

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

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

Tuesday, 6 March 2018

(Extract from book 3)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

(from 16 October 2017)

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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

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION

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Allan, Ms Jacinta Marie	Bendigo East	ALP	McLeish, Ms Lucinda Gaye	Eildon	LP
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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
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Bull, Mr Timothy Owen	Gippsland East	Nats	O'Brien, Mr Michael Anthony	Malvern	LP
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Crisp, Mr Peter Laurence	Mildura	Nats	Pesutto, Mr John	Hawthorn	LP
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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
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Kairouz, Ms Marlene	Kororoit	ALP	Tilley, Mr William John	Benambra	LP
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Knight, Ms Sharon Patricia	Wendouree	ALP	Ward, Ms Vicki	Eltham	ALP
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McCurdy, Mr Timothy Logan	Ovens Valley	Nats	Williams, Ms Gabrielle	Dandenong	ALP
McGuire, Mr Frank	Broadmeadows	ALP	Wynne, Mr Richard William	Richmond	ALP

¹ Elected 31 October 2015

² Resigned 3 September 2015

³ Resigned 3 September 2015

⁴ ALP until 7 March 2017

⁵ Nats until 28 August 2017

⁶ Elected 14 March 2015

⁷ Died 23 August 2017

⁸ Elected 31 October 2015

⁹ Resigned 2 February 2015

¹⁰ Elected 18 November 2017

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

Legislative Assembly committees

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

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

Legislative Assembly select committees

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

Joint committees

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

Dispute Resolution Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Allan, Mr Clark, Ms Hutchins, Mr Merlino, Mr M. O’Brien, Mr Pakula and Mr Walsh. (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Dalidakis, Ms Dunn, Mr Jennings and Ms Wooldridge.

Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Ms Garrett and Ms Ryall. (*Council*): Mr Bourman, Mr Elasmarr and Mr Melhem.

Electoral Matters Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Asher, Ms Blandthorn, Mr Dixon and Ms Spence. (*Council*): Ms Bath, Ms Patten and Mr Somyurek.

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan. (*Council*): Mr O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards and Ms McLeish. (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins and Mr Finn.

House Committee — (*Assembly*): The Speaker (*ex officio*), Mr J. Bull, Mr Crisp, Mrs Fyffe, Mr Staikos, Ms Suleyman and Mr Thompson. (*Council*): The President (*ex officio*), Mr Eideh, Ms Lovell, Mr Mulino and Mr Young.

Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Hibbins, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Richardson, Ms Thomson and Mr Wells. (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee — (*Assembly*): Mr Dixon, Mr Howard, Ms Suleyman, Mr Thompson and Mr Tilley. (*Council*): Mr Gepp and Ms Patten.

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

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

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Tuesday, 6 March 2018

The SPEAKER (Hon. Colin Brooks) took the chair at 12.03 p.m. and read the prayer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The SPEAKER (12:03) — 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.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE and MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:04) — My question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. Minister, what warnings did the equal opportunity commissioner, Kristen Hilton, give to you and your staff about entrenching issues of bullying, sexism and intimidation in the proposed Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) when she briefed you on 16 January this year?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) (12:04) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I remind the Leader of the Opposition and those opposite that it was the Andrews government that requested that the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) do this work. We requested that VEOHRC do this work, we look forward to its release and we will respond to it.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, I did not ask who requested the briefing. I mentioned the briefing of 16 January and asked what warnings at that briefing the equal opportunity commissioner gave to the minister and what was discussed with him at that meeting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister has only been answering the question for a short period of time, but I do ask him to come back to answering the question.

Mr MERLINO — As you would expect, given that the government requested that VEOHRC do this work, I have had meetings with the VEOHRC commissioner and received verbal briefings — verbal updates — in terms of the progress of the report.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr MERLINO — I am not going to go into the details of what was discussed, nor would it be appropriate for me to do so.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Hawthorn is warned, as is the member for Mornington.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:05) — The equal opportunity commissioner Kristen Hilton has said that the proposed MFB EBA needs to change because it entrenches discrimination. Minister, why did you, two days after she met you to express these deep concerns, reject the commissioner's advice and urge the MFB to back an enterprise agreement that entrenches workplace discrimination, particularly against women?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Emergency Services) (12:06) — I reject the assertions in the opposition leader's question, and I will give him a bit of a lesson in fair work legislation and the process. Once the agreement is voted on by workers, then it goes to the Fair Work Commission. It is the Fair Work Commission that goes through the individual clauses in the EBA in its totality to ensure it is compliant.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, in relation to relevance again, I clearly asked the minister about why he went out, after being briefed by the commissioner about elements and warnings she gave him in that report, and ask the MFB to endorse that report, given that the commissioner had warned him not to? That was the supplementary question. I ask you to bring him back to answering it.

The SPEAKER — I understand that the form of the answer that the minister is giving may not be to the liking of the Leader of the Opposition, but it is responsive to the question and relevant to the question.

Mr MERLINO — They would not understand about that fair work process because they never landed an agreement. They went to war with our firefighters, our nurses, our teachers and our paramedics. That is all they know.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance again, this is clearly the minister not answering the question — the substantive or the supplementary — that I put to him. The supplementary was: two days after the commissioner met him, why did he urge and advise the MFB to back an enterprise agreement that entrenches discrimination? That was the

supplementary question; I ask you to bring him back to answering that question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister will not use an answer as an opportunity to attack the opposition. The minister will come back to answering the question.

Mr MERLINO — I have rejected the assertions. In terms of the resolution of the agreement, as I have said publicly in here and outside, one of the key reasons that we got a breakthrough and that an agreement was reached was that for the first time ever we have got a formal commitment and a formal process for both our fire services — the Country Fire Authority and the MFB —

The SPEAKER — Order! The minister's time has expired.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I ask you, under sessional order 9(2), to obtain a written response from the minister, particularly in relation to the substantive question, which was around what warnings the equal opportunity commissioner gave the minister, which he made no attempt to answer. He clearly gave no information to the Parliament.

The SPEAKER — Order! My view is that the minister's answer, on my initial hearing of it, was responsive, but as has been my practice in the past, I will review *Hansard* and report back to the member concerned.

Ministers statements: federal infrastructure funding

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:09) — I am pleased to be able to advise the house and all Victorians that the government is getting on with delivering the infrastructure that our state needs. Less pleasingly I can report that we as a state receive less than 10 per cent of commonwealth infrastructure funding, a point that I know does not sit well with hardworking Victorians who know and understand that the Victorian economy is driving so much of national growth — national growth that the Prime Minister seeks to brag about while he short-changes Victoria in infrastructure funding. And of course, in health, we know he is set to cut more than \$2 billion — \$2.1 billion, my honourable friend the Minister for Health tells me — out of our hospitals.

But on infrastructure you can imagine how angry and upset ordinary Victorians would be to learn that as of just yesterday the Prime Minister is set to pour another \$3.5 billion into Sydney, apparently for a rail line to an airport that has not been built yet. He is the Premier for

Sydney; that is what he is. The First Minister for Sydney. The Prime Minister of Sydney.

Whatever title you want to give him, he is for Sydney. The Baron of Sydney. The King of Sydney. I do not care what title you use, but he is for Sydney, make no mistake about that. But we will continue to deliver the Metro Tunnel, the West Gate tunnel, the removal of 50 dangerous and congested level crossings, the South Morang line extension out to Mernda, the Hurstbridge line upgrade and the Mordialloc bypass. What do all those projects have in common? Two things: we are delivering them with not one dollar from the Prime Minister for Sydney.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I take the opportunity to warn the member for Euroa and the member for Hawthorn again.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:11) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, your government was warned by your own equal opportunity commissioner that the proposed Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) was sexist, it was discriminatory and it worked against a fair workplace for women. Premier, why on earth do you still continue to endorse this deal despite knowing how bad it is for women and how it entrenches workplace discrimination and workplace bullying?

Ms Ryall interjected.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ringwood!

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:12) — I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. As is often the way with the Leader of the Opposition, he has made a range of assertions. He has put forward a range of assertions and would have us all take those as fact. Well, I learned a long time ago not to take much of what the Leader of the Opposition says as fact. Not much of what you say can be relied on.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, I have asked the Premier why he continues to endorse the proposed MFB EBA. If the Premier is now going to tell

us that in fact he does not endorse the MFB EBA by saying that this is an assertion, maybe he can declare that in question time. But I have asked him: why does he continue to endorse this deal despite knowing how bad it is for women? Could you bring him back, please, to answering that clear question?

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (12:13) — Order! The member for Hawthorn will leave the chamber for a period of 1 hour. I will not have members speaking over the top of me when I am trying to rule on a point of order.

Honourable member for Hawthorn withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — The Premier has only been answering this question for some 20 seconds or 19 seconds. I ask the Premier to continue answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS — Thank you very much, Speaker. As I was saying, the Leader of the Opposition has made a number of assertions. He clearly did not listen to the Deputy Premier, because he made the same assertions, put forward as his version of events and facts, and I reject, just as the Deputy Premier did, those assertions.

Further to that, and directly to the question, the Leader of the Opposition has made a further comment and has alleged that the agreement as proposed and agreed between MFB management and the union on behalf of its members — career firefighters — which is out for a vote from Friday this week, which will then be or not be certified by the Fair Work Commission, somehow entrenches cultural issues. These are cultural issues that are no secret, cultural issues that are not news to anyone on this side of the house, cultural issues that were ignored for four long years and cultural issues that will be addressed because of elements of this agreement — not in spite of it but because of agreements that sit alongside this EBA about sitting down and working through the issues of culture and diversity.

But beyond that I will take the opportunity to again remind all honourable members that this process under the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission happened because of this government. Yet we are not waiting to see that final report. We have already begun the process of quadrupling the number of female firefighters, dramatically expanding the number of women in leadership positions in our fire services. The list goes on and on. It is a lot better than cutting their budget.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The level of shouting in the chamber is too much. I warn members on both sides of the chamber they will be removed without warning if this level of shouting continues. I ask the Leader of The Nationals to assist with the running of the house.

Mr ANDREWS — I would have thought this was a serious matter but, no, we have got to have the shouting and the theatre of it all. We will not do what those opposite did, and that is to summarily ignore this issue for four long years, only to lope in here and pretend that it is important to them. You did nothing about it, and our government will get on and make the cultural change because of this agreement — not in spite of it, not around it, but because of it.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Footscray and I believe I have warned the member for Hastings already, but if not I am doing so now, to cease shouting. I warn the member for Kew as well.

Supplementary question

Mr GUY (Leader of the Opposition) (12:16) — Section 18 of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement, which you support, Premier, states that changes to any state or commonwealth laws cannot be implemented at MFB without consultation and agreement by the union.

Premier, why on earth do you support an EBA that gives the United Firefighters Union (UFU) veto over workplace and anti-discrimination laws of either the Victorian or the commonwealth parliament?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:17) — The Leader of the Opposition may not be aware — and you can forgive him for being thoroughly ignorant on these matters, having never landed an enterprise bargaining agreement in his political career — these consultation provisions are longstanding and were in agreements many, many years ago. The notion that these are somehow new is simply wrong.

Consultation provisions have always been a feature, and I will tell you why: because if you are asking someone to run into a burning building to keep your family safe, then you ought to consult them on how you organise the fire service. That is what you should do. There have been consultation provisions, and they remain a feature of this agreement.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, the question was clearly about why the Premier would support an EBA that gives the UFU veto over

anti-discrimination laws. I ask the Premier to come back to answering a very clear and straightforward question.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Premier was being responsive to the question asked. I ask the Premier to continue answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS — The Leader of the Opposition asked about consultation provisions, and I have pointed out to him that consultation and agreement provisions have been a feature of agreements and they remain such.

Ministers statements: public transport infrastructure

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (12:18) — I rise to update the house on how the status of negotiations that we are undertaking at the moment with the federal Liberal-National government on the \$1.57 billion in regional rail revival money that is owed to Victoria is going.

Yesterday I was very pleased to be in Benalla. I was in Benalla to meet with a member for Northern Victoria Region, Jaclyn Symes, and community representatives to talk about how we are wanting to get on with the job of upgrading regional passenger services. Last December we were very close indeed. We had reached in-principle agreement with the former infrastructure minister about how we can get this funding released to Victoria, but true to form this is a federal government that just hates to spend a dollar in Victoria. They have stalled and they have put another roadblock in the way of Victoria getting the funding that it deserves.

The Prime Minister for Sydney has tied the funding for our regional rail revival package to the agreement on the inland rail project — another barrier, another blocker from the Prime Minister for Sydney. At the same time as we are seeing billions being announced for a rail line to an airport that is yet to be built, we are seeing billions of dollars that are owed to regional Victorians in infrastructure funding. We are ready to deliver on regional rail; I have made that very clear time and time again to the federal government. We have added nearly 600 extra services to the V/Line timetable, we have purchased 87 new VLocity carriages — in every single budget we have purchased VLocity carriages — and we are continuing to fight for our fair share from the regional rail revival program. That is in sharp contrast to those opposite when they were in government, when they cut and shut. They cut funding to V/Line, they shut country rail lines. But we take a very, very different approach and we will continue to fight for our regional rail money.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:20) — My question is to the Attorney-General. Attorney-General, you are responsible for the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Your commissioner, Ms Hilton, has made it very clear that the proposed Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) is discriminatory. Ms Hilton stated that the human rights commission has very serious concerns about an industrial agreement that 'has limitations on part-time and flexible work conditions, does not allow lateral entry and contains veto clauses'. Attorney-General, do you support your equal opportunity commissioner Ms Hilton's view of this discriminatory MFB EBA, or do you support your Premier's position, which is to give Peter Marshall everything he wants?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) (12:21) — It appears that the member for Hawthorn has been ejected on one of the few days he might have actually had a question. I simply say to the member for Malvern that my support for my agency and the government's support for the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission has been borne out by the fact that the Secretary of the Department of Justice and Regulation, Greg Wilson, has intervened in the matter in the Supreme Court in support of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to have their report issued expeditiously. That matter has been handled by Crown Counsel Melinda Richards. The secretary was successful at first instance. Of course the matter has been appealed, and my department will continue to support —

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, relating to relevance. My question did not refer to the report. It referred to the EBA, and the Attorney-General has not even mentioned the term 'EBA'. I ask you to bring him back to answering the question I actually asked.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Attorney-General will continue answering the question.

Mr PAKULA — The question went to the question of whether or not I have been supportive of the Victorian equal opportunity and human rights commissioner. I am indicating very clearly to the house not just verbal support but the support through the intervention of the secretary of my department for the actions of the commissioner in seeking to have her report released.

Mr M. O'Brien — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance. The question was: do you support your equal opportunity commissioner Ms Hilton's view of this discriminatory MFB EBA? That was the question. I ask the Attorney-General to come back to answering it

The SPEAKER — Order! I understand again that the form of the Attorney-General's answer may not be exactly the form —

Mr Burgess interjected.

The SPEAKER (12:24) — The member for Hastings will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. I will not have people interjecting while I am making a ruling.

Honourable member for Hastings withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — The form of the answer being given by the Attorney-General may not be the form that is requested by the member. I find that the answer is relevant to the question.

Supplementary question

Mr M. O'BRIEN (Malvern) (12:24) — Attorney-General, do you have full confidence in the equal opportunity commissioner, Kristen Hilton, despite her clear opposition to the discriminatory MFB EBA which your government endorses, or is Ms Hilton bound to join the growing list of others, particularly strong women like Lucinda Nolan, the member for Brunswick and Andi Diamond, who have all been pushed out because they dared to stand up to a bully like Peter Marshall?

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) (12:25) — Just so there is no ambiguity, Kristen Hilton is an outstanding equal opportunity and human rights commissioner. She has my full support. The board of the commission has my full support and the support of the entire government.

Ministers statements: federal infrastructure funding

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (12:25) — It gives me pleasure to update the house on the continued investment that the state of Victoria is making in infrastructure and of course the federal government's refusal to contribute to that effort. It has become a pretty regular thing. We saw it again on the weekend, like groundhog day, the Prime Minister of Sydney spruiking yet another announcement for New South Wales, this time for western Sydney. If building a

second airport for western Sydney was not enough, he now wants to build a rail line to it; just so we know, the airport does not exist yet. That is on top of the \$3.6 billion commitment to the western Sydney infrastructure plan he has already announced. Roads, rail, airports — if you live in western Sydney, if you are from Sydney, the Prime Minister of Sydney will look after you. The reality is that Malcolm Turnbull is a one-trick pony: forever looking after Sydney's interests and short-changing Victoria. While he gives his home state 45 per cent of national infrastructure funding, this state continues to receive less than 10 per cent.

Those opposite are complicit; let us make no mistake about it. They sit around and they continue to make not a whimper about this outrage. The last three years have shown exactly what they are — they are irrelevant. Just like those opposite, we will highlight each and every day that they wasted the precious gift of government. We have created 315 000 jobs in our time in government. The federal government might go around seeking to lay claim to that, but they have made no contribution to Victoria, its infrastructure or its growth while we cut taxes for business, while we build the infrastructure Victorians vitally need.

Kurunjang Primary School

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (12:28) — My question is to the Minister for Education.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Bass is warned.

Mr NARDELLA — In the 2017–18 state budget \$1 million was allocated to Kurunjang Primary School in my electorate. Can the minister provide an update about this upgrade?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) (12:28) — I thank the member for Melton for his question —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Nepean is warned.

Mr MERLINO — They do not like school capital. The 25th shadow minister calls it a distraction. The 25th shadow minister calls school capital a distraction.

Let me go to the question that the member asked. I can confirm the \$1 million provided to upgrade and modernise Kurunjang Primary School. On top of this, the government provided \$369 000 for maintenance. The school community has combined that capital and

maintenance funding. The funding will allow for refurbishment of various parts of the school, including the administration block, the junior and senior school toilets, and the staff lounge. The multipurpose hall roof will be repaired, and repairs to footpaths and asphalt will be carried out as well as landscaping in the northern area of the site. I can also inform the member that the project is expected to go to tender —

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr MERLINO — You are not interested in school building, are you? It is expected to go to tender in April 2018.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (12:30) — Order! The member for Polwarth will leave the chamber for a period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Polwarth withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — I understand that members in this place might be interested in shouting at each other, but I am sure that the school community involved would like to hear the minister's answer.

Mr MERLINO — Thank you, Speaker. The project will go to tender next month. The construction will take place in three stages throughout the course of the 2019 school year.

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr MERLINO — This school, like all existing schools in the Melton electorate, did not receive one dollar from those opposite in the previous government. So for the record, Labor's investment in Melton: land acquisition funding for Eynesbury primary school —

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the minister is clearly reading from a speech. He should just table it, rather than put us through that.

The SPEAKER — Is the minister reading or referring to notes?

Mr MERLINO — Speaker, I am reading from a note, being a list of schools that have received funding under the Andrews Labor government.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! I will not have members shouting while I am trying to make a ruling. The minister will make that document available to the house.

Mr MERLINO — I am more than happy to, Speaker. The list includes Eynesbury primary school; \$8 million for an upgrade of Bacchus Marsh College; almost \$5.8 million for Melton Specialist School; Kurunjang Primary School, which we have already mentioned; \$3.2 million for Melton Secondary College; \$541 000 for Staughton College; planning funding for Melton West Primary School; maintenance funding for Melton South Primary School; maintenance funding for Wedge Park Primary School; and inclusive schools funding for Arnolds Creek Primary School. And for our non-government schools, \$2 million for Catholic Regional College in Melton; and St Anthony's school, \$730 000. In just three budgets we have more than doubled the investment of those opposite in school buildings in the Melton electorate.

Supplementary question

Mr NARDELLA (Melton) (12:32) — The Andrews Labor government has also allocated \$2.35 million through the Shared Facilities Fund to build a community hub next to the Kurunjang Primary School. Can the minister provide an update about this project?

Mr MERLINO (Minister for Education) (12:33) — I thank the member for his question. In total, Kurunjang is receiving over \$3.7 million. In our 2016–17 budget we released \$50 million for the Shared Facilities Fund. These are projects that partner up with local government, with sporting associations or with not-for-profit community organisations. As part of that fund, \$2.35 million has been allocated to build a new community hub adjacent to the primary school. Melton City Council is providing \$300 000, to bring the total funding to \$2.65 million.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Caulfield!

Mr MERLINO — It will provide a teaching kitchen and edible garden that can be integrated in the primary school's curriculum. It will provide a range of services to the local community. The proposed hub will include two large community rooms for active/passive learning both for students and for the broader community. I am proud of this project. Those opposite do not care about school building. I thank the member for his question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — The member for Macedon and the member for Ringwood are both active contributors to question time, but not by raising points of order or through the normal forms of the house. I ask them to cease interjecting across the chamber.

Ministers statements: manufacturing jobs

Mr CARROLL (Minister for Industry and Employment) (12:34) — It is my pleasure to update the house on how the Andrews government's record investments in new trains and rail infrastructure is creating jobs right across Victoria and providing a very significant boost to the manufacturing sector. Last week I had the pleasure of joining the member for Dandenong out at Bombardier in Dandenong South, where Victorian workers are working on the biggest train and tram order in Victoria's history — being built in Victoria, not in South Korea. It is a massive program: 170 new jobs, 700 indirect jobs, great support from the member for Dandenong but also a company that is changing as the manufacturing industry is changing. iPads are very significant down in the factory there.

There is a perception that manufacturing is dying. Nothing could be further from the truth. Under the Andrews government, with \$100 million in support, manufacturing is continuing to thrive. In fact it has had 13 months of consecutive growth for the first time in a decade. We are getting on with the job, but also in regional Victoria, where manufacturing businesses are 20 per cent. The member for Macedon, not only a hard worker in Spring Street but a hard worker in her electorate, was with the Premier last week at Barker Trailers to unveil their 10 000th trailer — a local success story. It has been going for 40 years; 180 Victorians are employed at Barker Trailers and we are very proud to support them.

Those opposite are off the rails completely when it comes to policy. We are getting on with building jobs and creating jobs, but make sure you get your tickets to the Menzies Research Centre. Join the fearless MP, the member for Kew, with Rita Panahi and friends at Sky News. Get your tickets —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr CARROLL — Get your tickets! Go to the Menzies Research Centre and follow the member for Kew and get a rerun of teaching all the schoolkids about Brexit.

The SPEAKER — Order! I warn the member for Warrandyte against shouting at the Speaker.

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, last sitting week you removed members of the opposition for holding props in the Parliament. I seek your guidance on why that ruling has not been applied to the minister.

The SPEAKER — The minister was holding —

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (12:37) — Order! The member for Ringwood and the member for Geelong will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour. I will not have members shouting over the top of me when I am trying to issue a ruling.

Honourable members for Ringwood and Geelong withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — The minister had a piece of paper in his hand that he was holding at waist height. He was not waving it around.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER (12:37) — The member for Mornington will leave the chamber for the period of 1 hour.

Honourable member for Mornington withdrew from chamber.

The SPEAKER — The minister will be very careful about whether he chooses to quote from the document or to use the document as a prop.

Mr CARROLL — On behalf of the Menzies Research Centre Thought Network Special, I am happy to table the document.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (12:38) — My question is to the Premier. Premier, even if we accept your hollow platitudes about letting court cases take their course and nonsense about you not knowing anything about the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission report — yet your ministers and agencies do — you do now know that the equal opportunity commission applied for and was given an expedited court date to deal with United Firefighters Union delay tactics of 16 April, just weeks away. Premier, what is the reason you will not wait just a few weeks for the human rights commission report into sexism and bullying in the fire services to be released in full before trying to ram through the Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA)?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:39) — There was a fair bit in the question. There is much that would need to be rejected because it was not in any way factual, but I would simply say to the member for Gembrook that the government —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — I would simply say to the member for Gembrook that if he thinks — is it nine, is it 10 perhaps, reviews? — that nine reviews in nearly as many years, nine reviews in a decade, no EBA for five years —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr ANDREWS — I simply say we are not going to adopt the policy of those opposite, which is to either ignore —

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr ANDREWS — You waited four years — four long years — and did nothing. We will not adopt a policy that says ignore the culture and diversity problems or do nothing about them. I reject that policy and each and every one of the assertions in the member for Gembrook's question.

Supplementary question

Mr BATTIN (Gembrook) (12:40) — Premier, a full copy of the human rights commissioner's report is now with the fire agencies and Commissioner Lapsley. You and your government all know how bad this agreement is. Given so much evidence of bullying within the fire services, will you commit to putting this EBA on hold until the human rights commission's report is made public and ensures all issues of bullying and intimidation have been addressed to ensure a safe workplace?

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) (12:40) — I am indebted to the Leader of The Nationals for saying, 'No, it's not rubbish, it's factual' — according to him and according to the member for Gembrook, who would have apparently seen lots of documents, been intimately involved in lots of processes. No, I am sorry, member for Gembrook, you do not get to verbal people like you did in relation to Black Saturday. We are not standing for that. Having sent the reference to the commission, having aided the commissioner in the court —

Mr Guy — On a point of order, Speaker, on relevance, the member for Gembrook had asked a supplementary question which was very clear around why the government will not delay this ramming through the EBA until the human rights commission's report is made public.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The Minister for Emergency Services will come to order!

Mr Guy — It is a very simple question: why won't the government wait just a few more weeks until the report is made public? That is the question to the Premier. I ask you to bring him back to answering a straightforward question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The SPEAKER — Order! The member for Gembrook and the Minister for Emergency Services! The Premier was answering the question. I ask the Premier to continue answering the question.

Mr ANDREWS — The point of order of the Leader of the Opposition simply adds to the fact that he has no understanding of the way industrial relations certification processes work. He has got no understanding about how the justice system works as well. The matter is before the courts.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS — So you know when the appeal will be resolved? Those opposite know when the appeal will be resolved and the outcome of the appeal.

Ministers statements: federal infrastructure funding

Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety) (12:42) — I rise to update the house on how the Andrews government is getting on with the job of upgrading our roads with very, very little assistance from our federal government and the Prime Minister for Sydney. As we know, the New South Wales government continues to get well over its fair share, with 45 per cent of federal infrastructure funding while Victoria sits below 10 per cent. The projects we are doing are very strong projects. If you are looking at the western roads project, at \$1.8 billion it is the biggest upgrade to western roads the area has ever seen. If you look at the Monash Freeway project we are doing, \$400 million, new lanes where they are most needed, and I know my community is very grateful for it.

Whether it be the Mordialloc bypass, the Drysdale bypass, the Yan Yean Road duplication or the Chandler Highway, it is a pity that the member for Kew does not update his video on the Chandler Highway to highlight that it took a Labor government to do something that the Liberals never did. But we know the state Liberals are a lost cause, so luckily a good friend of mine, Bernie from Brighton, was able to come across an opportunity to provide a little bit of guidance to the federal Liberal Party. This little exclusive invitation I have received is to the Bayside Forum cocktail party on 15 March. We know that Christian Porter will be there, along with Tim Wilson, and they will be wanting to hear —

Honourable members interjecting.

