget week. What the government has done is deny the opposition the choice to respond in budget week. It is also important, I believe, that the opposition have a chance to ask questions on the budget. I understand the member for Oakleigh is new, but you cannot ask questions today on the budget that has not been brought down because we do not have the budget papers. The member for Oakleigh may have a series of press releases, but in actual fact questions will be based on the budget documents, as they should be. I think if any senior shadow ministers were to ask questions in relation to press releases it would be an inadequate basis for a question. Parliament should sit this week to enable question time about the most important document the government will release in this particular year.

I would also wish to make a comment in relation to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) because previously there was a budget sitting week, then the house adjourned for two weeks to allow all of the hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee to take place. I appreciate that the member for Oakleigh is new, but that is the way it used to be. And then the Parliament came back. All of the PAEC hearings were conducted in the two weeks immediately after the budget. I have not seen the PAEC hearing schedule for this year, but I bet you it is the same as last year, and it will go on and on and on into June. Scrutiny is not scrutiny that goes on for months and months. The media is interested in it now and the public is interested in it now. The opposition again, by the scheduling of Parliament in this matter which has truncated Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings, has been put at a massive disadvantage because the government has manipulated the scrutiny that has been able to occur.

I also take up the point by the member for Essendon and the member for Oakleigh that they would like to be out in their electorates. If you took that reasoning to its logical conclusion, then why sit the Parliament at all? Of course I am not suggesting that they are arguing that, but I am simply saying, ‘We do not want to be here; we would like to be in our electorates’, is not a

good argument for truncating the sittings of the Parliament.

I move now to the context of the sitting schedule for this election year. I notice, and I am sure others did notice when the sittings were released, that this is the shortest election sitting schedule since the four-year terms have been introduced.

Ms Allan interjected.

Ms ASHER — I would advise the Leader of the House to go and look at the sitting schedules under the Liberal-National coalition, and indeed the sittings that Peter Batchelor also put out. This is the shortest sitting schedule in an election year that I have seen since the introduction of four-year terms.

So we have a truncated budget week sitting, we have a truncated sitting for the election year, and indeed, this Parliament is going to rise in September. Again, that is a very early rising compared with the traditions of the past, which have seen the Parliament sit through until October. So we have seen a manipulation of sitting dates in relation to this week, a truncation of sittings for this election year, and it is in the context of this truncation — and indeed, the fact that the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee will not be able to adequately scrutinise the budget in the time frame that previously existed — that I oppose the resolution put by the Leader of the House.

House divided on motion:

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, Mr
Howard, Mr	Thorpe, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Ward, Ms
Kairouz, Ms	Williams, Ms
Kilkenny, Ms	Wynne, Mr
Knight, Ms	

Noes, 36

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

Motion agreed to.

Program

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (14:15) — I move:

That, under standing order 94(2), the orders of the day, government business, relating to the following bills be considered and completed by 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 1 May 2018:

Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018

Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018.

What a great day it is to be moving a government business program — budget day. There is a lot to talk about, and there is a lot of business to undertake as well — the business of the house. As we did last year, we are proposing that two bills be completed over the balance of the day. There will be a significant amount of time for members to consider these bills in the detail they would like to consider them in, to make their contributions, to give these bills what I would hope will be successful passage through this place and send to them on their way to the Legislative Council.

I look forward to unanimous support for this government business program. I remind particularly those opposite that this is the same sort of program that we moved last year, so there are no surprises in the number of bills on the program this year. We look forward to the support of members so we can get on and start debating and discussing these bills, which I am sure will attract keen interest in the Parliament. With those few words I commend the program to the house.

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (14:16) — The opposition opposes this program. We oppose it for a number of reasons. First of all, it adds insult to injury that not only

does the government have the house sit for only one day during budget week — for all the reasons that we canvassed a few minutes ago — but then on top of that it tries to push two bills through this house on a single sitting day, a large part of which has been taken up with the budget.

The Leader of the House referred to the fact that there was a government business program last year, which, from memory, this side of the house also opposed. But on top of that, the business program last year was for two relatively modest bills, one of them indeed being a statute law revision bill, whereas on this occasion the government is proposing two very sizeable bills, both of which raise a number of complex issues that deserve detailed consideration to ensure that both the principle and the detail of each bill is carefully examined.

I note that the Leader of the House made no reference to consideration in detail. Indeed this side of the house did not even think it worthwhile raising that possibility, because it is clearly going to be impossible on a single day of sitting with the house moving to the adjournment debate at 7 o'clock. This is yet again the government seeking to stampede business through the house.

I note that earlier the member for Essendon talked about the government's right to determine when Parliament sits. He is sufficiently a student of history to know that if a government has a majority in the lower house and abuses that majority, that undermines the integrity of the parliamentary system. I would certainly hope that he, for one, would be an upholder of the parliamentary system and would respect the need for the Parliament to sit to allow sufficient time for deliberation on bills. If one took to an extreme the member for Essendon's views, the house would not bother to sit for debate; it would simply sit for long enough to introduce and ram through bills without debate, and then everyone would go home again. I am sure he would not want that. I certainly hope none of his colleagues would want that. That is the extrapolation of the sort of argument the member for Essendon was using to defend the truncated sittings of this house and, by implication, the pushing through of whatever business the government wants.

A further reason that we on this side of the house oppose the government business program is that yet again it does not deal with the elephant in the room — the issue of the rorts and abuse of electorate office allocations in relation to the red shirts and in relation to the conduct of the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

The previous Parliament dealt with allegations against a member of this house — indeed, a member on the then

government side — by referring that matter to the Privileges Committee for investigation and report. This house then dealt with that report and imposed appropriate sanctions on the member concerned. Just as the previous Parliament proceeded in that way, as was proper and appropriate, so this Parliament should be proceeding to have these matters investigated in relation to the allegations against the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker and the matters that are covered in the Ombudsman's report about the red shirt abuse of office, which, it has been pointed out, would appear to be the single greatest financial abuse of office at any time in this Parliament's history. Somewhere in the vicinity of \$400 000 of public money was apparently taken and misused in breach of the rules by a number of members on the other side of the house. That cries out for investigation.

The Westminster Parliament was forced to go through major reforms when abuses of office by its members were identified, but here the Labor Party seems to think that if it just stonewalls for long enough, it can avoid being held to account for its apparent abuse of office and indeed suggestions about breaches of criminal law. The latter is for the police to deal with, and the former is for Parliament. We oppose this motion.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (14:22) — I am pleased to make a contribution in support of the government business program. In taking my leave from the Leader of the House in relation to contributions, I will keep mine to a few salient points, given there is so much to discuss with communities on a positive note in relation to the state budget. I think we can get on with the business of the house very shortly.

In particular I did want to note that the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018, up for debate in the house today, comes in light of the work of the former Law Reform Committee, which I was a member of back in the previous Parliament, in relation to access to justice for people with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities. I do look forward to the opportunity to make a contribution in relation to the matters in that bill and many of the recommendations that our committee made way back then in relation to improving not only access to but the experience of the justice system for people with disabilities and their carers. I do look forward to our debate and discussion on those matters and also of course on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018, as outlined by the Leader of the House.

Can I say also that there will be many opportunities over the coming week when we return to the Parliament to continue to discuss and debate other matters. In

particular today is an opportunity for us to delve further into talking to our communities about the budget, and it is an opportunity to deal with two significant pieces of legislation that have been on the public record for some time now. I look forward to our debates and discussions on those matters and also the opportunity to talk to my community outside of this place in relation to the state budget and the \$14 million announced today for schools in the Ivanhoe electorate. I commend the government business program to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (14:24) — I rise to oppose the government business program for a number of reasons, but firstly I will begin with the two bills that are before the house. One of those bills is particularly significant, and that is the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. This has come about as a result of considerable debate and an all-party inquiry, which I was a member of, and this will have a significant impact on the cost of doing business in Victoria. Therefore it needs to be well debated, because its impacts will be extensive across various parts of our economy. It also creates yet another piece of giant Labor red-tape bureaucracy, something that does need a strong light shone on it because, again, all these things have to be paid for — and paid for they will be, but by businesses in Victoria. I am sure there will be strong and passionate debate about that issue.

Also, the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018 is, again, a wideranging bill that has quite a number of aspects to it which will in fact require some considerable debate. There are a very large number of acts that are amended by this particular bill, and it is one that this Parliament should give, and one that deserves, a comprehensive debate. It also includes changes around VCAT, which is one of the more common courts of law as such that people end up in.

With all of that we have just had a debate around the sitting of the house and, again, this one-day sitting for the budget is not fair or correct for the people of Victoria. This is a budget that does need scrutiny, it does need debate, and it should be done while it is fresh in people's minds. So to have a one-day sitting and then return a week later does not do justice to the Parliament and our role as those holding government to account and keeping the people of Victoria informed, particularly on something as significant as the state budget. There is a great deal in the budget, and I am sure there is a great deal of things that people would like to know, and the Parliament sitting and casting scrutiny over the budget will in fact provide that. To have one day, go away and come back to it later is in fact to sell the budget, the Parliament and the people of Victoria short.

Also, as raised by the member for Box Hill, the rorts, the red shirts affair, still needs scrutiny. The rorting really goes way beyond what was repaid by the Labor Party over this issue, and it does need to be resolved for the integrity of Parliament. Parliament does need to come up with something — a solution or some process or some punishment — that passes the pub test out there. If it were not so serious, it would be considered to be fiction, but it is not fiction; it is real. It does need to be dealt with, and therefore the Parliament should be sitting. The upper house should be here this week, because now it falls to the Parliament to discipline itself, having had this process gone through, and do what the other parts of our justice system are reluctant to do. Because of that pub test and what people believe, they are looking for some sanction to be applied by the Parliament, and this is the last place where it can be done and should be done.

I oppose the business program on behalf of The Nationals for those reasons: for lack of scrutiny, for the sitting of the house and the budget, for the bills that deserve better debate and for the rorting that has occurred with the red shirts.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (14:28) — I rise to support the Leader of the House's government business program. I listened with interest to the member for Brighton and her contribution on the previous debate that we had. There are a couple of points I would like to make and bring to the house's attention. Yes, we are having one day here of sittings, but we are back next week, and then I and the member for Mornington will disappear into the vortex that is the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. It is worth pointing out to the member for Brighton, though, that this year there are actually more hearings than there has ever been to my knowledge. I think we are pushing now around about 60 hours worth of hearings when you cover off all the portfolios. This is interesting to point out because we have got a budget of around \$70 billion and we are going to have around about 60 hours of hearings.

I know the member for Box Hill is a keen aficionado when it comes to the power of the Westminster institution and the Westminster system, and he has indeed expressed a love and a desire for the mother country and all that is good that resides in the mother country. One thing I would point out to the member for Box Hill though is that in terms of the 2018–19 fiscal year the British Parliament will pass expenditure of £777.85 billion, which is equivalent to \$1.416 trillion. The House of Commons will spend three sitting days debating that expenditure and, as the member for Mornington can attest, the forms and rules of that debate are actually quite narrow. The ability of

members of the British Parliament to have a minister come before them and pursue any number of questions they may wish to explore as they relate to the forward estimates of the budget process are somewhat limited. With that brief observation, I commend the government's business program.

Mr HIBBINS (Pahran) (14:30) — I will pick up on the practices of Westminster and mention something that this house might want to consider. In Westminster they have a separate question time for the Prime Minister and ministers, so that house has a better chance of holding ministers to account. There is something we could consider.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — I don't know. Perhaps others might inform me of whether in Westminster they have a government business program and a guillotine. I am unsure, but I think this house might want to question whether that is needed here, given the long list of bills that are still before the upper house. We can ram them through down here but they are not getting anywhere upstairs. I would question the need to have a government business program, given the fact that we have also seen during this term of government important bills not get the scrutiny they need. We have not seen many bills go into consideration in detail, and there have been other times when minor administrative bills have been dragged out and filibustered on, with people speaking for their full 10 minutes. I question whether we need a government business program in the first place.

There are two important bills on this government business program to be completed today. I understand that this is what occurred last year, but I am still surprised that the government would use just one day to have a government business program and not simply start the debate on a bill they might want to complete next week. These are two important bills, but unfortunately again we have the failure of the government to refer the members for Melton and Tarneit to the Privileges Committee for their misuse of the second home allowance. Now on top of that we had the refusal of the government to refer members who have breached the Members Guide in their extraordinary misuse of public money by the Labor Party to fund their election campaign, as outlined in the Ombudsman's report. They even did this in the Pahran electorate, which of course did not get them too far. We have had misuse of public money and then the refusal of this chamber to hold those members to account. It is utterly appalling.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — Well, I tell you what, when you knock on 20 000 doors you make your own luck, don't you, mate?

The SPEAKER — Order! Through the Chair.

Mr HIBBINS — One bill that I would note that is not on the government business program is no. 9 on the notice paper, the Victorian Independent Remuneration Tribunal and Improving Parliamentary Standards Bill 2017. The one bill that was supposed to improve parliamentary standards in response to the misuse of public money by MPs is languishing on the notice paper. Why is that? Perhaps it would have been better if it had been brought in earlier and passed earlier. That might have lifted standards in this place, particularly in relation to what occurred on Good Friday with the rapping on the pairing deal. I think the onus is now on this government in this chamber to lift its standards and to introduce bills and measures to improve the standards of this place.

Also on the notice paper is a direction for the Speaker to establish a parliamentary integrity adviser. I would suggest that this would need to be strengthened, given that this government has shown itself incapable of holding its own members to account. We do need an independent parliamentary standards commissioner who can act independently of this place to hold MPs to account. With that, we will not be supporting the government business program.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Castlemaine Secondary College

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West) (14:34) — I have the great privilege to announce that, thanks to the Andrews Labor government's record investment in education, Castlemaine Secondary College will get their new global learning centre, visual art, fabrics, food tech and canteen spaces and performing arts precinct. In 2015 the Labor government's investment of \$2.5 million was able to complete the high-tech engineering, chemistry and physics precinct. This facility boasts state-of-the-art spaces for budding engineers, physicists and chemists. The facility also has an automotive studies workshop, which has allowed many students to begin their automotive TAFE qualification while finishing their schooling. This \$11.75 million of funding will make this great school

even better by giving students and teachers the world-class facilities they need to thrive.

The Andrews Labor government is building the Education State so every Victorian student can get a great education and so every community has access to a great local school. Planning is set to begin in the next few months with building works set to start early next year. I cannot wait to see this funding being put to good use. Since 2014 the Labor government has invested \$775 million in regional school infrastructure. This is in stark contrast to the Liberals and Nationals, which let our regional schools crumble and decay by slashing over \$1 billion from the education budget and axing the education maintenance allowance and School Start bonus.

I would like to congratulate the former principal of Castlemaine Secondary College, Mary McPherson, current principal Mr Paul Fry, the school council and its president Beth Mellick and indeed the whole Castlemaine community for advocating for better facilities for the students and future students of this school. What a tremendous job. I am really proud to be able to deliver the full funding for a new Castlemaine Secondary College in our first term of government.

Anzac Day

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) (14:36) — Today I want to pay tribute to the fantastic work of my local RSLs, which did a fantastic job commemorating Anzac Day this year. The day started at the Doncaster RSL, which was attended by a large number of people and led by president Charles Collins. It was fantastic to see so many young people attending and participating in the services and marches.

It was also an honour to once again march down a packed Yarra Street, Warrandyte, with our veterans, who were joined by local school students and the mighty Warrandyte Bloods. The march went down Yarra Street all the way to the Warrandyte cenotaph, where the ceremony was presided over by the eloquent and effervescent John Byrne. I want to congratulate David Ryan, president of the Warrandyte RSL sub-branch, and Delwyn Caulfield for their work in putting the day together.

I want to make special mention of the Warrandyte RSL sub-branch, which organised a community working bee a week before Anzac Day to help prepare the grounds. Unfortunately the branch has been let down and is unable to repair a collapsing retaining wall, as they have not been able to secure the \$7500 from this state government to fix it. It was after I was told this by the

RSL that I received personal assurances from the Minister for Veterans that these funds would be available for the RSL from his department. To date the minister is yet to answer any of the constituency questions I have asked regarding this issue and asking him to review his department's denial of these funds. For a reasonably small amount of money, it is sad that this minister and this government are refusing to help the Warrandyte RSL to ensure their grounds are safe for residents and visitors to the branch.

Bentleigh Secondary College

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (14:37) — Congratulations to everyone involved in Bentleigh Secondary College's senior school play *Flight Risk*, which is a very quirky adaptation of *Peter Pan*. It was a pleasure to join principal Helene Hiotis for the opening night last week. The reason for the different interpretation of this was the teenage experience of being pulled into the adult world while also being firmly anchored in childhood. The performers did not just memorise some lines; they contributed to building the show from the ground up, which stirred their imagination.

The cast was just fantastic. Lucas Petropoulos put in an incredible performance as Peter Pan; Abby Miles was just flawless as Wendy Darling; Jack Blight played a very convincing pirate as Captain Hook; and the show included not one but four Tinkerbells, played by Louise Davis, Chrissy Bonikos, Cece Tsan and Brendan Guy. Congratulations to them and to the rest of the cast: Jonathan James, Connor Williams, Jasmine Sanchez-Butt, Luka Munro, Jesse Dann, Jasmine Ashby, Andii Box, Tori Dun, Tom Edema, Mazzi-Rose Esparon, Niko Floros, Joel Hard, Piper Harrington, Kristen Hoy, Gem Kapoyanis, Ruby Lowe, Christiana Malotsis, Rishika Naik, Joel Nankervis, Rania Pappas, Jessie Pirret, Krizel San Pedro, Anabelle Stimpson, Tommy Thorman, Jordyn Wallace, Shayna Wescombe and Marisia Zapantis.

Congratulations to the crew: directors Harriet Devlin and Jacinta Egan, as well as Phoebe Lindsay, Josh Dunn, Jane Newey, Sarah Hamilton, Olivia Sherman, Daniel Meagher and David Higgins. Well done, everyone.

Silo Art Trail

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (14:39) — The Silo Art Trail consists of six sites across two municipalities, attracting 161 000 visitors per year with an estimated expenditure of approximately \$20 million. That makes the initiative a primary driver of tourism in the region. Based on this

success, councils are proposing 12 new silo artworks connecting the trail to five major highways as stage 2 of the Silo Art Trail. This will further spread the economic benefits of increased tourism across a larger area, delivering significant benefits to the main streets of small rural towns. If visitors stay overnight, walk the main street in the mornings and buy their bread, milk and papers it goes a long way to creating a job. Silo art has considerably increased the resilience of a number of small towns and has the capacity to benefit a number of other towns. The proposed cost is only around \$1 million and local governments are prepared to co-contribute. What they do not need is business case funding in the budget; they need the art on the silos.

Sunraysia Multicultural Festival

Mr CRISP — It was my pleasure to attend the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Community Council (SMECC) Sunraysia Multicultural Festival on Saturday. Food was the main attraction at the festival, where people get together to eat and conversations are held, which leads to cultural understanding and strengthens the community. Well done to SMECC.

Robinvale Villers-Bretonneux memorial

Mr CRISP — It was my pleasure to attend the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Villers-Bretonneux last Tuesday. The new memorial is a tribute to the hard work of the Robinvale community and stands as an impressive monument at the town's entrance. Several thousand people attended, which is a sign of the respect and the understanding of the commitment of those who served our country.

La Faya Festival

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (14:40) — The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the independence of Mauritius continued at Bunjil Place in Narre Warren recently with La Faya Festival, which I had the pleasure of attending. The celebrations included colourful displays of dance, history and art — all combined with the delicious flavours of creole cooking with a touch of French influence. The team from the Cultural Historical Association of Rodriguans and Mauritians in Victoria, CHARM, put together a wonderful display of Mauritian culture and history that included: the dancing talents of the Rodriguan Social Club, Kanasuk and the Happy Feet dance troupe; a wonderful rendition of the Australian national anthem by Stephanie Bousquet and the Mauritian national anthem by the composer, Mario Gentil; and fantastic performances by musicians Marley Brochard, Angelica Ithier, Doris and the Joyful Singers, and Stella Hennequin.

The event, via a terrific exhibition, also taught me a lot about the history of Mauritian migration to Australia, especially l'exode, which saw many Mauritians and Rodriguans leave their homeland in the 1950s and 1960s and settle in Victoria. I am so very fortunate to have so many of these people living in my electorate, seeking a better life, starting their own businesses, working hard and, like my own family, wanting the best opportunities for their children and a better life.

My Mauritians add so much to our multicultural Victoria and, as I said on the day, they are welcome. Thank you and congratulations to Patricia Kimtia, Edwige Bignoux and the CHARM team for such a wonderful event. Happy golden anniversary to the government and the people of Mauritius.

Budget

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (14:42) — Today the government handed down its fourth budget, but residents in my community received no money in this year's budget. In the last four years residents in Ferntree Gully have had no money for schools, no money for roads and no money for public transport, and we have just seen that again today. Residents in my community have been told by the Premier, 'You don't matter'. Residents who send children to schools in my electorate have been told, 'Your kids don't matter'. That is what we have seen from this Premier when it comes to the way he treats residents in Knox and the way he treats residents in the Ferntree Gully electorate. It is an absolute disgrace, and on behalf of the local community I say, 'Premier, hang your head in shame'.

Anzac Day

Mr WAKELING — I recently had the opportunity to attend the Boronia RSL Anzac Day service, and I pay tribute to everyone involved in the RSL and the local community for attending this fantastic event. We had the Anzac Requiem, the bugle played by two grade 6 students, and they did a fantastic job. I would also like to pay tribute to the Peace and Loyalty Lodge of Ferntree Gully for their Anzac service at the Tim Neville Arboretum, which I had the honour to speak at. Both events were well attended by the local community. I would also like to pay tribute to Anne Boyd and her team for hosting their annual Anzac Day event at the quarry on the hill at Ferntree Gully.

Anam Cara House Geelong

Ms COUZENS (Geelong) (14:43) — It was an honour to visit Anam Cara House in Geelong, a day hospice, to announce to guests, board members,

ambassadors, staff and volunteers that the Andrews government will provide funding of just over \$1 million to increase respite hours. This funding will increase the number of respite days from two to five.

It was an absolute pleasure to meet with the guests and chat to them about what the extra respite days will mean to them, their families and carers. They talked about how their family carers can now spend time shopping, going to Pilates or catching up with a friend for lunch while they — the guests — enjoy the activities and social time with other guests and staff at Anam Cara. I want to thank Diana Taylor and Kerry Dmytrenko and their committed team at Anam Cara, and a special thanks to the Minister for Health for her passion and commitment to end-of-life care services in Geelong. The Minister for Health's visits to Anam Cara have been warmly welcomed by all. Minister, this one is for Annie.

St Mary's Sporting Club

Ms COUZENS — Over the past few weeks, I have been pleased to join the Minister for Sport to make a number of significant announcements that will have a great impact on the Geelong community. St Mary's Sporting Club will receive \$1.17 million to upgrade its main pavilion, change rooms, oval and netball amenities. I had the opportunity to chat with the St Mary's women's football team and share in their excitement at the new change rooms.

Realink Australia

Ms COUZENS — I feel strongly about supporting the most vulnerable in our community and empowering them to make a difference. This is why the Andrews government has announced \$4 million over four years to Realink Australia to continue and expand the vital work they do in Geelong and across Victoria. The organisation provides support through sport and recreation, engaging vulnerable people to participate in activities that build confidence and self-esteem. This has been an exceptional program that has turned around the lives of many people. It has been a pleasure to hear participants talking about the positive impact it has had on their life. They have some amazing stories.

Budget

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:45) — Today we heard the Andrews government's fourth budget being handed down, and there is certainly no benefit for my electorate of Caulfield. We had a number of residents hoping that they would hear that the Glen Huntly Road level crossing was finally going to be removed after four

years of mounting a very strong campaign for that. Again, there is no relief in sight. The Glen Huntly traders have been actively involved in this. It is a level crossing that under VicRoads was named one of the top 10 dangerous level crossings, yet it was not funded in the first 50 and it has not been funded now.