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

Mr Hodgett — On a point of order, Speaker, I contend that the minister is breaching sessional order 5, and I ask you to bring him back to making a ministers statement.

The SPEAKER — The minister does appear to be straying from making a ministers statement. I ask him to come back to making a ministers statement.

Mr DONNELLAN — I guess it is really our desperation to get the message across to both the state and federal members of the Liberal and National parties that it is simply not good enough to continue to give this government under 10 per cent of federal infrastructure spending over the coming year, so I am very much looking forward to getting there with Bernie from Brighton and letting our federal members know how they are dudding —

The SPEAKER — Order! We now move to constituency questions.

Mr Wells — On a point of order, Speaker, I asked a constituency question on 17 October last year in regard to a soccer ground in my electorate. As of today that still has not been answered. It is question 13 260, and I would ask you to follow that up.

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

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Warrandyte electorate

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) (12:46) — (14 076) My question is to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. As outlined in the government's Social

Housing Growth Fund, the government says it will support up to 2200 new social housing places. Having met with local representative groups who aid people with a disability to access social housing in Manningham, it is very apparent that there is an extreme lack of social housing available to people in need in the Warrandyte electorate. I have been informed that there are only a couple of vacancies per year in housing that service those with a disability in the Manningham area, meaning that people are often forced out of their neighbourhood to other areas in the state just to secure the housing that they so desperately need. I ask the minister: will he detail his plans for supporting people with a disability in the Manningham area and ensure there are enough local supported housing options for those who are in desperate need?

Cranbourne electorate

Mr PERERA (Cranbourne) (12:47) — (14 077) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and I ask: what are the next steps on the much-anticipated upgrade of the intersection of South Gippsland Highway, Evans Road and Hallam Road? Since 2005 the communities of Lynbrook and Lyndhurst have been disconnected by this very intersection. In the Andrews Labor government's budget of 2016–17 the government committed to fix this hazard. My constituents were very appreciative of this announcement and are eager to see the end result of this very important project.

Gippsland South electorate

Mr D. O'BRIEN (Gippsland South) (12:47) — (14 078) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. When will the government commit to replacing the ageing rolling stock on the long-haul Gippsland train line? I am proud that The Nationals and Liberals have committed to a \$633 million investment to replace all the old long-haul rolling stock that was introduced when Ronald Reagan sat in the White House, the AFL was still the VFL and the internet was unheard of by most people.

The old N and Z-class trains that currently service all Victorian long-haul routes are outdated. They regularly break down, air conditioning cannot handle much more than a warm summer's day, and locos and carriages are regularly out of action for maintenance. While we will deliver new six-car sets based on the existing VLocity trains made here in Victoria if elected later this year, the people of Gippsland do not care which party gets it done — they just want new trains and better services. So far Labor has delivered nothing for passengers east of

Traralgon. It is time Labor joined with The Nationals and Liberals and committed to new trains for Gippsland.

Carrum electorate

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (12:48) — (14 079) My constituency question is for the Minister for Families and Children. The Turnbull government is quietly gutting a national childcare program, which is set to leave more than 50 neighbourhood houses across Victoria without vital funding. The program is the national occasional care program which supports 51 neighbourhood houses across Victoria to deliver occasional childcare services. These neighbourhood houses stand to lose almost \$800 000 per year — that is an average of \$15 417 per house — thanks to Malcolm Turnbull's callous cuts. This includes the Lyrebird Community Centre in my electorate of Carrum, which provides occasional childcare services. Minister, what does this federal Liberal funding cut mean for the Lyrebird Community Centre and families in Carrum Downs?

Ferntree Gully electorate

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (12:49) — (14 080) My constituency question is for the Minister for Police. Earlier this year an abandoned Ford utility was left outside a constituent's home in Wantirna. The police advised that the utility was abandoned by a criminal who had committed aggravated burglaries in Mont Albert and Box Hill as well as trying to target police with his vehicle. The Monash criminal intelligence unit informed the constituent that the offender was apprehended in the northern suburbs and had been remanded with the prospect of a lengthy sentence. The vehicle is legally registered to the offender. It is damaged and has broken windows and still holds all the offender's personal belongings.

The police have disabled the vehicle and left it unlocked. However, they cannot assist in removing the vehicle from the front of my constituent's home. The police directed my constituent to contact Knox City Council, and the council has advised that in the short term they have no jurisdiction in the matter as the car is legally registered and not a traffic hazard. Therefore my question is: what is the process that has to be undertaken to ensure that this vehicle is removed from outside my constituent's home?

Yan Yean electorate

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (12:50) — (14 081) Yesterday I met with Cr Peter Clark, the mayor of Nillumbik, together with the member for Eltham and

federal MPs Jenny Macklin and Andrew Giles. At the meeting Cr Clark told me that he had met with you, the Minister for Local Government, last week and that he had sought further funding for the Diamond Creek Trail —

The SPEAKER — Order! Can I ask who the question is to?

Ms GREEN — There is a lot of talking. The Minister for Local Government, sorry.

He advised that he had sought advice from you about further funding for the Diamond Creek Trail. I seek the minister's advice on what she was able to say to him and how I could further assist in furthering that request from Cr Clark.

Morwell electorate

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (12:51) — (14 082) My constituency question is to the Minister for Sport. What is the latest information with respect to the state government providing funding for the completion of the Traralgon West Sports Complex pavilion? The upstairs area of the complex remains incomplete despite stage 1 being completed way back in 2011. It really is a farcical situation when multiple users of the complex across many areas of sport, including umpiring, running, rugby, cricket, football, all ability groups as well as school groups, amongst others, utilise this precinct all year round, yet \$200 000 cannot be found to complete one of its most important features.

The fitting out of the second storey would mean even greater utilisation of the west end complex, with adequate meeting facilities and functions being able to be held by various user groups. These grassroots user groups deserve the opportunity to have this facility completed, as was promised years ago. Minister, what is the latest information with respect to the state government providing funding for the completion of the west end sporting complex pavilion?

Williamstown electorate

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) (12:52) — (14 083) My question today is for the Minister for Ports and it concerns the upgrades to Seaworks Maritime Precinct in Williamstown. As the minister will be aware, the Andrews Labor government has committed \$3 million to provide much-needed upgrades and new facilities for the site, which already attracts more than 100 000 visitors per year. This work would transform the site to allow more activities, exhibitions and events for the local community. Can the minister provide a full

outline of what specific improvements will be made to this site as a result of the \$3 million investment?

Ripon electorate

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:53) — (14 084) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Will the minister direct her department to provide restitution to Mr Bob Brown of Dunolly for the financial loss they caused him when they illegally destroyed his hand-dug mine between 22 and 25 February this year?

Mr Brown has been working under a miner's right near Dunolly for the past two and a half years. He dug to a depth of approximately 20 feet and sideways for another 30 feet. The miner's right allows for excavation with hand tools, so Bob is quite within his rights to have conducted this work and to successfully recover gold. As Bob was compliant with his miner's right, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning had no legal basis for filling in his mine with no notice.

Bentleigh electorate

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (12:53) — (14 085) My question is to the Minister for Public Transport. How many commuters on average use Southland station each day?

Mr Watt — On a point of order, Speaker, the question just asked by the member for Bentleigh is clearly out of order. That information is clearly available on the internet. My staff have done searches on train stations in my electorate. The information is readily available, so the question is not in order. I ask you to rule the question out of order.

The SPEAKER — I am not able to verify whether that information is available. I will consider the matter and report back to the house.

ENGINEERS REGISTRATION BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Mr PALLAS (Treasurer) (12:54) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to establish a scheme for the registration of professional engineers to promote best practice in providing professional engineering services, to provide for the endorsement of registration, to provide protection to consumers of professional engineering services and to make consequential amendments to other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

LEGAL IDENTITY OF DEFENDANTS (ORGANISATIONAL CHILD ABUSE) BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) (12:55) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to provide for child abuse plaintiffs to sue an organisational defendant in respect of unincorporated non-government organisations which use trusts to conduct their activities, to consequentially amend other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

GUARDIANSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION BILL 2018

Introduction and first reading

Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) (12:56) — I move:

That I have leave to bring in a bill for an act to re-enact with amendments the law relating to guardianship and administration, to repeal the Guardianship and Administration Act 1986 and to amend consequentially various other acts and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Read first time.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Deciduous trees

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly:

I draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly to a failure by some councils to take full advantage of low-cost ideas for developing regional towns.

I request the Legislative Assembly to call on the ministers responsible for roads and local government to set a contrary example by promptly ensuring the planting of deciduous trees capable of canopied all roads in the town of Mansfield. This planting will be low-cost greening the town to benefit local residential amenity and for tourist and state and local economic reasons.

Also, to deliver fairness by treating all roads equally, adding value fairly to all community-based main stakeholder residential and business investments. The choice and planting

of deciduous trees is based on economic and safety grounds, not a choice between native trees and European species.

By Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (1 signature).

Mornington Peninsula planning

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

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

1. removing 'as of right' approvals which now allow three-storey developments and buildings up to 11 metres high within our general residential zone;
2. repealing recent changes which have expanded the scope of VicSmart planning applications, removing residents' rights to be aware of future developments in their neighbourhood;
3. ensuring our existing design development overlays, which prohibit three-storey developments within general residential zones, are protected in perpetuity;
4. implement mandatory controls to strengthen and enforce the intent of our 2014 *Mornington Peninsula Localised Planning Statement* to override, in unambiguous language, any changes to the planning scheme, thereby providing a clear direction for decision-making;
5. protecting and strengthening local council control within the green wedge zone and rural conservation zone by limiting, or where necessary, preventing commercial and industrial developments on rural land, including accommodation complexes.

By Mr DIXON (Nepean) (517 signatures).

Native vegetation clearance

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of residents in Victoria calls on the Legislative Assembly to note that the current regime of 'offsetting' native vegetation clearance is unnecessarily expensive, cumbersome and the least effective way in achieving decent environmental outcomes related to small mining activities and clearance of 'isolated paddock trees' by farmers.

Offsets of up to \$95 000 per hectare are being demanded on land already degraded by 19th century mining resulting in projects not proceeding and therefore no land rehabilitation.

We therefore call on the Andrews Labor government to use the review of native vegetation regulations being conducted by DELWP to recognise the economic and environmental benefits of mining and agriculture land use and enable rather than block these small-scale mining and farming projects.

By Ms STALEY (Ripon) (115 signatures).

Energy security

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria:

The petition of the residents of the state of Victoria note with concern the impact on the health and wellbeing of Victorian residents who are dependent upon oxygen machines to maintain general health and the adverse impact upon wellbeing during unexpected power outages such as occurred in Melbourne in January 2018.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Victorian government to immediately secure and maintain a reliable power supply for Victorian patients who are dependent upon oxygen machines, home dialysis machines and other electrically powered equipment.

By Mr THOMPSON (Sandringham) (2 signatures).

Tabled.

Ordered that petition presented by honourable member for Ripon be considered on the next day of sitting on motion of Ms STALEY (Ripon).

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

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 3

Mr J. BULL (Sunbury) presented *Alert Digest No. 3* of 2018 on:

Audit Amendment Bill 2017

Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018

Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018

Parks Victoria Bill 2018

together with appendices.

Tabled.

Ordered to be published.

DOCUMENTS**Tabled by Acting Clerk:**

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 — Order under s 17D granting a lease over Gresswell Habitat Link

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

Kingston — C162

Melbourne — C321

Stonnington — C255, C257

Victorian Planning Provisions — VC144

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 — SR 15

Liquor Control Reform Act 1998 — SR 16

Road Safety Act 1986 — SR 17

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — SR 18

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:

Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 2, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23

Documents under s 16B in relation to:

Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017 — Notice of Capacity Determination under s 9

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983:

Conditions under s 220D

Specification of Railway Stations for the Purposes of the definition of 'Compulsory Ticket Area'.

The following proclamation fixing an operative date was tabled by the Acting Clerk in accordance with an order of the house dated 24 February 2015:

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Act 2017 — Whole Act — 28 February 2018 (*Gazette S71, 27 February 2018*).

ROYAL ASSENT**Message read advising royal assent on 27 February to:**

Bail Amendment (Stage Two) Bill 2017

Health and Child Wellbeing Legislation Amendment Bill 2017

Justice Legislation Amendment (Victims) Bill 2017

Oaths and Affirmations Bill 2017

Planning and Environment Amendment (Public Land Contributions) Bill 2017

Road Safety Amendment (Automated Vehicles) Bill 2017.

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

Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Parks Victoria Bill 2018.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Program**

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport) (13:00) — 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 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 8 March 2018:

Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018

Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018

Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018

Long Service Leave Bill 2017.

I will make a few brief observations on the business program that is before the house for support and endorsement today. There are four bills on the program. Each of them has various complexities around policy matters, and the week provides sufficient time for those matters to be considered throughout its course.

I would like to indicate for the record that I have been having some conversations with the manager of opposition business regarding the Long Service Leave Bill 2017. There has been a request made for that bill to go into consideration in detail, and I have indicated back to the Liberal opposition that that should be able to be accommodated late on Thursday afternoon, as has become the standard practice. That will be an appropriate day to talk about the Long Service Leave Bill.

Thursday, 8 March, is of course International Women's Day, and it will be great to be able to celebrate another International Women's Day in the chamber, with women and men across the Parliament. It is a day to recognise the achievements that have been made, but there is more work to be done. The Long Service Leave Bill is a terrific example of an area of policy and legislation where there is more work to be done. I really commend the Minister for Industrial Relations, who just happens to also be the Minister for Women. It has been a commitment of hers to improve conditions for working people. We know that many of the provisions in the bill support women who are working part-time, who are in casual employment, who are underemployed or who are trying to get into the workforce, and they need and deserve that support. Thursday will be an entirely appropriate day for the Long Service Leave Bill to be considered by the Parliament, and I look forward to joining with men and women across the Parliament in supporting this important legislation.

I would also like to indicate for the record that it is our intention for the bill that has just been introduced by the Attorney-General, the Legal Identity of Defendants (Organisational Child Abuse) Bill 2018, to be second read in the old-fashioned way, which is for the second-reading speech to be read out to the house. The Attorney-General has requested that, and I will be having further discussions with members of the house to accommodate that. Given the content of the bill and the announcement by the Premier and the Attorney-General today, it is entirely appropriate that that bill be treated differently to what has become standard practice with the incorporation of second-reading speeches. I understand there is a keenness for some members of the public to come and see that bill being second read by the Attorney-General.

As I said, this is a strong program which contains a number of important policy matters to be considered and put into legislation over the course of the week. I hope, as I do at this time every Tuesday of a sitting week, that this is a government business program that will receive unanimous acclamation from the chamber. It is with that optimism that I commend the motion to the house.

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (13:04) — I rise to make a contribution on the government business program on behalf of the opposition. Unfortunately the manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, cannot be here today. There are some issues that he needs to deal with, so I am filling in for him.

We have four bills on the government business program. It is a relatively light program, with only four

bills. There is the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018, which is basically a harmonisation bill across Australia and New Zealand. There is the Long Service Leave Bill 2017, which the opposition has requested to take into consideration in detail. The Leader of the House has indicated that she will accommodate that. There is the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. The opposition does have some concerns about this bill which it is endeavouring to flesh out with the government. Our main concerns are around the ability of or the potential for government departments or agencies to be exempted from these requirements. The opposition will certainly be seeking assurances that this will not be the case — for example, with perhaps the Metropolitan Fire Brigade or the Country Fire Authority (CFA). We do not want to see a situation where bodies like that would be exempted from these requirements.

Then we have the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018, which basically establishes a new framework around emergency management. Again the opposition have some concerns around that, particularly around the fact that a lot of these consultative bodies at the moment contain volunteers. Particularly around the CFA we want to ensure that they continue to have volunteers, so we will certainly be seeking to flesh that out during the debate.

Unfortunately for the Leader of the House the opposition will not be supporting the government business program, and that is primarily owing to the fact that the government is still refusing to deal with the rorting members for Tarneit and Melton. The government has previously said it was awaiting the outcome of a police investigation. It said it would be inappropriate for Parliament to deal with those two members until that investigation had concluded. The investigation has concluded, and the government is still refusing to deal with those members.

The members for Tarneit and Melton have serious questions to answer in this place. The Leader of the Opposition's motion, which is at humble position 17 on the notice paper — it is the last motion in the general business, notices of motion section of the notice paper — seeks to refer those two members of Parliament to a select committee for investigation into their conduct with regard to the rorting of the second residence allowance. We as an opposition believe that should be the number one item on the government business program. The government made a commitment to deal with these members once the police investigation had concluded. The government is still not doing that. In

essence they are protecting these two rotating members, and on that basis the opposition will not be supporting the government business program.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (13:08) — Strengthening preparedness for life-and-death emergencies, removing discrimination so women and parents stop losing hard-earned long service leave, improving Victoria's integrity and accountability system and increasing safety for Victorians using electrical equipment — these are the themes of this week's government business program. They add to the big-picture strategy that the Andrews Labor government is delivering throughout Victoria.

The message is clear: only Labor delivers for Victorians on results and on rights. This is highlighted yet again in this week's government business program and in recent events. The Abbott-Turnbull coalition government continues to dud Victorians, and the one-term Victorian coalition government was rejected for being a do-little government. The proposition is clear. The Andrews Labor government keeps prosecuting the case week in, week out in the Parliament, with other announcements and in building the infrastructure that is redesigning the world's most livable city for the future, making sure that the jobs and the other initiatives go right throughout the state of Victoria so that everyone can reap the rewards of this big-picture strategy.

To go to the bills in detail, the Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Bill 2018 provides for a new integrated framework to strengthen Victoria's emergency preparedness. What this will actually do is provide for integrated planning for activities that occur before, during and after an emergency, which is critical in its own right; arrangements to provide for all likely emergencies; plans that provide for the roles and responsibilities of all relevant agencies so there is not duplication or overlap and there is a clear chain of command; common principles to guide and drive the planning process; a clear and transparent governance structure for emergency management; and a combined suite of quality assurance and accountability mechanisms so there is better scrutiny, accountability and compliance. That is important in its own right.

Then we have, with the Long Service Leave Bill 2017, a new act that will be more modern, flexible and, most importantly, fairer for women and people with parental or caring responsibilities. This is an important proposition. Under the Andrews government's changes any period of paid parental leave and up to 12 months of unpaid parental leave will actually count as service and no amount of parental leave will break continuity

of service. This is timely. The bill will be considered this week when we acknowledge International Women's Day and, as the manager of government business has said, it is open now for this bill to go into consideration in detail. The timing could not be more appropriate to actually address this proposition of what is a fairer go, particularly for women. I think that will have lasting value.

Then we look at the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. This bill will make Victoria's integrity and accountability system more cohesive, robust and effective and build on recent changes delivered by the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (A Stronger System) Act 2016. This bill is important because it will address concerns about the operation of the integrity and accountability system raised by key stakeholders. It is in response to the government's discussion paper on the roles of the Ombudsman and IBAC released in March 2016. This is important, again, to address these significant agencies. The bill will make Victoria's whistleblower protection system stronger and more accessible to encourage people to report corruption and public sector wrongdoing. The bill will modernise and clarify the Ombudsman's legislation to ensure the Ombudsman can effectively resolve complaints, investigate maladministration and promote and improve public administration.

Then we have the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change bringing in the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. That will provide a single central national register to enable regulators to more readily trace suppliers and in-scope electrical equipment across participating jurisdictions. What this does is create a better alignment. It is a national strategy and it will improve safety. This is another strong government business program. I look forward to these debates and recommend the government business program to the house.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (13:13) — I rise to speak on the government business program. You have really got to hand it to the member for Broadmeadows: he can make the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018 sound like it is part of a big picture — perhaps it is a big picture only he can see. He has no lack of vision on such a bill.

Last sitting Thursday, which was 22 February, this house spent from 10.00 a.m. until 4.30 p.m., with only breaks for question time and lunch, performing a stunt. It was not the kind of stunt that you see at the Winter Olympics — it was not a triple somersault

with a twist — but it was a stunt nonetheless. This house debated a motion with no consequences, a motion created to let the various applicants for promotion on the government benches strut their stuff. That motion remains on the notice paper. We did that because the legislative program was so light that it was finished by Wednesday. Labor did not want to debate their own legislation and adjourned debate on the bills for a stunt. Labor was happy to spend hours on chatter that led to nothing but would not bring on the debate on the motion in the name of the Leader of the Opposition to establish a select committee into the rorting, misuse and theft of taxpayers money by the members for Tarneit and Melton.

And so we come to this week. We have another four bills — all with some worthy elements, and we will see how their debates pan out — but none that could not wait another week. None of them are more important than taking action to demonstrate that this chamber holds its own to high standards. The Liberals are ready. The Nationals are ready. Both Independents are ready. The Greens are ready. Only the government and the disgraced member for Melton vote week in, week out to do anything at all except address the rorting of the members for Melton and Tarneit. Of course this reflects badly on the government as it is only their members rorting the system, but it also reflects badly on our profession. The public out there thinks it is outrageous that two members of this place can misappropriate hundreds of thousands of dollars and the proper parliamentary processes are not used to discipline them.

When this government fails — and I sincerely hope for, trust in and will work relentlessly towards that goal on 24 November — all government MPs will forever be tainted not only for housing a disgraced MP in their ranks and accepting the vote of another but for not having to gumption to stand up to their leadership. No MP on the Labor side has said, ‘I, Jane or Joe Smith, member for Wherever, do not want to be associated with this rorting. We must act’. But no, week after week they stand up and they support a government business program that does not hold these rorting members to account. They would rather do stunts like we saw last week and like we may see again this week if they pull their legislative agenda. You have got to say, ‘Shame on all of you’ for that. Shame on you because every week in this place that you fail to deal with the rorting member for Tarneit and the rorting member for Melton you rip another shred of dignity off the profession that we all choose when we come here.

So it is not just about your own people; it is actually about all of us and upholding good government. Every week you refuse to debate that motion and every week

you refuse to hold those members to account in any way. It is not just your leadership, although they take most of the blame here, all of you — the member for Mordialloc over there; he takes just as much blame for the rorting members for Tarneit and Melton as anybody else because he does not stand up and say there is a problem. He is happy to defend the status quo —

Mr Watt interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member for Burwood is warned.

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, as you can see, we have let it go for quite a bit —

Mr Watt interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Burwood!

Ms Allan — The member for Ripon has well and truly overstepped the boundaries of the motion that is before the house. It is about the government business program for the week. It is such a shame that her time has expired.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The member for Ripon’s time has expired.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (13:18) — I am pleased to join the debate on the government business program, which of course I support. I am very pleased that with the four bills that are up for debate this week the Leader of the House has outlined an opportunity for the government to reaffirm its longstanding commitment to consider bills in detail, which has been put into practice on many occasions; unfortunately the manager of opposition business, the member for Box Hill, is unavailable today. We have certainly done that in regard to bills in the portfolio area that I have some responsibility for, with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in relation to keeping and banning livestock from our national parks. That was a bill that I recall we considered in detail as per the public commitments that we made at the last election to provide that opportunity for scrutiny from those in opposition.

I also want to pick up on a couple of other points that were raised by the member for Ripon in relation to the debates and discussions on the notice paper last week when we did have a discussion about federal government cuts to health budgets. Some \$2 billion has been cut out of Victoria’s budgets. The member for Ripon indicated that we debated and discussed matters that were of no consequence, of no matter and

were not important. I can say to the health services and hospitals in the Ivanhoe electorate — the Mercy Hospital for Women, the Austin Hospital, Warringal Private Hospital and indeed the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital — with thousands of employees and hundreds of thousands of patients over the course of a year that health cuts do matter. Health cuts are of substance. The fact that several Liberal Party members did speak on and contributed to that debate — I have not looked in great detail at some of their commentary — I think goes to the heart of the matter that they also are troubled by cuts outlined by the Turnbull Sydney-centric Liberal government.

I take issue with the claim that points raised and matters debated and discussed in this place by members across the chamber are somehow not relevant to people in my electorate of Ivanhoe. Very clearly they are. When you touch the Austin Hospital you touch everyone in the Ivanhoe electorate. Be very clear about that. If you do not back and support the Austin Hospital and the Mercy Hospital for Women in my electorate, you will hear about it from constituents in my electorate. If you do not support veterans and the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in my community, government will hear about it and so will every other member in this place. I was pleased to be provided with an opportunity to discuss those matters.

There were some other matters raised by the member for Ripon in relation to how the opposition stands ready to debate and discuss legislation. Well, the starter's gun went off in November 2010 when those opposite had the opportunity to govern and four years later they had still not moved off the starter's block. In fact they got such a petrified rock in terms of the former Premier, Mr Baillieu, that they actually took a few steps backwards when the starter's gun went off. The only thing they achieved under that former Premier was to make gold the mineral element of the Victorian state. That was one of their few achievements. I remember them doing that when we were up in the bush somewhere on one of our roving parliamentary sittings.

Can I say that we have seen nothing but action in the past few years by the Andrews Labor government. Those opposite squandered their opportunity. They talk about being ready to debate matters and being ready for action, yet they are somehow prepared to wait another week for the matters on the notice paper this week to be discussed and debated — that was the comment from the member for Ripon. We are not interested in any more waiting. The Victorian people are not interested in waiting. We are sick of waiting and we are sick of waiting for people to take some leadership and show

they are prepared to invest taxpayers funds in the services that Victorians need.

That is what we are seeing in my electorate of Ivanhoe. We have seen that in the duplication of the Hurstbridge line, we have seen that in the removal of boom gates, we have seen that again just today with the funding of speed and red-light cameras at two intersections on Rosanna Road, we have seen it with the curfew on Rosanna Road and we have seen it with the \$850 000 invested in safety improvements on Rosanna Road, which have been concluded.

Mr Watt interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member for Burwood will cease interjecting.

Mr CARBINES — It does not take very long to go through what was done on Rosanna Road by those opposite when they had four years in government. It does not take very long to cover off what was done by those opposite on the Hurstbridge line when they did nothing to invest in the \$395 million in improvements there. Just last week we had the Premier out reviewing the \$11.5 million that we have invested in my old school of Viewbank College. We have invested a million dollars for master planning at Banyule, \$6.28 million at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School, \$3 million at St Martin of Tours Primary School, \$2 million at Ivanhoe Primary School and the list goes on. We will continue to do that work. We have not wasted a moment and we are not going to waste a moment. We will get on with supporting the business program this week.

Mr T. SMITH (Kew) (13:23) — I rise to oppose the government business program and to support my colleagues the members for South Barwon and Ripon in their opposition to the Andrews Labor government's business program for the week beginning Tuesday, 6 March. The irony of the Leader of the House beginning her remarks by referring to International Women's Day and the Long Service Leave Bill 2017 given the revelations in the newspapers this morning with regard to the discriminatory provisions in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) just shows that this Labor government is internally riven by complexity, with people not knowing that this EBA is going to discriminate against women to the extent that it explicitly —

Ms Allan — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, on relevance. The member opposite has been speaking for fully 1 minute and he has not referred to the motion that is before the house.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms Allan — The irony that the member for Kew is talking about the treatment of women while behaving in this way is not lost on me at all, and it is not lost on many observers in this place.

An honourable member interjected.

Ms Allan — You are groaning. You think raising issues about standards and the way you treat women in this place is something to groan about. Deputy Speaker, I would urge you to bring the member for Kew back to the motion before the house. It is clear that he needs some guidance, and I would appreciate it if you would give it to him.

Mr T. SMITH — On the point of order, Deputy Speaker, I was referring to remarks made by the Leader of the House in her motion with regard to the Long Service Leave Bill 2017 and indeed International Women's Day. I was making the point that an EBA to be signed by her government on behalf of the MFB with the United Firefighters Union is discriminatory towards women as it explicitly prevents part-time work in any way, shape or form.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The member for Kew has made his point of order, but I ask the member for Kew to continue his contribution on the government business program.

Mr T. SMITH — On the point that the Leader of the House was making about International Women's Day, we want to see greater diversity in the fire services, and this MFB EBA will prevent that in any way, shape or form. It also provides for 196 days of leave —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Member for Kew, how is this relevant to the government business program? Is the EBA on the government business program?

Mr T. SMITH — I think, Deputy Speaker, there have been a number of wildly broad contributions by the members for Ivanhoe and indeed Broadmeadows this afternoon. I think that the standards set by the government on this motion would suggest that you are not being entirely consistent with your ruling, but I am happy to go to why we are opposing this — because of the rorting by the members for Tarneit and Melton — if you would like me to.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — I encourage the member for Kew to continue on the government business program.

Mr T. SMITH — We oppose the government's business program because we would like to see an inquiry by this Parliament into the rorting members for Tarneit and Melton, who have not been held to account for the almost \$200 000 of moneys that they essentially stole from the taxpayer for not living in their electorates — living down at the beach, living in a caravan at Ocean Grove and claiming \$170 000 for the privilege in the case of the member for Melton. We would like to see a privileges inquiry into these individuals. The government has said on a number of occasions that once the police have concluded their inquiry, which they have done, there would be an appropriate time for the Parliament to investigate these matters. The Presiding Officers have. There is certain evidence that was provided to the Parliament. There ought to be an inquiry by the Privileges Committee into the rorting members for Tarneit and Melton.

We saw today in question time just how close the member for Melton still is to the parliamentary Labor Party. There was a Dorothy Dixier question to the Minister for Education, which was just ridiculous. The Minister for Education should have just tabled his answer given that he had been provided the question in advance. Quite frankly Labor's collusion with the member for Melton is embarrassing for them. It is embarrassing for them in Melton. They are receiving widespread criticism in the western suburbs because none of their MPs that represent that part of Melbourne actually live there, and that is why we oppose the government business program.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 43

Allan, Ms	Knight, Ms
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	Scott, Mr
Garrett, Ms	Spence, Ms
Graley, Ms	Staikos, Mr
Green, Ms	Suleyman, Ms
Halfpenny, Ms	Thomas, Ms
Hennessy, Ms	Thomson, Ms
Howard, Mr	Ward, Ms
Hutchins, Ms	Williams, Ms
Kairouz, Ms	Wynne, Mr
Kilkenny, Ms	

Noes, 39

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

Motion agreed to.**MEMBERS STATEMENTS****Tasmanian state election**

Ms ASHER (Brighton) (13:35) — I would like to congratulate Will Hodgman, the Tasmanian Liberal Party leader, and the Liberal Party on their historic win in the Tasmanian election last Saturday. The party achieved an absolute majority for a second term of government, which is quite an exceptional achievement. There are a number of things I would like to note. I would like to particularly note that Will Hodgman was prepared to say something complimentary and gracious about the Tasmanian Labor leader in the dying days of the campaign. I think this is a welcome change from the slanging match modern politics has become. On the face of this result it appears that voters do not punish people who are gracious about their opponents.

The second observation I wish to make is that I think this is a reflection of the good economic management of the Liberal government in Tasmania, in particular the strength of the Tasmanian job market.

Another observation worthy of note is that, yes, of course the ALP did have an increase in its vote, but that was at the expense of the Greens. Given that Tasmania is the home of the Greens party — the birthplace of the Greens party — I think this is a particularly interesting development, which may or may not be repeated in November at the next election. Again, congratulations to Will Hodgman and all of those in the Tasmanian Liberal Party.

Avondale Heights Community Garden

Mr CARROLL (Niddrie) (13:36) — I rise to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of a group of enthusiastic local volunteers in Avondale Heights who established the Avondale Heights Community Garden in 2010. With a current membership of 50, the community garden is continuing to attract new members from the local community. The garden is about an acre in size and is one of 19 plots of land that were an integral part of the Walter Burley and Marion Mahony Griffin design of Avondale Heights and East Keilor. The garden caters for people who grow seasonal and organic vegies for their families as well as those who like to help out occasionally and participate in social activities. The garden is well run, following organic and sustainable principles which include an efficient compost system so that most green waste is returned to the garden. It includes a frog bog, some indigenous plants and an orchard with stone fruit and citrus trees.

On Sunday, 4 March, it was my honour to attend the community garden to unveil a beautiful mosaic made by grade 5 and 6 students at Avondale Primary School. I would like to congratulate all involved, especially the Avondale Heights schoolkids, as well as Rosemary McKenzie, Keilor East Rotary, Bendigo Bank East Keilor and Moonee Valley City Council.

Tony Favier

Mr CARROLL — I also wish to extend my congratulations to Tony Favier, who has retired after 18 years service at the Parliament of Victoria. Tony has given outstanding service to the people and Parliament of Victoria. I will miss Tony's cool, calm, level-headed support and advice. Lucky for me, as his local MP, I am sure I will see him around the community, especially in Aberfeldie, where he lives with his beautiful family. I wish Tony and his beautiful wife, Jo, all the very best for the future. You are going to be missed, Tony. You have given outstanding support to me and all members throughout this beautiful chamber of the Parliament of Victoria.

V/Line regional services

Mr T. BULL (Gippsland East) (13:38) — I was pleased to join with my colleagues earlier this week in announcing that, if elected, the Liberal-Nationals will replace all the long-haul carriages across Victoria, including those on the Bairnsdale line. With the amount of inquiries that my office receives regarding lack of air conditioning, unreliable services and limited seating in peak times, this is an announcement that has been very

well received by the people in the community. I note that in making some commentary on this the minister referred to the rollout of X'trapolis trains. These of course are not long-haul trains and do not come to Bairnsdale. It would be good if we could get some matching commitment from this government so that, regardless of what happens on 24 November, rural train travellers, including those in East Gippsland, get the quality of service that they deserve.

Omeo mountain bike park

Mr T. BULL — There has been strong interest in the Omeo community for a mountain bike park facility in the township of Omeo. I am aware that some discussions have taken place with the current government in relation to that. There is a strong belief in this, and in line with this belief I think it will benefit the local economy. It will really stimulate the local economy. I very much look forward to hopefully this being announced in the budgetary process.

Gippsland East electorate community events

Mr T. BULL — It was also a big weekend for community events in my electorate. We had the Paynesville Classic Boat Rally, the Bairnsdale Relay for Life, East Gippsland's Biggest Blokes barbecue, the East Gippsland Convoy for Kids and the Orbost Toy Run. They all raised a lot of money. Congratulations to all those volunteers who were involved in all those events.

West Gate tunnel project

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) (13:39) — The head of Transurban last month labelled the Liberal and Greens opposition to the West Gate tunnel 'cheap politics' in the *Age* newspaper. Today I will go further than that. The Liberals' opposition to this project is not just about cheap politics, it is more about dividing people into the haves and the have-nots.

Back in 2008 the Eddington report identified that major gaps in transport infrastructure reduced opportunities for jobs and business growth in Melbourne's west, which if not rectified threatened to result in a lockout of the west from economic development opportunities. In short, Mr Eddington identified a significant east-west divide in our city between the haves and the have-nots. But the Liberals could not care less about locking the west out. In fact they simply cannot and never will invest in the west. It is not in their DNA. Instead they have gifted us Bernie Finn in the Council.

As for the Greens, the party of spineless hypocrites, they would rather consign the people of Melbourne's inner west to more trucks and pollution. They would rather support an outcome that would redirect thousands of trucks off Francis Street and put them all on Whitehall and Hyde streets instead, which would do nothing to improve air quality or community amenity. In their opposition to this project, the Greens have revealed they are only committed to protesting and building databases from online petitions so they can milk people for political donations. It is a weak and gutless approach. Only Labor governments deliver for the people of Melbourne's west. We are getting it done.

Clean Up Australia Day

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (13:41) — Last Sunday I was pleased to again organise a local site for Clean Up Australia Day. For the ninth consecutive year our team cleaned up at the Lookout Trail Park in Vermont South. Once again it was very successful, resulting in lots of assorted rubbish being collected, including tyres, metal and various other unusual items such as a gas bottle and a large mirror. The area was again left in a pristine condition, ready to be enjoyed by all comers. Many local residents attended and worked hard during the morning to improve our local environment and make a real difference. My sincere thanks go to all the volunteers who came along and helped out in this most worthwhile exercise.

Forest Hill electorate Lions Clubs

Mr ANGUS — I recently had the pleasure of attending the changeover and 44th anniversary dinner of the Vermont Lions Club. It was a great night, and I congratulate the members on another successful year. The electorate of Forest Hill is also home to the Lions Club of South Vermont. I congratulate the members of both these clubs on the great work they do in our community and beyond. The regular fundraising and related activities undertaken by the club are a credit to all the members and supporters involved, and they certainly make a difference in the lives of those benefitting from the various projects taken on.

Chinese New Year

Mr ANGUS — I congratulate the Monash Chinese Events Organising Committee on organising another terrific Lunar New Year celebration at Glen Waverley recently. The annual Glen Waverley Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival is always a very spectacular event, and again there were very large crowds in attendance to watch the great entertainment. I congratulate the president, Vincent Chow, all the committee members

and the other volunteers involved in putting on this great celebration.

Metropolitan Fire Brigade enterprise bargaining agreement

Mr ANGUS — The revelations arising from media reports this morning and also raised in question time earlier today will be a shock to most Victorians. To hear that a trade union secretary has more power than the current puppet Premier is a disgraceful revelation. A report in today's *Herald Sun* states, and I quote:

All MFB policies, including bullying, harassment, equal opportunity, fraud and corruption, conflict of interest, whistleblower, and any new policies must be signed off by union. Includes all standard operating procedures, operational work instructions and directions from the chief officer —

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

Footscray City Primary School

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) (13:42) — Last year the two school captains at Footscray City Primary School, Darcy Conquest and Marlowe Wilson, wrote to me, telling me that they had acquired an Aboriginal flag from the federal member for Gellibrand, Tim Watts, MP, and needed a new flagpole to fly it from. They said they wanted to do this, and I quote:

To show our commitment to recognising and honouring the traditional owners of this land ...

I am so proud of these two students and this school that wanted to be able to fly the Australian flag with the Aboriginal flag. I wrote to the Minister for Education seeking a flagpole. I also had the opportunity to speak to the minister in this place and was guaranteed that we would be able to get a flagpole for Footscray City Primary School.

I am pleased to say that a couple of weeks ago, with the school community and a great attendance of parents, grandparents and friends of the children and staff at the school, we raised that Aboriginal flag together with the Australian flag. We see that flag flying proudly after what was a wonderful ceremony at the school. I want to congratulate those school captains, Darcy and Marlowe, for the way in which they approached the need to get that flagpole. They have demonstrated that if you want something and you go about it in the right way, you will succeed. It is a great outcome for the school and a great outcome for the community.

Country Fire Authority Hillcrest brigade

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (13:44) — A simple art competition by Hillcrest Country Fire Authority (CFA) has provided an unexpected boost for pet safety during bushfires and emergency situations, with the launch of the brigade's pet grab bag at Woori Yallock Primary School last week. The brigade were keen to actively engage with children in their fire messaging and did so by establishing an art competition with Woori Yallock, Launching Place and Don Valley primary schools.

Big congratulations go to Ashlyn Hermansen, a former student of Woori Yallock Primary School and now a year 7 student at Upper Yarra Secondary College, whose design features on the bag. Ashlyn's message was 'Prepare, relocate, save your pet's fate'. Ashlyn had clearly done a lot of thinking as her design included a dog, a cat and a horse as well as items that you would need to pack if you were evacuating, such as food, water, a lead, a bowl and medical supplies. On the other side of the bag is a space for the pet's name and a tick box to cover the essentials to pack in case of fire or emergency.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Member for Eildon, no props in the house.

Ms McLEISH — The brigade also gave a bag to the prep students, most of whom had pets, to encourage them to have a discussion at home about fire safety. Having kids think about fire safety is one thing, but going home and having a discussion with the family about what they would do in an emergency situation is much more powerful.

I applaud this great initiative by the Hillcrest CFA and thank their captain, Fiona Burns, community safety officer Andrew Smith and the dedicated volunteers who do so much to keep their community safe. I look forward to a wide rollout of the bags in coming weeks and months.

Yuroke electorate fire brigades

Ms SPENCE (Yuroke) (13:45) — I rise today to inform the house of a wonderful spectacle I had the pleasure of observing on Saturday night. Like so many in my community I watched the 2018 Craigieburn Country Fire Authority (CFA) torchlight procession with much pride. Each year, as part of the Craigieburn Festival, our wonderful men and women in the emergency services proudly march in this procession. It is truly wonderful to see so many members of the community line the streets and cheer the parade on.

The community of Craigieburn is very fortunate to be served by the trifecta of volunteer emergency services: the Craigieburn CFA, the Craigieburn State Emergency Service and the Craigieburn community emergency response team. Of course, these agencies work collegially with their career colleagues, including the career firefighters at the CFA and the wonderful Ambulance Victoria paramedics. Indeed it was great to see the career members marching side by side with their volunteer colleagues. All of the emergency services in Craigieburn provide exemplary service and are models for the rest of Victoria.

I should also note how proud I was to see my other Yuroke brigades represented, with Kalkallo and Greenvale in attendance. They are wonderful brigades, whose service is extremely valued. A special mention to the junior brigades who also participated in this year's march: the Craigieburn CFA juniors and the Kalkallo CFA juniors. It was great to see the next generation of firefighters represented. Well done to all involved in organising this wonderful march. Your service is outstanding. The torchlight parade topped off a terrific festival. Well done to Hume City Council.

International Women's Day

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (13:47) — This week, on 8 March, International Women's Day will be celebrated across Victorian communities, and I would like to acknowledge the work and contributions of so many amazing women within the Morwell electorate.

For example, the Latrobe Women in Business (LWB) network provides an opportunity for women who are involved in business to be supported and inspired by their peers. The LWB network has hosted some terrific events over the years, and many of its members are not only part of successful local businesses but also exceptional leaders within our community. One great example is the CEO of Work Solutions Gippsland, Donna Faulkner. Work Solutions Gippsland was recently awarded an extension of their disability employment contract, which is terrific news for many in the Gippsland community. Work Solutions Gippsland has been an exceptional locally owned and grown company, which creates employment opportunities for people living with a disability, injury or health condition. Congratulations to Donna and all her team, and to the LWB network for their wonderful support of local women.

Alan Wilson Insurance Brokers

Mr NORTHE — Lastly, I say a big well done to Alan Wilson from Alan Wilson Insurance Brokers

which last week moved into fantastic new premises in Traralgon. In recent years our community has endured major fires, floods and storms, and the work Alan and his staff have done to assist people with insurance advice and support during their personal times of trauma is quite outstanding. Alan and his wife, Debbie, have not only owned and operated this successful business but they have also been an extraordinary contributor to our local community.

Wallara Australia, Dandenong

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (13:48) — Yesterday I had the great pleasure of officially opening Wallara Australia's Potter Street learning centre in Dandenong. Wallara is an impressive community-based disability support organisation doing innovative and important work to support adults with a disability in our community. I am always eager to see the new and different ways Wallara is engaging our local community in equipping people with a disability with the skills they need to lead active and productive lives. I was excited to visit Wallara's new learning centre and see the broad range of programs on offer there. From life skills and cooking to gym and swim classes, dance classes, media classes and a range of other things, the educational, vocational, social and recreational programs at Wallara facilitate opportunities for local adults with a disability to achieve their potential in all aspects of their lives, including workplace and training opportunities.

The learning centre is a light, bright and vibrant place, and in addition to the great learning opportunities, it also provides a relaxing social environment for its clients. I was fortunate to chat to a few of Wallara's clients during the visit, including Wallara ambassadors Richard, James and Sarah, who all spoke very eloquently about what Wallara means to them. It was a delight to see how engaged clients were in the education services being offered and the passion and enthusiasm with which Wallara staff delivered those classes.

I would like to thank Wallara's CEO, Phil Hayes-Brown, and the staff and clients of Wallara for their hospitality during my visit and particularly for the delicious treats prepared by Wallara's cooking group and the wonderful service and cup of tea from Potter Coffee.

King Valley fire

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (13:50) — I want to put on record my sincere thanks to the Country Fire Authority (CFA) firefighters from Ovens Valley and the surrounding areas who contributed to fighting the out-of-control fire which started on Boggy Creek

Road last week. The King Valley, as many of you know, is fertile farming land with prime winegrowing and beef and dairy production. The recent fire burned for in excess of five days and required constant attention and ongoing supervision. It is so comforting to know that our men and women in the CFA and our other emergency services are ready and willing to protect our families and our assets. I called in to offer my support to the Moyhu CFA station, where volunteers from Bobinawarra, Carboor, Whitfield and many, many other country communities had gathered before the next assault on the fire. Thanks to all of our volunteers.

Whitfield community briefing

Mr McCURDY — I attended the community briefing at Whitfield on Thursday, which was well-attended. The Rural City of Wangaratta should be commended for their involvement during this emergency.

North-east rail line

Mr McCURDY — The Nationals have committed to new trains for the north-east Victorian line — \$633 million for the full long-haul regional train commitment — and we will see our tired old trains upgraded at last. The Minister for Public Transport, who continues to duck and weave on new trains, again wants to blame the federal government but still will not tell us when the new trains can be expected to be rolled out. The truth is Labor thinks regional Victoria stops at Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat. It is time for the Premier for Melbourne and the Minister for Public Transport to stop blaming everyone else and match our commitment for new long-haul trains.

Valley Park redevelopment

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (13:51) — I was delighted to open the next stage of the \$160 million investment in 21st century lifestyles for families in Broadmeadows. The landmark Valley Park redevelopment is the culmination of a commitment across Victorian Labor governments to change the face of housing and aged care and the aspirations of communities. The redevelopment is a result of collaboration between government and residential developers Frasers and Bapcare, whose mission is 'Partnering for fullness of life with people of all ages, cultures, beliefs and circumstances'. This project delivers life-changing opportunities. There are more than 200 new private homes for sale, 110 new homes for social housing, a new 90-bed supported aged-care centre, 34 independent units for older residents,

improved community facilities and new bike and pedestrian paths in landscaped parks which feature kangaroos in the back paddock.

The Brookview supported aged-care centre in Westmeadows delivers unique attributes for people to 'age in place'. The derelict Mews estate has been transformed to help meet demand for social and affordable housing through a mix of contemporary townhouses and units designed for all stages of life, adding to the Bracks, Brumby and Andrews Labor governments' commitment to help vulnerable Victorians.

Federal infrastructure funding

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (13:52) — This statement condemns the Andrews government for sitting on \$3 billion of federal government infrastructure funding destined for vital Victorian projects. For three long years under Labor \$500 million of federal funding for the Monash Freeway has sat unused. The federal government upgrades are sorely needed for improved capacity on the Monash from the EastLink interchange towards the Melbourne CBD and east of Clyde Road. Rowville electorate commuters spend many frustrated hours in traffic commuting to the city on the Monash Freeway. In the meantime the Premier has signed billion-dollar contracts with Transurban, forcing years of tolls onto Monash-CityLink commuters for a road in western Melbourne while these same drivers are denied upgrades they have already paid for and are forced to sit on congested second-rate roads.

The Premier continues to throw hand grenades at Prime Minister Turnbull over infrastructure funding for Victoria, demanding \$4.5 billion for metro rail. This is just more of the Labor blame game, as the state Labor government has not yet submitted a long-awaited business case to Infrastructure Australia for these upgrades. The Premier appears to be stalling until he can make an election eve announcement and score points in a few marginal seats. Victorians are tired of the cynical blame game that the Premier is playing with Victorian infrastructure.

Mordialloc Sporting Club

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (13:54) — Recently we started a community petition to stop the development and sell-off of the Mordialloc Sporting Club. The result from our local community has been extraordinary. Thousands of local residents have signed petitions and called for the old Mordialloc hotel to be protected to save live music in our community and our local heritage of more than 160 years.

Sadly, the board of the sporting club is still refusing to tell our community exactly what is going on. The least our community expects is transparency about what they will do with the site. To date they have failed to acknowledge the \$100 million apartment development they were planning. Suddenly last week the Mordialloc Sporting Club board withdrew the development application, preferring to wait a few months for the community to settle down after trying to develop land that they do not even own at the moment. Sadly, we all know that this is not the end of the matter. Our community is not buying this deferral of their development plans. You do not spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on lawyers and planning consultants to walk away from a more than \$100 million development site.

So today, on behalf of my local residents and community, in the Victorian Parliament I call on the board of the Mordialloc Sporting Club to pledge never to support the development of the Mordialloc Sporting Club site. We call on them to host a public meeting of the more than 10 000 social members and tens of thousands of local residents and wonderful sporting clubs who want to know what is going on, why this site is being sold off and how it will affect them. As the Dalai Lama once said, 'A lack of transparency results in distrust and a deep sense of insecurity'.

School chaplaincy

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (13:55) — The school chaplaincy program in Victorian government schools has been extremely successful. It has been funded through the National School Chaplaincy program or supported with funding from school resources or community initiatives.

I received a letter from Drouin West Primary School recently expressing their concerns regarding the future of the program. Ongoing funding of this program is currently being discussed at a federal level. As Kerry Ware, the principal of Drouin West Primary School, explained in her letter, the positive impact of having a chaplain at Drouin West for students, families and staff is immeasurable. The chaplain provides support to individuals who would otherwise not access community services for a range of reasons. It is our most vulnerable who seek and accept the support, guidance and care of the chaplain.

It is extremely important that the federal government commit to continue this funding for another four years to give schools funding certainty. I also believe it is paramount that the Andrews government provide funding in its coming May budget to support those

schools that are not successful in gaining access to the national scheme. Politics must be put aside on this issue and the welfare of our children and families living with disadvantage and disruption must be given top priority. As politicians we owe it to our children to ensure the hardworking teachers and staff in our education system are given all the tools and support required so that every child gets the best possible start in life. As Kerry Ware has put it, this low-cost support to our schools is a highly valued investment for the future.

Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (13:57) — On the weekend I was delighted to attend the official opening of the Essendon Maribyrnong Park Ladies Cricket Club pavilion and Lisa Gale social room. There are many people who deserve to be congratulated for ensuring that this project went from a dream to reality. One person who warrants special attention is a former City of Moonee Valley councillor, Jan Chantry, who was a tireless and effective advocate for the project from the very beginning. I am so pleased and delighted that the women of Essendon will have a 21st century pavilion in order to play cricket.

St Monica's Primary School, Moonee Ponds

Mr PEARSON — Last week I was delighted to visit St Monica's Primary School in Moonee Ponds with the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I was greeted by the principal, Peter Moore, out the front. He advised me that he was there to ensure the kiss-and-drop-off zone was properly managed so the children could safely access the grounds, which I think speaks to Peter's values. The minister and I met with the grade 5 and 6 students who displayed their knowledge and insights into sustainability and protecting our environment. It was a fantastic forum, and I would especially like to thank Sienna, Lauren, Eloise and Madeline for showing the minister and me around the school. St Monica's is a wonderful local school with a dynamic and resilient school community. We are all the better for having leaders like Peter Moore and schools like St Monica's in our community.

Strathmore Heights Cricket Club

Mr PEARSON — On Sunday there was a charity T20 match at Strathmore Heights Cricket Club to raise funds for the La Rose orphans. These four girls lost their mother recently in a car accident after having lost their father 10 years ago. I was really pleased that Strathmore Heights Cricket Club hosted the match to raise badly needed funds for Marina, 20; Olivia, 14;

Nadia, 12; and Alex, 10. I was also delighted to be presented with the opportunity to attend the event and make a donation as well.

Cathy Connop

Mr PEARSON — Acting Speaker, International Women's Day is on Thursday. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the great work and contribution that Cathy Connop from the Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre has provided in my community over the last 20 years. She is an outstanding local champion.

Ashwood School

Mr WATT (Burwood) (13:58) — I was honoured to present student leadership badges at Ashwood School last Monday. I was also present at the speeches for the election of those school captains, and the quality of the speeches from all eight contenders was exceptional. I wish to congratulate the 2018 school captains — Nell, Chelsea, Daniel and Oliver. I am sure you will be great representatives of the school.

Markham Avenue, Ashburton, redevelopment

Mr WATT — A few weeks ago in this place I told the Minister for Planning that my residents would take to the streets but it would not be to dance. Well, this came to fruition on 3 March. Since the revocation motion in November the government has introduced a new planning scheme amendment, but it has not consulted with local residents or the Boroondara City Council even though it is required to under the Development Victoria Act 2003. Residents of Ashburton are concerned about the overdevelopment of the Markham housing estate and the diminution of public housing. They are particularly concerned that the government is just not listening. The government's media release today just proves that fact. I want to assure my residents that I and other members of the Liberal Party are listening and will continue to stand with them to make sure their voices are heard.

Clean Up Australia Day

Mr WATT — Thanks to all those who helped out with Clean Up Australia Day. I particularly want to thank David and members of the Encounter Baptist Church and Deborah and members of the Ashburton Baptist Church for organising events at Holmesglen Reserve and the Ashburton train station respectively.

Lions Awareness Day

Mr WATT — Saturday, 3 March, was Lions Awareness Day. As president of the Lions Club of the Parliament of Victoria, I wish to thank all Lions club members for all of the good work they do in our community.