I would also like to point out that none of the schools in my electorate received any support either. Caulfield South Primary School has toilets which the children will not go in. They are in a desperate situation where children will actually hold on because of the state of those toilets, and there is not one dollar for Caulfield South Primary School and there has been not one dollar for Caulfield South Primary School in four years, nor for any of the other schools in my electorate.

Anzac Day

Mr SOUTHWICK — I want to pay tribute to Caulfield South Primary School, St Aloysius Primary School and Gardenvale Primary School, which held a very good Anzac Day service for the first time in Caulfield Park. I had the opportunity of working with principal Chris Chant, who was briefly principal of Caulfield South Primary School and did a fantastic job in the short time that he was there. He has now moved back to Gardenvale Primary School, where he is doing a great job as well, showing great leadership. These are the kinds of things our schools do when governments unfortunately do not.

Anzac Day

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (14:46) — I want to thank the Ivanhoe community for supporting Anzac Day services locally, in particular Viewbank College, with 1352 students. We had two services there, and I was pleased to participate in those while my staff represented me at Macleod College's service. I am pleased that our local schools were involved in those services.

I also want to pay tribute to members of the Watsonia RSL, who joined the member for Bundoora and me at the Cherry Street Victoria Cross estate memorial service with president Jeff Mawkes, a Vietnam veteran. At Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, the indefatigable veterans liaison officer, Robert Winther, OAM, oversaw the services. I was honoured to read the Requiem at the Ivanhoe RSL service and also to attend the dawn service in the ruins of the Ivanhoe RSL, which is to be rebuilt, with president John Beezley, a former Vietnam veteran.

We also had a service at Heidelberg with Tim Hogan as MC, and I want to pay personal tribute to him for his

work in organising that, which over 1200 people attended. I thank the Victoria Police volunteers who looked after our traffic issues. I also want to pay tribute to Heidelberg Football Club for hosting the barbecue afterwards.

To St Bernadette's Church for their service with Fred Cullen, OAM, a World War II veteran and former 44-year RSL president at Ivanhoe I express my thanks. RSL on Bell in West Heidelberg had a record turnout. To the 1st Ivanhoe Sea Scouts, the Melbourne Contemporary Choir and Trevor Plant's two-up I say congratulations. The Viewbank Gardens service in the afternoon rounded out a big week in the Ivanhoe electorate. Lest we forget.

Member for Clarinda

Ms BRITNELL (South-West Coast) (14:48) — I rise to put on the record a vile incident that occurred in this place during the previous sitting week. Following the member for Clarinda making an inappropriate gesture in the chamber during question time, which the member for Ringwood and I raised in a point of order, I was subjected to a torrent of verbal abuse in the lift. Upon leaving the chamber I walked to the lift, where I waited. The member for Clarinda approached, and as we waited I said to him that I was very disappointed in his behaviour. When we entered the lift, the member for Clarinda began shouting at me, and as it went on, he became louder and louder. He leaned in towards me and pointed his finger in my face. I felt incredibly uncomfortable, and when the lift opened in the basement, I exited, even though I had not made it to my intended location. I said to the member for Clarinda that I did not feel safe and I was leaving to report him to the Speaker.

I was shaken and completely taken aback by what had happened. I was accused of being a racist and an ageist — two points that were not part of anything that had transpired. I reported the matter to the Speaker and referred it to the Privileges Committee. I also find it astounding that, rather than apologising, the member for Clarinda indicated that I was involved in a robust discussion. The witnesses who heard his tirade and saw him pointing a finger in my face have reported they only heard his voice yelling.

On that day the Premier launched a campaign urging people to speak up and say something when they saw women being treated badly. I expected some sort of apology or discussion, but there has been nothing. I am shocked and appalled that no apology has been forthcoming from the Premier or from the member for

this appalling behaviour that occurred in a place where we shape the values of our state.

Oakleigh Primary School

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (14:49) — Yesterday it was fantastic to be at Oakleigh Primary School to announce that our Labor government is upgrading this fantastic school to the tune of \$9 million — new gym, better classrooms, upgraded buildings. This is yet another major upgrade for our local schools.

Oakleigh electorate community facilities

Mr DIMOPOULOS — A couple of weekends back I went to Murrumbena Park to announce a partnership between the state government and Glen Eira council to redevelop this whole area — a \$7.1 million upgrade, with \$2 million from the Labor government. Add this to the \$3 million for Oakleigh Recreation Centre, \$500 000 for Scammell Reserve pavilion and \$350 000 for Duncan Mackinnon Reserve, all from this government. This is what a real commitment to grassroots sports looks like.

Anzac Day

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Well done to the Oakleigh-Carnegie RSL for their amazing dawn service on Anzac Day last week. There were around 1500 people there, possibly their biggest ever turnout. I also thank Monash Rotary Club and Monash schools for their very special Anzac service at the cenotaph in Glen Waverley.

Level crossings

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Lastly can I just say that after 138 years the Clayton level crossings have been removed by Labor.

Victoria State Emergency Service Cobram unit

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (14:51) — Congratulations to the Cobram State Emergency Service (SES) today on budget day 2018 because the government has finally listened to the Cobram community and the 1200 people who signed our petition calling for a new SES station. Although actual dollars are unclear, our community has called for this for three years. Currently their equipment is housed in private sheds, and it is a difficult task to make the SES time frames when responding to emergencies such as road accidents. I tabled the petition in Parliament at the end of last year. It pointed to the urgent need for a headquarters for the Cobram SES unit. We know this

government does not value volunteers, as evidenced by the Country Fire Authority debacle. It looks like Cobram SES have made an impact. Well done to Carrie Hawke and John Stava as key drivers.

Yarrowonga Health

Mr McCURDY — Yarrowonga is a fantastic Murray River town. This township is one of the fastest growing towns in regional Victoria. Yarrowonga Health is in need of an upgrade to cope with the increase in permanent population as well as tourist numbers. In today's budget it appears that Yarrowonga Health has missed out again, even though the good people of Yarrowonga have been patient. It is high time this government looked further into supporting regional towns other than Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.

Cobram Secondary College

Mr McCURDY — On a first glance at the budget it appears that Cobram Secondary College has again been neglected by the Andrews Labor government for Melbourne, and with time running out for the Premier's term, the Cobram community are quite rightly asking if the Education State is for all Victorians or only those in Melbourne metropolitan seats. Cobram Secondary College needs a vital injection of funds to support this highly productive community, and the 2018–19 budget was the opportunity to do so. I recently met with the school principal and school council president to discuss the investment needed.

Budget

Mr McCURDY — The Andrews Labor government for Melbourne has had a windfall of billions of dollars from the port of Melbourne and Snowy Hydro sales, but it appears that not all of Victoria will benefit from these two iconic sales, which should support all of Victoria, not just a few captain's picks of regional priorities whilst the majority is spent in Melbourne.

Budget

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (14:52) — Budgets are about values, and this Victorian budget delivers a significant benefit for my local community. It was yesterday that I had the pleasure of joining the Chelsea Heights Primary School community to announce funding of \$4.5 million to upgrade classrooms and provide new learning spaces. It has been some 20 years since Chelsea Heights Primary School had major capital works, and to make that announcement onsite yesterday was truly wonderful

and an emotional experience. This funding will set the school up for the future. It is in addition to funding for Edithvale Primary School and Mentone Park Primary School in this budget.

One of the biggest projects, which is among some of the first in a number of years that have been in my community, is the Mordialloc bypass. For years people have been talking about this project; indeed it has been talked about for decades. This is the first government to ever put aside funding in the budget to deliver this project. It will take tens of thousands of vehicles off local roads, those of local residents, and it will ensure my constituents and constituents across the south-east get home more safely and sooner to their families. The best and most positive thing is that in the business case for this project the cost-benefit ratio is \$4 for every dollar invested. If we contrast that with previous projects, this is so substantial and should have been done years ago. I cannot wait to see it get underway early next year.

Nepean Highway–Bay Road, Cheltenham

Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (14:54) — I had occasion in 2008 to ask the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services: on 19 March 2007 how many infringement notices were issued to southbound vehicles turning right from the Nepean Highway in a westerly direction down Bay Road. I was asking for one day's statistics, one day's set of figures. 'Do members know what the reply was?', I asked at the time. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services said:

I am advised that:

...

It would be an unreasonable diversion of the department's resources to provide this information.

I made the point that this was the 21st century. I posed these questions at the time:

Is it sheer incompetence? Is it a corruption of due process? Is it massive idiocy? Is it a cover-up? Is it a whitewash?

I called upon the then Premier, the then Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the then Chief Commissioner of Police to step off the celebrity circuit and actually start responding to questions that the people of Victoria deserved answers to.

Sadly, on 8 November 2017 I again asked for the data that had been collated over the previous decade or so. The government declined to provide the information. I advised the house that the data must be provided in the interests of road safety and also in seeking to support the rights of motorists who depend upon licence

retention to maintain their employment, meet mortgage expenses and raise their families.

Budget

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (14:55) — The budget outlines the priorities of a government, and this budget is a Labor budget right down to its last footnote. I am absolutely delighted about the fact that we have been able to fund \$1.5 million for Riverside, which will provide new netball courts. That is certainly something that was well supported by the minister at the table, the member for Niddrie. A big shout-out to Richard Randall and Amanda Basu for all their labours and endeavours in making this become a reality.

I was absolutely delighted to head out to Strathmore Secondary College yesterday where, under this budget, we will be funding the very first stage of the rebuild of this great school with \$13.8 million. I want to place on the record my heartfelt thanks to Jim Kounetas, who is the president of the school council, as well as my good friend Darren O'Connor.

I was also pleased that we have funding available for master planning at Mount Alexander College. This is a wonderful school, well supported by Wayne Haworth, who is the principal. This investment for master planning will really help provide a pathway and a future for this great school.

I am pleased that \$1.2 million in funding has been provided to Essendon State Emergency Service (SES). As the minister at the table, the member for Niddrie, knows, the SES just falls in the electorate of Niddrie. We are both well serviced, as are our communities, by the great work performed by Essendon SES. I am pleased and delighted that \$1 million has been allocated to widening Raleigh Street for pedestrians and cyclists. It is a great outcome for the state district of Essendon.

Shepparton education plan

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (14:57) — This year's budget has been truly great for Shepparton, and I am very excited about it. At the moment I want to talk about the \$20.5 million for the first stage of the Shepparton education plan. It will provide a very welcome start to our new combined super secondary school on the Shepparton High School site in central Shepparton and establish a vital integrated children's centre at Mooroopna. It has been one of my major platforms since entering Parliament to bring about change in the educational sphere in our region so that we can provide better educational opportunities and

pathways for our young people going into further education and employment.

It is important for us to realise that any investment in the schooling experience must go beyond bricks and mortar, and the members of our Shepparton education plan advisory committee are very aware of this. Teachers must have better access to continuing professional education and be given the opportunity to develop their leadership skills so they can deliver high-quality education to our young people. It is disappointing to hear that the Department of Education and Training is often unwilling to release teachers to undertake either local regional leadership programs or indeed the Leadership Victoria program. I will be fighting for them to have access to a broad range of these important professional development programs during this process.

In my ideal world education would be assimilated much more closely with the community, and school principals would always be on the invitation list for any significant community and business events. Too often the education system is isolated from business and community. It is important that this is addressed as we move forward to develop better pathways for our students.

Macedon electorate schools

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (14:58) — On this budget day I rise to celebrate the historic investment the Andrews Labor government is making in schools across my electorate and to congratulate parents, principals and staff who have worked with me to advocate for this investment in our local schools. Over the four Andrews Labor government budgets we have invested more than \$62 million in schools across the Macedon electorate, including for Bolinda Primary School, Darraweit Guim Primary School, Elphinstone Primary School, Kyneton Secondary College, Kyneton Primary School, Gisborne Primary School, Riddells Creek Primary School, Lancefield Primary School, Woodend Primary School, Taradale Primary School, Mount Macedon Primary School, Gisborne Secondary College and Daylesford Secondary College.

In this year's budget I was thrilled to announce four more upgrades to local schools, totalling \$19.6 million, including \$10 million for Gisborne Primary School, \$3.2 million for the Romsey regeneration project, \$2.2 million for Riddells Creek Primary School and \$4.2 million for Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School, Bullengarook secondary campus. My colleague the member for Sunbury announced \$10.8 million for the Sunbury campus, and of course

this is on top of the \$4 million announced in 2016, making it a grand total of \$19 million invested in the Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School. I started my career as a teacher at Laverton P-12 College. I watched in despair as the Kennett government closed 350 schools and sacked 8000 teachers. I watched while the Baillieu-Napthine governments cut \$1 billion from the budget.

Budget

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (15:00) — I rise today to speak about the Victorian state budget of this year, a budget that has seen no relief regarding the costs of living for any residents in Geelong, Victoria or even the South Barwon electorate. Having a \$50 stunt to look at a website is about the only relief that this government has given. There is no funding for the Barwon Heads road duplication, a critical project in the South Barwon electorate. As far as the emergency services go, there is only money for land acquisition for the Armstrong Creek Country Fire Authority precinct. It also needs to be built, not just have the land acquired.

And there is no money for our existing rail users. All we have from this government is a pie in the sky bullet train. We are going to look at getting a bullet train that we might build in who knows how many years. It is absolutely absurd. The government should be investing money in our existing rail network, which would be a commitment that is grounded in reality, not in something to sell to long-suffering V/Line passengers in an election year in the form of a bullet train. There is no money at all for the duplication of the track to commence from South Geelong station to Waurn Ponds station, which would critically increase capacity.

As far as schools go, there has been a campaign going in the Armstrong Creek community for the Armstrong Creek West Primary School. It has finally been funded after a lot of pressure. It was supposed to open this year; it will now open at least two to three years later than promised.

Anzac Day

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (15:01) — There are so many great things to talk about today on state budget day, but I want to focus on congratulating the fabulous members of my community for the respectful and wonderfully warm way they commemorated Anzac Day. Hurstbridge RSL sub-branch president Noel Morse and secretary Noeline Park had their fabulous Saturday service as always. I want to thank my great friend John Parker, who laid the wreath on my behalf because I could not be there.

My day started on Anzac Day with the dawn service in Doreen run by Australia's youngest RSL sub-branch, the Doreen sub-branch, and MC'ed by the fabulous principal of Laurimar Primary School, Jason McBean. The new president of Doreen RSL, Wes Wridgway, and secretary, Judith Carter, should be very pleased with the amount of people that they draw to this wonderful service, which brings a new community together at Laurimar Primary School, the only primary school in Australia that hosts its own cenotaph.

To commemorate the centenary of Anzac Day, the Wallan Commemorative Committee, chaired by Tony Gill, organised a beautiful march down the street and a service in Wallan. Diamond Creek RSL had their fabulous, well-attended mid-morning service, and the Whittlesea Anzac Day march and service with Ned Panuzzo, president of Whittlesea RSL, and Denys Potts, secretary, had one of its best attendances ever. Well done, all.

Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) (15:03) — What a great day, and what a great Labor budget. Last Thursday I had the pleasure of visiting Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School to announce a huge \$10.8 million investment as part of the 2018-19 Victorian budget to expand, upgrade and modernise heritage buildings at the Jacksons Hill site in Sunbury. I was thrilled to be joined by principals, teachers, parents and passionate local residents and was also thrilled to be able to announce that their dreams would now become a well-deserved reality.

This funding will provide new classrooms, new opportunities and the restoration of neighbouring heritage buildings that have previously been ignored and left to deteriorate. This expansion and restoration is crucial for our growing community. It also builds on the \$4.2 million and \$4 million previously announced in conjunction with the fantastic, hardworking member for Macedon, whose electorate contains the Bullengarook campus. This brings the investment to \$19 million over two campuses in this term.

Sunbury electorate schools

Mr J. BULL — I was also thrilled to be able to be at Gladstone Park Primary School yesterday morning to announce a \$1.5 million investment from the Andrews Labor government budget to modernise this wonderful, hardworking school. This builds, of course, upon news of a \$3.5 million investment in Sunbury Primary School as part of the budget. My former primary school

will receive \$700 000, and that is Sunbury Heights Primary School. We are creating the Education State. This is outstanding news for hardworking students and hardworking parents in the Sunbury electorate, and we are thrilled to be able to deliver it.

LONG SERVICE BENEFITS PORTABILITY BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed from 28 March; motion of Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations).

Mr CLARK (Box Hill) (15:05) — The Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018 is a bill to create a portable long service leave regime, which will apply initially to the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors, with the capacity for the scheme to be extended to other sectors in the future.

The provisions of the bill raise a range of concerns. The bill undermines the concept of long service leave being a reward for long service with one employer. It is likely to be very expensive for employers, both in direct costs and in administration costs. There are a range of anomalies in how it will apply within each of the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors, creating risks of overlap, duplication and coverage creep. It will have particularly damaging impacts on disability services providers who are already struggling with the transition to the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) and the pressures being created by that move. The bill is being introduced in a context where the government has given no commitment of additional funding to community services organisations in order to meet the additional costs of the scheme.

I will outline how the bill proposes to operate. It is intended to create a portable long service leave benefits authority, which will administer the scheme, will have a board of up to nine persons who are appointed by the minister and will have a registrar as its CEO. As I indicated, the bill will apply initially to the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors, but the scheme is being structured with a view to its being able to be extended to other sectors in future.

In relation to the security and contract cleaning industries the bill will apply to contract workers, and there is also provision for the scheme to be extended by regulation to contract workers in other industries. The bill will not initially apply to independent contractors and for-profit organisations within the community

services sector other than for-profit organisations in the disability services sector.

The bill provides for employers to be required to pay a levy of up to 3 per cent of an employee's ordinary pay to the authority. The actual rate within that 3 per cent maximum is to be set by the authority itself. The bill requires employers in a covered industry to register themselves as employers and also to register their employees and their contract workers.

The bill allows workers in the contract cleaning or security industries with at least seven years service to ask their employer for long service leave and confers on them a right of appeal to the authority if the employer refuses to grant them that long service leave. The bill provides for those workers who are granted long service leave to be paid for their leave by the authority at their rate of pay at the time the leave commences.

The bill proposes to recognise service in the contract cleaning and security industries of up to 12 months prior to the commencement of the legislation. It proposes to allow for the cashing out of entitlements by employees in the contract cleaning and security industries only upon leaving the industry. The bill will allow an employee to not work in their industry for up to four years before losing continuity of service.

It provides for the scheme to make payments in lieu of long service leave to workers in the community services sector, thereby operating in a different manner in relation to the community services sector compared with the contract cleaning and securities sectors, for reasons that the government has given that relate principally to existing practice and enterprise bargaining agreements in the community services sector.

The bill provides for proceedings in relation to the scheme to be brought to the industrial division of the Magistrates Court, and the bill has a very wide definition of community services, which I will not go through in detail, but I would commend it to anybody who is interested in the issue, because the coverage would pick up some that would not necessarily come immediately to mind, such as community legal services and community advice services, as well as many others.

The opposition has appreciated the views and feedback that we have received from a range of stakeholders, including from employer groups, from Trades Hall and individual unions, and from service providers in the community services sector, particularly service providers and representative organisations in the disability sector and in relation to early childhood

learning. We have appreciated the feedback and input that we have received from all those stakeholders.

As I referred to at the outset, there are a range of concerns about this bill. When one looks at the issue in concept, the principal concern relates to it undermining the longstanding principle of long service leave being a reward for long service with the one employer. To date the only exception to this has been, as far as Victorian law is concerned, within the building industry, where there has been a recognition that building work is project based and for those reasons the CoINVEST portable long service leave scheme has been established for the building industry. But with that exception, the principle has been that long service leave should be a reward for long service with the one employer.

In moving the second reading the Minister for Industrial Relations sought to argue to the contrary. She referred to the second-reading speech given in 1953 by the then Minister of Labour and Mines, the Honourable Archibald Fraser. She quoted Minister Fraser as saying, and I quote:

The bill does not cover any employee who, by virtue of his calling, may have served under a number of employers over a period of 20 years. That is one problem which Parliament will have to tackle at some future time.

That is in fact a quote from page 986 of the Legislative Council *Hansard* of the debate in 1953 on the Factories and Shops (Long Service Leave) Bill.

Although Minister Fraser did make the statement that the minister has quoted, he also made a number of other statements that directly contradict what the minister has quoted in the way that she interprets it. I do commend to anybody who is interested in this issue a reading of Minister Fraser's second-reading speech, which I have to say is quite strikingly different to the nature of second-reading speeches that are delivered today, because it does appear, from reading *Hansard*, that he delivered it largely from genuine notes rather than from effectively a prewritten speech, and certainly not a speech that was simply incorporated into *Hansard*. There are long, long passages in which the minister engages in conversation with other members of the house who ask the minister questions, and the minister gives direct, succinct and pertinent answers. It is, I have to say, a very erudite speech delivered by Minister Fraser and an erudite debate that was being conducted in the house, as indeed later on in October 1953 with the lead speech given by the opposition spokesperson on the bill.

But in relation to Minister Fraser's speech, I refer to what he said at page 984 of *Hansard*, and I quote:

I have outlined the history of long service leave, and I shall now give reasons for its introduction in Victoria. The New South Wales state industrial commission, which is comprised of judges, stated —

and Minister Fraser quoted —

Long service leave is properly regarded as a reward for long service with one employer.

Later on, on the same page, Minister Fraser quoted remarks made by another member of the Victorian Parliament and went on to say that he believed that those remarks most aptly described the position, and I quote directly:

The employee who, for a continuous period of 20 years, has played the game faithfully with the one employer is entitled to a short period of rest without any financial sacrifice to himself.

Indeed, following the remarks Minister Fraser made at page 986, which the current minister has quoted, Minister Fraser went on to give the example of the building industry as an example of a possible area where issues might arise because of the difficulty of continuity of employment. But having given that example, he then continued, and I quote directly:

As I said before, employment must be continuous and it must be with the one employer.

It is clear from the 1953 debate that long service leave was seen as being a reward for long service with the one employer. Albeit that Minister Fraser expressed a range of views, ultimately that was the position he argued to the house. It is also clear from his speech that that was the general view of the community at the time in favour of the introduction of long service leave, and so it has largely continued to date. It is also interesting to observe that in 1953 the periods required for qualification for long service were much longer than they currently are. It is clear that Minister Fraser regarded those periods as being unexceptional.

It was clearly at a time when there was far greater continuity of employment than there is today. That of course is a factor that can be taken into consideration in different ways in addressing what is appropriate in today's climate, but it is interesting to note that distinction and the changes in practices that have occurred between 1953 and today in terms of continuity and mobility of employment. It is a concern that this bill does propose to depart, without adequate justification, from the longstanding principle that long service leave should be a reward for long service with the one employer.

As I mentioned previously, the scheme is likely to prove expensive for employers, both in direct costs and in administration costs. That burden will of course fall at first instance on the employers themselves but is then likely to flow through to consumers or to others who are paying for the services provided by the employers, unless of course it places Victorian employers at a disadvantage compared with others. This may not arise in the initial sectors, given that they are service industries, but could potentially apply if the scheme is extended to other sectors in future.

As I touched on earlier, the bill provides for a levy of up to 3 per cent of wages. It is very hard to see how that maximum levy can be justified unless an extraordinary level of administrative costs is envisaged for the scheme. Even the indicative figure that the government has been talking about of around 1.5 per cent of wages seems to be very high.

The long service leave regime in terms of its entitlement — and the government has indicated it is not intending to change the regime in that respect — is that long service leave is equal to one month for every 60 months worked. If every employee of an employer qualified, that on my arithmetic translates to a long service leave bill of 1.66 per cent of wages. However, as the government itself admits and indeed argues as a reason in favour of the scheme, at present only a very small proportion of employees in these sectors qualify, which means that the proposed 1.5 per cent levy is far higher than the current cost of long service leave being incurred by employers. Indeed even when this scheme provides for portability within a sector or industry, it would still seem to be far higher than the cost of the long service leave that is going to be incurred in order to make those payments to employees. So one does have to wonder how much additional cost is going to be imposed on employers and therefore on those who receive the benefits and services of those sectors, whether through purchase or through voluntary community support — how much of a burden is going to be placed on all of them — by the additional costs of this scheme and indeed how much has been factored into the scheme for its administration costs to be borne by employers.