Rosanna Road safety initiatives

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (14:00) — Speed and red-light cameras will be installed at two busy intersections along Rosanna Road in Rosanna to target dangerous drivers and improve safety. The sites at Banyule Road and Darebin Street were selected following a strong campaign from the local community, which I was pleased to work with to achieve this result. Cameras will make Rosanna Road safer for the community, especially for students, teachers and parents at the nearby Banyule and Heidelberg primary schools. Families using the local Goodstart early learning childcare centre in Heidelberg will also benefit from traffic safety cameras at the pedestrian lights at Darebin Street and Rosanna Road.

A tender is being developed and will be completed in the coming months, with the installation, testing and activation of the cameras to follow. The two sites were endorsed by the fixed camera site selection committee, which is made up of Victoria Police, VicRoads and the Department of Justice and Regulation, and I made a submission to the committee late last year.

Rosanna Road carries up to 50 000 vehicles a day, including 3600 heavy vehicles daily. I would like to thank the local community and the members of the Resolve Rosanna Road committee for working with me to submit a strong case to the fixed camera site selection committee calling for speed and red-light cameras on Rosanna Road. The Andrews government listened and acted. As a Rosanna resident and a parent who has used the Goodstart childcare centre, I know the risks locals take every day when they cross Rosanna Road on foot or drive and battle the trucks and congestion on Rosanna Road. Traffic safety cameras will make Rosanna Road safer for locals and have a positive influence on driver behaviour.

The Andrews government has introduced a truck curfew on Rosanna Road, invested \$850 000 in road safety upgrades on Rosanna Road, is tackling congestion by removing boom gates at Lower Plenty Road, Rosanna, is duplicating the rail line between Heidelberg and Rosanna, and — this is the big one — is building the north-east link.

Polwarth electorate

Mr RIORDAN (Polwarth) (14:01) — I wish to put on the parliamentary record recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data that has identified Colac in the heart of the Polwarth electorate as the most self-sufficient city in Australia. In my maiden speech I put on the record the history of enterprise, hard work and initiative that has dominated the mindset of people in Polwarth. This recent finding now officially acknowledges that nowhere else in Australia are more people employed in private enterprise and through entrepreneurship. Colac, and Polwarth generally, relies less on government departments and government employment and stimulus than any other region. This is a cause for great celebration, and it is indeed a badge of honour that all business owners, farmers, workers and staff across the Polwarth region should be very proud of. This well-kept secret is no more, and large privately and family-owned businesses which employ thousands of people in Polwarth continue to motor on. Food, fibre and grain production lead the way, closely followed by many fantastic services as well as logistics businesses, which provide strong employment opportunities. With Australia's lowest unemployment rates, why wouldn't you want to live, work and invest in Polwarth?

Matt and Rachel Hinkley

Mr RIORDAN — Not only has the high degree of self-sufficiency in Polwarth been recognised, but Polwarth farmers Matt and Rachel Hinkley have been recognised as Australia's best farmers. The Weekly Times Coles 2017 Farmer of the Year was awarded recently to this amazing Derrinallum farming couple for their progressive, scientific and business-oriented approach to farming. I had the great pleasure of a tour of the Hinkley farm late last year, where I stood in a canola crop more than 6 feet high. The Hinkleys have highlighted the opportunities for success that can be found by our next generation of farm operators if they are prepared to invest and work wisely.

Djerriwarrh Health Services

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) (14:03) — Last Thursday I was pleased to visit Djerriwarrh Health Services in Bacchus Marsh to announce the \$468 000 upgrade of the central sterile stock department at this important local hospital. This funding will improve processing, storage and distribution of sterile goods throughout patient care areas. This upgrade will occur alongside a major \$9 million rebuild of the operating theatre suites at Djerriwarrh, which was also committed to by the Andrews government. On top of this, a further \$1.6 million refurbishment and expansion of the

maternity unit will improve access, care and comfort for mothers and babies after birth. The Andrews Labor government's \$200 million Regional Health Infrastructure Fund is rebuilding rural and regional health services to ensure people can access safe, quality health care closer to home.

Buninyong electorate roads

Mr HOWARD — Yesterday I again visited Bacchus Marsh to turn the first sod on the \$2.4 million upgrade of the Gisborne Road and Holts Lane interchange. Over 5000 vehicles per day use this intersection, and these works will provide extra lanes to increase capacity, including a dedicated lane to enable traffic to access the Western Freeway. These works add to the Halletts Way upgrade, which is progressing well, adding new ramps to allow drivers to enter and exit the Western Freeway to provide quicker access to and from Melbourne. With Bacchus Marsh's population expected to more than double by 2041, the Andrews Labor government is continuing to invest in this area.

Broadmeadows electorate revitalisation

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (14:05) — I call on the Australian government to back a smart suburbs deal for Broadmeadows —

Mr Wells — On a point of order, Acting Speaker, you were not in the chair at the time, but I want some clarity around the lack of consistency of some rulings from the chair. During question time today the Minister for Industry and Employment had a prop, which the Speaker determined was appropriate because it was at waist height. However, when the member for Eildon had a prop at waist height the Deputy Speaker said that it was inappropriate and that she had to put the prop down. I am wondering if you could refer this issue back to the Speaker so that we can have some clarity for the next time it comes up.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Thomson) — I thank the member for Rowville. I will certainly refer this issue back to the Speaker for clarity. We are all aware that props are not appropriate in the chamber, and I will leave it to the Speaker to report back.

ELECTRICITY SAFETY AMENDMENT (ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT SAFETY SCHEME) BILL 2018

Second reading

Debate resumed from 7 February; motion of Ms D'AMBROSIO (Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change).

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (14:07) — I rise to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. Can I say at the outset that the opposition will not be opposing this bill. I also want to put on the record my thanks to the minister's office and the department, which gave us a very comprehensive briefing about this bill and ensured that we were up to speed on its intent.

It would be fair to say at the outset that this is a piece of work that has not happened in the last 5 minutes. It is the result of work that has been generated over a fair period of time. It is my understanding that this safety scheme has been in development for around 10 years in various jurisdictions. I note the work that many have been doing to ensure that we get harmonisation around electrical safety requirements in this state but also other jurisdictions in Australia and also New Zealand.

Although the scheme has been in development for 10 years in various jurisdictions, this bill is where we have arrived at in relation to the harmonisation of the various schemes that currently exist and have operated independently. It would be fair to say that there are a number of independent schemes and that there is a lot of duplication of those schemes and ultimately a lot of additional red tape and cost. The intention, as I understand it, is to reduce the red tape and costs for industry — for suppliers and manufacturers — and hopefully pass those savings on to consumers. We on this side of the house support any opportunity to reduce costs and ensure that we have less red tape and smaller governments, where this is possible, while obviously ensuring protection for consumers and that they ultimately benefit. That is why we are not opposing this bill that is before the house today.

I do note that one jurisdiction, New South Wales, is not participating in this scheme. It is unfortunate that jurisdiction is sitting outside of this scheme, and I hope to see New South Wales come on board and also take up its obligations of sharing some of the costs and other burdens that are associated with these schemes going forward.

The bill will amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to implement the electrical equipment safety scheme, which is a harmonised scheme for participating jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand that will ensure that consistent safety requirements are in place for the regulation of in-scope electrical equipment. Some of the details of this bill include that it will replace current separate jurisdictional schemes, as I mentioned earlier, that operate independently and also ensure that there is less confusion around the regulatory burden.

Also in this particular scheme are the actual different types of associated risk. Currently there are two types of risk that apply to those who supply equipment or manufacture electrical equipment. There have been two different types — high risk and low risk. What this bill looks to doing is putting in a third category, which is — surprise, surprise — a medium risk that will then allow further classification, obligation and cost. It will be up to each of those suppliers and manufacturers to ensure they meet those categories and then apply for the various categories on the single database. That will be introduced, and I will talk about the categories a little bit later.

The bill will require manufacturers and importers of in-scope electrical equipment, known as responsible suppliers, to register themselves. There is an obligation to actually register not in level 1, which is a low-risk category, but in level 2 and level 3 to ensure they are on the central database. The new registration requirement will enable industries to register themselves and their equipment once in a single database for the purposes of each participating jurisdiction, replacing the duplication of registrations in multiple databases. The bill also introduces a new requirement for responsible suppliers and on-sellers of in-scope electrical equipment to ensure that the equipment they offer or supply carries an approved regulatory compliance mark. What we are talking about here — again, rather than having a whole range of different marks that sit on the equipment itself, which is very confusing particularly to consumers to understand whether some equipment is compliant or not — is one mark under this particular legislation. One single mark will act as the compliance mark and will therefore hopefully make it easier for consumers to make sure that their product meets the regulation criteria.

The bill will introduce new and amended offences in the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to incentivise compliance with the new obligations. The penalty for one of these offences will be a maximum of 60 penalty units or approximately \$9500 for individuals, and up to 240 penalty units or approximately \$38 000 for

companies. The bill will increase the powers of Energy Safe Victoria (ESV), including an ability to issue infringement notices in relation to the new offences and the continuation of power to issue prohibition notices. Energy Safe Victoria will have the power to cancel registration, to refuse, to vary, to suspend and to cancel certificates subject to the right and review of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

Here we have Energy Safe Victoria, which is putting the scheme into place. One of the elements of this scheme is obviously there is a cost in putting this scheme together. There is a database they are putting together. There is a website, there is marketing and promotion of the whole scheme, and there is also obviously compliance. Currently Energy Safe Victoria collect fees for registration and have been doing so for a number of years. In 2016–17, 54 per cent of Energy Safe Victoria's income came from levies, which was consistent with previous years. Overall the levy this year was 4.7 per cent higher than in 2015–16 — that is almost 5 per cent, a bit more money there to be able to potentially look at marketing and getting the scheme up to speed. Overall the income was 2.9 per cent higher than in 2015 and 3.5 per cent better than the budget.

There are no other significant changes affecting the ESV; we have got \$36.4 million worth of income in Energy Safe Victoria and expenses are \$34.751 million. There is a net surplus of \$1.5 million in the 2016–17 budget. Part of their work with that \$36 million is to administer and run this scheme. I do note that part of their operating expenses has PR and advertising at \$2 million. It is just a question more than anything in terms of the rollout and the marketing of the scheme — whether that comes into that expense and how it will be managed — because we are talking about quite a major piece of work here. You are talking literally about a huge amount of suppliers and manufacturers that all need to comply. You have got a whole lot of retailers that need to understand this. There are obvious obligations to the retailers as well when they are selling these products. When you have got all of this activity going on, Energy Safe Victoria and the government need to make sure that they are able to inform those of the risk and certainly of the penalties that apply if they do not adhere to this new scheme.

The bill will include transitional arrangements, which are part of this, so that certificates that are in place at the commencement of the bill will remain valid for five years and will complement equipment that is in stock that may be supplied or offered six months from the bill's commencement date. Here we are talking about how there might be a small retailer who has a number of toasters and electrical appliances. On top of

that, they could have a product that will take time for them to sell and then ensure they be compliant once that stock turns over.

Just flagging some of the concerns, the scheme has been in development for 10 years and the fact that New South Wales has not come on board, as I said at the outset, is a little bit of a concern. Certainly the department discussed this in the briefing, and I raised this point with them. I understand that it is very difficult to oblige another jurisdiction to take something up, but I would hope that there would be a continued effort made to bring them on board or to at least understand what some of the issues are and ensure that those issues are taken into account.

There is also the costing associated with maintaining and operating the scheme. Those costs are paid by suppliers. However, given this scheme has been driven primarily by Victoria and Queensland, we want to ensure that Victoria will not face additional costs if other jurisdictions are slow to join the scheme and ultimately do not. We do not want to pick up the pieces here. We think that there should be an opportunity for others to take up their fair share. We have no problem with Victoria taking the lead on these kinds of things, but ultimately everyone should be paying their fair share of the costs.

One last point that I will raise comes back to the core of what I said at the very outset, which is that when it comes to any of these types of schemes, we as members of the Liberals and The Nationals are very, very concerned about any additional costs that get passed on to consumers. I understand it is taken up from existing levies, but the last thing we would want to see are the costs of equipment being passed on to consumers, particularly vulnerable people when they need some of this equipment. We are talking about basic things like toasters, refrigerators, heaters and air conditioners — basic equipment that is purchased.

This particularly comes at a time where the cost of living continues to rise under the current government. On many, many occasions we have made the point that affordability will be our focus going into the election. It has been our focus all along and will continue to be so. When we talk about this — electrical equipment, ultimately run by electricity — we want to make sure electricity is affordable and reliable. It is all very well to have safe equipment, but if you cannot run your air conditioners and your heaters because you cannot afford to pay for them, that becomes an issue that needs to be addressed, and sadly it is not under the Andrews Labor government.

I just wanted to pick up on a few elements, particularly with regard to the categories. There is now a new category, which is level 2, medium risk. The kinds of things that we are talking about in the level 3 category — and I again thank the department for providing me with this information — are high risk, including arc welding machines and, ironically, clothes dryers. Even a bread toaster can fit into category 3. You have got industrial equipment, and then you have also got the kinds of things like, as I said, toasters along with hedge clippers, kitchen machinery, lawn-care appliances and liquid heating appliances. They are all level 3. Then you have got things like floor polishers or scrubbers and flexible heating pads, which now move into level 2.

Items have all been categorised according to their level of risk: microwave ovens, level 3; projectors, level 2; power supply chargers, level 3; sewing machines, level 2; and therapeutic lamps and television receivers, level 2. Some television receivers are level 3, so I suppose it depends on the type of appliance, its complexity and its safety as to what category it fits into. The provision of that additional category allows those machines that do not pose a threat to safety to be categorised in a lower category.

In terms of the number of registrations — this is what I was talking about before — what is currently known by ESV about electrical equipment is that at level 3 you have got 15 354 different types of registration. At level 2 you have got 77, and at level 1 you have got 38 595. That is a total of 54 026 different types of appliances and equipment that we are talking about. That is huge, and it comes back to the point I made earlier that there is a fair bit of work that needs to be done in educating the market that is currently on one scheme about a new scheme and making sure it is compliant. I would again point out that hopefully that is all covered in the costs and there are no additional costs as part of the scheme.

In terms of searching the register, the register lists all equipment registered by the responsible supplier. It allows searches to be conducted by consumers and retailers. These searches do not require a login. They will be searchable by equipment type, responsible supplier, name or trading name and responsible supplier number, if that is known. The idea is that you jump into the database to check to ensure that there is compliance.

So far there have obviously been costs incurred in developing this scheme up to this point. ESV has incurred an estimated \$420 000 to date to develop, operate and maintain the register. Initial estimates are that the register requires \$60 000 to \$115 000 to operate,

recovered from fees for registering equipment on it. That comes to the point that I mentioned earlier. We have been given this information from the department, so we would expect that out of the total operating revenue of \$36 million or thereabouts we are talking in the vicinity of — let us call it at the top end — \$115 000 to operate the register, which is not a lot of money when you are talking about the kind of revenue that it always brings in. Again I just hope that that is not on the light side, because that is barely a wage.

This is a pretty complex system, and when you are whacking in \$115 000 to operate a scheme of this magnitude, I just hope that this is not underdone. I would hate for it to go back and ultimately for consumers to be out of pocket because we have not got enough money built into the scheme. That may be covered, and I know the wages for ESV represent a large component of the total revenue. My understanding is that the wages are about \$19 million out of the \$36 million. Maybe some of the wages will be deployed to run the program, but I do not have clarification on that.

I will mention the regulatory compliance mark. It is really important to get that right and for people to understand what that mark is, how to read it and all that kind of thing. When I saw some examples of that in my briefing I was a little bit unsure in terms of the clarity of that mark and the understanding of that mark. It may come through education or modification, but I just flag that as being one of the things to be looking at. New South Wales also has an approved number which will be required to be marked on products. Again, with the New South Wales scheme being different, you have effectively got two marks that need to be deployed.

On that note I have said enough on this particular bill. Energy and electricity safety is of paramount importance in everything we do. We need to get it right. We need to make sure that consumers are protected in all particular elements when it comes to this and everything we do in this place. That is why we will not be opposing this particular bill. There are a number of issues that we are certainly able to take up, and we look forward to seeing how the government proposes to implement this scheme going forward.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (14:26) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. I take on board what the member for Caulfield said about this being a long time in coming. I think that when we look at government regulation, traditionally states tend to go it alone, and we have done that periodically throughout our nation's

history. If you are looking for evidence of that, look no further than the different rail gauges that were deployed in colonial times across the different state jurisdictions.

This bill is very important because it enables harmonisation to occur. I think having harmonisation across different jurisdictions is indeed a very welcome initiative. I note that the member for Caulfield did indicate in his contribution that New South Wales is not participating at this point in time. I am not sure of their thoughts or their reasoning around that, but you would hope that, given in a per capita sense they have got around about a third of Australia's population, they would see sense in joining a national scheme so that you have got that national level of consistency.

I note that it is proposed that this scheme will create a single database. I think that if we can look at having a single national database that is ultimately deployed, this is going to be something that I think could be quite valuable to the state. I think it could play an important role. With the database, it is proposed that it is going to:

... enable regulators to more readily identify both suppliers of faulty or unsafe electrical equipment, and to trace and remove hazardous equipment from the market in a more timely manner.

I am quoting from the second-reading speech. What would it be worth to a company or a business if there was a capacity for a database to identify faults at the earliest opportunity? What would be the monetary value of that? I think that could be quite a significant value.

I think that when you look at the rollout of big data and data analytics, when you look at the number of devices which will now be registered and you look at their raw number, if this database can be developed, then it might actually be quite valuable to the private sector. For example, if I am an importer of toasters from China, for argument's sake, the database information has been logged and very quickly I find out that there is a problem with a batch or there is a problem with my supplier, I can be on top of that and I can respond quickly. That will clearly be of value to me. That would have a monetary value, as opposed to me being oblivious to a faulty supplier and potentially finding myself facing the judiciary because equipment I have imported is broken or defective and has resulted in injury or death.

When you start to think and you start to appreciate that data to the 21st century will be the equivalent of what oil was to the 19th century and when you start seeing the public sector looking at embracing this sort of new technology to look at developing databases and at trying to capture that material, then I think that could be

monetised. If you can monetise the value of an asset and you can therefore create a licensing fee or a fee-for-service operation, then I think you could reduce the cost of the operation of that scheme.

We might not be there yet. That may take some time because you will need to try to test the database and you will need to make sure that the format is appropriate. There is not much point having a database where the information that is captured is in a PDF and cannot be interrogated, nor would you want to have a situation where the data is only in an Excel format. I understand that CSV is the most appropriate format for data interrogation for high-end data analytics. I think if we are going to start looking at creating the groundwork so that we can create these assets, that could be quite important.

The reality is that the State Electricity Commission of Victoria was established in the first place because there was market failure that existed at that time in the 1920s — that is, you could have reliable and secure electricity throughout densely populated areas like metropolitan Melbourne but you could not have it in regional areas of Victoria. That led Sir John Monash to look at intervening and creating a statewide scheme that would therefore ensure that all of Victoria benefited from having electricity. That was a physical asset that was built up, that was managed and that was run. There is a question mark as to whether it was run entirely efficiently and effectively at times over the course of 70-odd years, but nevertheless it was run and operated. Then that asset was ultimately harvested by the former Kennett government and the proceeds of that investment were realised by the state of Victoria.

In the same way we were creating physical assets in the 20th century, we should be thinking about creating digital assets in the 21st century, and we should be creating a regulatory regime to be in place now that will foster, encourage and enable those assets to be developed. Again, you would not think that maybe a database that is registering toasters would be valuable, but I suspect that when you look at the volume of devices which are going to be registered and recorded, if you look at the wide areas they are going to be sourced from and if you will have problems and you will identify issues, then that in itself is of value. That will create a monetary value that can be realised, so I think that with a bill like this we will start to see the opportunities for that to occur.

I note the member for Caulfield in his contribution talked about his concerns about the cost of regulation. I probably would point out to the member for Caulfield that we too on this side of the house do not want to see

a burdensome cost of regulation on consumers. We do not believe in having a heavy-handed approach to regulation. We believe on this side of the house that you have an appropriate balance between protecting the rights of consumers to have access to safe devices and making sure that it is also cost-effective as well.

The other point I would make to the member for Caulfield is that in his contribution he waxed and waned a bit. On the one hand he was worried about the cost burden of this new scheme, but then on the other hand he was worrying about whether the funding allocated would be sufficient to do the job. What I would probably just point out to the member for Caulfield is that when you are looking at the large volume of devices, when you are looking at the large volume of equipment, when you are looking at the size of the scheme, I think the cost impost on consumers would be relatively minor. I think that when you look at deploying a scheme like this across Victoria, if there is any increase to consumers, I would imagine it would be marginal. What do I mean by that? Maybe it might be 5 cents extra for a toaster perhaps. I think when you are looking at a scheme like this and you compare and contrast it with the alternative of not doing something — so we just continue to go it alone and we continue to have an outdated, antiquated regulatory regime — then I think what we are looking at here is a much better alternative.

The bill before the house sets up an appropriate balance of having appropriate penalties in place for non-compliance. You do need to ensure that there are sufficient penalties when you are creating a new regulatory regime for people who wilfully try to rort the system or do not care about the customers or do not really worry about the impact that their decisions will have on consumers, particularly from the point of safety and security. I think it is entirely appropriate that you have a regulatory regime in place. I note that in relation to the penalty units you are looking at 60 penalty units for an individual up to 240 penalty units for companies, which equates to \$9500 and \$38 000 respectively.

We must try wherever we can to have those harmonised regulatory regimes and to try to find ways in which we can put modern, responsive and effective regulatory regimes in place that protect consumers. But we also need to have an eye to the future. As I said, there is a wonderful opportunity before all of us as legislators to think in the way in which those who have gone before us thought — to think about ways in which we can have the state intervene where there is demonstrated market failure and intervene in such a way that we can potentially create something that will be of value to future Victorians.

A bill like this takes time to come together. I appreciate the comments made by the member for Caulfield in acknowledging the comprehensive briefing that he received from the minister's office and the department. I think it is a very good thing when there is that ability for all members to develop an appreciation for the way in which legislation like this is crafted, particularly when you are looking at consumer safety and the physical safety of those who use these devices. This is a really important initiative and I am delighted that again there is an opportunity for the government to create these new 21st century digital assets which can potentially be of enormous value to the state of Victoria.

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (14:36) — I rise to make a contribution to the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. I had thought I would be following the Greens, but it appears that this is another piece of legislation that they are choosing not to speak on.

Mr Pearson — Who would have thought?

Ms McLEISH — 'Who would have thought?', says the member for Essendon.

When we think about electrical safety, it is something that we can take for granted. We all have a large number of electrical appliances in our house. Those appliances can be simple — in the bathroom they can be hairdryers or shavers. They can be what we steam clean the floors with. They are our televisions and video players. There is a whole raft of things that we have in the house and also in business. Businesses rely extensively on electrical appliances. Small businesses will often just go and purchase from one of the local suppliers in the town or the suburb where they are. Obviously much larger organisations and government departments and businesses would have more formal procurement policies in place.

Regardless, we all rely extensively on electrical products, and I think it is important that we have the right safeguards and systems and processes in place to ensure our safety. More and more these products are becoming disposable, so they are not something that you will have for 20 years: you throw them out and get a new one. With that constant turnover of appliances, I think it is important that the registration systems that are in place are robust and in instances where things need to be recalled — we have product recalls happen probably more frequently than we would like — we have got a system that can very quickly and easily identify where the products are, who they have gone to and who is distributing them. I think that that is a good system. What we have here before us in this bill is a

consistent scheme, a harmonised scheme for participating jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand. In essence that means that all of the states and New Zealand are on board.

However, interestingly, New South Wales is choosing not to be part of this. I think we should have a completely national scheme because appliances do not stop at a border. You will travel and you might be carrying a hairdryer or a shaver or something with you, or you might have a business that is based on one of the border towns — Albury-Wodonga, for instance — and you would have different requirements on either side of the border when really you are just right there. If you are in New South Wales, you might want to pop in and buy something in Victoria because they have the better deals at the time or you may not, but I think it is a shame that New South Wales is in this instance electing not to be part of this jurisdiction.

Each of these jurisdictions has had systems in place and they have had databases in place — some work well, some do not work so well. I think it is important that we are building a platform that brings everybody to the same page, and this platform should be more robust.

We have a two-tiered system at the moment. We have high-risk, or ‘prescribed’, electrical equipment and ‘non-prescribed’ equipment which is low risk. This bill is going to introduce another category in the middle of those: the medium risk category. Level 3 will continue to be high risk, level 2 will be medium and level 1 is low risk. The member for Caulfield did outline a number of the appliances that would be in the level 3 category, for example. These are things we have at home such as microwaves, clothes dryers and toasters. Toasters do bring with them quite a degree of risk — it is very easy for somebody to stick a knife in and find themselves with quite an electric shock.

In industry welding machines are an example of high risk. Something a little bit less risky would be floor polishers, scrubbers or sewing machines — you cannot imagine that when you get out a sewing machine it is going to be an enormous risk. There are some 54 000-plus different types of equipment and appliances that are covered in this situation.

This registration scheme will enable the industry parties to register themselves and their equipment in one single database for each of the participating jurisdictions, replacing the duplicative processes that were there — you would do it in Victoria, you would do it in New South Wales and you would do it in Queensland. A lot of the suppliers and sellers have businesses in multiple

jurisdictions, often in both Australia and New Zealand but certainly in most states.

The incentive to get people to do this is via penalty. This bill has the requirement that ‘responsible suppliers’ and on-sellers of ‘in-scope electrical equipment’ are responsible for making sure that the products they offer or supply carry the approved regulatory compliance mark. As I understand it, that regulatory compliance mark is embedded into a plastic component of the appliance, most likely the part of the power cord that you plug into the wall. The offences for non-compliance are 60 penalty units, which is about \$9500 for individuals, and 240 penalty units, which is a little bit more substantial, at about \$38 000, for companies.

These sorts of systems are quite good and ease the burden of compliance. There will be a single register, which is searchable, where you can go and check for compliance by different mechanisms, so there will be one scheme nationally, other than in New South Wales. But while we are improving the system on the one hand, there remains the current situation where people are not going to be able to afford to run all their appliances due to the cost of their power bills. I urge the government to have a good hard look at what is happening in the electricity industry to determine ways they can bring the costs down, because more and more households and businesses are struggling. In fact I have raised in this house previously during question time the situation of the Black Spur Inn. The cost of running the inn, with all the things they are required to do to put on three meals a day and provide accommodation seven days a week is hefty. Granted, it will be easier for them to check their compliance, but the cost of operating their systems and keeping their business afloat is very high.