I see that in today's budget there is provision for direct budget funding for elements of the scheme. Given this direct budget funding, it raises even more strikingly the question of how much administrative cost employers are going to be expected to bear. Whatever the detailed answer to that question is, it is clear that the cost to employers is going to be a lot higher than its current cost, and yet the government has made no provision for additional funding to community services organisations

to meet those additional costs. The community services organisations have had no word, no promise, no commitment and no undertaking from the government that they will be funded to cover that additional cost.

Disability services providers are ones that are likely to be particularly disadvantaged by that because funding under the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) is understandably and reasonably at uniform rates nationally, given that it is a national scheme. Victorian employers in that sector will have to bear this additional cost without additional funding by the NDIS and with no commitment from the state government to meet their costs. The NDIS is already imposing many pressures on that sector due to changing cash flow and administrative and other requirements, and yet the sector is going to have to cope with this new scheme on top of everything else.

There are also many anomalies and unanswered questions in relation to the detail of how the scheme is going to apply. Following the very helpful briefing that was provided to members of the opposition by officers of the department, I wrote to the minister's adviser, seeking some responses to some specific questions about how the scheme would apply in situations where an employee moved from covered work to non-covered work and back again. The minister's adviser replied to me and my colleague the member for Eildon just after noon today. I thank the minister and her staff and departmental officers for the reply, albeit that the timing has not allowed a great deal of time for consideration. However, on reading it, it seems to me from the answers that have been given to the questions we asked that in fact the true answers are not known and they are things that the government are going to have to try to work out as they go along.

Let me quote one example that I raised:

For example, a cleaning company has full-time sales, accounts and other administration staff, who go to clients and do cleaning work from time to time when a usual cleaner is ill or a cleaner is unavailable for any reason. If an admin staff member does cleaning work once a fortnight or so, do they have to be registered and have the levy paid for them for that work? If they only do a few hours of cleaning before returning to their admin duties that day what, if anything, does the employer have to pay by way of levy? Is it levy on a full day's pay, a levy on the worker's pay pro rata to the hours worked, a levy based on the standard hourly rate of pay for cleaning or no levy until a certain portion of the day is spent on frontline cleaning?

These are the sort of questions that if this legislation is passed and the scheme comes into operation employers across the state are going to have to grapple with.

The response I received was, and I quote:

An employer who employs workers performing work covered by the legislation must register for the scheme. This does not, however, mean that every single worker must be registered. The worker must be performing work described in one of the schedules.

For example, a contract cleaning company will likely employ administrative and management staff. These do not have to be registered. There will be cases where a worker performs various tasks, including some cleaning work. For example, a retail worker may be required to clean the shop at the end of the day. This does not mean they are performing cleaning work for the purposes of the act.

A role of the authority will be to work with employers on situations such as this. This mirrors the experience in other jurisdictions.

I think anybody who has been following can see that the questions that we have asked have not in fact been answered; they have been sidestepped. This is not an issue about whether someone who works in a retail store and cleans up at the end of the day has to be registered as a cleaner. It is a question about someone working for a contract cleaning company who does administrative work most of the time but from time to time has to go out and do frontline cleaning. There is no answer to how the rules are going to apply in that situation.

I also asked:

When the worker has worked for seven years with this employer, and is looking to take long service leave, presumably they will take long service leave under the Long Service Leave Act, because they would only be eligible for one day in 10 under the bill? How much is the employer able to claim reimbursement for from the authority, and how is that amount calculated?

The response was:

For most workers in these respective industries covered by the scheme, they will never reach the minimum service with the one employer required to take leave under the Long Service Leave Act. That is why the portable long service leave scheme has been developed. In cases where they do, the worker may choose to take their entitlement under the Long Service Leave Act. Where this occurs, the employer will be able to claim reimbursement from the authority for the period in which the employer has contributed to the portable long service leave scheme.

Again, this sidesteps the question and leaves no answers for employers who are having to grapple with that sort of situation. Later on, in response to another question about administrative people doing cleaning work in the contract cleaning sector, I was told:

A person doing occasional cleaning work that is not a significant part of their duties won't typically be covered by the scheme.

Again that does not really provide an answer. If someone is doing administrative work for a contract

cleaning company routinely but once or twice a fortnight has to go out and spend a day or a half day cleaning, are they covered or are they not covered? These are the sorts of issues that need answers if this is a properly thought-through scheme.

There are a range of other anomalies in relation to social work, amongst other reasons because of the overlap between social work and health services, which may catch health services where they are providing disability services but may not catch health services where they are not providing disability services. The person working for a non-governmental organisation in that situation may qualify for the scheme by doing work for people with disabilities at some point, may work in other parts of that organisation providing other health services at other stages, may be promoted to a management role in the organisation, may take family leave for a number of years and may then return, and the manner in which their entitlement is to be calculated will become very complex. Again the responses from the minister's office, presumably prepared by the department, did not resolve those issues.

There are many concerns of detail about the scheme, and if those questions of detail have not been resolved it is likely to impose even greater burdens on employers. Unfortunately experience with the CoINVEST scheme does not fill employers with confidence about how any pooled scheme such as that proposed by this bill would work. There are a range of different views in relation to how CoINVEST has operated, but certainly there are many employers who believe that there has been a degree of bracket creep — or scope creep, to be more accurate — and that the portable long service leave scheme in the construction industry is now based on a definition of building construction work that is very broad indeed.

Others would dispute that, and it is not a matter for us to resolve today, but I cite it to illustrate the point that if these definitions are not clearly ascertained and clearly specified and if there are not clear answers to all of these very reasonable questions that employers are already starting to ask, this scheme is going to be fraught with difficulty and cause grief, angst, cost and disruption to employers and employees alike. There is little basis at the moment for this house or the community to have confidence that the government has got these details right. At this stage the government is giving every sign that it has got a half-baked bill, a half-baked scheme, that it is rushing to get through Parliament to seek to have it on the statute book come what may.

The government of course claims that this scheme is supported by the majority report of the parliamentary committee inquiry that the government commissioned, but in fact when one looks at the report of the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee on its inquiry into portability of long service leave entitlements, one sees that we are in the bizarre situation where a majority of that committee actually supported the minority report and only a minority of the committee supported the so-called majority report. That is because the government members of that committee took advantage of the absence of one of the other members of the committee in order to overturn divisions that had previously been voted on and positions that had been arrived at by the committee.

Mr Pearson — Really? You're going to raise that? Let's have a chat about Good Friday.

Mr CLARK — The member for Essendon is getting agitated. We have seen exactly the same issue played out on a larger scale in recent weeks, when the government in the other place sought to take advantage of the absence due to illness of one member to have a house sit through the night into one of the most sacred and holy days on the Christian calendar in an unprecedented way in order to try to get through the Parliament a bill that would not have been passed. It would have been defeated if all 40 members had been present and voting on it. In exactly the same way the government took advantage of the absence of one of the members of the committee, who was entitled to think that issues had been decided and resolved upon at a previous committee and who was not able to be at that meeting, and then the government used the casting vote of the chair to overturn positions that had been agreed on and had the bizarre and anomalous situation of only three members of the seven-member committee supporting the so-called majority report and four of the members supporting the minority report. I quote from the minority report conclusion as set out on page 3 of the minority report:

When the committee examined the evidence and transcripts, as well as searching for related research, there was an absence of independent data to consider financial and economic impacts. The committee was also unable to identify if portable long service schemes have met defined and measurable objectives for implementation.

That is the true conclusion and finding of the parliamentary committee report that the government commissioned, and yet the government has had the nerve to say in its public statements ever since that the introduction of this scheme was supported by a parliamentary committee inquiry.

To conclude, there are a wide range of concerns with this bill, including the departure from the longstanding concept and principle that has basically endured since at least 1953 of long service leave being a reward for long service with the one employer through to the many unresolved anomalies that I have canvassed during the course of my remarks and the very considerable additional expense that is likely to be imposed on employers, particularly on many employers in the community services sector who provide valuable services to clients. The bottom line is that if those services are not being funded by government, the additional costs that are being imposed on them by these schemes one way or another are going to have to be borne by someone else — by the clients themselves or by reduced services to the community. It is completely unfair to those many vulnerable people who benefit from the services provided by so many community services organisations that they are being exposed to that risk. For all of these reasons, the opposition parties oppose this bill.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (15:35) — I am delighted to rise and support the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. I note that the second-reading speech by the minister referred to a former labour minister, Archibald Fraser, who was a member of the other place. He represented Melbourne North Province. He served as a member of the other place from 1940 until he resigned in June 1954. He subsequently went on to be appointed to the County Court as a judge, and he was a chair of the Victorian Licensing Court. One thing I did not know was that Archibald Fraser was actually the father of Neale Fraser, so that was something I picked up on then.

Mr Dimopoulos interjected.

Mr PEARSON — The member for Oakleigh asked me who Neale Fraser is — a well-known, legendary tennis player.

I am delighted to speak on a bill like this because I think it speaks to the values of the labour movement and why those of us on this side of the place joined the movement and are proud to call ourselves members of the movement. This scheme recognises the fact that not all workers are equal. This scheme recognises that some workers who work in industries like cleaning and security do not have the level of security that other workers have.

A friend of mine worked as a merchant banker for a number of years — and, for the benefit of *Hansard*, that is not rhyming slang. He was very senior in a very large merchant bank. The reason why there is a very low

turnover in a number of merchant banks is that their bonuses are paid on a deferred basis. You would earn a large bonus if you had a particularly good year that would be held in escrow by your employer for a period of three years, and then it would be paid out in arrears. Basically what happened for those workers, for those bankers, was there was an incentive for them to stay at their employer. Indeed defections were relatively low because a rival firm would have to not only pay a higher wage to entice the said merchant banker across to their firm but also pay their deferred bonuses.

I raise this from the point of view of recognising the fact that if you have got a highly skilled workforce, if you have got a worker who has got years of experience, has got a significant qualification beside their name, has worked at a very high level and is well paid and well remunerated, obviously they are not covered by a scheme like this because to some extent they will already be taken care of by other industrial instruments. Instead there is a need to introduce a scheme like this where there is systemic market failure.

My father-in-law worked for many years as a bricklayer, and those of us who know the building trade know that there is boom and bust in that industry. There are companies which can grow very large very quickly and can go broke very quickly. It is cyclical, and the notion that you could be, say, a bricklayer and stay with one employer for the term of your working life is fallacious. It just does not happen.

We are looking at the industries that are caught up by this legislation, and it is similar sorts of employers. You might be very fortunate to be employed by a security company or a cleaning company at the age of 20. You may indeed be fortunate enough to spend the next 45 years working with that said employer, but I think it is highly unlikely. I think that when you are looking at industries where there are very tight margins, where there is a lot of volatility or where contracts are regularly tendered out and contracts can be lost, you see a natural level of churn. A scheme like this is designed to recognise the skills that an employee has acquired over a period of time which are then transferred to a new employer. It recognises the fact that those workers will tend to have more skills, will be more senior and, rather than being trained up and skilled up, will be able to be put to work straightaway. A scheme like this is designed to ensure that we are in a situation where these employees' service is recognised.

We are also looking at a time of significant wage stagnation in the market. I do think there is probably a masters if not an honours thesis in the fact that the political cycle is becoming far more choppy than it used

to be, partly because we are in a low-inflation environment. When people feel that their wages are going up by, say, 3–5 per cent per annum even if inflation is running at, say, 2–4 per cent per annum, people feel like they are getting ahead and their wages are going up. We are in an environment now where because we are looking at a level of wage stagnation, people are becoming quite concerned.

Again when we look at the industries concerned here, we are looking at industries where people are earning a relatively low wage. I am indebted to Danielle Wood from the Grattan Institute, who recently published a great piece of research which she presented to the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees. She talked about the fact that it used to be — in my day and I think in many members' days — that you would enter the workforce, say, in your 20s, you would work hard, you would have a series of promotions in the course of your 20s, your salary would go up increasingly over the course of that time and you would progress into your 30s. You had the benefit of having increased superannuation payments which therefore increased the value of your superannuation, but you also had the opportunity of earning a pretty good wage by the time you were 30. That is no longer the case these days because of wage stagnation. We are looking at a set of circumstances where, running concurrently with this level of wage stagnation, this does affect female workers, it does affect workers in community services and it does affect workers who are perceived as having low skills. It is also compounded by the rapid increase in property values.

I note that Sam Langford, in a study that was published on 30 April this year, talked about research produced by Anglicare. This was a national study which looked at one particular weekend where there were 67 635 properties available for rent across Australia. Of those, only 1952 were affordable for a single person on the minimum wage. We are looking at an environment where the most isolated and most vulnerable members of our community are really struggling.

I note that the manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, is a lawyer — he is a former Attorney-General. I appreciate, having been married to a lawyer, that lawyers often try and find flaws in an argument, try and find the weaknesses, try and do the 'what if?'. I have no doubt of the sincerity with which the member raised the point, that if a retail worker is cleaning up at the end of the day, would they be covered by this or wouldn't they — there are these questions outstanding. I suppose I would say I would take two steps back, and rather than asking those questions as to whether a cleaner is covered or is not

covered, I would ask the question: is this the right thing to do? Is it right?

Mr T. Bull interjected.

Mr PEARSON — The member Gippsland East laughs. Well may he laugh. Is it right that low-paid, vulnerable workers who are working in an industry where there is a high level of churn, where they are locked out of the property market and where they are suffering sustained levels of wage stagnation do not have the opportunity for a long service leave entitlement? I think it is not fair that that is the case. I think this is the right thing to do.

At the end of the day, bills like this are important because you know what? It demonstrates why we are here. We are here representing the labour movement. We are here to represent low-paid, isolated, disadvantaged workers who have been excluded from the great wealth story that has occurred over the last 25 years. We have not forgotten these communities. We will not leave these communities behind. Despite the member for Box Hill's lengthy contribution about the bill, make no mistake: of course those opposite will oppose it. At the end of the day it is always a battle between labour and capital.

We are here to make sure that we protect workers, because if we do not protect working people and if we do not protect people who are isolated in the community we know what happens: they are left behind. The inequality becomes exacerbated. People will lose out further and further and the level of inequality — the Gini coefficient, as Thomas Piketty would say — becomes greater. That is not what we are here to do. We are here to make sure that working people have got a level of decency, fairness and justice.

So in answer to the questions raised by the member for Box Hill: this is about justice, this is about doing the right thing, this is about protecting working people. It is about making sure that some of the most isolated and disadvantaged members of our community are properly supported, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) (15:45) — I rise to make a contribution on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018, and I am pleased to defy the member for Essendon, who posed the question: is this right? Well, I want to talk about that, and I want to talk about the potential impacts here on the disability sector and pose that question: is it right?

As we know, disability services providers the length and breadth of Victoria are currently engaged in the rollout of the national disability insurance scheme

(NDIS). It has already occurred in a number of areas, it is being rolled out as we speak in some areas and other locations like my electorate of Gippsland East are still to have the rollout. What it is showing is that with a reform this big, there are ongoing challenges.

The NDIS is a reform of major proportions. Disability services providers are currently dealing with this process: the change from block funding for services for many to a user-pays, client-based funding scheme. As a result, these disability services are reviewing not only the services that they offer, but also where they offer those services from a geographic perspective. What I would pose to you, Acting Speaker, and also to the member for Essendon, is that a lot of these disability services providers have clearly said that they are operating on very tight margins. We have seen some fall and we have seen other disability services providers question their ongoing viability. They have got no margins to be able to pay for this, so where is that going to come from? Where are the funds going to come from to pay for this long service portability contribution? They are going to come out of the NDIS packages, from some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. So I ask you, Acting Speaker, and all members of this house: is that right? Is that the right thing to do? No, it is not.

In some cases we are seeing great levels of uncertainty in what are being referred to as 'thin markets'. This is where services are either not being offered, or they are not being offered to the level at which they can meet demand. It is proving a very difficult process, and it has raised the concerns of a number of providers about their ongoing viability. So while all this is going on, what do we have this government doing? At this time of huge transition for the disability sector — with a high level of uncertainty in a lot of cases, not only for the providers but also for the recipients of the services — the government is imposing an additional cost on the sector. If you tried to pick a worse time in history to put this impost on disability services providers, you could not. Given this stage of the NDIS rollout, it beggars belief who came to this conclusion to include the disability sector workforce in this bill.

Now the national disability services — the NDS, not to be confused with the NDIS — is the peak body for service providers in this state. They have said that this bill will not only be very, very costly for providers and impact on their viability, it will also be very, very complex from an administration perspective as well. To take one step back from this, the disability sector is currently transitioning not just from block funding to a client pays system, it is also transitioning from a state-based scheme to a federal-based scheme. So the

money will indirectly come from clients, funded by their packages from the federal government. The state is not providing the funding directly to these clients but is driving up their costs.

The member for Box Hill touched on this. The federal government funding that has been set for services under the NDIS has not got built into it the flexibility to be able to consume these extra costs. The state is imposing an extra cost on the sector, and the federal government has set fees for the services it provides. We will sit back, scratching our heads, saying, 'Why have these service providers gone to the wall?'. It makes absolutely no sense at all, and that is why disability services providers will be left with absolutely no option but to pass these costs, from an administration perspective, on to the packages of NDIS clients — those who are the most vulnerable in our community.

This bill will impose a significant cost on Victorian disability services providers, and it will also have a significant cash-flow impact. There was an independent report done by McKinsey in relation to the price review, and among its many, many findings was that many traditional providers are struggling to operate profitably at the current price points. That is an independent report — that is not the conservative side of politics — saying that service providers are struggling, basically, to keep their heads above water. Did the government not read that? Did they not see that report when they included disability services in this bill? It beggars belief. It is not the only independent report that gives similar messages about the pricing structure that is affecting the sector.

If there is concern in these areas that potentially impact on viability, why are we even considering doing this at the moment? Putting viability to the side, additional costs will also force providers to look at the range of services that they deliver to clients. There are other elements that do not appear to have been considered in this bill either. One of those — and I think the member for Box Hill touched on this — is that the disability workforce comprises in its vast majority either part-time or casual workers, and they often work for more than one service provider. They often work fluctuating hours. It is very complex. They might also work in the aged-care sector. Someone who is offering respite for a child with special needs may also be looking after someone in the aged-care sector. The aged-care sector is exempt from this. So with different hours, different providers and different working arrangements, it becomes very complex.

The member for Box Hill posed a question in the bill briefing that touched on this very point. We get some

global, touchy-feely response that does not answer the question. What do we get from the member for Essendon? He said, 'Just ask yourself: is this right?'. Asking yourself if it is right is one thing, but we must get it right as well.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is hoping that almost one-third — and it will probably be more, I reckon — of NDIS participants will be self-managing their NDIS packages. So this workforce will be extremely complex to track. These are individual families who have control of their own child's, brother's or father's package of support and who are engaging staff. We have got to somehow have them included in the long service portability bill. It will be very difficult to track, and we need some answers there.

For all these reasons we do not support the bill. It is time also, as the member for Box Hill touched on, to consider the original reasons for long service. I think originally it was to allow families to go back to England to visit family, and then it was a reward for service to one employer. The bill cannot proceed in relation to the disability services workforce. There are too many unanswered questions. I would hope we get a house amendment — if not in this house, in the upper house — to remove the disability sector to just make the bill even palatable for consideration as a reasonable option for the disability sector.

The government needs to know how it is going to cover these additional costs to the disability workforce. We do not want them coming out of the packages of our most vulnerable. I ask the government to please have someone stand up in here and explain where the money is coming from if the service providers cannot afford it. How are we going to get another source of revenue so it does not come out of the packages of those with special needs?

I will finish off by touching on the parliamentary inquiry that looked into this matter. As the member for Box Hill said, it was an extremely rare situation where the majority of the committee supported the minority report. Surely that is enough evidence to say there are huge question marks over this bill. NDIA prices do not account for state-specific additional costs. You cannot impose an additional cost at state level when the payment that is coming into the NDIS is federal money with no room to move. It beggars belief. The disability sector ought to be withdrawn because that is the right thing to do.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (15:55) — In 2016 Sam Ismaili, a cleaner at 1 Treasury Place, said in an interview with his union, United Voice:

I've worked 37 years at Treasury Place and cleaned the offices of Rupert Hamer, Lindsay Thompson, John Cain, Joan Kirner, Jeff Kennett, Steve Bracks, John Brumby, Ted Baillieu, Denis Napthine and now Mr Andrews. I should have been able to take it —

long service leave —

four times but I haven't taken it once because we keep losing it. It's not fair.

I say to Sam: that is right, Sam, it is not fair. That is why I am very proud to speak on this legislation before the house today.

Let me tell you a little bit more about Sam. Sam arrived in Australia from Albania in the early 1970s. As I said, despite working for almost four decades in the same building, he has never been able to take long service leave. Each time he would be close to qualifying, his entitlements would be erased with the arrival of a new cleaning contractor. Once again he is on the cusp of reaching the seven years service needed to qualify, but the cleaning contract for 1 Treasury Place is going out to tender, meaning he is at risk of losing his entitlement once more.

Let me tell you some more stories. This is Helen's story. For 35 years Helen has been a cleaner at the National Australia Bank (NAB). She had long service leave once, at the first site, but has not had it since then. In the last 24 years she has worked with NAB, cleaning their buildings, but the cleaning company has changed seven times, so she has not qualified again for long service leave. Helen said:

The companies did not ask anything about our leave when they changed it. I thought I would get long service leave for the whole time I was employed. I never asked about long service leave because I did not need it. I thought it would be easy to take it when I was ready, but it is not that easy. Now I am working with the union to try to find out if any of the companies have to pay me my long service leave. I am always working and do not get much time with my kids or grandkids. I want to retire soon. If I had long service leave, I would go to Queensland to see my daughter and grandkids, and I would also go home to Greece. It is not fair that cleaners do not get long service leave.

I say to you, Helen: no, it is not fair.

Let me tell you about Ada. Ada is a community services worker. She said:

I have worked in women's and family violence services for more than 13 years. During this time I have had 10 different employers and no breaks in service. I have built up a high level of professional expertise in my field doing direct service work supporting women and children escaping family violence, but this work is emotionally taxing, which has contributed to times when I have felt burnt out, despite

wanting to continue to apply my considerable expertise to the job I love.

Some of the reason for needing to change jobs so often in my field has been due to funding insecurity and program changes. Thus, despite my long tenure in the community sector, I have not been able to access any long service leave entitlements which would enable me to take an extended break to allow me time to refresh and recharge so that I can keep doing direct client work.

Because of this, and because Ada has not been able to access long service leave, she is left doing direct client work.

Here is Richard's story. Richard works in the security industry. He has been working at the National Gallery of Victoria for just over 12 years. He said:

I have never had long service leave. Security is contracted out, so the contract goes up every three years, and every three years you are looking at the possibility of losing your job, or you just carry on with the one company, or you stay where you are. I have stayed where I am. In my time there we have had three major contract changes ...

The first contract was with Wilson. I was there for six years and three months. That left me nine months short of being eligible to get paid any long service leave. When the contract ended Wilson had no work for us, so you basically had two options: be out of work, or you stay at the gallery. Contract changes can make a fairly significant impact on your earnings ... Losing long service leave is a fairly large financial loss, because I reckon I have lost around \$6000 to \$6500 in entitlements in the time I have been there ... My son also works in security and his wife works, so we had a situation during the school holidays where everybody was at work and we had to find someone to look after the kid. If we had long service leave, it would provide the additional option to do that. If I had been employed by the gallery, I reckon I would have about 10 weeks of long service leave accrued, but because I work contract I have got nothing ...

Sam, Ada, Richard and Helen, this bill is for you and for the thousands of hardworking, reliable and loyal workers in the cleaning, security and community services industries who have been denied a well-earned workplace benefit through no fault of their own. It is not fair, and that is why the Andrews Labor government committed to take action and introduce this legislation, which will make long service leave available to workers who up until now have missed out, as I have said before, through no fault of their own. Under the new laws workers will be entitled to long service leave after working for seven years in these industries irrespective of the number of employers they worked for over that time.

It is hard to imagine, I know, when you look at that rabble on the other side of the house, with their tedious anti-union and anti-worker diatribes, that it was a Liberal government that first introduced portable long service leave in 1976 for construction industry workers.

The Liberal Party introduced the scheme in recognition of the fact that without this scheme construction workers would never qualify for long service leave due to the nature of their work as they move from building project to building project working for different contractors. So I say to those on the other side of the house: it is time. Please, once and for all — once at least, please — put aside your anti-worker ideology and do the right thing.

Let me tell you a little bit about some of the features of this scheme. The bill will cover the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors. A bill to create such a scheme for the community services sector was introduced into Parliament in 2010 but never passed. The key features of that bill are reflected in the new bill, albeit with revised administrative and governance arrangements. The intention of the scheme is to provide workers with an entitlement similar to what they would have received under the state's default long service leave legislation. The scheme will be managed by a statutory authority. Employers will pay a levy to finance the payment of entitlements. The legislation caps the levy at a maximum of 3 per cent, with the actual amount to be calculated by the independent statutory authority. Employer levies in similar schemes in other parts of Australia have varied from 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent.

New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT already have portability schemes in place for workers in selected industries. Employers will be required to register themselves and their employees, and contract workers may also register for the scheme. Employees will be able to self-register. Employers will be required to provide a quarterly return. An employee or contract worker will have access to their record. The levy payable by employers will be a percentage of the ordinary pay paid or payable by employers to employees.

There will be a governing board appointed by the minister comprising at least one representative of the union, at least one representative of an employer group, an independent chair and deputy chair and the registrar. Board members are expected to have skills and experience relevant to the role, and the board will have responsibility to set the levy.

An employee will be able to go up to four years without working in the industry before their continuity of service is interrupted, and periods of leave — for example, parental leave — will be treated the same as in the Long Service Leave Act 1992. There is scope for recognition of service in other jurisdictions with similar arrangements, subject to the negotiation of an

agreement with those jurisdictions. Workers will be able to access their long service leave entitlement after seven years of continuous service. For each day worked during their employment in the industry the worker will be credited with one day's service, and their long service leave will be one-sixtieth of their credited service. So if a worker works for 10 years and on average over that 10-year period they worked 200 days a year, their service credit will be 2000 days. One-sixtieth of this is 33.4 days. This is equivalent to the entitlement under the current Victorian Long Service Leave Act.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all of those workers in those industries — in security, in cleaning and in community services — who have campaigned so hard for so long over so many years, and I want to say to you that this bill is an example of the labour movement at its finest. When our unions — the Health and Community Services Union, United Voice, the Australian Education Union and the Australian Services Union — work together with us, the parliamentary Labor Party, this is what we deliver for hardworking Victorians: fairness for these people who work under contracts and have previously been denied an entitlement that is available to the rest of us. I call on those opposite to support this bill, and I commend it to the house.

Ms THORPE (Northcote) (16:05) — I rise today to speak briefly on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. The Greens will be supporting the bill, which provides much-needed and overdue long service leave entitlements to people working in community services, security and contract cleaning.

It is worth noting that the parliamentary inquiry into portability of long service leave entitlements received its terms of reference in May 2015 and delivered its final report in June 2016. Finally, nearly two years later, we are seeing some results. In the interim some of our most poorly paid and insecure workers have continued to work with no access to long service leave. Many of these workers are exposed to serious risk and trauma on a regular basis, and their contribution needs to be recognised financially as well as valued culturally. Under the current system workers in these industries can do the same work in the same workplace for decades without qualifying for long service leave.

A long service leave portability scheme for construction workers has been in place for 30 years. The Australian Services Union has been calling for similar entitlements for social and community services for 10 years. Workers expect better from a Labor government. My colleagues in the other place will speak in more detail

on the bill. At this point I commend the bill to the house and look forward to seeing these changes come into effect as soon as possible to improve the lives of people working in these industries.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (16:07) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. This is a very, very important bill. I address my contribution to my colleagues in the chamber but also to my colleagues in the other place, who will deliberate and vote on this bill very soon. I also address my remarks to those hardworking Victorians who work in the sectors in which we are seeking to close loopholes: the contract cleaning, security and community sectors. My message to them is: you matter and you deserve the same rights, the same rest and the same family time as every other Victorian worker. This is about decency and it is about equality. There is nothing else to be said, other than how we work to achieve those two principles in this bill.

In my view it is a fundamental principle that all workers should have the same rights and that workers should not have those rights abrogated because some work in an industry that has a different rhythm to it and has changing employers. We should not throw our hands in the air and say it is too difficult to fix this because of the market and because of the industry. We do not abrogate those rights and those responsibilities.

I take issue with the member for Box Hill's comments. Several times in his contribution he referred to a principle that he said would be breached if this bill gets through the Parliament, and that is the principle of being rewarded for a long contribution to one employer. That has never been a principle that I have subscribed to. The broader and more fundamental principle is: if you work for seven or 10 years, if you work for a sufficiently long period in order to accrue long service leave, you should accrue that long service leave regardless of whether you have worked for the same employer or different employers, because that is sometimes not within your power — it is not your choice, as we have seen time and again in the industries that we are talking about. There are workers who work in the same place for 20 or 30 years, and employers move around them. The workers have not moved at all — they have just been the victims of changing market dynamics.

In my strong view, this is an example of market failure. This is exactly what governments need to address. They need to address market failure. Who you work for or how many employers you work for should not fundamentally matter when you are talking about accruing long service leave. What should matter is the

fact that you have worked for the minimum required period. That is what should matter, and that is what this Labor government seeks to address with this bill.

Further, it is a bit disheartening to hear the opposition speak on this bill because the sectors that we are talking about are some of the most disadvantaged. Not only do they include the most difficult jobs — including that of security guard, which can involve work at any time, 24 hours a day, including at night and in freezing cold and very hot temperatures. Community sector workers have to keep applying for their jobs every year through funding rounds. They also have to deal with probably the most disadvantaged people in society, including people who are suffering from family violence. They hear really tough stories, and their jobs are very insecure.

There is also contract cleaning. My mother was a contract cleaner for many years and her name is Helen, which was the name of the worker in the case study that the member for Macedon outlined. These are not glamorous jobs. They are not jobs that attract high salaries or bonuses. For that reason alone I would think that it would be meritorious for us to address a fundamental right like long service leave for hardworking workers who do not get the benefits that workers in the banking industry or those at the top end of Collins Street get. These are the workers we need to look after.

This is absolutely about Labor values — addressing inequality and market failure. I am proud of this government because we do that every single sitting week. Every single sitting week there is a bill that in some respects addresses equality and market failure. Coming up later today is the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018, which seeks to do that in another area of public policy. We have done that in spades with the prevention of family violence, and we have done that in spades with the budget that the Treasurer handed down today.

I will for a moment turn to better access to TAFE. We are providing free access to 30 TAFE courses. That is exactly what Labor governments do in terms of addressing inequality, disadvantage and market failure — better aligning the skill shortage in this state with the opportunities that young people have.

The member for Macedon has already talked about the case study of Helen, and Helen's story resonated particularly with me. Like my mother, she is a Greek Australian and her name is Helen. Like my mother, she is a contract cleaner. Her employers shifted and changed under her feet. She cleaned the same offices;

she did not choose to leave, so she should be entitled to long service leave like other workers in her community.

I would say to the Greens that that was a very uncharitable contribution by the member for Northcote, and to be honest I was surprised by it. She is on the same side as us on this issue, and it was quite uncharitable of her to say that the community expects more from a Labor government. What do you mean 'more'? That is exactly what we are delivering. This is our bill, and we are introducing it to the Parliament. I would ask the member for Northcote that when we do not have to disagree and take digs at each other, let us not do it. On this bill we do not have to do that, so let us just not do it.

In terms of the opposition, when the member for Box Hill was on his feet I was conscious that in politics you can be driven by values or you can be driven by ideology. We are driven by values, so as a Labor Party and an Andrews Labor government we say: what is it that addresses our values and is true to the values of the labour movement and the government, and how can we give expression to those values? We are doing that in this bill by addressing inequality and market failure. We say: let us just get it done. We will work out the problems and deal with the issues. That is why we are going to set up a statutory authority and put experts on its board, and that is why a whole range of provisions are included in this bill.

What have those on the other side done in relation to this bill? They have looked at a public policy issue and asked themselves, 'How can we not do it? How can we find every single problem?' The member for Box Hill is better than that, but he listed every single problem. He gave the example of someone whose primary job is to work in the office of a cleaning company but then once a month has to go out on the floor and clean, and he asked how he or she would be treated. Of course they are issues that we will absolutely resolve, but they are not issues that would stop us living up to our values with the introduction of this bill. That is the difference between those on the other side who seek to be in government and those who are in government, which is our proud Labor government here in Victoria.

I would also like to just mention some salient points in the last few minutes of my contribution on the bill. The intention of the scheme is to provide workers with an entitlement similar to what they would have received under the state's default long service leave legislation. The legislation caps the levy at a maximum of 3 per cent, and I note the member for Box Hill's comments about the higher end of the 3 per cent, but it is an absolute cap on the contributions at 3 per cent. New

South Wales, Queensland and the ACT all have these schemes, and we need to have them as well.

Employers will be required to register themselves and their employees. In fact employees can also self-register. An employee will be able to not work in the industry for up to four years before the continuity of service is interrupted, although they would not be credited with any service during that period when they are not working. Periods of leave — for example, parental leave — will be treated the same as they are in the Long Service Leave Act. There is scope for mutual recognition with other jurisdictions. We have left that open, as the minister said in her contribution.

In the last few seconds of my contribution I would like to echo the words of the member for Macedon. The fact that we are here is an absolute credit to the workers in those industries over generations, and my heart bleeds for those who will not benefit from this bill because their time has passed. But it is a credit to the industry of those workers, the union movement and this Labor government that we are even debating this bill. We are going to change the lives of workers in those industries in the decade going forward. I am proud to support this bill, and I commend the minister.

Ms RYALL (Ringwood) (16:17) — I rise to make a contribution to the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. I note the contribution of those opposite and in line with the contribution from the member for Box Hill I note that we do oppose this bill.

I come to the chamber and speak as someone who was actually on the inquiry in relation to the portability of long service leave. For those who might actually like to consider the report by the majority of the members of that committee, I quote:

Through submissions and public hearings, it was identified by the full committee that for some there could be inequity in the contract cleaning, security and some other industries where an employee might maintain the same role with multiple employers due to the contract changing hands. This could mean the employee is excluded from accruing enough long service leave to reach eligibility for leave or pro rata payment.

Although those on the government side would like to try to draw divisions about fairness and unfairness, the paragraph after that says:

Without data, the committee is unable to verify how many contract cleaning and security employees would be affected. If it were a very small number, due to increasing industry and employment mobility, a portable long service leave scheme may not be the best way to address it.

What we find as a result is that this bill has actually arisen out of deceit, out of manipulation and riding

roughshod over the will of the people, where some members of the committee, the Labor members, chose an opportunity — and this might sound familiar to some — to take the absence of a member to rescind the very will of the motions passed by the majority of the committee. That was unprecedented in Parliament. It was an abuse of committee process. It sounds similar to something that recently happened in the upper house where the illness and absence of a member of Parliament was taken as an opportunity to try to manipulate and ride roughshod over the will of those people who represented the majority in that case.

The Treasurer said today in his budget speech, ‘You are what you do, not what you say you’ll do’. Clearly the spin doctors were not thinking very well when they allowed that to go through, because this is exactly what goes to the character and the behaviour of the Andrews government — that lies, deceit and cheating are in their DNA and in their blood. We saw the headline the *Herald Sun* used in relation to the rorting used by this government to slide into government. It referred to them as a pack of cheats, and that is exactly what happened in this committee.

To steamroll over the majority of the committee by, in the absence of a member, rescinding motions and replacing them with those previously voted down is nothing short of manipulative — absolutely manipulative. Those in the majority on the committee recognised that there were some instances where there was a lot of movement in and out of the industry. The committee examined the evidence and transcripts and took that into consideration. I think the member for Macedon might have outlined three of those instances, but we also recognised that it was very difficult to say what the extent of that movement in and out of the industry was and whether a scheme, as such, similar to the one for the construction industry, was the right one in this instance. Would it be better handled differently?

As a result of that we recommended:

That the Victorian government commission independent quantitative research to determine if industry portable long service leave schemes outside Victoria have resulted in an increase in the retention of employees eligible for long service leave.

And:

That the Victorian government commission independent research to determine the economic and employment impacts of expanding that long service leave as well as the cost to employers and employees.

We had economists who made contributions as witnesses in that inquiry and who said this will actually, in effect, stall wages growth.

So there are trades and offsets, as they have identified. It might be easy for members of the government to sit there and say this is about fairness and so forth, but what we are saying is that we need evidence-based policy. Although they may utter the words ‘evidence-based policy’ every now and then, what we as the majority members of that committee were asking for was evidence to base the policy on and evidence to base the bill on, if a bill was needed in order to provide some fairness to those people — and it might just be a very few — who are in this inequitable situation.

I also refer to workforce data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which shows significant movement between industries. There was also a Deloitte Access Economics survey where 60 per cent of respondees identified that they will pursue a new job in the next 10 years as they look to change their industry and role. When the ABS data is showing significant movement, especially in those areas that we are referring to in this bill, it follows that if you are going to spend a lot of money establishing the infrastructure to enable a portable long service scheme you need to know how many people it will affect and what the future projections are based on movement in and out of those industries. If the cost to government, because we are also talking about government services, is prohibitive and it only impacts a few, is there an alternative way of addressing this so that the people affected, such as those in the examples that have been given, can be given long service leave as a result.

That movement in and out of these industries makes it very, very difficult to pin down the numbers, as I said. But I also note — and if those opposite had read the transcripts from the inquiry they might also have noticed — that the information from and input by witnesses in relation to the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) and to those in the disability area is to leave it alone for now. They said we should not touch it because the implementation of the NDIS is in itself very, very significant. If you bring something like this in at that point in time, it stands to distort and confuse the circumstances.

Another thing I raise is the cost of the establishment and implementation of the scheme. Many would know and some of those identified in the examples given today would understand that those contract employers are doing government service work. So when we talk about, say, the Shrine of Remembrance or we talk about a particular government service or statutory

service to government, what we find is those contractors have been brought in to do the work on behalf of government. In that instance the government shifts the cost of that service to those employers rather than bearing it themselves, so there is a lot that is not clear in relation to the provision of those government services or the cleaning activities in government-owned buildings that these people are contributing to as part of their employment. The government is saying, 'You employers, you contract companies, can bear the cost of this scheme', when they are doing it on behalf of government. We did raise the question in the committee of who would be funding the cost of that establishment, how much would it be and will it not be cost-shifted onto employers, who also have slim margins. On that basis, I will come back to what was said by the Treasurer today in relation to what they do and I will —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward) — Time!

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (16:27) — I am very pleased to add some brief comments on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. This bill introduces portable long service leave for workers in the security, cleaning and community services sectors. I am thrilled that this legislation will make long service leave available to workers who have missed out on this important leave through no fault of their own. Employees in these sectors are often unable to continue working for a single employer long enough to qualify for long service leave due to the contract-based nature of the industries and a variety of short-term funding arrangements.

The intention of the scheme is to provide workers with an entitlement similar to that received by other workers under the Long Service Leave Act 1992. Under the new laws, workers will be entitled to long service leave after working for seven years in these industries, irrespective of the number of employers they work for over that time. Due to the nature of these industries, contract cleaning, security and community services workers often do the same job for well over the seven years legally required to accrue long service leave, but they do not receive it.

It was great to meet with United Voice representatives and delegates in February to get a briefing from them on the importance of portable long service leave to workers in the security and cleaning sectors. My comments in this brief contribution will largely focus on those sectors as I reflect upon that meeting. At that meeting I had the opportunity to chat with Ken, a cleaner at the Arts Centre Melbourne, and Bronco, a security guard, to discuss the Portable Leave for Life campaign being run by United Voice.

The stories of Ken and Bronco were not unique, and their experiences were far too common. They told me that 74 per cent of security guards and 61 per cent of cleaners miss out on long service leave. We spoke about how security guards work an average of 11.4 years in their industry, and cleaners even longer with an average service of 20 years, but due to contracting in these industries workers are prevented from accessing long service leave. Most security guards and cleaners will work at the same site for most of their careers — so they are not only doing the same job, but they are also at the same site — but they still face a possible change of employer when contracts change every three years. When they are employed by a new employer at contract change they lose their entitlement to long service leave.

Ken and Bronco also told me about the dangerous and unsafe work conditions that they face and how the nature of the work takes its toll on workers in these sectors. We talked about how cleaners and security guards are at high risk of injury and illness, so much so that insurance premiums in these industries are higher than for police and workers in psychiatric hospitals. Most cleaners and guards work shiftwork and long days. A day's work can be up to 12 hours in these sectors. Shiftwork is associated with a greater risk of accidents and illness, including sleep disorders, mood disorders and cardiovascular disease. Long service leave provides an important break to rest and recover during a long career. It also provides something to look forward to. That was something that Ken and Bronco made very clear: knowing this break was to come would give them good relief and the will to continue.

We talked about how cleaners in Victoria previously had access to portable long service leave prior to 2010, as this was provided in the Building Services (Victoria) Award 2003. However, the entitlement was lost in the award modernisation process, which removed state-based differentials in working conditions, and the workers in this sector have been fighting for this leave ever since. It is also important to note that portable long service leave provisions do operate in other states, with schemes covering cleaners operating in Queensland and New South Wales and schemes covering cleaners and security guards operating in the ACT.

United Voice has been fighting for portable long service leave for security guards and cleaners for a very long time. I commend them on their efforts, I thank them for keeping us informed of this need and the importance of providing this well-deserved long service leave. It is well understood that long service leave is a benefit that all workers should enjoy as a reward for long and faithful service and to allow workers to take a

break from their jobs and spend time with their families. However, as previously mentioned, many workers, through no fault of their own, are never able to enjoy long service leave because of the nature of the industry they work in.

This bill will address that anomaly for workers in the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors. It is estimated that 10 000 security guards and 20 000 cleaners would be eligible to access long service leave under the scheme. I am thrilled that this bill will assist so many deserving workers. I congratulate the minister on her work in this area, and I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (16:32) — As the minister and others have noted in this debate, this is certainly not the first time the Parliament has considered various provisions around long service leave. Firstly, and of course most famously, in 1953 there was the Factories and Shops (Long Service Leave) Act 1953. As was noted in the second-reading speech, the original intent was to provide a reward for service to one employer. The minister also referred to two other bills, one being the Pre-school Teachers and Assistants (Leave) Bill 1984, which was for whatever reason apparently not proclaimed, and of course the Community Services Long Services Leave Bill 2010, which was not considered by the house before the Parliament was prorogued in 2010; and it did not make an appearance. The minister also referred to what is now an infamous committee report, and I will have more to say about that if time permits later on in my speech.

The bill essentially establishes a Portable Long Service Benefits Authority with a board of up to nine persons appointed by the minister and a registrar as CEO. What we do not know of course is how many employees are going to be in that organisation and what the actual cost of running it is going to be. We also know, as others have noted, that initially this regime will apply to contract cleaning, security and community services, but there will be capacity for the scheme to be extended to other sectors in the future. So we are being asked to establish an authority and we are being asked to give the Parliament's imprimatur without knowing what the extent of the scheme will ultimately be.

There are a number of other major provisions, but the one I will comment on is the requirement to pay a levy of up to 3 per cent of an employee's ordinary pay to the authority, but again with the actual levy to be set by the authority. The Parliament is once again being asked to authorise something that may or may not be a much, much higher figure than the 1.5 per cent figure that the

government has been talking about. The other provisions are standard, for example allowing for a cashing out of entitlements. What is perhaps not standard is the provision to allow an employee to not work in the industry for up to four years but still maintain their entitlement. That is, as I understand it, well beyond most enterprise agreements and well beyond the conditions in other industries. The bill also allows for payments in lieu of long service leave.

In the context of this bill we need to consider what exactly long service leave is. It seems obvious, and to some extent it is, but it is paid leave additional to the normal recreational leave, or annual leave that is accrued through the working year. Interestingly it is not an entitlement that is widely recognised around the world. It is not even an entitlement, as I understand it, that is recognised, for example, in OECD countries. It seems to be an entitlement that is peculiar to Australasia. Certainly the sources I was looking at suggest that perhaps the origin might even be in payments to the Victorian colonial public service. I was not able to verify that, but I understand it is one possibility. The important point, though, is it is a reward for service to one employer. I think it is a good concept. It is a benefit to an employee. It is an opportunity for them to take a break, to refresh themselves and to return to their employment probably much refreshed and far more able to tackle the tasks at hand, rather than perhaps going on and becoming stale and potentially looking elsewhere for employment.

It is a benefit also to the employer, because it is a strong incentive for employees to remain with that single employer. It is an effective method to reduce labour turnover, and it is an effective method to reduce the obvious costs that are associated with a higher labour turnover. Given that benefit to the employer, I think it is entirely reasonable that employees are able to share in that cost saving, effectively through the opportunity to take long service leave. But of course what is proposed here will break the nexus between the benefit that the employee derives and the benefit delivered to the employer. That nexus will unfortunately be broken, and on the basis of this bill, long service leave would simply become another allowance.

For a decade or more in this state our productivity growth has been almost negligible; it has been non-existent. If we are going to remain competitive and if we are going to continue to have our standard of living rise, then we must get back to a situation where we are making productivity gains. You cannot raise productivity by loading additional costs on employers and not give them the opportunity to generate productivity gains and recoup some of the costs. You

will actually drive productivity down rather than up and, as the member for Ringwood noted, potentially drive down employment as well, because if you add more costs to employers and there is not headroom in terms of the opportunity to raise prices, then they will be out of pocket. It is not some magic pudding. There is not some imaginary employer super-profit scheme from which the additional benefits can be funded without offsetting savings.

Not only does the bill propose to introduce additional costs, it is proposing to do so without any offset whatsoever. It proposes to introduce a levy potentially as high as 3 per cent. The government is suggesting, as I said earlier, that 1.5 per cent is the levy that they will charge, but we know that is only going to be the opening bid. We know the levy is going to go up, and it is likely to go up soon. If every employee qualified for long service leave, it would cost employers 1.66 per cent, so the levy that is proposed is marginally lower than would be the cost of providing long service leave to every single employee. We know that not every employee is going to qualify for long service leave; in fact it is highly unlikely that even half of the employees are going to qualify for long service leave.

There are a number of other concerns with the bill. The member for Box Hill has addressed most of them. There are issues associated with providers under the national disability insurance scheme. With a fixed price for undertaking their work and relatively slim reserves, there is a distinct risk that they could be sent to the wall, and there has been no commitment at this stage of additional funding from either the Victorian government or the commonwealth.

As I mentioned, I want to touch briefly on the issue of the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee report. I think it is worth noting in this context that the majority of members of the committee found that the Victorian government should commission independent research to determine what methods of removing long service leave inequity were desirable. That was not followed through. They did not find that there was merit in introducing a portable long service leave scheme. They did not find that the Victorian government should commission a feasibility study into the scheme. They did not find merit in introducing portable long service leave schemes for the security industry. But they did ask the government to commission independent research. As of course we know, the view of the majority of those members of the committee was rejected and a casting vote, which should only ever be used to maintain the status quo, was used to overturn resolutions of the committee.

There are many difficulties, I think, with this bill. It does not reflect the recommendations of the majority of the committee that was established to consider the subject. It breaks the nexus between the payment for long service leave with one employer and actual service given, and it adds considerably to the cost burden of employers without commensurate savings or benefits. I do not support the bill.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (16:42) — I rise to say that I am very strongly in support of this bill, the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018, and I am very proud to be part of a Labor government that is introducing such legislation that really rectifies an injustice. It is well overdue, so it is great to be standing here in support of this bill. Of course, as we know, the opposition are always complaining and arguing and opposing anything that gives workers a pay increase, a little bit extra or some other condition. I think they would perhaps prefer that all workers work for nothing, and this is the issue. We keep talking about industries and whether they can afford this or afford that, but the fact is that people work and they deserve to be paid and they deserve to get proper working conditions as well.