I also want to comment on the need for the government to continue to look at ways we can improve electrical safety. I draw the house’s attention to an incident that occurred almost two years ago in which a 21-year-old woman in my electorate was electrocuted in the laundry of her rental property. They are not quite sure exactly what happened or why she was electrocuted, but she was thrown backwards, turned purple immediately, had to be flown to the Alfred and was fighting for her life. She suffered quite a lot of memory loss at the time and it is possible that she still has some gaps in her memory, although she has recovered well — she has done well to make such a good recovery. She is the mother of two small children. Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) has still not been able to pinpoint, as far as I know, why this young lady was electrocuted. So while this bill, on the one hand, is looking at improving the electrical safety scheme and the regulatory burden faced by suppliers of

electrical goods, I think there is more work that ESV can do to make our lives even safer.

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (14:45) — It is my pleasure to rise in support of the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. As we have heard, this bill will amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 and the Energy Safety Victoria Act 2005 to improve safety outcomes for Victorian users of household electrical equipment. In my lifetime the consumer world has changed quite significantly, and the world of household electrical equipment is one that I have been a bit closer to than, perhaps, many in this place. The reason for that is that my father is an electronics technician and supported his family, which is obviously my family as well, with his four children with a business that repaired household electrical items, mainly TVs, VCRs when they existed, DVD players, sound systems, video cameras and similar types of equipment. Of course, this was in the days when people actually bothered to have these things repaired and when it was financially viable to do so.

As my father often reminds me, we have now become a throwaway society, and as a consequence of that, his industry — the repair industry — is largely dead, sadly. But another consequence of this trend is that we now have a proliferation of products and suppliers in the marketplace of a range of different electrical products, many of them imported, and we cannot always be assured of the quality of these products and sometimes, sadly, their safety. It is too often that we open newspapers to read stories about the harm done by unsafe products or the need for product recalls.

One example of this, which I think highlights why this bill is so important, was an incident involving an inflatable spa which took place in late 2013. I will run through this story because I think it highlights a number of challenges which the bill before us today seeks to address. The user of the spa in question received an electric shock when she was standing on the ground and touched the spa water when she was stepping into the pool. Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) identified a failure of insulation between a live part of the heating element and its metallic enclosure, which essentially caused an electrification of the water, which is obviously extremely dangerous. In that instance, the retailer that was identified was a large chain from which this particular spa had been purchased, but the ESV and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) received more complaints of electric shocks from units sold by a number of other suppliers. At the time, the ESV was not aware of other importers who may have brought the spas into the country.

The certificate holder for the product was based overseas and did not have a registered entity in Australia, and only provided limited information about their clients in Australia, which meant that regulators here had to spend a significant amount of time trying to identify other importers and distributors. Meanwhile this product was still posing a serious risk to consumers. It ultimately took ESV and the ACCC until the end of 2014, keeping in mind that the original incident occurred in late 2013, to locate the nine importers of the spas. This example demonstrates why this bill is so very important.

As we have learned, the bill before us today implements the Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme, which is a national scheme that creates consistency across jurisdictions in the regulation of electrical equipment safety. The bill involves the adoption of a national electrical equipment safety scheme register, first in Victoria and Queensland, with other states to follow in the months and years ahead. As it currently stands, and as my example earlier demonstrated, it is slow and difficult for regulators to identify all the locations where an unsafe product is being supplied as there are numerous certification databases that must be searched in order to do so. There is also significant inconsistency in the type of information recorded in the many databases. This clearly has very serious consequences for our ability to keep consumers safe. A central register will go a significant way to addressing this and to reducing the time taken to address this.

Under the new scheme, manufacturers and importers of relevant household electrical equipment will be required to register. The register will essentially enable regulators, including ESV, to more easily trace suppliers and equipment across jurisdictions and to recall unsafe products from the market. The register will also be searchable by consumers, which will help them to make better informed decisions about the equipment they are purchasing or using, or the equipment they are using if they have concerns about it. There will be three risk categories within the system which matches compliance obligations with the safety risk posed by an equipment type.

As we have heard, currently there are two risk categories for equipment under the Electricity Safety Act: high risk 'prescribed equipment', which includes things like washing machines, refrigerators and portable power tools, and 'non-prescribed equipment', which is considered to be lower risk and includes flat-screen TVs and light fittings. A third category will be introduced so there are essentially low, medium and high risk categories. In addition to these we are proposing that in-scope electrical equipment carry the

regulatory compliance mark (RCM), which will become the sole safety approval mark for industry and consumers. This mark is a sign to consumers that a product complies with safety standards and in this way creates comfort and confidence in our marketplace.

In total, this new scheme will cover over 54 000 items, which is obviously a hugely significant number. As you might expect, penalties will apply if the scheme is not adhered to. This will also involve the creation of some new offences that are designed to incentivise compliance and enable Energy Safe Victoria to enforce the new obligations that are outlined in the legislation. The offences will be connected to things like supplying or offering to supply unregistered in-scope electrical equipment and failing to register as a responsible supplier. They will relate to the supply or on-selling of in-scope electrical equipment which does not carry the RCM, falsely marking in-scope electrical equipment with the RCM, the supply or hiring of in-scope equipment which is not safe or is non-compliant with prescribed requirements, and failing to supply the ESV upon request, with relevant documentary evidence for in-scope electrical equipment. The bill also expands the powers of Energy Safe Victoria to allow it to undertake additional regulatory activities.

As you can see, the scheme put forward through this bill is one that greatly strengthens our regulatory environment compared to what it is today, and there are a lot of benefits that stem from this. I have already touched on the benefits to consumers of the new scheme. Obviously all of us would like to ensure our household equipment is safe, and this provides an easy way of getting that certainty. Having a nationally consistent approach is also hugely beneficial for Australian manufacturers, and of course it is also beneficial to retailers, who will now only have to check a single website to ensure that their product is safe. I do not think you can underestimate the benefits of that and the time saved by only having one location to look at and also the certainty that gives both retailers, in knowing that they are selling a product which is safe for their consumers, and obviously also consumers.

It makes life easier for regulators, who will now be able to share information quickly to protect Victorians from dangerous equipment. Hopefully it will mean that we do not have the situation arise that I described earlier with the spa example, where it took 12 months or more to identify avenues of supply for an unsafe item. That obviously means there is a significant period of time where members of the public are in danger. For anybody in this place who may have had the great misfortune of being electrocuted, and sadly I am one of those —

Mr Pearson interjected.

Ms WILLIAMS — Yes — the member for Essendon gasps — it is a deeply unpleasant experience. Thankfully my incident was not as serious as it may have been, and thankfully there was somebody else there to detach me from the equipment that I was fused to. It was a hedge trimmer that electrocuted me, another household appliance. It had water in the sockets, so when I went to plug it in, my hands were gripped to the plug and could not be removed, and nor was I able to speak to tell my then partner that I was in trouble. He was busy in another part of the garden but happened to turn around at the right time, grabbed a pole and promptly whacked the plugs out of my hands. I was very, very fortunate, although some short-term damage was caused by the incident — nothing long-term thankfully. It is a reminder to us all that these things can happen and happen easily. This is why I commend the bill to the house.

Mr CRISP (Mildura) (14:55) — I rise to make a contribution on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to implement the electrical equipment safety scheme, a harmonised scheme for particular jurisdictions in Australia and New Zealand which will ensure that consistent safety requirements are in place for relevant in-scope electrical equipment.

I guess this comes about because in many ways Australia and New Zealand are probably viewed by the world as very much a similar or single market, and this does make quite a deal of sense. The bill will replace the separate jurisdictional schemes which have operated independently of one another in relation to electrical equipment, leading to confusion and a considerable additional regulatory burden.

Victoria currently has a two-tiered system divided between high-risk or prescribed electrical equipment and low-risk or non-prescribed equipment. The bill will introduce a third risk category and relabel the existing categories as level 1, being low risk; level 2, medium risk; and level 3, high risk. Manufacturers and importers of in-scope electrical equipment in Australia or New Zealand, known as responsible suppliers, will be required to register themselves and the level 2 and level 3 in-scope equipment they supply to Victoria on a central database.

A common database makes very good sense. Databases cost money to run, they cost money to maintain and they cost money to keep secure, so in this particular case a common database across as many states as

possible in Australia and New Zealand makes very good sense. The new registration requirement will enable industry to register themselves and their equipment once in a single database for the purposes of participating in the jurisdiction and replacing all those other databases that are around the country.

There will also be a requirement for responsible suppliers and on-sellers of in-scope equipment to ensure the equipment they offer carries the appropriately regulated compliance mark. This is yet another mark that Australians will need to get used to. In the citrus industry I had a lot of experience in trying to find suitable marks for people to easily identify where the food was coming from. This I think is a little bit simpler.

The bill also allows Energy Safe Victoria to cancel registrations and vary or suspend certificates subject to a right of review at VCAT. The bill includes transitional arrangements so that certificates that are in place at the commencement of the bill will remain valid for five years and compliant equipment that is in stock may be supplied or offered for supply for a six-month period from the bill's commencement date.

It is a fairly extensive bill and will bring about something that I am sure everybody will agree is a commonsense approach. It is probably the ultimate cross-border exercise for us, except for the fact that it appears New South Wales at this stage is not going to participate. That is of some concern when you have got cross-border communities like mine in Mildura. Hopefully this will not add too much to the burden of the cross-border commissioner, who will be taking his or her place in the not-too-distant future, and will not result in them having to resolve any sudden complications with the cross-border issues.

A number of other things will also come about here, particularly concerning the common database, minus New South Wales, and the regulatory equipment, but I guess we probably have to look at how much life has changed and how dependent we are on electricity, how dependent we are on the appliances that fill our homes and fill our workplaces. I think we all know that if there is a power failure and our computers go down, our offices as MPs very quickly grind to a halt. Similarly in our homes, from a handful of appliances that we may have grown up with to cupboards full of them now in this age, it tells us just how dependent we are on our gadgets or widgets but also how dependent we are on electricity.

Something, too, I think people are now beginning to realise is just how important energy is in their life and

how much of their life revolves around a reliable energy source. The cost and availability of energy is very much on everybody's mind. I do not think we can talk about all the marvellous appliances that make our lives so much easier without acknowledging that the availability and cost of energy is becoming a concern. None of us want to give up those things that make life easier for us, but we also are very aware that they do cost money, and increasing amounts of money, to run.

There is concern in my area about this issue. We are at the end of the line. Many of my constituents are at the end of very long lines and they do worry about the loss of power through either mechanical failure of the system or increasingly about the rolling blackouts as a method of managing our energy system. There is work being done on dispersed generation. That is certainly something that can help. There is an abundant solar resource in the north of Victoria and there are a number of solar projects that are at last starting to get underway.

There has been some debate recently about the siting of solar projects. It has a number of constraints. The site for a solar power station needs local government approval, it needs a grid connection and it needs the finance to actually build it. The local government approval process is something that some people are now expressing concern about — that is, just where they are sited. Local government will no doubt deal with that. Grid connection is becoming a far more important aspect of our alternate energy supplies. The energy grid is constrained. The grid that supplies Mildura — particularly through two 220 000 volt lines, one running via Horsham and one running via Kerang to Mildura — is designed to deliver enough energy for Mildura and some of the surrounding areas. But with a population of only 50 000 to 60 000 and perhaps a maximum of 80 000 people being serviced out of those lines, they do not have an enormous amount of capacity. As we try and build an alternate energy grid, the capacity of the grid to move the power from where the sun shines or the wind blows back to where all the consumers are is a considerable challenge. One of the issues is that we are approaching the capacity of the 220 000 volt lines — for those who do not know, they are the ones with the towers that run around our state. I have recently written to AusNet Services to ask them just what is the capacity of the line, particularly the capacity of that line that remains, to be part of our energy security.

There are issues around energy and supplying all those wonderful, convenient appliances that people have to make their lives easier, but there is also an issue of making sure that when you flick the switch they actually work. Something that is becoming even more

important with these appliances that are becoming even more sophisticated is that they do not perform if the system has drifted out of spec. By that I mean that the grid is under some pressure and the frequency or the voltage is varying. This can damage appliances. Many appliances are not as robust as they were a generation or two ago, 50 or more years ago, when the power supply was less stable. A humorous example is that a number of expensive dishwashers west of Ouyen all cut out when they had a brownout, which was a voltage shock and a frequency drop. The electricians had to head out and actually restart those professionally. Again, it is about maintaining a fit-for-purpose grid so that people can operate their particular appliances and keep them fit for purpose and not have them damaged or wear out prematurely — or even perhaps become dangerous if they are damaged by an energy system under stress and pressure. The Nationals in coalition are not opposing this legislation. But we do have those greater concerns that when you plug it in and switch it on that it will actually work.

Ms HALFPENNY (Thomastown) (15:05) — I rise to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. As previous speakers have mentioned, this bill makes important amendments to the Electricity Safety Act 1998 as well as to the Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005. We know that the market for electrical equipment has come a long way. It is very different and changing all the time. We have lots of different gadgets and various pieces of equipment coming into the market. There is also a big change in the places where electrical equipment is manufactured. Unfortunately long gone are the days when Australia made a lot of electrical equipment. Most of it is imported and there is even change in the places that are manufacturing electrical equipment and where we import it from. In some cases the equipment is manufactured in places that have a very short history in this area and therefore may not have such well-established standards and regulatory frameworks to ensure that electrical equipment is safe and doing what it is supposed to do. We all know that it is absolutely vital that electrical equipment is not faulty. We know that it can create all sorts of fires. House fires have been caused by faulty electrical equipment and of course things like electric shocks and so on are also threats. We want to make sure that consumers are safe and that they are not put in a position where goods are faulty and they are harmed or hurt by them.

This is legislation that is, of course, well due. It is due now because of the changes in where goods are coming from and the need for a good, strong regulatory system. As we know, when there are incidents and things

happen, often the information about the faulty equipment, shonky suppliers or whatever is not passed on from one jurisdiction to another. That is the case not necessarily intentionally, but because there is not the system in place to allow for information for both consumers and regulators to ensure that electrical equipment is properly and thoroughly checked and tested, and is of a good standard.

One important part of the amendments being made is to ensure that manufacturers and suppliers are all required to register their equipment in a national database so that we do not have segments, sections or different databases that collate information about various things in different places that not everyone has access to or that make it difficult to get full and thorough information. It is good for both the consumer and the regulatory bodies to ensure that they are monitoring equipment and making sure that there is not a threat to the public. The amendments are also very timely because there has been quite an increase in the number of electrical equipment recalls as a result of that equipment being faulty. There has also been a drop in the standards of imported items, so of course it is good to see that legislation is coming in now to protect the consumer from faulty equipment.

The first thing this bill does is, as I have mentioned, implement a national electrical equipment safety scheme database in Victoria — that is, one that compiles information from across the country. This is a huge step in leading the way to better management and regulation of the industry as well as improving the safety of household electrical equipment. I note, and the previous speaker mentioned, that New South Wales are not signing up to this scheme. However, they are agreeing that they will recognise and accept the ratings and the regulations within the scheme, so at least there will still be some sort of uniformity.

There will also be new requirements for suppliers and manufacturers of household appliances and electrical equipment. One requirement is that in-scope electrical equipment has to be registered with the new electrical equipment safety scheme (EESS) database, as well as the responsible suppliers. Of course the in-scope electrical equipment refers to more of the lesser voltage equipment that is used for personal and household use.

Currently manufacturers and importers register across multiple databases, as I have said, but of course having a single central database is much better to ensure full knowledge of equipment and understanding of what is going on with particular suppliers and particular equipment. This will also help regulators such as Energy Safe Victoria to trace suppliers and the

equipment supplied in a much more efficient manner, so it is a much easier and quicker way to, for example, get faulty equipment off the market if it is not safe, because there is one database. Regulatory bodies will be able to track where that faulty equipment is coming from and where it is stocked, ensure that it is out of circulation and protect the community.

The EESS database will be an excellent tool for regulators to share information and will help Australian manufacturers achieve better standards by having to comply with their obligations as well. Now Victorian families have access to an easy-to-use database to look at the information on the product they are buying, and this will also be the case for retailers who want to quickly check that their product is safe. Again, this is giving much more thorough and comprehensive information to both the consumer and also the regulatory bodies.

In addition to providing a central resource for consumers to check information on their electrical purchases online, the bill will also allow consumers to ensure compliance with safety standards of electrical equipment by proposing that electrical equipment under the levels 2 and 3 in-scope categories be marked with the regulatory compliance mark, again giving good information to the consumer. This requirement complements the expanded three-tier system, which will see the relabelling of the categories of electrical equipment. This system will also ensure that safety risks and obligations match electrical equipment types. That means that stricter standards will apply for medium and high-risk in-scope electrical equipment, and it will also improve product compliance.

The Electricity Safety Act 1998 identifies two risk categories for electrical equipment. This is a simple and consistent scheme that works perfectly with other energy schemes that the government has introduced in the past. Our current electrical safety legislation, of course, needs to be improved to maintain public and consumer safety, to allow proper regulation and also to be able to source where faulty equipment is coming from.

Of course when you have a new regulatory regime, not only is it about improving the information that is provided to consumers in government, but you also need tougher offences to encourage compliance, because of course compliance is one of those things where, if people or suppliers or manufacturers do not think they need to comply, then perhaps they cut corners where they should not. So it is very important to have strong offences to encourage compliance, and this is being done also through incentives to be developed.

There will be a creation of offences that will enable Energy Safe Victoria to use new and increased authority to undertake regulatory activities and enforce new obligations for manufacturers. There will be amendments to the act to give regulators more power to protect Victorians. And there will be new offences regarding the supplying or selling of unsafe equipment, not complying with requests made by Energy Safe Victoria for documentary evidence and not registering as a reliable seller. Again, it is amazing how important it is to provide proper evidence and documentation when it comes to sourcing products, whether they be electrical or otherwise. This of course means that there will be more compulsion on suppliers and manufacturers to comply with that legislation.

This bill is necessary as it will align our electrical equipment safety law with other states, and it will lead to, we hope, a signing of the intergovernmental agreement for the electrical equipment safety system. The aim of the national system is to set out consistent requirements for electrical equipment while enforcing the importance of compliance with these obligations. Over 54 000 electrical items will be covered by this bill. Of course this means, with this legislation and many of the other pieces of legislation, protecting the consumer. Whether it is consumer law or whether it is electrical goods, the state Labor government is making sure that we do whatever we possibly can to ensure it is safe to live in Victoria and that consumers are protected.

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (15:15) — I am delighted to rise and make a contribution on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. As you have heard from some of the previous speakers, the purpose of the bill is to amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to implement the electrical equipment safety scheme, which is for participating jurisdictions throughout Australia and New Zealand. It will ensure that consistent safety requirements are in place for relevant and certainly in-scope electrical equipment. As you have heard from other speakers, that safety issue is a major issue, and we all need to be on the same page when it comes to safety in this area.

The bill will replace current separate jurisdictional schemes which have operated independently of one another in relation to the same electrical equipment, leading to confusion and additional regulatory burdens. As we know, Victoria currently has a two-tiered system, a combination of high-risk, or prescribed, electrical equipment and low-risk, or non-prescribed, electrical equipment. This bill will introduce a third, medium-risk category and will relabel the existing categories as level 1, being low risk, level 2, being

medium risk, and level 3, being high risk. I think that is fairly self-explanatory.

The new registration requirement will enable the industry to register themselves and their equipment once in a single database for the purposes of each participating jurisdiction, replacing duplication of registrations in those multiple databases. The bill will also introduce a new requirement for responsible suppliers and on-sellers of in-scope electrical equipment to ensure that the equipment they offer or supply carries the approved compliance mark.

The bill will introduce new and amended offences in the Electricity Safety Act 1998 to incentivise compliance with the new obligation. The penalty fee for individuals is 60 penalty units, which is just shy of \$10 000 — up around \$9500 — and up to \$38 000 for companies. The bill will increase the powers of Energy Safe Victoria, including giving it an ability to issue infringement notices in relation to the new offences and the continuation of its power to issue prohibition notices.

Energy Safe Victoria will also have the power to cancel registrations and refuse, suspend or cancel certificates, subject to a right of review at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, VCAT. The bill includes transitional arrangements so that certificates that are in place at the commencement of the bill will remain valid for five years, and compliant equipment that is in stock may be supplied or offered for supply for six months from the bill's commencement date.

As we are talking about an electrical safety amendment scheme, I certainly want to highlight a situation in the Wangaratta District Specialist School, which is currently waiting for government support due to unsafe power and switchboards. This is now an ongoing safety concern for the special school, which reached its capacity two years ago and is still waiting to get those switchboards effectively fixed. Chris Harvison and all the teachers and students at the Wangaratta special school want to ensure that this safety issue is addressed, because the cost is only around \$15 000 or \$20 000. I am certainly concerned that this has not been treated as a high priority because it is a safety issue.

As I say, because we are talking about safety with the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill, it is important that I raise that. It is important that these safety concerns get addressed. This building was built in 1986 and certainly needs urgent attention. Better still, it has certainly outgrown where it currently is and its current capacity. It started out with nine students and now it is up to 162, which is well above its capacity. That is just my two bobs worth from

a local perspective on electrical safety. I certainly hope that gets addressed very shortly.

One of the concerns around this legislation is that the Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme has been in development for about 10 years now in various jurisdictions. New South Wales have expressed that they have no interest in participating in the scheme. Why that would happen, I am unclear, but as a member who lives in a border electorate we are often burdened by cross-border issues and we need all the cross-border cooperation that we can get. With Victoria and Queensland participating or primarily driving the scheme, we want to ensure that Victoria will not face additional costs if other jurisdictions are slow to join this scheme. Hence, with New South Wales not being involved, it could be a costly exercise for us, so we need to be mindful of that.

I am also aware that there have been wideranging consultations, including with Energy Safe Victoria, CitiPower and Powercor, and United Energy, as well as with the Energy Users Association of Australia, the Consumer Electronics Suppliers Association and AusNet Services. We placed on record that these communities also stand to benefit from this legislation. It is certainly different in jurisdictional safety labels, and they are simplified into one. It is uniform, it is easy to understand and it is helping to eliminate confusion and enhance electrical safety awareness and understanding. With those few comments, I will leave my comments there.

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (15:21) — This bill aims to provide greater safety. It wants to deliver a single central national register to enable regulators to more readily trace suppliers and in-scope electrical equipment across participating jurisdictions and remove equipment from the market to minimise harm to consumers. It will also reduce the burden of duplication for industry, which must currently register with multiple databases. It will make the system safer, it will make it more efficient and it will be in the public interest. To do this the bill will realign the requirements for demonstrating product compliance to the expanded three-tier system of risk categories to better match regulatory obligations and the compliance burden with the safety risk posed.

It is worth noting in context that the proposed amendments are consistent with the government's general policies on maintaining public and consumer safety. The proposed amendments will make Victoria's electrical equipment safety laws consistent with the other jurisdictions that will sign the intergovernmental agreement for the electrical equipment safety system.

Such a system aims to promote public safety by setting uniform electrical equipment requirements and developing a culture of compliance. That is the critical proposition — to develop this culture of compliance.

This repeats themes that we see as legislators: you need to have scrutiny, accountability and then compliance. Other jurisdictions that are expected to sign the agreement include New Zealand, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. I just want to reference a previous speaker from a border electorate, who made the argument, and I guess the ongoing complaint, about how communities within Victoria could be affected by the cross-jurisdictional nature of such things, so we hope that New South Wales eventually signs up as well.

The amendments will improve efficiencies for energy safety regulators, consistent with the government's principles of continuous improvement in regulatory practice. That is the proposition as it is framed in its overview. To add to the context politically, it fits within the Victorian government's commitment to an energy system that is clean, affordable and reliable. This is the ninth piece of legislation brought to this Parliament to reform our energy system in three years. Clearly there has been a need for change, a need to modernise and a need for the compliance regime to be continuously improved.

The Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill is necessary due to the profusion of types and standards of electrical equipment and appliances we are seeing every day in our homes. This is part of the problem — the plethora of different types of equipment and the profusion of standards of electrical equipment and appliances — and that is why a national electrical equipment safety scheme register will be adopted. That will be first in Victoria and Queensland, with more states coming on board in the months and years ahead.

Relevant household electrical equipment and the manufacturers and importers of this equipment will be required to register on this database, so that is how we will try to get the accountability and compliance improved. You have got to be on the database, and the single register will enable regulators including Energy Safe Victoria to more readily trace these suppliers and equipment across jurisdictions and where necessary recall unsafe products from the market. So that is the proposition, and just by setting this up this should have an impact on the quality controls. It will also reduce the burden on industry, and of the information being duplicated, because at the moment there have

to be multiple databases where registration has to be delivered.

The proposed three-tier system of risk categories will enable safety-related compliance obligations to better match the safety risk posed by an equipment type. The context of this is that our current safety regime needs improvement. At the moment there are two risk categories for equipment in the Electricity Safety Act 1998. One is high-risk prescribed equipment such as washing machines, refrigerators and portable power tools. The other is non-prescribed equipment, which is of lower risk, such as flat screen televisions and light fittings. Added to that, in-scope electrical equipment is proposed to carry the regulatory compliance mark — the RCM. This will become the sole safety approval mark for industry and consumers, so this should make it easily acknowledged and accessible for consumers to know that the equipment they are buying is safe. The mark will provide comfort to consumers that the product complies with the safety standards, and the whole proposition is to make it simple, to make it consistent and to provide compliance through penalties for its misuse.

On this, new offences will be introduced to try to encourage compliance and to enable the Victorian energy safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria, to enforce the new obligations. These include offences connected to supplying or offering to supply unregistered in-scope electrical equipment; failing to register it as a responsible supplier; the supply or onselling of in-scope electrical equipment that does not carry the RCM; falsely marking in-scope electrical equipment; the supply or hiring of in-scope equipment which is not safe or is not compliant with the prescribed requirements; and failing to supply Energy Safe Victoria, upon request, with relevant documentary evidence for in-scope electrical equipment. I just wanted to spell out the detail there of the key points of scrutiny.

The bill will also provide new and expanded powers to Energy Safe Victoria to strengthen its ability to undertake regulatory activities in relation to electrical equipment safety, so there is broad scope in this legislation. It covers more than 54 000 items from the toaster on the kitchen bench to the drill in the shed. The onus is on those who supply the equipment to ensure it is safe and registered, so this is to the benefit of families and individuals. They will now have simple and easy-to-check information on what they buy, as well as access to the database to check it for themselves, so that gives the transparency. This is helpful to Australian manufacturers as well, particularly those who meet their obligations, as they will now have a simple and

consistent standard with which they and their competitors must comply. This is also beneficial to our regulators, which can now share information quickly to protect Victorians and this is also beneficial for retailers, which will only need to check a single website to ensure their product is safe.