One of the things that the opposition keep talking about is this idea that long service leave is traditionally recognition of length of service. Well, no, the gold watch is recognition of length of service — things that employers do for long-term employees that are not part of legislation. There is federal and state legislation that covers long service leave and all employers are entitled to it. This legislation really rectifies an injustice that came about with the change in types of employment. When people worked for one employer, they worked every day and it was for the same employer, doing the same work. It is the employers that have changed this system by turning workers into contractors rather than permanent long-term employees. What we are talking about is employees who are doing the same job in the same place but whose employer may change; it might be through transmission of business or liquidation, but they are continuing to do the work that they have always done. So when we are talking about recognition of service, there is recognition for the work that the employee is doing and it ought not be tied to the particular employer because the nature of employment has changed rather than the work.

The second issue is about costs. I think someone did raise this but they seemed to dismiss it. The fact is that in other schemes where there is portable long service leave, over time the cost to the employer decreases as the fund builds up reserves and excess funds. That money can then be used to pay for the time that people take for their long service leave. I also noticed that in

the 2018–19 budget papers — and I have not gone fully through them — there are funds allocated for the implementation of the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018, and I am sure that arrangements could be made to sort some of those things out.

Really, I think this is an entitlement that workers should have. I commend the unions for continuing to persist in fighting for the rights of their union members and workers in these industries. You hear some stories of people who have worked 20 or 30 years and never received any long service leave; they have been doing the same job in the same place for all that time, yet because the employer has chosen to go somewhere else or has gone bust or has given the contract to somebody else, the worker has been penalised and has not received the opportunity that everybody else has to take proper extended leave for wellbeing and to spend time with their families.

Some of the employees we are looking at here, such as early childhood educators and security guards, often work in very stressful, difficult jobs with lots of shift work. They need to have proper working arrangements that provide for proper time off. Again this bill is fixing up an injustice, and I hope the opposition is not going to play games with workers' livelihoods and their lives by trying to stop this legislation going through.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (16:47) — I rise to speak on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. Right up-front The Nationals and the coalition are opposing this bill. The purpose of the bill is to create a portable long service leave regime to apply initially to the cleaning, security and community services sectors. Earlier you heard from the member for Gippsland East about the issues with the community services sector.

The main provisions in the bill are to establish a portable long service benefits authority to administer the scheme, with a board of up to nine persons appointed by the minister and with a registrar as CEO. It applies initially to contract cleaning, security and community services, with the capability for the scheme to be extended to other services in the future. It applies to contract workers in the security and contract cleaning industries, with provision for the scheme to extend by regulation to contract workers in other industries. It does not initially apply to independent contractors or for-profit organisations within the community services sector except for for-profit organisations in the disability services sector. So therefore it does not apply to the not-for-profit sector, something that I am sure in his address the member for Gippsland East would have spoken very strongly on, because these are in

competition in many areas. This may well produce an imbalance in that not-for-profit sector.

The scheme requires employers to pay a levy of up to 3 per cent of the employees' ordinary pay to the authority, with the actual levy rate to be set by the authority. It requires employers in a covered industry to register themselves, their employees and their contract workers. It allows workers in the contract cleaning or security industries with at least seven years service to request long service leave from their employer, with a right of appeal to the authority if it is refused. It provides for workers granted long service leave to be paid their leave by the authority at the rate of pay at the time the leave commences. It recognises service in the contract cleaning and security industries of up to 12 months prior to the commencement of the legislation. These two together do present an interesting management issue in that the authority is starting behind the eight ball financially. I do worry about just what will be the rate that they strike and the burden that will be on employers — more about that later.

It allows cashing out of entitlements by employees in the contract cleaning and security industries only when leaving the industry. It allows an employee to not work in their industry for up to four years before losing continuity of service. It provides for the scheme to make payments in lieu of long service leave to workers in the community services sector. It provides for proceedings in the matter of disputes in the scheme to be brought before the industrial division of the Magistrates Court. So it is pretty comprehensive in the way the bill is structured.

There are quite a number of concerns. I was part of the all-party committee that inquired into this matter a little while ago. I was part of the committee where the majority report became the minority report and the minority report became the majority report. That is something that has been unprecedented in my 11 years serving on parliamentary committees. It was an extraordinary use of the chairman's casting vote not to go with the status quo but to in fact change what the majority of those who had authored the report wanted in the recommendations, brought about by the inability of one of the members to attend the committee hearing at that particular time.

The bill undermines the concept of what long service leave is about. During our inquiry we heard quite a lot about the history of long service leave and how it came about. It relates back to our colonial period, when bureaucrats and public servants were sent out from Great Britain to administer in the colonies and after a certain amount of time they would receive three months,

which was chosen because that was the time for them to take a sea voyage back to their home country and then return. That is how it initially came about. It has turned into something different over time, as so many things do. It is now a reward for someone who has given continuous service to a particular employee.

We also have to consider the cost of the scheme. It is likely to be expensive for employers both in direct costs and administration costs. The levy can be up to 3 per cent and the government is talking about a levy of 1.5 per cent, which is far higher than the cost to employers who manage the liability themselves now. It also leads to the concern I alluded to earlier that giving people 12 months start and the opportunity to cash out when they leave could mean a very difficult start for the authority as it has to strike quite a high rate in order to accumulate reserves rapidly.

It is also an issue of how the authority paid for — that it has to come out of, I presume, contributions. I do not see anywhere that the government is going to set aside money to put into this scheme to cover those costs. To support it, there will be red tape and there will be costs that will have to be borne somewhere — either by the cost of the scheme or by the taxpayer. Perhaps it will come from those who do not qualify, because employers will be contributing and if somebody does leave the scheme early and does not acquire a benefit, I presume that that entitlement will not be returned to the employer but will remain in the pool for the scheme. Again, that will mean that the rate will need to be set reasonably high to make sure that the scheme can in fact pay out employees at the rate to which they are entitled. Given that we are in a low-inflation period at the moment, that would not be a big challenge, but in a period of higher wage inflation over time one might well find that the authority will face quite a number of challenges.

The scheme applies only to frontline cleaners and security personnel, not to other staff of the employer. I think it is quite well worth raising the concern that if someone quite rightly is promoted within their job then they will have sacrificed their entitlement in the scheme to the altar of red tape, bureaucracy or others. There is concern there for those who might seek to be promoted or whose skills are developing — something that we all want to see happen.

The coverage within the community services sector is complex and will create uncertainties and potential for double-charging or penalties for non-compliance. The coverage of the current building industry scheme, CoINVEST, has been highly contentious, with many employers believing they have been falsely classified as

being in the building industry and forced to pay the levy. So we have demarcation issues that will come up, particularly across the community services sector.

The bill is strongly opposed by disability services sector employers, who are already under severe pressure due to the move to the national disability insurance scheme, where they operate with fixed national fee rates. The levy will wipe out most disability services providers' surpluses and risks them going broke and breaking the service to those who are disabled, which is surely something that the government does not want to happen.

The bill creates an expensive, centralised and bureaucratic regime that will impose high costs on employers. A portable long service regime undermines the rationale of long service leave as a reward for continuous service with one employer. A majority of that parliamentary committee I was a member of did not favour this style of scheme. With those words, The Nationals in coalition oppose the bill.

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (16:56) — I rise to speak on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018 and to say that like my colleagues I am strongly opposed to the bill before the house.

The first thing that I need to say is that employees in the state of Victoria are entitled to long service leave. All employees are entitled to long service leave if they work the requisite number of years in order to achieve long service leave. The construction industry long service leave fund, CoINVEST, as it is colloquially known, was created many years ago for a specific set of workers in the Victorian community that were unable to achieve the requisite 10 years of service because of the nature of their employment, which was project based. When your work is project based, by definition you are prevented from actually achieving 10 years service with one employer because you are in fact engaged to work on a specific project. That project could run for weeks or for years but inherently it did not run for the requisite 10-year period in order to achieve long service leave for those workers. As a consequence of that, the construction industry fund was created.

This fund, as was put by those opposite, is apparently about providing to workers a benefit which the opposition supposedly does not want to afford workers. Let me say that workers who work in the cleaning industry or in the disability services sector have the right to achieve long service leave. If they work the requisite number of years, it is the same for them as it is for any other worker in the state of Victoria, any other private sector worker who is currently working in the central business district or across Victoria. There is

nothing stopping workers in the cleaning sector, the disability services sector or the community services sector more broadly working the requisite number of years — be it seven or 10 years, as the case may be — and achieving long service leave. No evidence has been led by those opposite to say that workers who are going to be covered by this act of Parliament are placed at a greater disadvantage than any other worker in the state of Victoria, where they need to receive this benefit.

In fact, we know that this is not about providing to workers a benefit that does not currently exist. We actually know from the commentary of those opposite that this is about providing an additional benefit that they do not currently receive and, can I add, will not be a benefit that will be afforded any other worker in the state of Victoria. Under this scheme, if somebody works for an employer in the disability services sector for five years and leaves, they will be entitled to a payment for their long service leave, a benefit that is not afforded any other employee in the state of Victoria. There is no evidence before the house that has been led by those opposite to explain why workers in the disability sector should, after five years of service, receive a payment for long service leave when workers who have worked in a takeaway food shop for five years and leave are not afforded a payment for long service leave.

We know that in fact this is nothing to do with the disability sector, this is nothing to do with the cleaning sector and this is nothing to do with security. This is about creating a regime which ultimately is going to be applied long term to all Victorian employees. This is about creating a portable long service leave scheme for all Victorian employees so that every Victorian employer will be required to make a contribution into a fund for every Victorian worker that works for them and those workers will benefit from that scheme regardless of the service.

I come back to the point that I started with: Victorian workers currently are afforded long service leave, as they always have been under the Long Service Leave Act 1992 — always have been and always will be. It is an act of Parliament that has operated under all sides of politics. Employees are entitled to long service leave after they have achieved the applicable number of years of service. In fact only recently we had legislation in the Parliament that dealt with the Long Service Leave Act.

Here we have before this house a piece of legislation that seeks to carve out an entitlement for a group of employees. The government cannot explain why this specific group of employees should be afforded this benefit when other employees in the state of Victoria are

not going to be afforded the same benefit. Disability services providers in my own community do a fantastic job and the workers there do a fantastic job. Those workers have the capacity to have many years of employment with that one employer. That is no different from the private sector employees who work directly opposite that not-for-profit disability services provider. The employees at the disability services provider will now be afforded a portable scheme from which they can receive a financial benefit if they choose to leave their employment before seven years of service.

However, the same benefit is not being afforded the private sector employees who choose to work for the employer across the road. That is despite the fact that employees at both organisations, the not-for-profit and the private sector organisations, are not limited in their length of employment by way of contract and are not limited in terms of tenure. We are going to carve out a specific provision for a group of employees for no other reason than that they work in the community services sector.

When we talk about the economic cost to businesses, for profit and not-for-profit businesses, of course we are going to raise those issues because it is a direct financial impact on those organisations. More importantly, those businesses are going to be impacted financially and those employees will gain a financial benefit when they work less than seven years. The government cannot provide any explanation to the house or the Victorian community for why they are seeking to impose this financial cost on those organisations and why they are providing this financial benefit to a specific group of employees in the state of Victoria but all other employees and employers will not be subject to the same terms and conditions. The contributions of government members clearly lack logic in terms of the spurious arguments they have made in regard to the legislation before the house.

As I said at the beginning, the construction industry long service leave fund was created specifically for a sector of employees who by definition were inherently unable to achieve 10 years service with one employer because the nature of work in that industry was project based. People were not specifically employed by a building contractor but were in fact engaged to work on a project. That was the main reason why that piece of legislation was created.

Can I say that I have had a lot to do with the CoINVEST scheme in my former employment. Let me say that the scope of that fund has been expanded well beyond the scope of the construction industry. I know, for example, that it covered employees where I was working who

were performing mechanical maintenance work in the metal industry — nothing to do with construction — but a political decision was made to expand the scope of that fund to cover those groups of employees.

Given the fact that we are going to have an authority that will administer the scheme and a board that is going to operate the scheme, mark my words, the scope of those covered by this scheme will expand well beyond what we are talking about today in this piece of legislation. Again the government cannot provide an explanation as to why employees in the disability sector who have the capacity to work five, 10, 15, 20 or 30 years of service with that employer should be afforded a benefit which is not going to be applied by this piece of legislation to other employees in the state of Victoria. Who are we in fact protecting? What benefit are these employees being prevented from achieving?

We know these employees, if they work the requisite number of years, will achieve long service leave like every other worker in the state of Victoria, so again, why do we need to establish a portable scheme when in fact it is not about protecting anything for those workers but is about providing them with an additional benefit which will not be provided to other employees? The member for Oakleigh said there is no additional benefit. These workers will work four years and get a financial payout for long service leave. No other Victorian employee gets the same benefit. That is exactly the issue that those opposite will not answer, because they cannot answer.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (17:06) — I rise now to make a contribution to the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. The bill before the Parliament is one that the government is very, very keen to see passed. We can see this is quite evident by the way that they stooped to an all-time low in the manner that the members of the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee behaved during the drafting of the report and the passing of the recommendations during the inquiry into the portability of long service. I want to thank the members of the department and the minister's staff for allowing me to be briefed over the telephone when the bill briefing happened. I greatly appreciate that.

The purpose of the bill is to create a portable long service leave regime to apply initially to the cleaning, security and community services sectors. I suspect that this is the first tranche of legislation which will see later additional sectors, perhaps retail or media, also falling under this regime. We know there is capacity in the bill for this to happen, but we do not really know where this bill is going to end up. The bill, as has been said previously, is not going to be supported by the

coalition, and I certainly endorse the comments that were made by the member for Box Hill in his opening statement, the member for Gippsland East in relation to the disability sector and then finally the member for Ferntree Gully, who has a lot of experience working in this area.

I think the government often forgets that the members of this side of the house have all been employers at some point in time and would be subject, if they qualified, to long service leave. I have never had long service leave, and I think with one job that I had I was actually able to take the money out at probably the seven-year or so mark when I left that position.

I also want to put this in the context of the report by the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee when they did the inquiry into the portability of this scheme and the fact that, quite extraordinarily, the majority report which was tabled in Parliament was not at all a reflection of the will of the majority of the committee members. They found that the minority report was not a reflection of the minority of the committee but in fact there were four of the seven members who did not agree with the recommendations in the final report that was put forward. We saw in this instance that the members of the government took advantage of an ill member of Parliament, and motions that had been passed were rescinded when somebody was away and then different recommendations were passed.

It is also worth noting that submissions to that inquiry were received from quite a large number of organisations, and certainly the unions were well represented in that. They had shown a clear representation, and this certainly extended beyond the three sectors that are involved here, being the cleaning, security and community services sectors. I do note that the retail industry were keenly involved, as were the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, the CFMEU, the Australian Education Union, the Australian Retailers Association, the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the Health and Community Services Union and the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance. There were many people with a keen interest in this, and of course we have got the United Firefighters Union. We know that very often the unions, when they are involved, have a clear message for the government, and we always wonder what the government are going to owe them for their support.

If we look at the bill, it is setting up another single authority — a further bureaucracy — and I know that this has been accounted for today in budget paper 3, where there is \$400 000 put up for the current financial year and \$5.7 million for the next financial year for the

set-up and the early operation of the scheme. This scheme will be a bureaucratic, centralised system with a nine-member governing board appointed by the minister. The head of the authority will be a registrar who would act like a CEO.

The employer has to register their business, their address, their Australian company number, their ABN, their employees and their contract workers and on a quarterly basis needs to provide the names of employees, the days they have worked and the part-days they have worked. There is also the capacity for an employee to register themselves. Each scheme has a separate fund, and that fund must be kept separate. With regard to registration I notice that budget paper 3, page 140, indicates that the government expects to have 5000 registrations in the next financial year. The scheme will see employers having to pay a levy of up to 3 per cent of employees' ordinary pay to the authority, with the actual levy rate to be set by the authority. We are not exactly sure where the percentage of 1.5 currently being bandied around will land.

This scheme is to allow workers in contract cleaning or security industries with at least seven years service to request from their employer long service leave with the right of appeal to the authority if this is refused. It will be interesting to see how this will work and how this process will play out, because long service leave and the timing of that needs to be agreed. If we have valued employees who also value their workplace, it is in everyone's best interest to take this at a time that is agreed, because it is very difficult for an employer to have somebody suddenly decide I am going to take X number of weeks or months of long service leave during what may be the busiest time of the year for that organisation. I am quite interested to see how this method will work out and how the authority will be determining it.

I do want to comment on some comments that were made during the bill briefing that I just did not agree with. It was stated in the briefing that not-for-profits typically do not make provisions for long service leave, and this is just not true. I have been employed as the CEO of a not-for-profit, and I have worked with others in different capacities. Good auditors insist that appropriate provisions are made. Every not-for-profit that I have been involved with has made the appropriate provisions, so I was really quite affronted to hear that comment that was put forward.

In my role as a management consultant, I have also worked with a lot of companies that were undergoing change. Employee entitlements were always front and centre of how these would be managed and how best to

look after employees. The members of the government continually say that employers do not look after the interests of their workers. Certainly from what I have seen and from my experience, this is not the case. It is quite the opposite. I know that when change has resulted from an organisation coming together with another company or different changes in the set-up, the entitlements of employees, including long service leave entitlements, were always looked at and were very typically agreed to by the new organisation or the new organisational being.

We know also that long service leave is just that — it is a reward for long service and valued service to an organisation. Employers are indeed the lifeblood of an organisation. For any employer, attraction and retention are key. Changing the workforce continually can be difficult for employees and employers, and it certainly leads to a loss of productivity. It is in everybody's interest to have a happy workplace and to see that after certain periods of time long service is equally available to everybody, not just members of certain sectors.

If you have got valued staff, I think employers are very happy for them to receive their long service leave after a period of long service. It is not the gold watch; it is actually leave that they can take for their period of good and dedicated service. Often this is a key attraction point. People who might get to six years might think, 'Gee, if I hang out another year or so, I might be able to take my long service pro rata, but if I am there for 10 years, I actually am rewarded for that'. It can help people to stay on, being the reason to continue with that employer, and that offers the employer certainly that greater consistency of workplace that is not constantly subject to change.

The scheme proposed today is expensive, centralised and bureaucratic, and it imposes high costs on the employer. I do want to mention also that the disability sector is very worried about this scheme. They are under severe financial pressure due to the move to the national disability insurance scheme, whereby they operate with fixed national fee rates. This levy will wipe out most disability providers' surpluses and risk sending many of them to the wall or broke, and we do not want to see that. We want to have a robust disability sector supporting those who need our support.

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (17:16) — I take great pleasure in joining the debate on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. I am following the member for Eildon. I quite like the member for Eildon, but I think that some of the things she said in her contribution just show how far this current Liberal Party has strayed from the small-l liberal,

fairness-based party it was in the 1970s. While the member for Eildon said that employees are the lifeblood of an organisation, I think that some of the things that come out of the mouths of the so-called Liberal Party these days are more about getting blood out of a stone from workers.

I was reminded that I was at the end of primary school in 1976, when the first portable long service leave scheme was introduced. It was actually, ironically, introduced by a Liberal government. I have not heard other speakers from the other side, but I did hear the member for Eildon. What I would say to those opposite, who I understand are opposing this bill, is that this is about workers in the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors, including early childhood educators, and the long service leave that they deserve.

It was for the same reasons, the very same reasons, that the then Liberal government in 1976 introduced portable long service leave in the construction industry — because many of these employment arrangements are constantly on contract. I would urge the members on the other side who are opposing this bill to look in the faces of the security guards that protect us here in the Parliament every day, because most of them are contract employees. I have been here 15 years, and many of those employees are the same people and they have been here for a long time. These are the employees, these are the workers, that we are actually talking about.

When the member for Eildon mentioned the disability sector, what the disability sector wants is a good-quality workforce that is consistent. People with disability want continuity of care. What is going to occur in this system means that the person with a disability can choose who they work with, but it goes without saying that in this system there are going to be numerous contract arrangements. If you are a good disability worker, you will be working in a local community like mine. The six local government areas that came on in the north-eastern suburbs were the first ones after the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) trial in the Barwon region.

It actually means that you might be a disability worker and you may have contracts with five or six or seven people that you are caring for in the same day. This could go on for years and years and years. You might be working with the same people, caring for those same people, but you would have individual contract arrangements with each of them, because that is what the system allows: for the individual with a disability to be able to choose in that way.

But I do not think that anyone with a disability who is now getting access to a service that they have never had before, or their carers, want a low-quality, low-skill or low-benefit workforce to be caring for them. They want the best to be caring for them, and I am sure that they want the best for the people caring for them. Many of those people with disability and their carers will be able to get back into the workforce or get into the workforce for the very first time. The Productivity Commission identified that it was a huge cost to the productivity of this country that we have such a low rate of people with disability in employment. It beggars belief that those opposite would use the idea of people with disability and the NDIS as a reason why this bill should not be supported.

I and a number of my parliamentary colleagues who are in the chamber right now met with many workers — cleaners — who over decades may be cleaning the same buildings but involved with different contractors. This is hugely physical work. It has a high rate of injuries. It is not very well paid. When you have someone in your home or in your workplace who is cleaning, they are actually in a position of trust. The fact that they are not rewarded with the other benefits that other employees take for granted is really a risk. It should not be a risk that we subject workplaces to. We should not be putting employees in this position.

I was really taken with the women that came to see us. They have got families, the rate of injuries that they had was significant and some were getting older. They said, 'We need this long service leave. We need our bodies to have a break. For the same reasons why portable long service leave was introduced into the construction industry in 1976, that is why we need it now'.

I notice that no-one from the Greens party is in here. I do not know if they have spoken on this bill. They come out with their mealy-mouthed nonsense about the so-called 'old parties', saying that there is no difference between the so-called old parties. The oldest political party in Australia, which has always backed workers, will continue to back workers.

One of the biggest problems in this country is that we have a low-wage economy. We actually need an improvement in pay and an improvement in conditions. I am not surprised that those opposite will always back the big end of town whenever there is a bill before this house that is about workers and looking after them.

Mr Watt interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — The member for Burwood is not in his place!

Ms GREEN — That is when you see the huge difference between the Labor Party and the conservatives, the termites on the other side. I commend the bill to the house. We will always stand up for workers, even if the conservatives will not.

Mr BURGESS (Hastings) (17:24) — It is a pleasure to rise after the member for Yan Yean. As always, the further she goes the further she stretches it. Again today she has done exactly the same thing, talking about how the Labor Party has always been the friend of workers.

Well, tell that to the many hundreds of cleaners around Victoria whose jobs the Labor Party is destroying. Tell them that you are for the workers, when in fact what you are doing at the moment is trying to increase your union base by getting rid of 800 workers across schools across Victoria. That is exactly what this government is doing, and I do not hear anyone talking about that. This government is just absolutely cleaning out that industry, but they are cleaning out the wrong people. They are imposing large union companies because they could not get union memberships out of the existing cleaners. Those cleaners were threatened, told that if they did not join the union they would lose their jobs, and now instead of just leaving the workers that way they are now replacing them with larger companies that are already unionised.

This government has absolutely no shame. It will do whatever it takes; it will destroy people's jobs, it will destroy little businesses that are out there cleaning schools.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr BURGESS — I hear the member for Mordialloc; he is in favour of these school cleaners being sacked. He is now on the record as being in favour of those school cleaners being sacked in his community, so anyone that is reading this should understand that the member for Mordialloc has just been interjecting and saying that he is in favour of these school cleaners being sacked out of his schools. Mordialloc schools should really understand that their local member is not standing up for the school council decision to employ these little companies to clean their schools and do a great job. He wants large companies that are already unionised to go in there and do less cleaning, leaving the schools dirtier for longer. He is a disgrace, the same as the rest of them. They are pushing these hardline policies that destroy small businesses and destroy jobs, and really, that appears to be the only thing that they are good at.

If the Labor Party had done any work on what this bill or what long service leave is really about, they would understand that it is actually about encouraging people to stay in employment. It is an advantage for people to stay with an employer. This bill completely changes that. It bears no resemblance to what the original policy was or what the original intent of that policy was. It is a high-cost, concentrated, bureaucratic process that this government is well and truly renowned for. Every time it legislates it adds costs to business.

The scope of the bill will expand: we know that. That is just a foregone conclusion with the Labor Party and with this government. Look at the things that they have done to businesses, particularly in energy. Look back and see what they introduced the last time they were in government: the smart meters that were going to solve all of our ills, including sore backs. They were going to be a wonderful thing and have little cost. They ended up being an enormous cost to local communities — on people and businesses. There has been no benefit from these smart meters. What they really ended up doing was just get rid of all the meter readers. That is what the Labor Party achieved with smart meters. It allowed all of the electricity companies to go and sack their meter readers and replace them with smart meters. In the end, who paid? Not the companies. No, the consumer paid — the people out there in the consumer land of small businesses, the residents and the homes.

Add that to the things they have been doing lately with their abominable policy on energy in Victoria, closing Hazelwood — let us not make any bones about the fact that they forced Hazelwood to close — and then in the same breath banning any exploration for gas, whether that be conventional gas or fracking. Clearly we banned fracking. They have now extended the ban on conventional gas, and what are they doing about it? They are trying to let companies into all sorts of areas to try to make a profit where that profit did not need to be made. When you close Hazelwood, you put extra pressure on gas prices, and that is exactly what is happening to our community. That is what is happening to small businesses.

This bill is just another example of how this government does not care about businesses. What it does not seem to get is that when you do not care about businesses, you do not care about the employees — because without the businesses, contrary to what the member for Yan Yean was saying, you do not have jobs. We are not talking about the big end of town here; we are talking about small businesses. You are now going to impose significant costs on small businesses out there, and where is that supposed to come from? If you think for one second that that extra cost is not

going to cost jobs, then you are delusional. This government seems to just go along doing that. It adds cost after cost and then expects plaudits when it reduces slightly the costs it has already imposed.

Today's budget was really quite a joke in that respect. We saw the Treasurer standing up here reading out from his budget speech and looking around like he should be congratulated on reducing costs that he had already imposed. This government does not get how business works. It does not seem to understand that when you impose costs on business, particularly small business, you really impose costs on employment, which means it is going to cost jobs. When you cost jobs, you cost Victorians and Victorian families, and they do it tough.

The government has forced up the cost of energy in this state such that we now have people for the first time having to consider whether they are going to turn on the heating, whether they are going to have the lighting on or whether they can afford to eat this week, because those costs are not something that can just be absorbed. They are costs that these people have to find out of their finite resources. You can just go along passing legislation, closing Hazelwood and banning gas exploration, and in the end it is not you who wears it. In the end it is the small businesses out there that wear it. The employees of those small businesses and Victorian families wear it. That is what this bill is about. It is not about doing a favour for anybody. It is about perhaps giving some people an idea that they are going to get a benefit out of it, but then they will be surprised when there is no job there for them at all.

That is what this government is driving for. It obviously does not intend to cut jobs, but it just has no idea. It is negligent in the way it puts these particular pieces of legislation in place and then turns around, points at everybody else and says, 'It was your fault'. It is not other people's fault. It is this government's. It has introduced this legislation. It does not understand the basis on which long service leave was introduced. It has completely changed that concept. This side of the house will not be supporting this bill.

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (17:31) — I rise to speak on the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018. In the late 1970s and early 80s I worked in the construction metal industry, and we did not have a portable long service leave scheme until the Building Union Superannuation scheme came into force, which is now Incolink. Before then there were a number of fitters, trade assistants — I was a trade assistant at the time — boilermakers and other tradespeople who worked in the industry who would go and work for a

number of very large companies. They would work for them for years on end but never be eligible for long service leave, because they went from company to company. They were working for these big, multinational corporations — Mobil, Esso, Shell and others. The glassworks down at Yarraville is another example — CSR — along with Monsanto before it became Huntsman and before it closed down. They would go and work in the industry to service these large companies. So the metal workers union at that time as well as the Electrical Trades Union and others in the construction and metal industry agitated to put in place portable long service leave for people who were working in the industry to stay in the industry.

We have just had a contribution by my friend the honourable member for Hastings, who said this bill is going to close businesses down. In actual fact if you have a look at the construction industry with Incolink, and if you have a look at how you keep and retain skilled workers within an industry, this is one of the ways you do that. Whether it is the metal construction industry, whether it is the disability sector or whether it is the cleaning or other service industries, this is the way of keeping those skilled workers within the industry.

If you put in place the logical extension of what my honourable friend said, the construction industry would be no more. The introduction of the BUS scheme, which is now Incolink, would mean the destruction of the construction industry and we would not be constructing anything any further, which is just a nonsense. The honourable member for Hastings is all about rhetoric; it is all about ideology for him.

In actual fact this legislation is about people — people who do the same job for different employers in the same place for decades on end. You have the business people and people who work for the major contractors who become eligible for long service leave. They do their time — they do their seven years or their 10 years — they get their long service leave pro rata and they go off and have a break. They go off and have their holiday, and it is paid. But then you have these companies that change their contracts constantly, and the people working for those contractors but remaining within the industry miss out. That is not fair.

I heard the honourable member for Ringwood's contribution just before. I was on the same committee as she was, dealing with this particular reference from the Parliament. We heard time and time again from people who had been at the same job doing the same thing for 25 or 30 years. My friend the honourable member for Oakleigh is nodding his head because probably his mum or friends of his and of his mum did

the same thing, and yet, having done the same job for 30 years, are not eligible and have not been eligible for long service leave.

One of the things that came out of that inquiry was that when the quotes are put in and when people are tendering for these positions they actually put in around 0.6 of the wages for long service leave. They actually have an amount that goes into their tender document that covers long service leave because if they then have their contract extended beyond the period of time that they get, those workers become eligible for long service leave. So they put it in. But what happens is that they then lose that contract after three or four years. So what happens to that money that should have gone into long service leave and that should have gone to those workers in that industry? They pocket it. They put that in their pocket, and the people who are paying for the owners of those businesses to take their long service leave are in actual fact the cleaners and the services workers that are put in that invidious position of doing that work and not being eligible for long service leave.

It is about keeping these skilled people, these important people, in that industry, and that actually helps businesses to retain good, skilled workers. They do not then move — which a lot of them do. This was part of the discussion and part of the debate that occurred before the 2010 bill. What actually happens is that skilled workers within the health and disability area may be working for a non-government organisation and may have worked there for many years, and yet just next to them is someone working for Department of Health and Human Services or from somewhere else, and they lose them because they then want to transfer, and they do transfer; they change jobs to the company that gives them long service leave. The companies that are contracting for these positions then have to retrain, have to spend more money, to get a new worker to fill that position, and where are they? They are sitting and working next to their friend who used to be in their position but is now getting long service leave through the government department.

I was also here and heard the contribution by the honourable member for Northcote. It was not a bad contribution. It was very short — I think it was 1 minute and 35 seconds — but she went on to criticise us. She said, ‘I expect more from the Labor Party’. What does she expect from the Labor Party other than legislation to protect workers? What does she, as a commentator rather than somebody that actually does the hard work, expect? She then criticises the Labor government for in actual fact doing what it should be doing. As the honourable member for Oakleigh said in his contribution, there are times to criticise — and I am

happy to criticise the opposition, the Greens and others. There are times to do that, but when you are actually doing the right thing, when you are actually looking after people in the constituency, then it is wrong to be a battler against the Labor Party when it is actually doing the right thing.

The legislation before the house is really important. I know that the government understands that in the disability area, the health area and community services area there will have to be adjustments made in terms of the contracts that are given out. I know and understand that the government will with organisations that do contract to the Victorian government be working through these issues in terms of funding. That is really important in terms of this legislation before the house. I support the legislation. I think it is very good legislation. I ask for its speedy passage.

Mr WATT (Burwood) (17:41) — I was not actually going to get up to speak on this bill, but I heard a couple of other speeches, such as that of the member for Yan Yean, who talked about the ALP being the worker’s friend. I thought I would do a bit of a Google search on some cleaning companies and some Labor members of Parliament. I did a search for ‘Cleanevent’ and ‘Bill Shorten’ and discovered that Bill Shorten and the Labor Party stole \$1.5 million out of workers’ pockets. It did not all go into their pocket; it went back to the company so the company could give Bill Shorten and his mates kickbacks. I looked up another company ‘Spotless cleaning’ and ‘Cesar Melhem’. Cesar Melhem did over the workers at Spotless by \$6 million for what the *Australian Financial Review* described as ‘financial and political advantage’. So much for being the worker’s friends. The other point I would like to make right now is —

Ms Green — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Burwood has made no attempt whatsoever to speak about this bill. What he is talking about bears no relationship, and I urge him to come back to debating the bill.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — Member for Burwood, what I would say is that it would be good to actually start on the bill, even though I know you are speaking for a short amount of time. I will draw you back to the bill, and then you can free-range from there.

Mr WATT — Given the fact that I promised I would only speak for 2 minutes — I did promise that — I do have to say that if the member for Yan Yean is going to keep calling points of order, it is going to make it difficult. I am debating contributions that she made.

The other thing I would say is that the member for Melton should give up the charade and stop pretending that he is an Independent. I listened to his contribution. He talked about the Labor Party, his good mates, and how he is still a member of the Labor Party and still supports the Labor Party. He should give up this charade, go back and sit over on the other side and stop pretending that he is an independent. The Labor Party are not friends of the workers, and the member for Melton is not an Independent member; he is a member of the Labor Party.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ACCESS TO JUSTICE) BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed from 28 March; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Mr PESUTTO (Hawthorn) (17:44) — It is a pleasure this evening to be able to rise and speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018 on a day when we have a very revealing admission in the budget that the Treasurer handed down earlier today, which shows — if any further proof were needed — that the government cannot be trusted to manage our justice system and that it has finally been dragged, kicking and screaming, to the realisation that it has misread all of the very obvious and conspicuous signals that point to a law and order crisis in our state. Just look at some of the signature announcements which have been made in today's budget: 21 magistrates and judges to be appointed — 21! I have never, ever known, in all of my time in practice and parliamentary politics, such a large number of appointments to be made over a period of time. Why would that be so? Is it an admission that the government has completely misunderstood, incompetently ignored and stubbornly refused to concede that there has been a crisis, with violent crime up over 20 per cent over the period of this government?

It is interesting that coupled with that is an announcement that there will be more prosecutors — a large recruitment drive for police prosecutors. We will need them because if we are privileged by the honour of the Victorian people to form a government in November we intend to change the legal landscape and the criminal justice system to ensure that more violent and high-risk offenders do serve their sentences behind

bars, where they belong, and to enact laws that toughen up our sentencing regime.

It is interesting in relation to those announcements the government has made that it seems interested in trying to placate an intensifying atmosphere and more demanding public appetite for strong action with what I would call fairly modest commitments in the 2018–19 year in relation to judges and magistrates. It is pretty plain that most of the resources will come online in the later years of the forward estimates.

Talking about the government wanting to deal with the problem now, I noticed in the budget papers — and I issued a statement about this a short while ago — a big, bold announcement from the government that they are going to do something in relation to gang crime and cybercrime. Well they might, because I do not know what more evidence they would need to be convinced that that there is a serious problem, indeed a crisis, in relation to gang violence in our community, particularly with regard to bikie gangs and some very violent youth gangs such as Apex, which has not gone away, and Menace to Society, which is building its ranks. We saw throughout January and February just how confused and chaotic the government's position was on that. In early January they stated that there was no problem. Then there was a problem, then there was not, then there was, then there was not and then finally there was but it was Sydney's fault. It was quite extraordinary to see.

These gangs, particularly bikie gangs, as we know — or ought to know — are highly sophisticated. They are well-connected and resourced with firearms, cash, accounts and indeed personnel — they proudly boast of the titles within their own organisations. They are very sophisticated. It must be said that the government, in the face of this crisis, has announced in today's budget \$3.4 million out of \$22 million or thereabouts for new initiatives to tackle crime perpetrated by gangs and cybercrime. But out of that \$22 million — if you accept there is a problem now, there is a crisis confronting us right now — why would you bake in the larger increases in the back end of the forward estimates? You would deal with the crisis now, because otherwise all you would do is give these gangs even more time to recruit and strengthen their arm, and that is what they will do.

I raise this issue not just because today's budget is a revealing admission but also because it relates to access to justice. We have a justice system at the moment in which, as even today's budget confirms, cases are costing more in criminal and civil jurisdictions, and by and large — not entirely, but by and large — they are taking longer. There may be a range of reasons — we

could discuss that perhaps on another occasion — but it is certainly clear that if you have mounting delays and increasing average costs per case in each of the civil and criminal jurisdictions, that is going to impact adversely on access to justice, not just for those who are socially disadvantaged but those who may not be but are perfectly entitled to access our courts but cannot because justice is denied because of delay.

Unless the government gets on top of this problem of court delays and court costs — and there is no sign that it will and there is irrefutable evidence that it has failed to do so so far — a lot of the initiatives contained in this bill are going to be hard to achieve. We know what we will do if we are elected later this year to tackle delays. I have made some announcements in relation to that in recent weeks and months. Certainly there is work that we can do around committals to bring that back.

We will also look at the practice of adjournments. I hear repeatedly, and recall even from my time in practice, that many parties are given adjournments far too easily. I also hear that some courts — not all, and I am pleased to say it is a small cohort but this is often remarked upon by practitioners in the jurisdictions who are equally frustrated with delays and postponements — seem quite amenable to kicking cans down the road. I think the system needs to dramatically tighten the practices around adjournments — it should be much harder to get adjournments.

Obviously you do not introduce changes that will be productive of injustices. People are entitled to have their case heard, but they are not entitled to mock the system and they are not entitled to continually sack their lawyers or simply refuse to see practitioners or allied health professionals. It is not fair or appropriate that prosecutors or those on the prosecution side should be tardy in providing materials and exhibits to the defence. It occurs on both sides, and certainly I will do a lot to tighten that up and I will work with the courts if I am given that privilege to tighten these practices up. There needs to be much done in that area, so the government will struggle, I fear, should it be re-elected. I am not convinced that it has the wherewithal to do what is necessary to ensure that many of the reforms in this bill, which we do not oppose, can be achieved.

Turning to the bill off the back of that preface, it is to be noted that this is the culmination of work that the government did following its *Access to Justice Review*. I can say at the outset that we are not looking to oppose the bill here in this house — and we may not at all — but I just simply state for the record that we will reserve our position in the upper house. Given the varied matters that the bill addresses, we may or may not have

some amendments in the upper house, but certainly at this stage we do not propose to oppose the bill in the Assembly.

Obviously the bill's main focus is Victoria Legal Aid (VLA), and that is appropriate. That is the chief body which is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that those who are socially disadvantaged can access the courts and can receive appropriate and adequate representation in our courts. Victoria Legal Aid of course has a range of functions, and they are set out in the Legal Aid Act 1978. The changes which this bill proposes are for the most part, as I have said, not ones that we will oppose, but I do want to make some comments generally about legal aid in light of the changes that this bill makes. Things like the Collaborative Planning Committee may well work, and we are happy to see whether that does produce good results. Victoria Legal Aid's overarching function seems to be strengthened by this bill. It is given more of a coordinating role according to what the government is professing in its supporting materials, and that is well and good.

I think, though, that in relation to these changes — whether it is transparency, the Collaborative Planning Committee or strengthening the governance of VLA — it is really important that Victoria Legal Aid focus on its core responsibilities before it deals with anything else, and its primary focus at the end of the day is to assist those who cannot afford or through some form of illness or disability have trouble accessing legal representation and advice in our justice system. Whilst in this house and in this Parliament we may have different views around the role of legal aid, what I think we can converge on is the idea that our system benefits when people who need representation but cannot afford it or cannot physically or mentally access it can get representation. If for no other reason, that is an imperative, because even if you do not subscribe to those views, to not have a legal aid system that is properly funded would simply mean that our system would be unworkable. That is something I think we should all agree on.

I do want to say something about Victoria Legal Aid's approach to its mandate. I think it needs to do more to focus on its key legislative objectives and functions. I worry sometimes about Victoria Legal Aid, which is supposed to be an independent statutory agency that is governed by the public sector code of conduct and public sector values in this state — which are not open, as I have always understood, to political contention. I think they are well settled, those public sector values and the code which embodies those values. I often see agencies of government advocating for causes and

wonder whether it is the appropriate thing for agencies which have explicit legislative mandates to be pursuing issues which fall squarely and unmistakably in the realm of political debate. I see this on social media all the time. It is perfectly legitimate for each person as an individual, whether they are a public sector employee or not, to entertain whatever views they wish, subject of course to the law, but I do worry sometimes whether some agencies — and I would include Victoria Legal Aid in this — venture beyond that into areas where there is clearly a political debate surrounding the core issues at the heart of what might be a very controversial matter.

What I am concerned about is that if you are part of a team that secures a popular mandate — in this case it is obviously the Australian Labor Party — you are entitled to govern knowing that public sector agencies will serve you impartially. That is something you are perfectly entitled to expect and insist upon. What I would say is: so are we. If later this year we secure a popular mandate for the things we have been very explicit about — and I respect the fact that our parties will disagree on many things, but it is a matter that I often think about — and should we receive the privilege and honour from the Victorian people to form a government, all agencies should serve our agenda as we have articulated those matters at an election and in the months and years leading up to an election so that we can rely confidently on those agencies that they will not in any way thwart or resist what we want to do.

I say this because I do notice a number of agencies, as I said, express opinions on issues which are distinctly at odds with things that we have announced and said. I wonder — should we form a government later this year — whether such agencies would be in a position, consistent with the public sector's longstanding role, which is impartial and non-political, to implement those things. I hope that agencies like Victoria Legal Aid will bear that in mind, particularly on their social media, where they express a lot of these views.

Not only legal aid but organisations like the Sentencing Advisory Council and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission are all very important bodies in our system of government and they are entitled to enact their legislative mandate. But they just need to bear in mind that in an election year it is important to uphold those public sector values, and those public sector values run both ways. Those public sector values recognise independence from the executive to the extent that they should be allowed to conduct their affairs independently of the executive — not independently of the Parliament or independently of their statute, but certainly that they are entitled to perform their roles and that is something I

wholeheartedly respect, having worked in or alongside those agencies in different capacities as a lawyer over the years.

In terms of strengthening VLA's role, that is certainly something we do not oppose. I do hope that the changes the government is proposing in relation to the board do not deprive legal aid of some of the management experience I think it needs. It is running at a significant deficit this year and has struggled over the years to end the year in the black. That is not to speak ill of the efforts and achievements of everybody involved — I know they are doing their very best and they should be supported in that. It should rather be seen as an obligation of governments of the day to ensure that fairly experienced, commercially or managerially tested people serve on the boards of organisations like legal aid, if for no other reason than they come under so much financial pressure and they struggle at times to deal with volume.

Our courts are struggling with volume, and I know legal aid struggles with volume to manage demand that is sometimes hard to predict. Certainly in recent years more people are trying to access the courts and that does place a very heavy burden on legal aid. But I just urge the government in the time that it has left in this term and should it be successful after the next election to ensure that the people who are serving at the highest levels of legal aid bring a very robust experience of running large organisations. It does not have to be experience in private organisations necessarily, but experience of running large organisations where they can manage those variables like volume, demand, large numbers of staff, public expectations that are often unrelenting, and expectations from government and other political stakeholders and protagonists. You do need that level of depth in the people you appoint. I do have some reservations about what the government is proposing here because I do have some apprehension that it might risk diminishing that level of depth that I think legal aid needs, but we are prepared to give the government the benefit of the doubt and not challenge those particular aspects. In finishing on that topic I do say that legal aid serves a very important role in our community, and it is important that it be given every chance to be able to meet its legislative mandate and to do that first, before anything else.

I did want to speak very quickly about VCAT. We do not have any objections to the proposed changes to VCAT. They should make access broader so I will not spend too much time on that.

I did want to talk about protective costs orders, which have been on the statute books for some time. The

proposed change from the government does not alter that greatly in our view, certainly not to the point that it would trigger any concerns giving rise to opposition to the changes. But what I would say about this is that it would concern our side of the house if protective costs orders were to become over time a means by which effectively political agitators could simply approach the courts, access the justice system at great expense — effectively to taxpayers — and vexatiously obstruct the government of the day. There are all manner of scenarios where a party might want to do that that are politically motivated. They might have objections to a road project or an infrastructure project and on fairly base political grounds bring an action unmeritoriously in a court and seek a protective costs order, which protects them from any adverse costs orders while the defendant party and effectively the taxpayer through the justice system has to greatly subsidise what are political antics, frankly.

Whilst we see some merit in the idea of protective costs orders — and this bill does not change what is already there, so there is a regime for protective costs orders — we would have some concerns if these were basically a mechanism for courts to decide which cases they like and which cases they do not, borne only of the political philosophy and ideology at the heart of it. We would have great concerns about protective costs orders if they were employed for those purposes.

I have fewer concerns about the fee levels in the County Court and the Magistrates Court. Courts have generally been pretty good at different levels of fees to recover costs of managing the justice system. But equally I would just note that people are entitled to be treated equally and fairly in the courts, and if you went too far and had fees prescribed which favoured a typical class of litigant at the expense of another when really they ought to be treated equally, then that might be a concern. But we certainly will not oppose that matter.

What I will finish on are the changes to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996. I do recognise and note that that flows consequentially from the changes to marriage laws at the federal level. I note there can be varied views across our community about that matter. It was settled in terms of federal legislation last year, and I note that what this change purports to do is respond to only that, and I was assured in the briefing that it served no other purpose than to give effect to the federal Parliament's changes last year.

We do not oppose the bill. Because it deals with a range of matters that are quite varied we will preserve our position in the upper house and we will look at how the debate and discussion around this bill evolves in the

time that should elapse between now and then. On that basis, I conclude my remarks.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (18:08) — I note but I am not surprised that despite the name of the bill the member for Hawthorn did not even start to talk about the issue of equitable access to justice until about 11 minutes into his contribution. Even then he did so without support for the concept and he did so with significant insult to Victoria Legal Aid (VLA). This is in line with his hard right-wing ideology, which I should note is in the ascendancy in the Liberal Party at the moment — an ideology that would seek to make all vulnerable members of our community undeserving at best and, at worst, guilty of something, and an ideology that believes that if you are poor you deserve nothing, or worse, you deserve a kind of punishment by or through lack of access. It has at its core a disdain for legal aid and a disdain for those who rely on it. I find this really quite deeply disturbing.

Further to that, the desire to muzzle legal aid and any ideas that they may have that might challenge this ideology is also deeply, deeply concerning and something that the Victorian voters should be acutely aware of, because beneath that there is something I personally believe is very sinister. In fact he spent 10 minutes of that contribution grandstanding, 10 minutes criticising legal aid and the few minutes that remained speaking very briefly about nothing even closely relevant to the contents of the bill. I think that is very, very revealing about the ideology that supports those opposite and the views and values that they would seek to impose on Victorians, which are without doubt very dangerous. But that is enough of him. He gave us enough of him, and I will not indulge him any further.

This bill will give effect to 16 recommendations from the *Access to Justice Review* and will also make miscellaneous amendments to other justice legislation. The bill will increase access to justice for Victorians and ensure the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our communities receive the support they need when engaging with the law and with our justice system. Fair and equitable access to justice is a very important principle in any democratic society and is something that we must take very seriously.