This is good legislation designed to improve the situation for customers in Victoria. What we need to do is make sure this bill represents an important step in ongoing protection and ensure that our regulations are fit for purpose. What the Andrews Labor government is hoping is that the rest of Australia will follow in this to maximise the compliance regime and to give uniformity, to give certainty and to give greater protection in the public interest. I recommend the bill to the house.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (15:30) — As always it is a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak on such a great bill. First, I would like to congratulate the minister and the minister's staff on all the hard work they have put into this bill. It is comprehensive and something that is going to make our state better, and of course it is the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018.

Our government is proud of its commitment to reform. I think we have proved that over the last few years. Our commitment to getting a fair deal for Victorians is out there to be seen by everyone, and our commitment to an energy system that is clean, affordable and reliable is second to none. Essentially it is our commitment to getting things done.

This is the ninth piece of legislation in three years that we have brought into this Parliament to reform our energy system. We have had the Energy Legislation Amendment (Consumer Protection) Act 2015, the Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Amendment (Saving Energy, Growing Jobs) Act 2015, the National Electricity (Victoria) Amendment Act 2015, the Energy Legislation Amendment (Publication of Retail Offers) Act 2015, the National Electricity (Victoria) Further Amendment Act 2016, the Electricity Safety Amendment (Bushfire Mitigation Civil Penalties Scheme) Act 2017 and the Energy Legislation Amendment (Feed-in Tariffs and Improving Safety and Markets) Act 2017, and these have all been well received by the Victorian public.

It has taken a lot of work to address the neglect of the opposition as the former government, and there is a lot more to do, and we know that. Energy prices at the moment remain too high, and the companies that we have spoken to have made some concessions in that

regard, but those who sold our energy assets — those members opposite — refused to invest in new generation or new technology, and because of the policy chaos in Canberra under the Turnbull government at the moment we see no investment at all. That is not how it is in Victoria. We have legislated targets, and we are building the energy system of the future with beautiful wind turbines. They are a fantastic thing to see, and we love seeing them in Victoria because they provide clean energy and will be providing cheap energy as well.

This legislation addresses the neglect of the former government again by proposing a standardised and practical approach to electrical safety in the home across Victoria. The Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill will amend the Electricity Safety Act 1998 and the Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005 to improve safety outcomes for Victorian users of household electrical equipment. This is necessary due to the provision of types and standards of electrical equipment and appliances we are seeing every day in our homes. A national electrical equipment safety scheme register will be adopted first in Victoria and Queensland, with more states coming on board in the months and years ahead.

There are lots of relevant household electrical items and equipment that the manufacturers and importers of this equipment will be required to register on a database, and the single register will allow operators, and regulators, including Energy Safe Victoria, to more readily trace supplies and equipment across jurisdictions, track down what is going on and recall unsafe products from the market. I recall in the mid-90s, and many people in the house, I assume, would recall this as well, the large range of incidents involving Mistral fans. At the time they were causing many, many house fires, and when I was stationed at Frankston there were four or five house fires I think that were attributed to Mistral fans, and they were almost famous for that. This bill looks to make sure that things like that do not happen again — that where there is a trend towards a particular product causing fires, whether that be through misuse or a deficient product, these items can be recalled quickly and this can save lives as well.

This bill also reduces the duplicative burden for industry, which must register on multiple databases currently. So we are making sure that, although this bill makes things safer, it is cutting some red tape as well. This is sensible, it is necessary and it is good reform.

As I just mentioned, having been a firefighter, I have been to many, many fires caused by electrical

appliances. Sometimes it is not due to the appliance itself; sometimes it is due to misuse. But one thing is for sure, and that is that years after certain products have been recalled, we have found such items in homes, and they have been the cause of fires. This bill enables that information to be accessed easily, and it enables us to get it out there to consumers a lot quicker.

The proposed three-tier system of risk categories will enable safety-related compliance obligations to better match the safety risk posed by an equipment type, and our current safety regime does need this improvement. Currently there are two risk categories for equipment in the Electrical Safety Act 1988. One is high-risk prescribed equipment, such as washing machines, refrigerators and portable power tools, and the other is non-prescribed equipment, which is a lower risk, such as flat screen televisions and light fittings. Additionally in-scope electrical equipment will be required to carry the regulatory compliance mark, or RCM, and this will be the sole safety approval mark for industry and consumers, which is fantastic news. This change will provide comfort to consumers that a product complies with safety standards. As soon as they see that RCM mark they will know that that equipment fits the standard, it has been approved and it is safe to use. It will be simple, and it will be consistent across states. There will be penalties for its misuse, which is also important.

New offences will be introduced to incentivise compliance and to enable the Victorian energy safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria (ESV), to enforce the new obligations. These offences include supplying or offering to supply unregistered in-scope electrical equipment, failing to register as a responsible supplier, the supply or on-selling of in-scope electrical equipment that does not carry the RCM mark, falsely marking in-scope equipment with the RCM mark, if the supply or hiring of in-scope equipment is not safe or is non-compliant with prescribed requirements and failing to supply the ESV upon request with relevant documentary evidence for in-scope electrical equipment. The bill will also provide new and expanded powers to Energy Safe Victoria to strengthen its ability to undertake regulatory activities in relation to electrical safety equipment.

The scope of this bill is extraordinary; it is large. It will cover in excess of 54 000 items, from the toaster on the kitchen bench to the drill in the shed to the circular saw to the foot massager. The onus is on those who supply the equipment, and they will have to ensure their equipment is safe and registered.

This is a win-win for families; it keeps families safe. They now know that their equipment has not been imported in a shipping container from someone they do not know in a form that does not fit any type of Australian or international standard. They will now have an easy-to-check mark on what they buy, as well as access to a database that they can check for themselves about the equipment they would like to purchase.

This is also a win for Australian manufacturers, as we heard the previous speaker state. They will be able to meet their obligations and will now have a simple and consistent standard that they and their competitors must comply with.

Finally, it is a win for our regulators, who can now share information quickly to protect Victorians. Every day in Victoria there are incidents involving electrical equipment, whether it be fires or short circuits or shocks, and this bill will go a long way to ensuring that families, tradesmen and others in our community are safer. This, to my mind, is also a win for retailers. They will not need to check every single website to find information about a product to see if it is safe. They can now go to the single register.

I think it is good legislation. It shows a government that has been listening to the community, and even more than listening, acting on what the community wants. I can tell you from firsthand experience that this legislation is necessary. Tragedies in the home can be so easily averted through people knowing that their electrical equipment is faulty or dodgy. This mark lets them know straightaway if a product is something they should not buy or go near.

The market for equipment changes every day. There is a new product released every day. We need to make sure that manufacturers are keeping up with Australian standards, which we need to keep at a very high level. This bill represents an important step in the ongoing protection of Victorians and in ensuring our regulations are fit for purpose. As is the case with quite a number of bills that we have introduced into this house, one day we expect that the rest of Australia will follow. But we are always happy to be in the lead and take that progressive step to ensure our community is as safe as possible and that we are not sending firefighters and ambulances out to houses where people have had accidents because of faults in equipment that could have been picked up earlier. That is what this bill does. While it has a number of aims, for me the main thing this bill does is ensure the safety of our community.

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (15:40) — I am very proud to rise today to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. As we have heard, this bill is about improving safety outcomes for all Victorians, and therefore it should receive overwhelming support in this place.

It is easy to underestimate how many electrical appliances we have in our homes that are operating at any one time and the increased risk we face from those appliances. I recall that some time ago I was charging my phone, and it was only when I noticed the phone was doing some very strange things that I picked it up. It was so hot to touch that I had to put it into the refrigerator. Had that phone been on some other surface, who knows what could have happened. It was only later that I found out that the charger for the phone was the subject of a recall.

This bill goes to that very point. This bill will implement some key features of the electrical equipment safety scheme, known as the EESS. Under this scheme participating jurisdictions agree to put corresponding laws in place for electrical equipment safety regulation. With the amendments to the Electrical Safety Act 1998 that are proposed by this bill, Victoria will recognise and adopt the EESS database for the purposes of registering electrical equipment and manufacturers and importers of that equipment. The bill will help to improve efficiencies for Victorian and interstate regulators and the industry by essentially harmonising consumer electrical equipment safety regulation. As I said, this is all about improving safety outcomes for Victorians.

With this bill, we will be adopting a national electrical equipment safety scheme register. We will see Victoria and Queensland sign up to this first, with more states coming on board in the future. The bill will amend the Electrical Safety Act 1998 to provide for the regulation of the supply of certain in-scope electrical equipment. We have heard from former speakers that the in-scope electrical equipment will include up to 54 000 regular household items, including the fridge, the iron, the power drill — whatever really you find in your home will form part of the in-scope electrical appliances. The bill will also provide for the regulation of certain persons to be known as responsible suppliers, and they are the people who manufacture or who import into Australia in-scope electrical equipment for the purpose of sale in Victoria.

On relevant household electrical equipment, the manufacturers and importers of this equipment will be required to register them on a database. An important point here is that it is a single database, so it is

streamlining the process for manufacturers and for importers but also streamlining the process for consumers — everyday Victorians — which means they only have one place to visit to check on the safety of the electrical appliance that they are proposing to buy. But it also means that regulators such as Energy Safe Victoria will be better able to trace these suppliers and the equipment across all jurisdictions and, if necessary, to recall any unsafe products which might be out there in the market. Again, this is important because, as we know, supply of goods does not stop at state and territory borders. We cross jurisdictions, so it is important that regulators, consumers and retailers are able to access a database which also crosses those jurisdictions.

As I said, the bill will cover importers and Australian manufacturers of electrical equipment, whether they supply it online or through retail shops. Again, this is important because so much of our purchasing today is done online. However, consumers obviously will still need to take care if they are purchasing products online from overseas suppliers, as obviously these products are not in scope for the purpose of this bill.

Importantly the bill will also extend to suppliers who supply household electrical wiring. These suppliers must register any household wiring products and have a certificate of conformity covering the product. The bill will also more closely align the categories of products with the introduction of what is known as a medium-risk category of equipment that will be in addition to Victoria's current low-risk and high-risk categories. As I said, this will better align with the risk posed by the equipment category.

Importantly as well for consumers, all equipment will carry the regulatory compliance mark. This will be the only safety approval mark for industry and consumers. Essentially this will say to consumers, 'If this mark is on the product, it complies with safety standards'. What a great win for consumers and for Victorian families — it means a simple and easy check on what to buy. Consumers can also access the simple one-stop database, which means they can search that database by brand, type and model number and by supplier as well. Essentially again this streamlines the process by putting all of the products into one place so that consumers are not confused by having to search various databases. After I had my son, I remember thinking I had to buy various products at the time. I did not know what was safe and what was not safe, and it would have been a terrific win for me if I had had a single database that I could have accessed to say, 'Yep, this is a safe product, you can go ahead and buy it'.

But not only is this scheme a win for Victorian consumers, it is also a win for Australian manufacturers because for them it means there will be one standard for them to comply with. Similarly retailers will only need to check a single website to make sure the products on their shelves are safe. Of course it also means that regulators will be better able to share information between jurisdictions — again, as a step to better protecting Victorians.

We have heard there are too many tragedies involving home appliances. This bill, to the extent that it can help reduce or minimise those tragedies, is a very worthwhile piece of legislation and one that we can all readily support. We have seen also that the market for household electrical appliances is in a state of progressive change. There has been a massive shift in the market — electrical appliances are now much cheaper. There is a tendency for consumers to more easily acquire electrical appliances. We need to make sure that those appliances are still safe and fit for purpose, and that they are not going to create risks for Victorians and Victorian families. The suppliers and retailers will have six months from the commencement of this bill to register themselves, to register any equipment that needs to be registered and to affix the mark on the equipment with the regulatory safety mark.

I have to say this is good Labor legislation designed to improve the welfare and safety of all Victorians. The Andrews Labor government is doing a lot of good work in this space. We are committed to improving the safety standards of electrical equipment to improve safety outcomes for Victorian households.

Of course we are also working very hard to ensure that energy supply in Victoria is certain and is competitive and above all fair for all Victorians as well. We know consumers are paying more than they need to for their energy. We commissioned an independent bipartisan review last year which told us that, so we are now working very closely with industry and consumers and implementing programs around energy efficiency. We are providing funding to businesses to assist in all of this. We are also making proper investment in renewable energies.

I am very proud of our commitment to reform in this area. I would like to acknowledge the incredible work of our Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr HOWARD (Buninyong) (15:50) — I am pleased to speak on the Electricity Safety Amendment (Electrical Equipment Safety Scheme) Bill 2018. As we have heard, it is about ensuring the safety of all

people who buy electrical equipment and the safety of their homes.

It is amazing to deal with bills like this and think back to a little more than 100 years ago. I recall stories that my grandparents might have told me about a time before they had houses with electricity in them. This new thing, electricity, was available to them, but rather than depending on it, my grandparents, having come from England and then settling in Minyip in the Wimmera in Victoria, learnt how to use a Coolgardie safe and things like that. When you tell the next generation about that, they find it so bizarre to think of life without electricity. Today we have washing machines that wash your clothes with the press of a button and refrigerators that carefully and properly refrigerate foods. We use over a day so many electrical goods in a household that it is easy to become overly familiar with them and forget that there are safety risks wherever we are using electricity. We have to be aware of those safety risks and deal with them appropriately.

We are also aware that there are good-quality electrical appliances and there are some that clearly have been produced in an inappropriate way, often in other countries — sometimes in Asia. Some of those appliances are imported, and it is only after they are imported and fires happen in people's houses or people are electrocuted that we realise this equipment is inferior and dangerous and should not be used in Australian homes. It is appropriate that state governments across Australia and New Zealand have been working through a process of refining safety and doing it in a uniform way, ensuring that people who import goods into our country will be required to be responsible for the goods they bring in and ensure they are compliant with all the electricity safety requirements. This needs to be done in a sensible and streamlined way, hence the value in working across Australia and New Zealand.

Not surprisingly Victoria has indicated it is prepared to be at the forefront of this new system of establishing that where people are supplying electrical equipment to the market in Victoria they will be appropriately registered and will, in registering, ensure that any products they handle, distribute or sell will have met appropriate safety standards. This will be done by a single database so that the system will be able to be streamlined. Those who are responsible suppliers — the groups and the companies that are selling the electrical equipment — will register themselves on this single database, resulting in the replacement of the duplicative system that has been in place across this country, bringing it down to a streamlined system with

eventually national standing — and in the case of New Zealand, international standing.

As well as having this registration system we are trying to simplify purchases by having the regulatory compliance mark placed on electrical equipment. People who purchase equipment with that regulatory compliance mark will know that it is of a standard that is suitable to be used in their homes, that it will not cause fires and that it will not risk people being electrocuted. To back this system up we need to ensure that if people are not doing the right thing, they can be charged appropriately. If goods that are sold under the regulatory compliance mark are not actually satisfying those standards, then penalties will apply.

The bill introduces this new system, and it is backed up by new and amended offences under the Electrical Safety Act 1998 which will ensure these obligations are met. If they are not, penalties will be imposed on individuals of up to 60 penalty points, which is equivalent to about a \$9500 fine for individuals. If they are companies, those fines would be up to \$38 000 if people were non-compliant and selling goods they claimed to be regulatory compliant but that were not or by selling goods they had not appropriately vetted as the registration requires them to do.

There are a range of other things we have done. We have increased the powers of Energy Safe Victoria, which of course is the oversight body, to ensure safety associated with electricity across the state both in terms of what comes through the wires to people's houses — the electricity that flows through our transmission system — as well as appliances that may be sold. These powers include the ability to issue infringement notices in relation to the new offences and continuation of the power to issue prohibition notices. We are ensuring that the regulator has the necessary powers to be able follow up on matters and to put penalties in place where people are doing the wrong thing.

I have heard others speak today about personal cases in their own families, situations where they know of people who have bought non-compliant equipment or sometimes people who have connected up electrical equipment themselves without having the proper training to do so and have put themselves and their houses at risk. We know that if the wrong thing is done, then periodically appliances overheat or short-circuit and cause fires in houses, which are a huge tragedy. We also know of cases where people have in fact electrocuted themselves, and that is clearly something to be very concerned about and something that we would not want to see happen.

We have got to learn from what is happening out there. We have to adapt a system that can safely work across this country. We need a system that is reliable for consumers, a system that ensures that anybody who is in the business of selling electrical equipment has appropriately vetted what they are selling and that dodgy equipment, wherever it may be produced or wherever it might come from, not be sold in this state. I am very supportive of this bill. As people have said, in bringing in this bill there are transitional arrangements for the new registration system. Through an appropriate consultation process we have ensured that the system can work in well with companies and individuals who are working in this industry selling equipment and purchasing equipment from overseas. This bill will be well received. It will ensure the safety of Victorians who are purchasing electrical equipment and the safety of their homes too.

I certainly commend this bill to the house. It is very sensible to have worked through a bill like this. I know this government and this minister have continued to work to address their responsibilities to electrical issues of supply and electrical safety issues in this case. I commend this bill to the house.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr DONNELLAN (Minister for Roads and Road Safety).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

**INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (PUBLIC
INTEREST DISCLOSURES, OVERSIGHT
AND INDEPENDENCE) BILL 2018**

Second reading

Debate resumed from 7 February; motion of Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General).

Government amendments circulated by Mr PAKULA (Attorney-General) under standing orders.

Mr R. SMITH (Warrandyte) (16:01) — I rise to speak on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. The bill, as described by the government, aims to make a broad range of changes to the various acts that govern Victoria's integrity and accountability bodies. Can I first put on record my appreciation to the department for their very comprehensive briefing. I am certainly very pleased that that was able to happen.

The changes that the bill facilitates are designed to provide clarity around issues such as public disclosure relating to the accountability of the public service and the various agencies and departments and of those who are entrusted with the use and the allocation of public resources. The Attorney-General outlined the principles that guided these integrity reforms in his second-reading speech, principles such as accountability, independence, effectiveness, transparency, collaboration, cohesion and fairness. These are certainly laudable aspirations, and we support the intent of the bill and the principles behind them.

I want to make very clear that we do support the bill. We certainly do not oppose what was put on the table two weeks ago. Of course some issues that have arisen over the last 24 hours have made aspects of this bill a little bit more murky, and I will talk about that shortly. But starting with the second-reading speech that the Attorney-General presented to this house, I want to refer members to the paragraph which says, and I quote:

The bill also addresses recommendation 18 of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHR) 2015 report on sex discrimination and sexual harassment in Victoria Police ...

I support and congratulate the Attorney-General on addressing this important recommendation from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. I have read the report myself, and I have to say that some of the witness statements are quite harrowing and quite confronting. I also read the follow-up report from 2017 which does indicate that there is real culture change happening as a result of the 2015 report, with witnesses saying that the report was an enormous step forward in addressing the cultural problems that were within Victoria Police. It is pleasing that the bill does address that recommendation.

It is a shame, however, that the bill is not able to take into account the recommendations from the equal opportunity commission's report into the bullying and harassment in the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). It is unfortunate that this government refuses to make that report public, and it is unfortunate that the many issues that the commissioner raised have not been able to be put forward here in the house or even be addressed in this particular bill. For those who have not been following, this is the report that the United Firefighters Union (UFU) and the government have sought to cover up and delay for over one and a half years. At the outset the UFU told its members not to participate in the report, bizarrely even saying that the review was not independent. What the UFU actually said in a newspaper article of 8 July 2016 is that:

We have good grounds to believe that the MFB and CFA management have orchestrated this campaign in conjunction with media outlets, the Liberal Party and other third parties in an attempt to lower the standing of firefighters in the community.

I say this is quite a bizarre accusation because in fact none of the bodies that the UFU spoke about actually called for the review; in fact it was the government that kicked things off originally. That makes it all the more strange that the Minister for Emergency Services is now using his executive powers to withhold the public release of that report. It is bizarre because a huge amount of information about this particular report has been put on record. It was said on 27 April 2017 that:

... investigators working on the review have been told of:

recruitment panels being biased against hiring women ...

a stripping ritual at the end of recruitment courses ... whereby women would have to climb to the top of a building — along with male recruits — and take their clothes off for a photo;

firefighters going out on weekends and bringing back women to stations, and sex taking place in offices; and

porn hanging inside kitchen cupboards at fire stations.

It beggars belief that this government has been relentless in trying to keep this particular report from coming to light so that it could be addressed in a bill such as this.

The firefighters union, with the support of the government, has continued over the last year and a half to try to block this particular report. On 15 June 2017 it was reported that the UFU had launched a court bid to try to stop the review and ban the publication of the report. In July it was delayed until mid-August, and if we go forward to 7 August 2017, a parliamentary inquiry into the issue actually received correspondence from the Minister for Emergency Services saying that he was using his executive privilege on behalf of government to block the report, saying that disclosure of the report would be contrary to the public interest. The government, in this house during question time and on other occasions, keeps saying, 'We initiated the report, so that makes us take the moral high ground, that makes us the ones who are running the show here', but the fact of the matter is the government has used executive privilege to stop the release of this particular report, and Victorians sure want to know why.

In September of last year the report still had not been released; it actually had been delayed for an additional four weeks. In December of last year the report still had

not been released and was said to be delayed for a further month. In February we were still waiting, with the *Herald Sun* saying some of the participants in the review were growing increasingly agitated about ongoing delays and had contacted the commission.

If we look back to the report into Victoria Police, which the Attorney-General mentioned in his second-reading speech, we see witnesses had said that the release of the report and the subsequent discussion of recommendations and the government's support of those recommendations had actually helped them move on. Again, you would wonder why the government would be stopping this particular report from going through when it would be of great assistance to those who had been the victims of the bullying, harassment and intimidation that goes on in the MFB. It would be a great opportunity for them to put some of their demons to rest and move forward.

We can see why the government has spent so much time blocking this. We raised these issues in question time and we were rebuffed as usual. But the headline in the *Age* today, 'Sexism in MFB revealed', only goes to show why the government is so keen to stop any of this issue moving forward and certainly stop any of this issue being made public. At this point I want to move a reasoned amendment, which I ask to be circulated. I move:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the house has assurances from the government that every government department and agency is covered by the bill and no government agency or department will be exempt from the provisions of the bill by way of agreements with the government'.

The reason for that reasoned amendment is that while there is bipartisan support for this bill and there have been a few discussions between me and the Special Minister of State and we were quite supportive of this bill, in the last 24 hours it has come to light that the MFB's enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) deal includes a veto, which says that all MFB policies, including policies relating to bullying, harassment, equal opportunity, fraud and corruption, conflict of interest and whistleblower provisions must be signed off by the union. Further, any changes to state or commonwealth laws cannot be implemented at the MFB without consultation and agreement — and the Premier was very keen to talk about consultation, but did not announce the fact that agreement was also a stipulation of the union.

If we are going to be talking about integrity bodies, if we are going to be talking about public interest

disclosures, I want to make sure, and our side of the house wants to make sure, that every single agency and department of this government is treated equally. It appears from the demands of the union — demands which I have to say when taken in total are ones that the government has capitulated on on every occasion over the last couple of years, even to the extent that various high-level fire officers have either been pushed or have resigned as a result, including, may I say, the former Minister for Emergency Services, the member for Brunswick — that the government is looking to shield the MFB and potentially the UFU from any oversight or any opportunities for investigation if a complaint is put forward. To that end, my reasoned amendment is there to ensure that the government can give us those assurances.

One of the reasons that we have seen these house amendments from the government — and, may I say, some members may not be aware there is a provision in this bill that amends the Constitution Act 1975, which means that two-thirds of the members in this house must support this bill in order for the bill to go forward — is so that a special majority is not needed. As I said, the opposition was quite prepared to support the bill in the way that it came out, but just needed those assurances. Rather than give those assurances to the opposition and in fact to the Victorian public, the government has instead chosen to sabotage its own legislation to remove that amendment to the Constitution Act so that a special majority is no longer needed in this house. The government would rather change their own legislation than give assurances to the Victorian people that they are not trying to protect and shield the MFB and the UFU.

That speaks volumes to this house and indeed to Victorians right across the state that the government, in a display of cover-up, is continuing to pander to the UFU and Peter Marshall instead of being open, honest and transparent. This bill and the MFB EBA will be at odds with one another if the UFU's demands are going to be met, and there is no reason to think that those demands will not be met. It seems that this web of deceit, this culture of cover-up, will keep going on, and if these integrity bodies are unable to investigate claims against the UFU and the MFB, then that is a sorry state of affairs for the state of Victoria to be left in.

Having said all that, I go on to say that our bipartisan approach to this bill has been there because we do support the importance of integrity and accountability bodies in this state. Their importance cannot be overstated. Besides the obvious role of investigating improper conduct and prosecuting those who do the

wrong thing, they also provide confidence to the broader community that the people who interact with government departments and agencies will be treated properly, that their taxes will be used for the right reason and not for personal gain, and that the opportunities to deliver goods and services by way of tender to the private sector will be fair in the way that they are transacted by departments and agencies. It is important that those who seek to do the wrong thing with public resources and public money understand they are likely to be caught and that the integrity bodies will be robust in their investigations. It is important that any evidence of improper conduct can be put forward and that those who are the whistleblowers, those who make those public interest disclosures, know they will be protected and will have trust that their confidentiality will be kept and their complaints will be taken seriously.

Victoria has a wide range of integrity and accountability bodies. They do provide a very robust investigation platform for those who make complaints against government agencies and government departments. We have the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, whose role it is to investigate corruption in the public sector as well as police misconduct. It is interesting for those who were not in this house during the 56th Parliament to see Labor supporting IBAC, because I can tell you that at the time that the opposition put the notion forward, there was very little support for it from the then Labor government — the Brumby Labor government.

It was the allegations of bribery, intimidation and the misuse of funds at the ALP-dominated Brimbank City Council which really got the ball rolling and showed the need for an anti-corruption commission in this state. We called for an investigation after former member for Keilor in the Assembly, George Seitz, blew the whistle on alleged corrupt practices by Brimbank councillors, as well as by current and former members of this house. The subsequent explosive report from the Ombudsman actually gave us a shopping list of corruption and improper conduct, terms that are probably synonymous with the Labor Party more broadly, and the Ombudsman showed us that the Labor-dominated council —

Ms Williams interjected.

Mr R. SMITH — We send them to prison. The member for Dandenong raises our former state director. When he did something wrong, we sent him to Victoria Police and we had him sent to jail. That is an example of the difference between this side of the house and that side of the house. When people on our side of the house

do the wrong thing, we refer them to the police and they are punished. When people are guilty of misconduct on that side of the house, they are protected, shielded and in fact lauded by this party which holds up corruption and misconduct as a badge of honour rather than something that should be condemned.