The fact is that there are certain cohorts within our community who, often through no fault of their own, will be disadvantaged within the complexities of our justice system. Our systems are without a doubt complex, and it is not always clear to people where they should go for information, and when they do eventually find where they should go it might be difficult to comprehend that information. Our systems can also be

very expensive. The last thing we should ever want is for people to be denied justice for these reasons. Justice should not be the domain of only the educated and the well resourced. I would hope that we could all agree with that, but given the contribution of the member for Hawthorn, it appears that we cannot all agree with that, and that for me is very, very deeply concerning. The principle of equitable access to justice — the principle that everybody should be able to seek justice and be informed and have the support they need to do that — is at the very heart of the bill before us today.

Before I get into the detail of the bill I would like to get into its background. By way of background, in October 2015 the Department of Justice and Regulation was commissioned to conduct a review into access to justice, and it did that with the assistance of Crown counsel Melinda Richards, SC, and Rachel Hunter, who is a former chair of Legal Aid Queensland and the director-general of Queensland's Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The review culminated in a report that was released in October the following year — that is, 2016. It proposed a number of strategic responses designed to enhance access to justice through a systemic approach grouped around four key themes. Those themes included better information — that is, information about access to justice and about legal assistance and civil justice systems as a way of improving management of those very systems. Another theme was more flexible and integrated services to respond to community needs in a proportionate and timely way through better coordination with other services in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.

The third theme was making better use of technology by improving online accessibility and online processes and tools, which is obviously something that comes up quite a lot within government processes as technology evolves. And the final theme was improving governance, leadership and linkages, which involves the VLA being established as a system manager to coordinate the legal assistance sector, making it more accountable and transparent in undertaking its role and also in its delivery of services.

The Andrews government announced its response to the *Access to Justice Review* report in May 2017 and agreed, or agreed in part, to 57 of the 60 recommendations. Furthermore, as part of its response to the review, the government committed \$34.7 million over four years to support the implementation of the recommendations. This funding went towards expanding alternative dispute resolution for small civil claims at VCAT and to modernising VCAT processes and enhancing judicial mediation at the Supreme Court by providing an additional judicial

registrar and accompanying associate to provide alternative dispute resolution services. Funding also went towards improving the accessibility of educational and online material provided by the courts and by VCAT and to improving the way the County Court works with self-represented litigants, among other things. That \$34.7 million was in addition to the \$103.7 million announced as part of the 2017–18 budget to enhance the justice system and legal assistance services.

While implementation of the 57 recommendations of the review is underway, the bill before us today specifically gives effect to 16 recommendations that require legislative amendment. I will not have time to talk through all of those amendments, but I will talk to those that I can. To touch on some of the detail and content of the bill, I will talk firstly about the amendment to the Legal Aid Act 1978, which will strengthen Victoria Legal Aid's role in coordinating legal assistance services and legal information, which will drive collaboration between the VLA and legal assistance stakeholders. It will also strengthen the skills base of the VLA board and increase transparency and accountability through improved planning and reporting. These changes stem from observations in the course of the review that the legal assistance sector is somewhat lacking in coordination and operates in silos. This creates significant challenges for the effective and efficient use of resources.

The review found that there is no single entity with a full picture of funding flows or service offerings in the sector, which inhibits coordination of services and also inhibits good planning for the allocation of public funds. As such, the review recommended that the legal assistance sector be structured as an integrated and coordinated system, with the VLA assuming the role of coordinating system manager, which will hopefully help in resources being directed where they are most needed. I would have thought by anyone's standards that that would be a desirable outcome.

The bill will also amend the Victoria Law Foundation Act 2009 to make the Victoria Law Foundation a centre of excellence for data analysis and research on access to justice, legal need and civil justice issues. This responds to a finding of the review that there are serious gaps in the information available about the legal needs of Victorians and that the foundation was the most appropriate agency to fill this gap. The review also recommended that the foundation focus on a new research function and that its members have the necessary skills and experience to focus on that function. The review then further recommended that the foundation's legal information role should be

transferred to Victoria Legal Aid, which would then become, as we have heard, the primary point of legal information. This is really quite significant, as previously the provision of legal information, as I have touched on, has been disparate and very disorganised, and this has led to significant confusion. It has adversely affected access to reliable legal information for many Victorians, which obviously goes very much to the heart of the concepts of justice and equity.

The bill also amends the VCAT act to improve user access to the tribunal and enhance its efficiency by amending provisions that relate to compulsory conferences, service of documents by email and enforcement of orders and other procedural matters.

I am conscious that I have only got a short time left, but these changes to VCAT are really significant because I think, despite the reasons for which VCAT was established in recent times, it has been identified that there have been a number of barriers to accessing VCAT. It was supposed to be the people's tribunal, but increasingly people are relying on paid assistance to get through those processes. The changes in this bill seek to rectify that and create a more equitable structure. I wish I could say more, but unfortunately I am out of time. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (18:18) — I rise to speak on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018. The Nationals in coalition are not opposing this bill. The purpose of the bill is to give effect to 16 of the 60 recommendations of the government's 2016 *Access to Justice Review*. The bill also amends the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996 as a result of the commonwealth's implementation of same-sex marriage.

It increases the threshold amount for small claims with VCAT from \$10 000 to \$15 000. I do want to talk a little about VCAT at this point. I have recently received some correspondence from Leigh Anderson, who is a principal of Maloney Anderson Legal in Mildura. What Leigh informs me is that:

The High Court has recently handed down a decision which is that VCAT (and other state tribunals) have no jurisdiction to hear matters where a party is a resident of another state.

This raises issues for the area of Mildura, and he gives two examples of this:

1. NSW resident landlord of Victorian property with Victorian tenant (pretty common)
2. NSW tradesman doing work for Victorian builder on a domestic home (also pretty common)

With the above two examples the relevant acts — Retail Leases Act and Domestic Building Contracts Act — require matters to be heard in VCAT.

Accordingly it would appear there is now nowhere for these types of disputes. VCAT can't hear them because of the residency issue and the courts can't hear them because they have no jurisdiction under the acts.

This is a problem. I do note that we have had much talk of a cross-border commissioner, and I think I have got one of the first 100 matters for a cross-border commissioner to deal with. This is a serious matter, and it may not wait until a cross-border commissioner is in place to make recommendations. I am hoping that within the system that we have here this has been taken into account by the Attorney-General and he will bring forth the necessary legislation to this house in the same way that we are doing with this Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill to resolve this matter, because it will not take long for there to be a large number of issues that fall into this very large crack that has appeared courtesy of the High Court. We do know that VCAT is very much a busy court of a sort, although it is a civil and administrative tribunal. It is very busy, and it will not take long for a lot of these matters all the way along the borders to mount up and become a serious issue.

Part 3 of the bill amends the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act to remove the requirement that a person must be unmarried in order to alter their recorded sex. That too is related to the commonwealth changes around marriage.

It amends the Civil Procedure Act 2010 to set out matters a court may have regard to when making protective costs orders, prospectively capping a party's liability to pay another party's costs if they are unsuccessful. Costs are always a very thorny issue when it comes to matters before the courts, and that does need to be managed wisely. Yes, we need people to have access to justice, but we also do not want to open the way for vexatious litigants to feel as though they can afford a matter even if perhaps the remedies that they are seeking may not have much likelihood of success.

Part 5 and part 8 amend the County Court Act 1958 and Magistrates' Court Act 1989 to enable the making of regulations with greater flexibility, including prescribing fees for different court users and when fees are payable and by which party. That was previously in statute.

The bill amends the Legal Aid Act 1978 to increase the role of Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) in coordinating the provision of legal aid and legal assistance information,

to introduce new planning and reporting requirements and to require at least one VLA director to have public management experience and at least two to have experience in VLA's areas of legal practice. This does open up the issue of legal aid, and it can be a very vexed issue over time. We know that people should have the right to justice, and where they cannot afford it they should be given assistance. However, I have had — and I am sure many MPs have as well — many people through my office claiming that someone of no means has become a recidivist offender and has held a case up for ages. There was a very recent case that took over three years to resolve where a landlord of a property in my electorate wished to — and had good reason to — evict someone from a rental property. This was backed up by VCAT, but through various manoeuvres by legal aid the whole matter took some three years to resolve. That left a very nasty taste in this particular gentleman's mouth about just how that came about. I know these are the exceptions, but they certainly attract a lot of public attention.

The bill amends the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014 to increase funding available for legal assistance services and to allow the Victorian Legal Admissions Board to make payments from the Public Purpose Fund for innovative improvements and access to justice. It amends the Victoria Law Foundation Act 2009 to alter the functions of the law foundation to focus on data analysis, research and evaluation on access to justice, legal assistance and civil justice issues. I think the data on crime in this state will provide plenty of work for the Victoria Law Foundation as it goes about analysing what we all know is happening out there.

It also amends the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 to enable mediators to conduct compulsory conferences across all VCAT lists, simplifying the process for enforcing VCAT orders and allowing parties with small claims to request written reasons and to recognise the role of a support person at VCAT. The quicker we can get through some of these small cases the better, particularly when from time to time I have people come into my office concerned about the delays they are experiencing in the justice system. Justice delayed or withheld is not really justice at all.

That they have compulsory conferences is something that I do welcome. Mind you, it is going to take some very, very special people to undertake those roles and persuade some of those parties before VCAT at loggerheads with each other to in fact work their way through mediation. With those words, again, we are not opposing this legislation, but there are, as always with justice, plenty of issues to debate.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (18:26) — We know where crime lives — it lives in the same place as disadvantage. Half of Victoria's prisoners come from only 6 per cent of postcodes. We know where they are. They start at the end of the train lines, because that is where all the poor people were put to be the factory fodder in the post-industrial settlement of Victoria. They are pretty easy to establish. They are at the end of the train lines: Broadmeadows, Frankston, Dandenong, Werribee et cetera. Then there were the housing commission estates. These were in inner-city areas. Then you have rural issues to look at as well.

So we know what needs to be done in these areas to actually help these suburbs. This goes to the point of not just this piece of legislation that we are debating now but also the proposition that is built into the budgets of the Andrews Labor government — each year investing in how to give people a better attitude, education and opportunity for lifelong learning, in the landmark TAFE decisions that we have made today and all these opportunities that actually say, 'Here's your chance for a better life. Here's your chance to be included in the community to get the skills for a job to make your contribution'.

This is the Labor approach — to give the nobility of work, to give the opportunities you want for a fair go, which is what this state and this country are about and what this government drives. This is critical. We are the leading government in the country driving these propositions. We had the announcement federally of what is now being called Gonski 2.0 about how you actually do that, and while I applaud conceptually what it is trying to achieve, the Andrews Labor government has delivered what is needed at each stage for students to be able to actually get to this proposition. We are not talking about it in the abstract. We are delivering it in this budget to help young people get a fair go, particularly those who feel disadvantaged or come from disadvantaged backgrounds or are disconnected. That is what you do not want people to feel: isolated and marginalised at the end of the line.

I continue my call to the Australian government. You cannot just be a bystander. You have got to be a participant. The easiest and laziest politics is to whip up anxiety and fear. That is what the opposition is doing. That is their game plan. We know it. That is what they want to do for the election year. But you have got to do the hard work on policy. You have got to be able to make the investment and you have got to be able to deliver it where it is needed most. That is at the heart of the budget that is being brought down today. I want to acknowledge the Treasurer, the Premier and the cabinet

for all the work they have done. To bring this together is outstanding.

When you look at this piece of legislation, disadvantaged Victorians will have better access to legal advice, support and information. It also comes after an investment of nearly \$35 million. This funding is part of the Labor government's response to the access to justice review, which made 60 recommendations aimed at reducing the barriers disadvantaged people face when accessing the legal system. The government has accepted, or accepted in part, 57 of the recommendations, with some being referred to the courts and with the remaining three recommendations under further consideration.

The package will deliver \$7.3 million for additional legal aid grants to ensure better access to legal representation, and a further \$6.85 million will go towards expanding the legal help phone service and improving Victoria Legal Aid's website. Duty lawyer services will get a boost of \$2.59 million to provide more assistance to people at courts, such as victims of family violence. Another \$1.27 million will be spent on increasing translation and interpreter services. Then there is a further \$6.26 million towards increasing alternative dispute resolution services for small claims at VCAT to help more people resolve legal issues earlier and avoid hearing costs. All of this is common sense and good investments that will deliver great returns.

Almost \$800 000 will go towards planning for an Australian-first pilot for an online dispute resolution service. VCAT will get \$4.55 million to modernise and streamline its processes, including introducing automatic online registration of orders. VCAT will also share in a \$1.98 million investment, with courts to improve their websites and other public resources. If you have a look at what the government is doing with this bill — and I want to acknowledge the Attorney-General and the work that he has put in — it is delivering more judges and magistrates, who will be recruited. There will be more support for victims of crime, which you would think the opposition would actually acknowledge. That is what is being done because of the new investments in the budget announced today.

What will that do? It will provide a stronger, safer justice system in Victoria. The Andrews Labor government will invest nearly \$260 million to recruit new judges and magistrates, provide better support for victims of crime, implement counterterrorism reforms and upgrade courts across Victoria. This comes on top of the record funding of billions of dollars to deliver 3000 new police officers.

This is the coordinated strategy that you need to actually address these issues. A lot of them are driven by population growth and a lot of them are driven by place-based disadvantage. It is about how you put the entire system in order so that you can actually get a better result. That is about the new industries and the new jobs, particularly in areas of disadvantage like the electorate of Broadmeadows that I represent. You are saying, 'How do we come up with a better plan?', so that you honour the people whose muscle, sweat and manufacturing nous underwrote prosperity for generations. You say to them, 'Look, we respect you for what you've done. We understand the world has turned, we're going through globalisation, we're going through mechanisation — and this might, through no fault of your own, cost you your job'. What are we actually going to do about that? What is the next proposal?

That is what I have been trying to drive as the member for Broadmeadows. I even got the Business Council of Australia to come to Broadmeadows. We have had the Treasurer of Victoria come to economic and cultural development summits; Bill Shorten, the national leader of the Labor Party, has been there; and Jennifer Westacott from the Business Council of Australia has come. I pushed on this point that we have to make this count. She said it would not be a fly-in fly-out visit but that there would be support. We had chief executive officers from the Ford Motor Company, which has been an iconic company in the area for almost as long as the McGuire family have lived there, as a matter of fact — we were there before the company produced and we have outlasted it, just by the way. It is still a very important part of the community. It has reinvested hundreds of millions of dollars in innovation.

This is the opportunity for the major innovation hub for Melbourne's north, the population of which is already four times the size of the population of Geelong and within the next two decades will have the population that Adelaide has now. We have a booming population there, which is a positive for driving economic activity. This is about how we manage to get the investments right, create the new industries, provide the jobs and then get the skills and the opportunities lined up, so that if you are growing up in one of these communities, you actually have jobs. That is one of the great preventers of crime and is one of the outstanding attributes at the heart of the Andrews Labor government's budget delivered today by the Treasurer, with that understanding and sincere belief and dedication, saying to people, young people in particular, 'Here's a better way that you can get the right skills'. That is so particularly for those who think through their hands. We should acknowledge that quality and say, 'These

are the new skills that we need for the new industries'. This is the way that we can bring them together.

Then we can say, 'Here's the preventative model, by giving you a better go, a fairer chance in life. Here's the lifelong learning, from preschool to postgraduate, looking after the skills for the blue-collar jobs in particular'. Then, 'Here's what we're going to do to take care of the justice system'. That is from the policing aspect to taking care with more judges to providing a stronger, safer and fairer justice system and making sure it is justice for all. That is what this bill does. This goes to trying to take care of disadvantaged Victorians who need the support most.

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (18:36) — I rise briefly to speak to the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018. This has a number of elements. This bill seeks primarily to implement 16 of the recommendations made in the 2015 *Access to Justice Review*. It also importantly ends the requirement of what is called forced divorce for transgender people wanting to change the sex marker on their birth certificate. I will address just two of the issues in the access to justice part of this bill.

The review found that current state and federal funding levels for legal aid are insufficient to meet demand. Legal aid is an important institution, and access to justice is a really important principle for making our justice system work effectively. Victoria Legal Aid has noted that demand is expected to increase further. As this government goes down the route of introducing stricter bail and sentencing laws as well as having more police numbers, we are going to see greater demand on legal aid. The initiatives outlined in the bill may only just scratch the surface of what is actually required.

Whilst it is promoting some efficiencies, it contains only one measure that will directly increase income for Victoria Legal Aid's services, which is increasing the Public Purpose Fund revenue allocated to legal aid from 35 to 40 per cent. Whilst that is helpful, this change will deliver only a small increase in additional annual funding. We note that Victoria Legal Aid did post a financial deficit in the 2016–17 financial year. This bill will only be truly successful if funding meets the unprecedented and increasing demand for legal services.

I also address the requirement to ensure that Victoria Legal Aid maintains its independence under the new reporting and planning requirements in this bill. This bill seeks to strengthen legal aid's strategic planning capacity, establishing a planning committee and requiring it to publish its strategic and annual work

plans after formal consultation with the Attorney-General. Whilst planning by legal aid is of course supported, we do want to make sure that this bill does not go too far in formalising the Attorney-General's oversight and approval of legal aid's strategy and planning. It is important that whilst there is collaboration, legal aid does retain its independence.

Moving on to the forced divorce provisions in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996, this bill ends those. They follow on from a requirement from the changes to the federal Marriage Act 1961 and the achievement of marriage equality. The issue that it is addressing is that under the current Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act it is required that a transgender person wanting to change the sex marker on their birth certificate to the gender they identify as be unmarried or divorce their partner. This essentially forces a person to choose between their gender identity and their partner, which is an unconscionable choice. It should have been removed previously in this Parliament under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment Bill 2016 that was brought before this house. It was not; that bill was defeated in the upper house. It was a horrendous debate, a debate that I hope will not be repeated again. I really do hope that not just this particular part of the bill but the entire bill is passed by the upper house without some of the horrendous debate we saw last time when issues like this were debated.

That said, this does come on the back of a really great celebration of marriage equality having been achieved here in Australia. That is a change that so many people worked so hard for so long to achieve. The provisions in that federal bill include that in the 12 months to December of this year the states end the requirement of forced divorce or else they will be in breach of federal sex discrimination law.

We certainly welcome this change. It will have such a profound impact on the lives of so many transgender people. One example is of course Greens Victorian Senator Janet Rice and her partner Penny, who transitioned over a decade after they married but is unable to affirm her gender on her birth certificate. Their story will be like those of so many others across this state who will benefit from this change. Issues like this go to show that even though we have achieved marriage equality in Australia there is still unfinished business when it comes to LGBTI equality and law reform. On that note, the Greens will be supporting this bill.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (18:42) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Justice Legislation

Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018. This is an enormously important bill, and it is only one part of a system that we are reforming through investment and through legislative change. This is for all Victorians who value and respect the value of justice, but it is particularly also for vulnerable Victorians, who need access to justice perhaps more. I will touch on that a bit later.

The Victorian Labor government values the rule of law and all people's access to it. We value equality before the law, the right to counsel and the right to a fair trial. We value strong institutions, including the judiciary and the court system, but they are of no use if you cannot access them. There is no use having the most robust and strong institutions if citizens are locked out of them, and increasingly we have seen that some people are actually locked out of these institutions and access to justice. We are talking specifically about vulnerable Victorians — and all Victorians. We are talking about disadvantaged Victorians, who are what the member for Broadmeadows talked about — those who, through either lack of knowledge or funds or not having the life chances in their family or the community, have a much greater propensity to be brought before the criminal justice system or the justice system full stop and then have the onus to either represent themselves or find access to inexpensive or free legal counsel. The only way you can have a civilised society is if people at the most vulnerable stage of their life have access to the strong institutions that we hold up as evidence of a civilised society.

This bill does a lot of the things that we expect in terms of strengthening that access to justice. It might pay to quote just a bit from the Attorney-General's second-reading speech because he outlines the problems very, very well. He says the review undertaken, which is what I was referring to:

... found significant goodwill and dedication among institutions and service providers in the justice system and the legal assistance sector, despite the many challenges the system faces. It also found that some important enablers of the system are weak. There is a lack of data, poor technology in many parts of the system, under-resourcing of legal assistance and related services and services that are not sufficiently integrated.

He also went on to say:

The government agreed, or agreed in part, to 57 of the 60 recommendations. In its response to the review, the government announced \$34.7 million in new funding to help disadvantaged Victorians better access legal advice, support and information. The package was in addition to the \$103.7 million provided to enhance the justice system and legal assistance services that was announced in the Victorian budget 2017–18.

There are a range of issues and problems in the system at the moment, and they were effectively encapsulated in those 60-odd recommendations.

What do we seek to do in this bill? Quite a number of things, including making significant changes to the Legal Aid Act 1978 and strengthening Victoria Legal Aid's role in coordinating the provision of legal aid and legal assistance and information. We are also increasing the transparency and accountability of Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) by introducing new planning and reporting requirements, including a long-term strategic plan every four years, an annual corporate plan and quarterly performance reporting. It is quite odd that these things were not enshrined in law in the way they are here, and I think that is vitally important. We also seek to strengthen the skill base of the VLA board and change some governance arrangements that are not working in the best possible way currently.

We are also seeking to give more prominence to the Victoria Law Foundation, an excellent organisation. I have had a bit of interaction, through constituents and others, with the Victoria Law Foundation. For starters, its website is incredible in terms of making justice and law accessible to everyday Victorians, but we want to empower the organisation to become a centre of excellence and also to be part of the system that actually collects data and to be more robust in terms of the analytics it can provide back to government and policymakers about how we can further improve the system of access to justice.

We also seek to make several changes to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 to enable mediators to conduct compulsory conferences across all lists at VCAT, which is one of the review recommendations, and a whole range of other changes.

I want to pick up on two points, one made by a colleague and a very robust, intelligent member, the member for Broadmeadows, who talked about this government's investment in a coordinated strategy — I think he called it — in terms of investment to essentially bring a better life to people who are vulnerable so they do not necessarily come up before the justice system as often as they currently do.

Before I go to that I just want to pick up on the member for Hawthorn's comments in relation to the cost of justice where, in what was effectively an example of tricky politics by the member, he talked about the fact that the cost of justice has gone up under our government. What he neglected to tell the chamber — the Parliament — was that the formula for how you work out the cost of justice is by effectively dividing

the number of cases heard by the courts by the budget the courts have to run. This government, our proud Labor government, has increased the funding of every single jurisdiction in Victoria. What happens when you increase the funding? The cost per case of course — by function of the formula — goes up. If you have \$1 million divided by 10 000 cases, you are going to have a lower cost per case than if you have \$2 million divided by 10 000 cases. He was less than truthful in that contribution.

What was also less than truthful was his specific take on the crime rate. We all know that — and it is not just us saying this but the Crime Statistics Agency Victoria, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, any reasonable observer or any reasonable interested person including, may I say, the Chief Commissioner of Police at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings both last year and this year, who said clearly that we in Victoria have one of the lowest crime rates. I do not want to verbal him — his evidence is on the public record — but he did say that, and he specifically said we have the second-lowest youth crime rate in Australia after the Australian Capital Territory. But that does not suit the political agenda — the base, shallow political agenda — of those who want to be, but thank God are not, on the Treasury benches.

You have got that on one side, or you have got the fantastic contribution by people like the member for Broadmeadows, who encapsulated well the investment this government is making across an entire policy framework from TAFE access to investment in schools and three-year-old kinder — a whole bunch of those investments that governments can make to change the outcomes of people's lives 10, 20 years down the track. They are the things you do. You try and help people before they fall off the cliff into the criminal justice system, not once they have fallen. Of course you need to do both, but if you look at the previous government's pedigree, there was an increase in recidivism by 43 per cent under the watch of the member for Box Hill. Forty-three per cent — how is that for having a win on crime? So you incarcerate people, you send them back out and they commit offences — a 43 per cent recidivism rate. It is extraordinary. And they can boast about the crime rate, for God's sake.