The Ombudsman's report showed the council was dysfunctional and that it was a council that was influenced by unelected Labor figures. It showed that conflicts of interest, improper use of powers, bullying and intimidation, misuse of council funds and equipment, inappropriate release of information and an improper use of electoral information were rife. The report showed inappropriate conduct by and influence by state MPs, including former MPs such as Theo Theophanous and Justin Madden, the current member for St Albans and of course the member for the then seat of Derrimut, who is sitting in this house even today, who was mentioned no less than 38 times in the Ombudsman's report. It is unclear to me why the Premier would pick that man to be the Speaker of this house when he already had form with regard to the way he conducted himself. The man who the Premier appointed to stand in judgement of all of the members of this house showed very clearly to everyone here, by bringing the name and occupation of politicians into disrepute, that he was a very poor choice because he did have form and, as I said, was mentioned no less than 38 times in this report.

It is those sorts of practices which the *Herald Sun* raised in 16 September 2009 when they said that:

The initial report from the Ombudsman, tabled in Parliament in May, found deep-seated corruption issues in Brimbank ...

An earlier report in the *Age* said that the sort of behaviour by the Labor Party in that instance delivered 'dud candidates in safe seats, subverts democracy and wastes ratepayer money on vote-buying'. I would be very interested to see who that particular journalist thought were the dud candidates that have been delivered to safe seats. I have got a few of my own suggestions, and I am sure that the journalist would be quite happy to understand the sort of corrupt behaviour that was going on in Brimbank council —

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr R. SMITH — The member for Mordialloc thinks it is hysterical, which as I said is par for course for the Labor Party — standard practice for the Labor Party. It is just a joke, I guess.

When we proposed the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, it was interesting to hear on a number of occasions during question time when asked if the government was going to embrace such a body the then Premier, Mr Brumby, say:

We are pleased that we have more checks and balances in place in this state in relation to the operation of the executive, in relation to the government generally and the operation of the Parliament. I do not see any need for an independent commission against corruption.

Further on he said:

I repeat: the government does not intend to introduce an independent commission against corruption.

On 30 October 2007 — again this was a question which the Leader of the Opposition was asked previously, and the government's position on this is clear:

We will not be establishing an independent commission against corruption.

And on and on it went, with this government absolutely stymieing the idea of having a broad-based anti-corruption commission until the Premier of the day was dragged kicking and screaming to an independent review by Ms Elizabeth Proust, who said, 'You know what? With the sorts of goings-on by the Labor Party, you actually do need an independent broad-based anti-corruption commission'. The *Age* said it well on 4 June 2010 when they reported, and I quote:

For years, the Victorian government has insisted that the systems it has in place — an Ombudsman to oversee the public sector, the Office of Police Integrity to investigate police corruption, the Auditor-General to check financial compliance in government departments — were good enough to weed out corruption and misconduct.

But in a blow for the Premier —

and that was John Brumby —

the findings of his own high-level review into the state's anti-corruption agencies, released this week, found they were anything but. A six-month investigation by former senior bureaucrat Elizabeth Proust exposed a system that was fragmented, inefficient, and had serious gaps where corruption could easily fall through the cracks.

It went on to say:

As far as political backflips go, this one is monumental. Despite Victoria and South Australia being the last states without their own anti-corruption commissions, Brumby has spent years publicly resisting the idea of an independent corruption commission, describing them as a waste of resources and little more than a 'lawyer's picnic'.

...

Continuing to resist would have left the government looking as if it had something to hide.

I think we can all agree, in this house and certainly in the broader public, that they did have many things to hide.

With an election only six months away, something had to give.

'My personal view has always been against the establishment of such a mechanism', Brumby said as he announced his decision to a room full of departmental chiefs and journalists on Wednesday afternoon, less than 48 hours after receiving the Proust report.

Even though he had continually denied the need for it, his own review said that it was needed, and in a stunning backflip he eventually capitulated. Now we have Labor enthusiastically embracing the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission through this very legislation.

As far as saying that it was unnecessary, it is safe to say that there have been numerous investigations by IBAC — I suppose the most prominent one being Operation Dunham, which showed the corruption and the personal gain from public resources surrounding the ultranet project, where we saw high-level Department of Education and Training officials being found guilty of many, many cases of misconduct and personal gain, and that was but one. There are many others, and certainly there have been investigations into police conduct, into the operation of some health organisations, into TAFEs, and the list goes on and on. It is very important that that Liberal-National initiative was put in place, and it has certainly served its purpose over the intervening years.

Other agencies include the Victorian Inspectorate, which ensures the compliance of IBAC, oversees the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman and other bodies and ensures that witness rights are protected — and that is very important. When we do have accusations made against certain people, those people should be deemed to be innocent until they are proven guilty. It is important that their rights are protected. The Victorian Inspectorate also ensures that IBAC does the right thing in exercising its coercive powers.

The bill also goes to the Ombudsman, who investigates, amongst other things, complaints into actions and decisions by governments, departments and agencies and conduct by their staff. I guess the Ombudsman came into prominence most recently when a Labor whistleblower blew the whistle on the red shirts rorting investigation when it was made very clear that the government had used public money inappropriately.

The Premier said that he would completely cooperate with the Ombudsman's investigation, then proceeded through his Attorney-General to attempt to stymie the Ombudsman at every turn. His words about supporting the office of the Ombudsman were complete hypocrisy, and it really shows Labor up for being hypocritical in their approach to the integrity bodies. As I said, this government has tried to block investigations into the red shirts rorting scandal at every turn even though the Premier promised to cooperate.

And may I say — and labour the point — it was not our side of politics that actually blew the whistle on this scandal; it was actually a Labor whistleblower, so I guess there is no honour amongst thieves at all. Using public money to campaign is completely inappropriate. Many, many Labor campaigners were used. They were employed by MPs who did not even know their names and had never seen them, and the campaigning was done in most cases in seats that were way, way outside those electorates they were employed to actually look after. The interesting thing is that the government have never denied that they did this. They are actually quite proud of it. They deny it was wrong, and I guess it just really gives everyone a sense of what these guys opposite think is right or wrong. They have a really warped sense of that.

I quote from a *Herald Sun* article from 17 February 2016, which says:

The Andrews government has executed an abrupt about-face and now will argue in the Supreme Court that Ombudsman Deborah Glass lacks the power to investigate Labor's rorts-for-votes scheme.

A week ago, Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings told Parliament the government did not intend to make submissions to the Supreme Court ...

...

But yesterday, Mr Pakula said the matter would 'effectively operate as a test case regarding the relationship between the Ombudsman and the Parliament ...

I guess we can thank the Attorney-General for helping us clarify that relationship, and I am sure he was not doing it with any ulterior motive whatsoever. It is unfortunate that *Hansard* cannot pick up sarcasm.

Going forward on the same issue, remembering that the government was never going to block the Ombudsman's investigation, from the *Herald Sun* of 18 February 2016:

Taxpayers, who saw their money misappropriated by the Labor Party in the rorts-for-votes scandal, now face legal

costs as the government tries to shut down an investigation by the Ombudsman.

What amounts to a cover-up started with a letter from the Premier's right-hand man, Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings, telling Ombudsman Deborah Glass she does not have the authority to inquire into the rorts.

The article goes on to say that additional money from the taxpayer over and above the money spent on rorting the public by way of using campaigners when they should not be used will be spent on well-resourced lawyers in what appears to be a government manoeuvre to shut down the Ombudsman.

On 25 August 2016 the *Herald Sun* reported that the Ombudsman was ready to start probing Labor's use of taxpayer funds after getting the green light from the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said that it was within Ms Glass's jurisdiction to follow the referral from the Legislative Council. So it looked like the Ombudsman was ready to go, but of course the government was not going to live with that. On 27 August, following the fact that the Supreme Court had paved the way for the public watchdog to investigate allegations, the Attorney-General said:

The government will carefully consider the Supreme Court's reasons for its decision before making any further comment on the matter.

It did consider the decision and then took the matter to the Court of Appeal. Following that:

In a blow to Premier Daniel Andrews, the Court of Appeal on Friday dismissed the government's second attempt to block Ombudsman Deborah Glass from investigating the ... 'rorts-for-votes' scandal.

The government seemed to support that. The government's spokesperson said that:

... the decision 'effectively means' the Ombudsman must investigate and prioritise any matter referred by either house of Parliament.

But then just a short time later, in January of last year, the Attorney-General said he would go to the High Court to challenge that last month's decision. Again, when we are talking about the independence of our integrity bodies, as this bill does, the government has demonstrated time and time again that it has anything but respect for that very independence.

In January of last year, the Greens leader in the Council at the time, Greg Barber, said that it showed Labor would do anything to avoid an inquiry. In fact, the Attorney-General actually tried to drag other parties into this mess that the government had created on its own, by saying that the government was going to try to

change the Legislative Council's referral to include the use of parliamentary resources entitlements by the coalition and the Greens. There had been no allegations against the Liberal Party, the National Party or the Greens. In fact, this was Labor's mess, again raised to public prominence by a Labor person. The *Herald Sun* raised the issue very well in January 2017 when it opined that:

The Andrews government is going to extraordinary lengths to stop the Ombudsman investigating Labor's alleged misuse of public money in the lead-up to the 2014 ... election.

It went on to say that:

Labor's determination to avoid an investigation will see them waste further taxpayer [public money] exhausting legal avenues including appealing to Australia's highest court.

The *Herald Sun* article asked the question which many, many Victorians are also asking:

The obvious question is: what does the government have to hide?

The *Age* went on to say that:

Something stinks about the Andrews government's latest bid to challenge an investigation into Labor's so-called 'orts-for-votes' scandal.

It referred to the Special Minister of State, Gavin Jennings, who said shortly after coming to office that they wanted to rebuild 'the community's confidence in the accountability and openness of government'. I will give those opposite a tip: this is not the way to do it. Trying to shut down one of your integrity bodies, trying to stop them from investigating what is clearly a roting scandal, is not the way to inspire confidence in Victorians, not one little bit.

Going on, in May last year the Victorian Ombudsman was finally being given the green light again to investigate the Andrews government over the Labor Party's misuse of parliamentary resources. You have got to wonder how much money was wasted in the attempts to block the Ombudsman actually doing the investigation. Again, a government spokesman said that the government took all this action, the government spent all this public money and the government continued to block the Ombudsman's investigation because they were actually trying to 'protect the architecture of Victoria's integrity regime'. That is what they were doing.

I mean, we got it wrong over here; the Victorian people got it wrong. They were actually trying to protect the architecture of Victoria's integrity regime. We thought those opposite were trying to rort public funds. We did

not realise that trying to nobble the integrity body, the Ombudsman, was actually just trying to protect us all from ourselves. But that is this government and these people in this government all over. The questionable behaviour of government members does show very clearly that there is a lie when it comes to saying that they respect the integrity of our independent integrity and accountability bodies.

The bill covers a number of other issues, including the Protected Disclosure Act 2012. It makes significant changes to make the pathways for making disclosures easier. It merges the Accountability and Oversight Committee with the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee. We have certainly seen that there are some crossovers in those two committees. We do not oppose the merger of those two committees as long as they are adequately resourced. We also support the budgetary independence of our integrity bodies and support that part of the bill.

To sum up, the opposition does support a strong and robust integrity and accountability regime. We know that with proper oversight we can protect those who do make complaints against government agencies and departments and, indeed, even the government itself. We hope that these integrity bodies do deter those who think that they can get away with the misuse of public resources and public funds. I would take this opportunity to actually call on Labor, though, to take a serious look at the culture that it has fostered within its own ranks, where corruption and improper behaviour seem to go unchecked and in fact actually seem to be encouraged and rewarded. We have seen that time and time again. It is fine to promote these concepts of integrity and accountability, but if you do not practise them yourself — if you do not walk the walk, so to speak — then it really amounts to nothing. Victorians generally firmly believe that this government has a long way to go before it can demonstrate that it actually practises what it preaches.

Mr NOONAN (Williamstown) (16:31) — I am really pleased this afternoon to make a contribution to this debate and clearly on this side speak in support of the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. From the outset I do want to place on record my thanks to and acknowledgement of the Special Minister of State, the special minister's staff and indeed all those public servants who have worked over a long period of time to prepare this legislation for the Parliament.

This is a significant piece of legislation. I want to give some context to that, to speak to an aspect of it or a number of aspects, time permitting, which I think are quite critical and a positive step forward. From the outset I would say that I do think that this is a very practical demonstration of the Andrews government's commitment to ensuring a robust integrity and accountability system for Victoria. I say that because I think every Parliament and every member has an expectation that those in our public sector will act with integrity and that there will be accountability around their decisions.

I think it is not necessarily well understood, though, beyond those who work closely in our system, that there are a good number of integrity officers who support the work of the Parliament. They do not work for the government; they obviously work in the public interest — in this case IBAC; the Ombudsman; indeed, the Auditor-General; the Victorian Inspectorate and in fact others. They, as independent officers of this Parliament reporting to this Parliament, governed by legislation passed by this Parliament and amended by this Parliament, in fact serve our democracy very well and very strongly. They serve to give independence and maintain confidence in terms of that independence to the Victorian community. Any government that sets about trying to diminish any of those officers does so at its own peril. In fact, there have been a number of examples in Victorian political history where that has happened and to the detriment of those governments. I think in recent history of the Kennett government and arrangements around the Auditor-General as an example.

To support the integrity system, there must be protection for those people who see wrongdoing in our public sector and who experience, if you like, the worst examples of corruption, for them to be able to come forward and report that with an effective system that protects them. When you look at much of the substance of this bill, it really is about ensuring that those people who have the courage to come forward are supported in their approach in order to keep the integrity of and confidence in our independent system of government.

When I think about the legislation that has come before this Parliament in my time, since 2007, much of it involves a high degree of consultation and discussion, and it often comes here because it addresses gaps that have been identified in existing legislation, or where unintended consequences need to be addressed. When I look at this bill, I see a really terrific example of that in fact happening. There have been significant contributions to the formulation and in fact the content of this particular bill. That has come through discussion papers being put out for IBAC, the Victorian

Auditor-General's Office and the Ombudsman in the first half of 2016.

There has been some really strong work done, I think, by what I would consider the often unheralded parliamentary committees of this Parliament. I single out a number of them in the case of this particular bill, including the Accountability and Oversight Committee and the IBAC Committee, and I see the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee also has made a contribution to a couple of discussion papers as well. I think it is important that we recognise and acknowledge the work of those committees in relation to the substance of this particular bill.

I think it is also important to recognise a good number of the organisations that have contributed by way of feedback to the discussion papers and have obviously helped shape the government's considerations and indeed the content of this particular legislation. I think the result of this particular bill and the work that has gone into it will in fact strengthen the work of our independent offices and generate further confidence in our integrity system here in Victoria.

Having said that, many of the changes when you look at them — many of the amendments that are proposed as part of this particular bill — I would say are functional changes rather than wholesale structural changes to those independent offices and the protections for whistleblowers as well. But I think when you talk about what this bill is essentially about, you are really talking about maintaining the accountability and integrity system and making that more cohesive, robust and indeed effective.

In relation to specific component parts of this particular bill, there are so many parts that I am sure members will speak to, but I did want to touch on one component which had me thinking back to my time as Minister for Police and some concerns I had at the time as police minister in relation to a very serious incident that occurred in Ballarat involving the assault of a woman in a Ballarat police cell which occurred in January 2015. It was a very serious incident. It was captured on CCTV. It showed an off-duty officer being stripped, kicked and in fact stomped on in a police cell, and it was obviously a very distressing incident. At the time, IBAC determined that it would conduct a public examination into that particular incident, and they used their own-motion powers to initiate that.

At the time of that announcement, I remember being somewhat concerned about procedural fairness of having two serving officers involved, and I was also

concerned about the privacy of the victim, who was an off-duty officer. I was also worried about that in the context of it happening in a regional city, where essentially people have some understanding about the identity of people involved in incidents like that. At the time my concerns were echoed by the Police Association Victoria, which issued a press release on 5 April which stated, and I quote:

We do not believe that the public interest is best served by IBAC examining our members in public, under the intense gaze of the media, without charge or any prior opportunity to respond to the allegations being made against them. Such a process places our members at risk of being tried and convicted in the court of public opinion before they are even charged and is contrary to both the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair trial.

They then went on and stated:

We see no reason why our members should not have the right to a private interview or examination in the same manner afforded to any other ... citizen. There is nothing that comes from a public hearing that cannot be established by private interview or examination without the risk of destroying reputations and the potential prejudice to subsequent proceedings.

I think the concerns raised at the time by the police association in fact were legitimate. As I said, I was concerned about the health and safety of the victim, and history would show that the proceedings there led to charges being laid against those officers. I want to commend, if you like, the work that has been done to just ensure that the threshold level in relation to these public examinations is balanced, because we know at the moment that IBAC can hold examinations in public if there are exceptional circumstances and if it is in the public interest to do so, ensuring that there is no unnecessary or unreasonable damage to a person's reputation, safety or wellbeing.

I think what this amendment does in relation to my concern around that is just slightly lift the threshold such that the new arrangements under this act will look at the seriousness or systemic nature of the conduct as an additional threshold level. That, I think, may not have prevented, if you like, that case being subject to a public examination in Ballarat, but it makes it a bit clearer that this is a very significant thing that can in fact happen, and I certainly welcome that amendment.

Just with the very short period I have got left, can I say that it is really dissatisfying to stand here and have to look at this amendment that has been put by the opposition, which is no more than a political stunt. I reckon it was written over a bowl of Weet-Bix this morning by the member for Warrandyte. It is absolutely

clear that all parts of government, including the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, have to comply with all relevant legislation — including the IBAC legislation, the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 and every component part — and it is really disappointing, given that so much work has gone into this act, that the opposition walks into this place with a very, very poorly worded amendment that adds nothing to this debate.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (16:41) — I rise to join the debate on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. I support the motion put forward by the member for Warrandyte:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the house has assurances from the government that every government department and agency is covered by the bill and no government agency or department will be exempt from the provisions of the bill by way of agreements with the government'.

The reason the member for Warrandyte has moved that reasoned amendment, taking into account what the member for Williamstown said — that all government agencies and departments are covered by this — is that we are not convinced. We would rather have seen as part of the bill that it cover all departments and agencies.

Mr Noonan — It does!

Mr WELLS — The member for Williamstown yelled out, 'It does!', but we have seen the conduct of the government in its dealings with the Ombudsman in regard to activities by the Labor Party machinery and what the government has tried to do in shutting down the Ombudsman's investigation of that. So it is the case that we do not trust the government and we want something in writing to ensure that all government agencies and departments are going to be covered by this bill. I would have thought that the government would say that the Special Minister of State was saying, 'Yes, we want to make sure that this is open and transparent and we have the full support of everyone in the chamber that this is passed'. We just need that house amendment or some other amendment to come in, because we are not satisfied with the way the wording is at the moment.

I know the member for Warrandyte has mentioned the front page of the *Herald Sun* today and the article about the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) enterprise bargaining agreement. When you read through this it is unbelievable. It is absolutely unbelievable that you have a situation in the MFB where the chief fire officer — the one who gives direction on all operational matters,

whether it be about trucks or equipment or work practices or uniforms and all the sorts of activities that come under the branding of 'operations' — has to get approval from the United Firefighters Union (UFU). That is just not right, because that is why you have a chief fire officer in place — to direct traffic. An equivalent example would be the Chief Commissioner of Police having to get permission from the Police Association Victoria on all operational matters. That simply does not happen, but it does happen in the case of the MFB.

Let us look at the veto powers. The Premier spoke today about a consultation process, I think he called it. It is not a consultation process; it is a blatant veto. I have a quote from page 4 of today's *Herald Sun*:

All MFB policies including bullying, harassment, equal opportunity, fraud and corruption, conflict of interest, whistleblower, and any new policies must be signed off by union. Includes all standard operating procedures, operational work instructions and directions from the chief officer.

So the chief fire officer may give a direction to the MFB firefighters, who do an outstanding job of keeping us safe, but he cannot give that direction — he cannot implement a brand-new standard operating procedure — until it is signed off by the UFU. That is blatantly wrong. You cannot have the union second-guessing what the chief fire officer says. As I said, can you imagine Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton in giving direction on an operational matter or on a standard operational procedure having to go to the police association for permission first? It simply does not work. It should not work in the case of the MFB. It is blatantly wrong. That is why I support the member for Warrandyte's reasoned amendment. We should have a commitment in writing that all government agencies and departments will be included under this bill.

There is not just the veto power. On email monitoring or surveillance by the MFB of staff, no CCTV cameras can be installed without union approval, and changes to any state or commonwealth laws cannot be implemented at the MFB without consultation and agreement by the union. Once again these are difficult situations and the chief fire officer should have the complete and utter right at the end of the day to implement those laws. Of course he will talk to his senior commanders and they will come to an agreement. Obviously there is some consultation with unions, but at the end of the day it is the call of the chief fire officer to implement this.

Getting into details of the bill, I want to raise the issue of the commencement date of the bill. I have heard certain

agreements but the proposed Integrity and Oversight Committee in part 2 of the bill will come into operation on the day after the day the bill is proclaimed or 1 January 2019. If the bill is not proclaimed before that date, it will come in then. The way the bill is written, if the bill is passed prior to the end of this parliamentary term, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee will no longer exist.

I am wondering if the Attorney-General could make sure, if he is the minister summing up, that we can get clarity around that particular point — that the bill in regard to abolishing the IBAC Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee will not come into play until the next term of Parliament or 1 January 2019, because the way I read the bill, and if the Attorney-General can tell me that this is incorrect, then that is fine, is that if this bill is passed by this house, goes to the Legislative Council before, for example, August or September and it is passed, then there will no longer be an IBAC Committee or Accountability and Oversight Committee and the Integrity and Oversight Committee would then come into operation.

When those opposite are summing up, if we could just get clarity around that, I would be grateful, because the work of the IBAC Committee currently is very important work. It has support from all sides of the chamber. It has strong support for the inquiry into external oversight of police corruption and misconduct in Victoria. We have taken evidence from the new IBAC Commissioner and the Victorian Inspectorate and we have had all-day public hearings. The evidence that has come before the committee has been valuable and will make a very good report. The team are working on writing the report, which will take some time. We want to be able to complete that work. We want to be able to make sure that that report, where we have a timetable I think of towards the end of August, can be completed and have an assurance from the government that the committees will stay in place as they are at the moment.

With that short presentation, I support the reasoned amendment to the second reading moved by the member for Warrandyte, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank the people that have worked on both committees — the IBAC Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee. I do think they do valuable work not just in the actual oversight process but in the work that they do for reports and in self-referencing.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon) (16:50) — I am delighted to make a contribution on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. The bill that is before the house is a very comprehensive bill, and it covers off a number of issues. In many respects it seeks to have a better level of coordination between the various investigative bodies that operate in the state of Victoria and ensure that there are appropriate interlocking mechanisms to ensure their ability to function efficiently and effectively. It is about making sure that they represent what is best practice in 2018, rather than what might have been best practice some time ago.

Others have spoken before me, and I do compliment the member for Williamstown for his outstanding contribution in which he reflected upon some of his lived experiences as a minister of the Crown. This bill covers off and traverses enormous and wideranging areas of integrity and oversight, and I think one of the aspects of the bill I am particularly drawn to is the important role that parliamentary committees play in providing a bit of a check and balance in terms of other bodies.

As the chair of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee it would be remiss of me not to talk about the work that my committee has performed in relation to providing a degree of oversight of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO). As we have seen in the course of this term, that degree of oversight can be wideranging. We have had the review into the performance, management and function of VAGO, which is a regular triennial event. We have had also the review in terms of the financial aspects of VAGO. This is the appointment of auditors to do that work, but it is an opportunity for the committee to be allocated a task on behalf of the Parliament to ensure that there are appropriate reviews done in terms of the way in which VAGO functions from the point of view of the conduct of both the performance audits it conducts and the financial audits as well.

Indeed there was an earlier instance, which happened within the first six months of my being the chair of the committee, where we had to investigate what were serious allegations against the former Auditor-General. I felt that was an important role that was tasked to the committee to undertake, and I think in terms of the quality of the report that was subsequently tabled that the report speaks for itself. It is something I was very proud to be associated with.

I know the member for Gippsland South was in the chamber earlier, and I am assuming he was checking the speaking list and will make a contribution as well, both as a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee but also as a member of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee. We, as ordinary members of this place and the other place, make a contribution to the way in which good public administration is delivered in this state by making sure that we provide a degree of independent oversight of bodies like VAGO and IBAC.

The bill covers off on a number of other areas. I note the fact that there is some clarification around the Victorian Inspectorate's oversight of the coercive examinations by IBAC, the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General, the chief examiner and the information commissioner. Again, having those checks and balances in place is vitally important, because if you have unconstrained, unfettered power by these investigative bodies, there is a real risk that at some point in time in the future that power may well be abused by an office-holder. So ensuring that you have an organisation like the Victorian Inspectorate being able to provide that level of oversight, just to make sure that, yes, you are behaving fairly and appropriately and that you are conducting an examination in an appropriate manner, I think is indeed important.

I note too the bill goes to the information commissioner being involved in terms of audio recording and video recording of evidence. Again, I think making sure that you have got an appropriate record that fairly and accurately reflects the deposition provided by a witness in these circumstances is very important. As the member for Williamstown indicated in his earlier contribution, when witnesses or people are examined or investigated, particularly if it is in a public examination and that examination has come about because of testimony provided, it is important that there is a proper record being kept of that so that people can make those investigations and be thoroughly confident that the evidence is fair and reasonable.

The bill also goes to the budgetary independence of IBAC, the Ombudsman and the Victorian Inspectorate. I think these are important initiatives. When these bodies have got that level of independence, when they have got command and control over their profit and loss statement, their balance sheet and their cash flow statement, and when they have a level of funding and be sure of that and their ability to discharge their duties fairly and easily, I think that is really important. You could potentially undermine their good work or the work of those offices more generally if every six to

12 months they have got to go cap in hand seeking either for their funding to be rolled over for the next financial year or for a budgetary increase. Having a situation where they have got the ability to be completely independent and look to the future with confidence, knowing that they have got that budgetary certainty, that they can offer their staff secure tenure of employment and that they can offer them a long-term contract, if that is what they wish — that staff are seen as being ongoing employees rather than being on a contract — is a very important initiative.

I know that the bill also refers to the Ombudsman being empowered to resolve complaints through mediation and conciliation. In 2018 this is common and is indeed best practice. I think it is very important to be able to find ways in which matters can be dealt with and triaged through the system, being able to be in a situation where a concern, an anxiety or an issue can be raised and then discussed and can go through that formal conciliation or mediation process. I think you would often find that when parties are afforded that opportunity to air their concerns or air their grievances, where there is an opportunity for them to sit down and in a non-adversarial environment talk about their concerns and issues and try to work them through, there is a reasonably high success rate in relation to resolution of those issues, as opposed to just having more of a punitive, adversarial response.