With this proud government, not only are we making the reforms that are necessary for access to justice across legal aid, we are extending the legal aid funding and we are making a more coordinated legal aid system so the taxpayer dollar has far more impact and reach. We are also empowering the sector to become a far better policy contributor through statistics and through a bit of nous in terms of the data they collect. But we

are also making investments where they count, from kindergarten right through to TAFE. I was so proud of the announcement today by the Treasurer, the Premier and the Minister for Education that we are providing free access to 30 TAFE courses for Victorians — free access. Our youth apprenticeship programs are involved across all our major projects. This is a government that is proud of its investment for those across the whole of the Victorian community but particularly those who are most vulnerable. When we talk about access to justice, we talk about it in a 360-degree way, not just in the one-dimensional, 'Oh my God, crime has gone up' way, with the completely false information that is provided by the opposition. This is a great bill. I commend it to the house and look forward to its speedy passage.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (18:52) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018. As those who have gone before me have indicated, this is a lengthy and extensive bill. It gives me great pride to speak on a bill like this, because I think this continues a great tradition of what people like Rob Hulls did when he was the Attorney-General in this place for many years and held that office with great distinction and sought to overturn some of the more draconian measures that had been implemented by the former Attorney-General in the Kennett government, Jan Wade.

Indeed it is a great honour to be afforded the chance to rise to your feet in this place to talk to your values, to speak about the things you feel passionately and strongly about. In my case, I am delighted to be able to do this. This is the second bill I have spoken on today, and I do note that previously the member for Prahran was the lead and only speaker from the Greens to speak on this bill. As he is the justice spokesperson, I would have thought that it would have provided him a great opportunity to spend 20 minutes enlightening us in terms of the Greens view of the world, talking about the contribution that they would make if they sat on the Treasury benches and about the things that they would do if they ever formed government. All the member for Prahran could do was a desultory 5 minutes. It was like, 'Well, it's budget day. I don't really want to be here. I had better make a contribution lest my colleagues take this portfolio off me. So I'll just come in here, say a few words and then I think I'll run off to my office or go to the bar', or do whatever the member for Prahran does when he is not here, because frankly, he does not spend a lot of time here. But anyhow that is his wish and that is his wont.

I am delighted to be able to speak on a bill like this because it speaks to the values of the Labor government. I draw the house's attention to part 9 of the bill, which relates to changes to the Victorian Law Foundation and talks about providing and enhancing the ability of the law foundation to 'conduct, commission and disseminate research' into the Victorian justice system. I reckon this is a really important initiative, because it is important that the executive branch is not captive and dependent only upon the advice provided to it by the department. I think it is important that other streams of advice are provided to the Attorney-General or to the cabinet. To have an organisation like the law foundation do that work is incredibly important.

The bill also talks about technological change, and as members of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee would know, data is my great thing at the moment. I love data, the bigger the better —

Mr Wynne — Big data man!

Mr PEARSON — Well, I am a big data man. I also like small data. I like any data that can approve the efficiency of the delivery of services in this great state of Victoria. It is surprising, though, minister at the table, Minister for Planning, that we are now looking at ensuring that the electronic service of documents to parties and potential parties to VCAT proceedings will be enabled under this legislation.

It is an important step forward, but I think it is really important that we try and find ways in which we can have more efficient use of data to use technology to drive greater efficiencies. I do recall an involvement I had with the Public Interest Law Clearing House (PILCH) in a past life, where Justice Connect was established. That was all about trying to make sure that you could provide online resources to help people who might be in trouble with the law and might need to seek some advice. PILCH is alive and kicking, Minister. It is doing well —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr PEARSON — I was just giving him a bit of advice. As a great member of the labour movement, I am conscious that I can offer my time and my service to worthy causes, and I always thought that PILCH was doing some great work. Justice Connect was about providing those online resources and tools so people could access that, seek advice when they needed it and effectively have some triaging of services as needed.

I also want to place on the record my profound appreciation for the Moonee Valley Legal Service.

They have done some great work in terms of supporting residents in my community. I note, for example, they have been particularly forthright in terms of providing advice for people who have racked up fines. As the minister at the table would know, you often have constituents who come to you who might be from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and who might, for example, share a car amongst their large family. If they go back to Somalia for a few weeks to see their family and the rego has not been paid or there is not enough money in their CityLink account, then fines can escalate. I have had constituents meet with me who had racked up something like \$20 000 or \$30 000 worth of fines, which when you have a government transfer payment as your principal form of income is a profound and really heavy burden to carry.

Organisations like the Moonee Valley Legal Service do a great job in terms of providing a level of support to people in my community. The bill also makes further changes in relation to the board of Victoria Legal Aid (VLA). It specifies that you will need to have at least one person with a criminal law background and a second person who has got expertise in an area of law that is practised by the VLA. I have served on a number of boards in my time, and I think that getting that skill-set balance right — between making sure that your stakeholders are properly represented and well serviced, coupled with people who have got specific technical advice — is a very great initiative. Codifying that, specifying it and ensuring that that is the case is really important.

This bill speaks to the values of the government. I think it is a really important step forward in terms of using data and of starting that process around innovation in order to start to encourage us down that path so we can be more efficient and more effective in the way that we deliver government services in this state. I think that this will really help us in relation to where we are going, because as I have said many times: we are not in the age of Trajan; we are in the age of Hadrian. We have to recognise the limits of our borders, and we must try and find ways in which we can make sure that we are far more efficient and far more effective in the way in which we discharge our duties.

When you look at all the various datasets that the state government would capture and hold, the fact that we do not necessarily have those datasets speaking to each other or able to be aggregated and consolidated is quite telling. I think that we can try and find ways where we can look at encouraging this level of automation and embracing technological change to be a more efficient deliverer of government services. Ultimately we are on a journey where we can try and find ways in which we

can bring those datasets together and try and do some predictive analysis so that we can be more efficient, and I think that will be a really important initiative.

The 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

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

LONG SERVICE BENEFITS PORTABILITY BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms HUTCHINS (Minister for Industrial Relations).

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, 37

Angus, Mr	O'Brien, Mr D.
Asher, Ms	O'Brien, Mr M.
Battin, Mr	Pesutto, Mr
Britnell, Ms	Riordan, Mr
Bull, Mr T.	Ryall, Ms
Burgess, Mr	Ryan, Ms
Clark, Mr	Sheed, Ms

Crisp, Mr
Dixon, Mr
Fyffe, Mrs
Gidley, Mr
Guy, Mr
Hodgett, Mr
Katos, Mr
Kealy, Ms
McCurdy, Mr
McLeish, Ms
Morris, Mr
Northe, Mr

Smith, Mr R.
Smith, Mr T.
Southwick, Mr
Staley, Ms
Thompson, Mr
Tilley, Mr
Victoria, Ms
Wakeling, Mr
Walsh, Mr
Watt, Mr
Wells, Mr

Question agreed to.

Read second time.

Third reading

The SPEAKER — As a 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.

Motion agreed to by absolute majority.

Read third time.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER — The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Fairhills High School

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (19:07) — (14 269) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, and the action that I ask the minister to take is to provide an explanation to the community of Fairhills High School of why he and his government have chosen over a four-year period to not provide this school with one cent of funding. In fact no schools in my electorate have received money in this year's budget or in any of the four years of budgets handed down by this Labor government. This is a government that has chosen to ignore the needs of children who live in my community.

Ms Thomas interjected.

Mr WAKELING — Those opposite might gloat. Those opposite in the Labor Party can gloat about the fact that children who go to schools in the Ferntree Gully electorate have not received one cent of funding to upgrade their schools. Labor members of Parliament can gloat, but what I do is call upon those opposite and call upon the minister to come out to the Ferntree Gully

electorate — to come out to my community — and provide an explanation of why that school has been ignored by this government for four years. When he comes out to the Ferntree Gully electorate he might want to provide an explanation as to why he made a decision with the Premier of this state to not provide any money to any of our schools, not only this year but in any of the four years that this Labor Party has been in government.

Those opposite were elected on a promise to make Victoria the Education State. I would like the minister to come out to my community and explain how he and his government have made the Ferntree Gully electorate — the Knox community — the Education State when not one of the schools in my community has received one cent of funding in budgets, not only in this year's but over the past four years.

I did a search in the budget papers for the suburbs of Wantirna, Wantirna South, Ferntree Gully, Boronia and Knoxfield, and guess what — there is nothing in there. There is nothing in that document because my community has been ignored. This is a government that was elected on a promise to stand up for all communities and to represent all communities. I call on this minister to take action and explain to the Ferntree Gully community and the Fairhills High School community why he has chosen over four years to provide that school with not one cent of funding.

Maribyrnong Park Football Club

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (19:10) — (14 270) I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Sport, and the action that I seek is for a meeting to be convened between the Maribyrnong Park Football Club in Moonee Ponds, otherwise known as the Marby Lions, his office and the Department of Health and Human Services to discuss the opportunity to upgrade the club's pavilion. The Marby Lions is a fantastic local football club led by Doug Stevens and Tony Fisher, and it is a wonderful example of a strong local community sports club. Last year the club was fielding three senior teams and 17 junior teams from under-nines to under-19s as well as five girls teams. The club is growing quickly and would welcome the opportunity to discuss its plans for the future.

Sea Lake Mallee Rally

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (19:11) — (14 271) I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. I seek action to ensure the future of the Sea Lake Mallee Rally. This is a significant event for Sea Lake. Having begun in 1973, it is the oldest running

off-road event in Australia. These sorts of event weekends keep businesses open and ensure the survival of regional communities. The event attracts visitors in the hundreds from all over Australia. Events such as this strengthen rural communities and give them confidence to develop and upsell other tourist attractions. Events like this also droughtproof, and thus strengthen, rural communities.

The future of the rally is in doubt due to cultural heritage issues that are currently arising. The event is scheduled for the Queen's Birthday long weekend, and I am seeking the minister's assistance to ensure not only that this rally goes ahead but also that rallies continue into the future. This event is so important to Sea Lake, its economy and its surrounding areas that it cannot be lost to the Mallee. It has been developed over the years into a major event, and it is in fact on the Australia-wide calendar. Events in small towns should unite communities, and every effort should be made to not have them divided.

Embrace Diversity campaign

Ms GRALEY (Narre Warren South) (19:12) — (14 272) My adjournment matter is for that Minister for Multicultural Affairs, and it concerns our Embrace Diversity multicultural quilt launch in Narre Warren. The action I seek is that the minister attend the unveiling of our multicultural quilt at Bunjil Place on Saturday, 5 May. Maya Angelou once said:

We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of that tapestry are equal in value, no matter their colour.

The Casey community is a melting pot. It is home to people from over 85 countries. The multicultural quilt is the result of an idea generated in 2016 to bring together different cultural organisations to work on a project that showcases their heritage and expresses a sense of solidarity and cohesion in our local community. In the bigger picture the project is meant to express the common thread of humanity that ties us all together.

From the initial stage of identifying the different cultural groups to engaging an artist who could depict the cultural symbols on canvas, this has become an exciting and inspiring community project. It has involved countless hours of community engagement, 30 community groups and over 300 people, behind-the-scenes planning, administrative organisation, consultation, sourcing materials and much more. The final product is a quilt that the entire team — and in fact the whole community — can truly be proud of.

Each of the cultural symbols have their stories, but the central piece — the woman — is the jewel in the crown and represents life. Her movement expresses joy, happiness, spirit, energy and joie de vivre and is the soul of the quilt. Her dance is representative of cultures around the globe who express and communicate through this language. The strands of her hair represent the diversity that exists within us and that binds us together in our humanity. The rays of the sun depict the land we live on that has been nurtured by the first peoples of Australia.

I am immensely proud of everybody who has worked on this project, but I would especially like to thank Dena Aljamal, Claire Armstrong, Tania Sacco, Naureen Choudry, Sandie Stones at Fab Art Gallery and all the multicultural groups that collaborated on this project. I would like to send a special thankyou to Nichole Hayes, who has put her heart and soul into this project.

On the afternoon of 5 May all these groups will come together with their friends and families to celebrate and embrace diversity as we unveil the multicultural quilt. I am thrilled to be attending. It is the hallmark piece in my Embrace Diversity campaign. I will be there with my family, and I look forward to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs coming and attending this event as well.

Irabina Autism Services

Ms VICTORIA (Bayswater) (19:15) — (14 273)
Today I rise to ask the Minister for Education to immediately reinstate early childhood intervention services (ECIS) funding to Irabina Autism Services until the families are transitioned to the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS). Irabina have had their ECIS funding cut in one fell swoop. They were previously advised by the department that as each child transitioned to NDIS funding they would have their ECIS funding withdrawn one by one, but now they have been advised that funding for all children that transitioned to school at the end of last year would be withdrawn and backdated to January 2018. These children have not received their NDIS funding due to delays in complex children's therapy plans being approved through the NDIS and are now in limbo with no funding at all. This is having a massive impact on Irabina, and I request that the funds withdrawal is stopped until the families can access their NDIS packages so there is no impact on treatment.

Irabina is dedicated to helping families adapt to the challenges of living with autism spectrum disorder. They have been delivering expert support and education services for almost 50 years. Autism is a

complex developmental condition, and Irabina's expert team of therapists, psychologists and specialist educators help families manage that complexity. While there is no known cure for autism, there is an enormous amount that can be done to help those on the spectrum and the families that support them.

As a not-for-profit organisation, much of Irabina's income is from families utilising their Helping Children with Autism funding package and fee-for-service payments. There are currently 107 families waiting for their children's therapy to commence at Irabina alone. This delay in supporting our children and their parents is hurting these kids and their families. Intervention cannot be compromised. Children will regress due to the delays, and the result will have a profound effect on their lives and their place within the community.

Twenty per cent of children with autism are level 3 functioning — the highest disability support need. We have a number of these children currently waiting to access Irabina's world-class behaviour centre. These families and children are living in extremely volatile and vulnerable circumstances. Take Jarrod: he is nine and has not been at school for three years. He does not speak and spends the majority of his days isolated. He continuously engages in damaging behaviour, even headbutting, kicking and punching his mother. She has physical and emotional scars due to his behaviour. Her marriage is together, but only just. Jarrod cannot interact with his siblings either. Not only is he aggressive with them but he smears faeces throughout the room, he damages property and he harms himself by hitting his head and biting his arms and hands. This is a horrendous situation for the family, yet this young boy cannot currently access appropriate and life-changing intervention. Jarrod's behaviour is treatable.

We have a world-class service on our doorstep. Irabina's programs are revolutionary and are changing lives. This is proven and based on evidence over many years. Minister, Irabina needs to have ECIS funding restored immediately to enable this work to continue.

Craigieburn railway station car parking

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (19:18) — (14 274) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is that the minister provide an update on the time line for the provision of additional car parking at Craigieburn railway station. Commuters in the Yuroke electorate are thrilled with the announcement of a \$60 million investment in parking at train stations, including an additional 745 car spaces for Craigieburn railway station. Currently the car park at Craigieburn station is routinely full well before

peak hour. These new spaces will help commuters get home safer and sooner as well as taking the pressure off car parks at the nearby Roxburgh Park and Coolaroo stations. This announcement comes in addition to the 124 spaces already built or underway under this government, with the number of spaces available to commuters expanding from 270 at the start of this term to a huge 1139 spaces once the project is complete. I thank the minister for delivering this much-needed investment, and I look forward to sharing her response with Yuroke residents.

South Kensington railway station

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (19:19) — (14 275)
My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport. I ask the minister to personally meet with residents of Kensington regarding the impact of the Metro Tunnel and in particular to discuss the need to upgrade South Kensington station and the impact of the new transmission towers on local amenity.

Kensington is a wonderful neighbourhood — yes, I might be biased; I live there. Many families move into the area due to the great parks, the quiet streets, the proximity to the city and of course the great community. Kensington residents overwhelmingly support the Melbourne Metro Tunnel project; however, they will have to put up with years of construction and disruption on their doorsteps even though they will not actually benefit from the project. The new metro will not actually stop in Kensington despite our calls for it to do so. Though residents will not directly benefit from the tunnel, they are willing to put up with years of disruption because they know it is a project that is in the public interest. But despite their support and their cooperation, residents are concerned they are not being listened to.

A key example of this is the new transmission tower on Hobsons Road, which will tower over residents' backyards and local parkland and which residents were given very, very little information about. The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority have acknowledged the community consultation could have been much better, but even after finally coming to a community meeting they still have not given the community the detail that we have asked for on the options and solutions for moving this tower. Residents have also raised concerns about site remediation after construction has finished and potential changes to truck routes which could see large trucks redirected down local streets.

Kensington residents need an upgrade to South Kensington station, and they are disappointed that this

is not in today's Labor budget. It is not an expensive exercise, yet it has been left out again — while the government can find billions for new toll roads. A Kensington local contacted me recently. His son, who has a disability, uses South Kensington station for his daily commute to school. He wrote:

I worry about my son on that platform each day because it is just so narrow and the express trains rattle on through. It is time for an upgrade and it should be done sooner rather than later.

The platforms at South Kensington station are dangerously narrow, there is no accessible access, there is only one exit, there are no toilets and the small bus shelter is completely inadequate for a station of this size. This year, an election year, Labor should listen to the community and fix South Kensington station. I am calling on the public transport minister to meet with concerned local residents about all the issues I have raised today surrounding the Melbourne Metro project in the community of Kensington.

Yan Yean Road duplication

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (19:21) — (14 276)
Tonight I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Faneco Road, Browns Lane and Yan Yean Road be explored within the scope of works of the current Yan Yean Road stage 1 upgrade project. Stages 1 and 2 have been funded at a cost of \$227 million. The work is gathering pace, and in response to that significant change VicRoads has held community information sessions, and I have also been engaging directly with residents about their questions and concerns.

During the last sitting week I was pleased to table a petition of 167 signatures from the Plenty Community Action Group which, because of its concerns about safety, seeks these traffic lights. The wise elders of Plenty have encouraged me to seek this improvement to address the safety of residents and users of public buses and school buses along Yan Yean Road. The residents would like to see this intersection with traffic signals to allow right turns from and into the upgraded Yan Yean Road by local traffic and emergency vehicles and to ensure that there will not be rat-running through local streets. These people live in Plenty because they love this area. They do not oppose the realignment, but they want the best from this project and they want to maintain safety.

I was thrilled that in last year's budget stage 2 of the Yan Yean Road duplication from Kurrak Road to Bridge Inn Road was funded, and planning and

acquisition is underway. We have seen in today's budget that Bridge Inn Road will be duplicated, which will be done in conjunction with the Yan Yean Road upgrade.

With the north-east link, the Yan Yean Road upgrade, Mernda rail, the duplication of the Hurstbridge line and now the duplication of Bridge Inn Road in addition to Plenty Road, only Labor is investing in the transport infrastructure and community needs of this area. If traffic lights could be installed at that intersection, offering great safety improvements, this would be a perfect outcome for the Plenty residents and it would make them feel better about the project.

Belvoir Special School

Mr TILLEY (Benambra) (19:24) — (14 277) I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Education. I call on the minister to remove the impasse that prevents volunteers from building a life skills house for the students at Wodonga's Belvoir Special School. The life skills house is a joint venture between Belvoir Special School and the Rotary clubs of Belvoir-Wodonga, Wodonga Central, Wodonga West and Albury Wodonga Sunrise.

The house will be built on the grounds of Belvoir Special School so that more than 200 students can learn independent living skills like cooking and cleaning in a home environment. The clubs have engaged a builder who is already on the Department of Education and Training's construction supplier register. They have \$256 000 pledged for materials and labour from local businesses and tradies. A further \$76 000 in cash has been raised from activities and donations from like-minded groups. This is a community and school partnership that has been roundly applauded by the education department as a state first. It is also a project that started more than 12 months ago with what these groups understood to be tacit approval from the department.

The house is designed to be a practical teaching tool that will lead to greater independence for individuals, and in some instances act as a precursor to them living independently. Unlike similar projects in Victoria, this will be a purpose-built educational facility aimed at replicating a normal house or unit, rather than a converted classroom.

A planning application was lodged with the City of Wodonga in October last year, at the same time as the regional education office was asked to provide a letter of consent. Late last year the Minister for Education advised that no funding would be available to the

school ahead of today's budget. There is no money in the budget today, but as is demonstrated by the hard work of the community, this is a high-priority project for the community in the Benambra district.

In December we asked that the minister expedite the letter of consent amid fears that some of the donations in cash and kind were under threat. Here we are more than six months later and the letter of consent has still not been issued. The clubs and volunteers are in limbo, and the students at Belvoir remain without a vital training tool that can help them in their everyday lives.

I am extremely proud of this school. The coalition government relocated Belvoir Special School to a greenfield site, and it constructed stages 1 and 2 concurrently. We broke the shackles of a rundown, landlocked former location, and the school is now thriving. Once again I ask the minister to pay particular attention to this issue and get the ball moving.

Broadmeadows police resources

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (19:27) — (14 278) My adjournment request is to the Minister for Police. The action I seek is that she provide a report on how many shifts the 21 new police custody officers (PCOs) at the Broadmeadows police station have been able to relieve police officers from so that they can return to the beat. The Andrews Labor government has delivered on its election promise of deploying 400 police custody officers at police stations across Victoria. PCOs are responsible for searching people coming into the cells; looking after their welfare by organising medical treatment, meals and visits; and supervising them when attending court. The first recruits graduated from the Victoria Police academy in January 2016, helping to free up police officers from custody duties so they can focus on apprehending criminals and keeping our community safer.

Wherever possible police custody officers have been recruited from the local communities they serve, creating new jobs and providing a pathway into careers in policing and the justice sector. As I understand it, PCOs in the Broadmeadows area have freed up 5212 shifts, which is very important in this area.

When I toured the Broadmeadows police station yesterday, the issue of how police officers can be deployed to so-called crime hotspots was raised with me and a strategy was outlined that would enable senior police officers to be placed where their experience would be of most value. This is something that could be looked at, with police recognised for the significance of their contributions. This is in keeping with a strategy

that is smart on crime. The minister has been able to deliver this with the government's record funding for police recruitment, which has provided 3000 new police officers. This is part of a whole-of-government approach that can be seen in today's budget. It involves getting things done. That again goes to the proposition that this is what the Labor government delivers.

This approach brings these issues above the endless loop of arguments about who is supposedly tougher on crime. We cannot arrest or imprison our way out of this problem. We have to actually address the causes of crime as well, which are well-established: poverty, unemployment and disconnection. This could be part of a further consideration of how we continue the smart-on-crime strategy that the Andrews Labor government is delivering. I want to commend the Minister for Police, who is at the table.

Responses

Ms NEVILLE (Minister for Police) (19:29) — I thank the member for Broadmeadows for his adjournment issue. The member is correct: as at the end of February our program of police custody officers (PCOs), which we have fully rolled out across the state, including PCO supervisor positions, has seen 91 860 shifts freed up, with police not having to do that work. It has just been a game changer for so many police stations where police were spending time and energy managing cells — and there is not a police officer I have met who signed up to basically manage prisoners in cells — so this has been a very welcome program.

On top of that of course we are continuing to roll out an almost 35 per cent increase in the budget of Victoria Police since we came to government and also a 30 per cent increase in police numbers — new, in addition to attrition rates. That will see extra police in every single division right across the state over this year and in fact the coming years, as well under the allocation model agreed to with the Police Association Victoria and Victoria Police.

Of course we have also got our great protective services officers (PSOs) — some of whom are sitting up there in the gallery — working at train stations. And we have announced additional PSOs in order to create a mobile team to be able to work on and across our public transport system. We are also looking at a revised model to look at operating out of places like shopping centres.

So this is about making sure police have the resources, the skills and the capacity, and it is about the right targeting for where our police, our PSOs and our PCOs

need to be. If you look at the crime data, where additional police have gone in, that is where you are starting to see significant declines in the crime rate. So while have we seen in the latest crime stats the biggest decline in over a decade — in fact it is over 25 years since the establishment of the law enforcement assistance program — that will continue to come down as more police hit the streets.

I thank the member for his support of Victoria Police members; they do an incredible job each and every day, whether they are looking after prisoners in cells, working on our transport services or protecting us here in Parliament or on the streets across Melbourne.

A number of other members raised issues for ministers, and I will pass those issues on.

The SPEAKER — The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 7.33 p.m. until Tuesday, 8 May.