The bill also enables young people aged between 10 and 16 to provide information to the Ombudsman on a voluntary basis. There are in the bill some checks and balances in relation to the way in which a young person can voluntarily offer that information. You would obviously want to make sure there are appropriate checks in place to make sure that the person who is giving that evidence or providing testimony or providing information has got a legal guardian present or has got legal counsel present, but I think that in this day and age if you look at children but also young adults, if they are more like 16, they would have information and they would be aware of what is going on around them or in their environment. They may be able to provide a perspective which might help inform the Ombudsman in an investigation, but it is obviously important that there are, as part of that, appropriate checks and balances in place so that those children are protected.

As I have indicated, this is an extensive piece of legislation that has come before the Parliament. I received the bill in the last sitting week, and it is indeed a weighty tome. I think it demonstrates the level of work that has occurred over a lengthy period of time to

get the balance right. I am delighted to make a contribution on the bill because I feel that it does get the checks and balances right. It brings our integrity and oversight regime forward into the 21st century, and I think it really is a testament to those on this side of the house. We actually take this stuff very seriously, we properly and thoroughly research our material and we bring before the house extensive legislation like this. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (17:00) — I am pleased also to rise to make a contribution in relation to the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. I particularly want to rise to support the reasoned amendment that was moved by the member for Warrandyte, which says:

That all the words after ‘That’ be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words ‘this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the house has assurances from the government that every government department and agency is covered by the bill and no government agency or department will be exempt from the provisions of the bill by way of agreements with the government’.

That is what I am rising to support this afternoon. It is very important that this matter is addressed by the government before we bother to discuss this bill in any detail.

That issue has been dramatically highlighted in the press today. The front page of the *Herald Sun*, Tuesday, 6 March 2018, says, ‘Mates rates: Exclusive — Pay and perks bonanza for fire union’. That is on page 1. On page 4 it goes into a couple of aspects which I want to discuss now. In particular I want to look at what has been described in the article as the ‘deal of the century’. In particular I want to mention the provision within this agreement that is mentioned in the *Herald Sun* under the heading ‘Veto’. The article states:

All MFB policies including bullying, harassment, equal opportunity, fraud and corruption, conflict of interest, whistleblower, and any new policies must be signed off by union. Includes all standard operating procedures, operational work instructions and directions from the chief officer.

It goes on:

No email monitoring or surveillance by MFB on staff; no CCTV cameras can be installed without union approval.

And finally:

Changes to any state or commonwealth laws cannot be implemented at MFB without consultation and agreement by union.

We have got the extraordinary situation under this enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA), which has been outlined in the paper today, that the union will have the upper hand over the government. That is quite an extraordinary situation for us to be facing here in Victoria. For legislators within this place to be in a situation where there could be a union that is not subject to the legislation of Victoria — and certainly not in relation to this particular bill, which goes to the very heart of the matters that this article brings out, as well as in relation to accountability and integrity — is extraordinary, and it should not be tolerated. That is why I am very keen to support the member for Warrandyte's reasoned amendment.

The article goes on to say:

There are also concerns about equal opportunity.

One source said there was a fear the EBA made it 'almost impossible' for the MFB to investigate any allegations of bullying or harassment because it would be unable to check emails or communication within the organisation.

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is sitting on a report into bullying and diversity in fire services because of legal action taken by the UFU. Any action recommended as a result of that report would have to go through a consultation process with the UFU.

Any MFB disciplinary action under the new deal would involve a process of up to five steps.

We can see there in black and white that the tail is wagging the dog, and that is an unbelievable situation and one that we on this side will not put up with under any circumstances.

It is interesting to note that at the start of this debate today the Attorney-General, who I note is at the table, introduced a range of amendments, which included, in the first of his amendments, omitting clause 111 from the bill. That clause amends the Constitution Act 1975, and as a result of that it needs a special majority of the Parliament. Rather than risk not getting that majority, the attorney has — after, I am sure, consulting widely — removed that clause from the bill. It is a way of avoiding this chamber requiring a special majority on this bill.

To me that epitomises the government's attitude towards this bill. They want to be seen to be doing certain things in relation to this space, but if you cut to the chase and if it looks like the bill needs some improvement or is under threat because of the fundamental problem that arises from the matters that I just referred to that were in the paper today — rather than face that — they will cut and run. That is exactly

what they have done in relation to this clause. There are a number of other amendments that have been introduced by the attorney, but that is the critical one. It shows to me the heart of the government. They would rather cut the corner, get rid of that clause and just ram the bill through this place so they do not have to worry about the matters that the member for Warrandyte has very importantly raised.

Integrity and accountability in the public sector, and indeed anywhere in the community, are absolutely vital. But if you look at the current government's attitude towards that issue, you will see that their talk is very cheap. You can see the black letter words on the page here, but if you look at the heart of the government, it is not prepared to toe the line in many of these areas.

The example that leaps immediately to my mind is the red shirts rorting affair. The government initially denied that it had anything to do with that issue, but of course a Labor Party member was the whistleblower. The government at the time said, 'There's nothing to see here. We'll let everybody have a good look at it. There are no problems at all'. Of course since the investigation commenced and the reality of the alleged offending that took place has become apparent, the government has done nothing but attempt to stop the investigation.

How they have done that is well and truly on the public record. They have tried to block the Ombudsman at every turn. The member for Warrandyte in his substantive contribution at the start of this debate outlined that in great detail, and I will not repeat all that. Suffice to say, despite the government saying 'nothing to see here', they have relentlessly attempted to block the Ombudsman, including taking the Ombudsman to the High Court of Australia. As an aside, the cost to the Victorian taxpayer of the legal fees involved in all those appeals and in all those legal cases must be astronomical. It will be interesting if we can ever get to the bottom of that and see how much money you and I and all other Victorians have paid in relation to this. To actually take Ombudsman to the High Court to try to block a proper investigation in relation to the red shirts rorting affair to me is symptomatic of the attitude of the government really and truly towards integrity and accountability.

It has been interesting too that there has been no advice to either committee. As a member of the Accountability and Oversight Committee I found out that the committee was being scrapped when we received the bill in this chamber. There was no courtesy of correspondence from either the Attorney-General or the

Special Minister of State in relation to that, and I suppose that is their prerogative. But I too want to place on record my thanks to the staff members of those two committees, the Accountability and Oversight Committee and of course the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee. Certainly from the Accountability and Oversight Committee perspective, the team over there have worked very diligently during the course of this Parliament. We have tabled five reports to date and there is currently other work afoot in relation to that. The team continue to do a very diligent and thorough, outstanding job in relation to the work of that particular committee, the Accountability and Oversight Committee. I want to thank them for their work and, as I said, I support the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Warrandyte.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (17:09) — It gives me pleasure to speak on this very important bill, the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. As the minister said in his second-reading speech, this bill does some very important things. Principally, and I start many contributions with this, it acquits our election commitments. This is a government that delivers on its election commitments, and this bill is no different in that regard. It acquits our public commitments, and I will explain a bit further about those.

The bill addresses concerns that people and agencies have expressed about the operation of the integrity and accountability system. It seeks to make the whistleblower protection system stronger and more accessible so as to encourage more people to report corruption and public sector wrongdoing. The bill seeks to modernise and clarify the Ombudsman's legislation. It does that by varying a number of acts on the statute books — for example, the Protected Disclosure Act 2012. It seeks to change the name of that act to something a bit more accurate and directed, namely, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012, which after all is what the act seeks to do.

This bill seeks to reform the Ombudsman Act 1973 by providing the Ombudsman with clear jurisdiction over publicly funded services. Other provisions include allowing people aged 10 to 16 to provide information to the Ombudsman, of course with relevant safeguards and on a voluntary basis. Other speakers have talked about amending the parliamentary system of oversight to make it more coherent.

The bill is the culmination of a significant review of the entire integrity framework in Victoria. It builds on a legacy this government has already created, and that is the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (A Stronger System) Act 2016. When the other side talk about and point the finger at us in terms of integrity and accountability, we have a track record of commitment in this regard. I will speak a bit more about that in a moment.

The bill acquits the government's public and election commitments. It does that through seeking to amend various parts of the statute books. It specifically addresses recommendation 18 of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's 2015 report on sex discrimination and sexual harassment in Victoria Police by removing confidentiality barriers that prevent people involved and protected disclosers from accessing support services. Recommendation 24 of the *2015 Review of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* said that the Ombudsman should have clear jurisdiction to:

... consider human rights issues relating to the administrative actions of all public authorities under the charter ...

In this case, except police personnel. It seeks to implement the majority of recommendations in the IBAC Committee's 2017 report and the important work that that committee did.

As the minister said in his second-reading speech, the driver of this bill and the driver of the government's commitment in relation to the integrity framework in Victoria rests around seven principles: accountability, independence, effectiveness, transparency, collaboration, cohesion and fairness. I think when it comes to those values and ethics, this government has demonstrated them time and time again.

The honourable member speaking before me talked about the fire services. It continues to amaze me, the audacity with which those on the other side speak of matters in the fire services when they absolutely abrogated much of their responsibility in their time in office. I will just pick two key elements of that abrogation of responsibility. One was ignoring the reports. I think today in question time we talked about nine reports into fire services, all of which found similar themes and patterns. Those opposite, over their four years in government — particularly a government that had the fire services in its sights in a previous term — did nothing to implement those reports or any recommendations.

We on the other hand sought the report that is now subject to legal action. We sought the report from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. We have committed to implementing its recommendations. As the Minister for Emergency Services said today, we are not waiting for that. We have already invested in the fire services to do some key things, including quadrupling the number of female personnel and recruits.

That is one element. The second element that continues to be a thorn in the side of the opposition but that they do not like to be reminded of is that they tore money away from the fire services, from the Country Fire Authority. They tore away some \$60-odd million. They put it in one year and they took it away the next.

But back to the bill, in terms of the amendments to the parliamentary committees that I mentioned earlier, parliamentary oversight of integrity and oversight bodies is fragmented with responsibility distributed across the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee, the Accountability and Oversight Committee and the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), a committee that I am on and that a previous speaker on this bill, the member for Essendon, is the chair of.

This bill seeks to streamline parliamentary oversight of the integrity and accountability framework by merging the IBAC Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee and naming the merged committee the Integrity and Oversight Committee. As is appropriate, PAEC will continue to oversee matters relating to the Auditor-General's functions; for example, performance audits, finance audits and a whole range of other things that come up. In fact that is correct, appropriate and consistent with the role played by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee on behalf of this Parliament. It is a very important committee, obviously, and a joint committee that will continue to play the role it was established to play even with this bill going through the house.

I think that is an example of the strength of our accountability system. The Auditor-General serves an extraordinarily important function, and the office of the Auditor-General is obviously a key element of the strong institutions we have in this state and the accountability and integrity framework we have that keeps government departments and governments honest. By the same token, as we have unfortunately experienced in the last few years, the office of the Auditor-General also requires oversight for the good of the system and the functioning of the integrity system,

and that is what Public Accounts and Estimates Committee provides. I think the member for Essendon mentioned briefly the report that PAEC produced in relation to the former Auditor-General and his vacating that position.

This government has a lot to be proud of in terms of the accountability and integrity system in Victoria. It is a government that does not interfere in the same way the previous government, the now opposition, did in the role and the functions of the Chief Commissioner of Police through the debacle of the affair with Tristan Weston. It is a government that does not do the things that cost the taxpayers of Victoria enormous amounts of money through Ventnor and Fishermans Bend. There are a whole range of other things that those on the other side choose to ignore. This is a profoundly important bill. It is a bill that strengthens the system that we need for our democracy, our society and our government expenditure. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr WATT (Burwood) (17:20) — I rise to speak on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. At the outset — this is not going to surprise anybody — I certainly will be supporting the member for Warrandyte's reasoned amendment, which states:

That all the words after 'That' be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words 'this house refuses to read this bill a second time until the house has assurances from the government that every government department and agency is covered by the bill and no government agency or department will be exempt from the provisions of the bill by way of agreements with the government'.

I must say that when I looked through this bill — and I did have a bit of a look through the bill myself — I wondered a little about what the government were trying to do here and what they were trying to achieve. I was comfortable that we appeared to be coming to a position where we were not going to oppose this bill, and that was on the basis that we would take at face value what the government was saying to us and what the intentions of the bill were. But then we arrived in Parliament today and we saw that the government had signed off on the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA).

Some people might not think that that is all that important, but the reason I raise this is because of some of the reporting in the media today. Page 4 of the *Herald Sun* talks about some of the clauses in this agreement. We can look at the fact that there are a number of veto clauses. We can look at the point where it talks about:

All MFB policies including bullying, harassment, equal opportunity, fraud and corruption, conflict of interest, whistleblower, and any new policies must be signed off by union. Includes all standard operating procedures, operational work instructions and directions from the chief officer.

That is somewhat concerning in and of itself, but where we actually get to the crux of this bill is the bit where the article says:

Changes to any state or commonwealth laws cannot be implemented at MFB without consultation and agreement by union.

That goes to the heart of the reasoned amendment moved by the member for Warrandyte. We hear that the MFB will not be affected, but they are a government entity. Every government entity should be caught up in this. There should not be any particular entity which is given a leave pass. No union should be able to give themselves a leave pass for employees of a particular government entity in which they have members. They should not be able to get leave passes just because of a side deal with the government. When this issue is raised with the government and we point out our concerns here, instead of actually trying to solve a problem here, what the government does is bring in a bunch of house amendments which would mean that any of the concerns we raise will not have to be dealt with because they remove the bits that talk about needing a special majority or which would actually require us to support the bill or not support the bill.

As the member for Forest Hill mentioned, the first house amendment the government has put forward is to completely omit clause 111. We know that clause 111 does have an effect by way of amending the constitution, so we would require that special majority. Instead of the government working with us to improve the bill and to give us assurances — if we take on face value the intention of the bill — then it should not be too difficult for the government to give us those assurances that the MFB or MFB employees will be caught up in this.

The reason why the government has decided to omit all of clause 111 is that it is an amendment to the Constitution Act 1975. Clause 11 states:

(1) In section 87AAA(1) of the **Constitution Act 1975**—

(a) **insert** the following definition—

“*public interest complaint* means a disclosure that the IBAC has determined under section 26 of the **Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012** to be a public interest complaint;”

(b) the definition of *protected disclosure complaint* is **repealed**.

(2) In section 87AAL(1)(b) of the **Constitution Act 1975**, for “**Protected Disclosure Act 2012**” substitute “**Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012**”.

Because of the omission of those amendments there are a few other house amendments that are going to have to take effect, and these house amendments that the government have actually brought in appear to me — and I am open to members of the government saying I am wrong and showing me I am wrong — to be all about the government not wanting to give assurances to the Parliament or give assurances to this house that every government department and agency is covered by the bill and that no government agency or department will be exempt from the provisions of the bill by way of agreements with the government. That is what we are after as an assurance. That is what the reasoned amendment is calling for.

If the government is able to satisfy those requests, then we would not need to have the house amendments which have been brought in, because the bill would pass and we would not have an issue where we would not be able to get that special majority. We would be able to get that if the government could simply assure us that all entities, including the MFB, are caught up and would be included. I have got to say that if the government could assure us that the clauses in the EBA are not going to overrule legislation, then I am not sure we would have a particular issue with this and the opposition would not need to move this reasoned amendment. It is somewhat disconcerting that the government feel as though it is much easier for them to take parts of the bill out and to amend the bill through house amendments than it is to simply satisfy a very reasonable request from the member for Warrandyte, which is: tell me that the MFB is caught up in this bill, tell me that the MFB do not get a special leave pass, tell me that the United Firefighters Union and Peter Marshall do not get a special leave pass and that they actually have to comply with the law like every other law-abiding citizen in the state.

Leading on to law-abiding citizens — or maybe not so law-abiding citizens — while still talking about integrity and accountability, it would be remiss of me not to mention a notice of motion that we have on the notice paper which the government continues to refuse to let us debate. I note that that particular notice of motion is about certain members of this house and the second residence allowance. I think that is a particular topic of interest we should be getting to. I am not going to debate that notice, because that is not about this, but

on this issue of integrity and accountability I am not sure that the government can introduce legislation when we have a cloud hanging over the head of a parliamentary member of the Labor Party and another member of the Labor Party with the government refusing to actually do anything about that.

It does not surprise me that the government has taken this attitude, because I have talked in this place previously about the red shirts rorts. Given the fact that this bill actually does affect the Ombudsman, I note that it has been proven that the Ombudsman has the power to investigate the red shirts brigade and the red shirts rorts. It is very interesting that we have a bill before the house about integrity and accountability and yet we have a government that has no integrity in the way that it was actually elected. When we have got members of Parliament who clearly rorted their second residence allowances, when we have members of Parliament who clearly owe their election to the rorting of the red shirts brigade, when we actually have members of Parliament who I believe may have worked for other members of Parliament but were actually out campaigning for themselves by being paid to work in another electorate office on the other side of town —

Mr Burgess — Not in here now?

Mr WATT — In this very chamber at this very point. There may be members of Parliament currently who were being employed to work in an electorate office but who were actually campaigning, out on the beat, in a completely separate area. They may have been down in a bayside suburb campaigning when they actually should have been up in the north-western suburbs working for a member of Parliament. I would say that these are the types of things that we need to have investigated. These are the things that the government needs to make sure we actually deal with. It is very interesting that we would have a bill before us called the integrity and accountability bill when what we know is that the government has no integrity and there is no accountability when it comes to the rorting. I notice some members of Parliament roll their eyes, but those members of Parliament are the ones I am particularly talking about, who I believe should have been working but were being paid while they were actually campaigning for themselves.

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (17:30) — It is great to speak on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018 and to follow what has been, it is fair to say, a fairly fluid and wideranging debate. Sometimes it has touched on the

bill, but I think a lot of the contributions have strayed a bit further away. I wanted to make just a couple of points, particularly about the lead speaker, the member for Warrandyte. He made the claim that this is a bipartisan approach to the bill. Well, it is not a bipartisan approach if he puts up a reasoned amendment saying the bill should be stayed. I know he has taken a pay cut. There is the top 25; he says he is not in the top 22 anymore. He is sitting on the pine, still staying in the shadow ministry. But come on, it is not bipartisan if you have offered up a reasoned amendment based on absolute falsehoods.

The amendment that they put forward will not be supported, because they are an absolute stunt, because of course the Metropolitan Fire Brigade will be covered and will be required to comply with the relevant legislation. They will. They are a statutory authority, and it is covered by the bill. So this attempt, with the member for Hawthorn not being the lead speaker, just shows that when you dig down a few —

Ms Thomson interjected.

Mr RICHARDSON — And the manager of opposition business. It shows that he has to stay. You cannot replace that guy. Do not let him out of Box Hill. Wheel him out. If he has still got a heartbeat, you have got to keep him there because, I tell you what, he is carrying your team. He is carrying the opposition, and it shows when he is not here. They are all out of sorts.

This is a political stunt to just give them some speaking notes because they are underdone. They have not done their work on the bill despite the people who sit on that committee. When the member for Rowville walks in — and he has done an extraordinary amount of work as chair of the IBAC Committee — and has to write notes frantically before he speaks, it shows that he was blindsided and that clearly this was not the subject of bill briefings this morning. So they are being caught a little off guard, but hopefully they will see sense when it goes to the upper house and they support a bill that is really important. It goes to the heart of the work we have done as the IBAC Committee, particularly around the work of IBAC.

Maybe the opposition have had a change of heart about supporting IBAC. I mean, federally there is a big debate at the moment about whether there should be a federal oversight body. Currently the Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, has put that forward as a key priority and that has not been supported by the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. So maybe they have had a change of heart.

One thing I am really impressed with in this bill is around protected disclosure. We know it is very difficult for anyone to speak out in a workplace. Anyone who has seen corrupt, serious misconduct is putting their life and their livelihood on the line. We have heard evidence from people who have been damaged after making a disclosure, after standing up for their values and making what is now termed — and I think it is a better term — a public interest complaint. They are, as public servants, defending the interests of Victorian taxpayers. Where there is a misappropriation of funds, they are there to speak out and protect the management of our state and investment in a range of projects.

It would be a very daunting thing. In some of the evidence we heard from people, lives have been destroyed by making those statements and taking a stand. To those people who had the courage to speak out and have led to certain inquiries and who have participated in public hearings as innocent parties, we thank you. You have helped create a better system in Victoria, and that is exactly why the IBAC system, the bill and the strengthening of this work is so important.

I wanted to also touch on the public hearings that occur. We have heard, throughout the time that I have been on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee, about the balance in holding public hearings. Whenever you are associated with IBAC there is the risk of your reputation being impinged on by association — that is always the balance of public hearings. But one clear thing we got from the education department inquiry was that public hearings brought forward so many more items of evidence. That was really important in getting more witnesses to come forward and support the work. But for those public hearings we might not have uncovered the full details.

It would be remiss of me to not go to protected disclosures — which would be public interest disclosures. We have had an exceptional circumstance in the 58th Parliament where we have had a member of this place refer themselves to IBAC — it is uncommon to refer yourself to IBAC — and put forward that they should be investigated. And who would that be? That would be the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has put forward an investigation into himself.

I am so thankful, and I will take members through the important stuff on how you make a complete IBAC referral, because I think it is really important that people understand that the investigation that the

Leader of the Opposition asked for into himself just might not be completed yet. He might have missed a few steps. If you get online and go to www.ibac.vic.gov.au, you can have a look at how to make a complaint. You have got to understand what to do and what we can and cannot investigate. Well, you have got an alleged serious corrupt conduct — tick, you have got to put that forward. You have got to check if you have the right agency in Victoria. I think he had the right agency, he went straight to IBAC. You have got to be clear who you are complaining about. That is the extraordinary thing, he was complaining about himself — absolutely himself.

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

Quorum formed.

Mr RICHARDSON — The Leader of the Opposition has only gone halfway towards complaining about himself. That is step three. What I am so glad about is that protected disclosure legislation will mean that the Liberal Party cannot take action against him. He will be protected to make the complaint against himself, to allege the corrupt conduct against himself and to ask for that investigation into himself — and the Liberal Party will not be able to sack him. They will not be able to remove him and it is a great thing. I think that also potentially applies to the Victorian Parliament. There might be findings beyond that, but before that investigation is concluded he can carry on as the Leader of the Opposition.

But he has missed some very important points. He still has got to put forward what happened and what the nature of the complaint was. He has never detailed the complaint he was making against himself. IBAC will not be limited to just the dinner. IBAC does not have jurisdiction on how many people sat down at the Lobster Cave down in Beaumaris, whether it was 20 or 10 or seven. They do not make findings about the numbers or who was there, but he should turn over everything that he has done, including when he was planning minister, because that would be a nice protected disclosure. At least then all the information on Fishermans Bend and who benefited and who made money and who donated would all be out there.

So my message to the Leader of the Opposition is: get on the website www.ibac.vic.gov.au. Have a look at the seven steps to go through on your complaint because you have not quite done it yet — you still have to put the dot points to IBAC so they can have a fair look at you. It is not done yet. It is not completed and it was a

complete abuse of their process to say that you were acquitted when you were not acquitted because you actually did not lodge the complaint right. You did not put it in the right form in the right jurisdiction.

Go back and have another crack. Number seven, if you are calling us, grab a pen and paper and maybe go down to Beaumaris for a bit of lobster with your mates as well, and find out exactly whether there is jurisdiction over the donations that you were talking of and the paper bags that you were talking to because that is coming along. That is still there. You have not put that forward yet. You still have to do that. You can turn over all the tape recordings. We do not even need the covert powers of IBAC, because the tapes were already there. They were dropped out to the media, so there is no need for covert powers. We know the member for Hastings gets a bit sensitive about that — because who was also at the dinner, brother?

Mr HIBBINS (Prahran) (17:40) — I rise to speak on behalf of the Greens on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. This is a bill that makes a number of changes to Victoria's integrity system, most significantly around protected disclosures but also to the powers of IBAC and the Ombudsman, and changes to the oversight committees as well. The Greens will be supporting this bill. It has been an ongoing journey since IBAC was created to get the sort of integrity system that we need in Victoria. Subsequent to this bill, there is still more to be done, which I will outline later on.

I will start with a bit of history on an anti-corruption commission in Victoria. As previously pointed out, there was resistance from the previous Brumby Labor government to setting up an anti-corruption body. The former Premier has even outlined, subsequent to that, that he thought the existing arrangements were satisfactory. Following the election of the previous Liberal government, IBAC was set up, and in setting that body up there were a number of flaws in the original legislation. It is a bit unfair to call it —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Edbrooke) — There is too much audible noise in the chamber. I ask members to refrain from speaking.

Mr HIBBINS — It was a bit harsh to call IBAC a toothless tiger, but it did have issues with just exactly what it could investigate. There was a need for them to lower the bar for what matters they were able to pursue without getting caught up with people trying to use

legal technicalities to delay investigations, as well as having the ability to conduct preliminary investigations which, to the government's credit, was addressed in previous legislation. It is absolutely critical for an effective anti-corruption agency to have the power to root out corruption wherever there is the barest whiff of impropriety without, the Greens feel, overly prescriptive legislation that could either limit its ability to pursue a matter or make it subject to legal proceedings designed to stymie those investigations.

I will preference my comments on the bill by saying that it has been a pleasure to have been on the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee that has looked at a number of these issues that are addressed in this bill. It is certainly welcome to see a number of recommendations from various committee reports being adopted by the government.

The bill is a very extensive bill so I will not go into every single detail; I will just outline some of the important matters. There have been changes to protected disclosures. Again some of these were recommendations which the IBAC Committee put forward, including changing the title of the act to include 'public interest disclosures', which better communicates the public interest nature of the disclosures than protected disclosures. It also allows for a complainant, someone who is subject to protected disclosure, at some point if they deem it necessary — for example, if there has been a delay in the agency following up their complaint — to disclose to a journalist and still retain those protections. There are confidentiality provisions, if breached, that could result in forfeiting that protection. Certainly it is in the public interest for a complainant to be able to provide that information to a journalist if they feel that the response from the agency they complained to has been inadequate.

There are changes to IBAC. My understanding is that the changes are in relation to having public hearings only for serious and systemic misconduct. I do have some concerns around this provision because one would think it would go without saying that only serious matters would eventually go to a public hearing. But IBAC should be able to pursue matters or public hearings if they feel they are in the public interest without overly prescriptive legislation preventing them from doing that. We will have a further look at that particular element in the bill.

The bill allows IBAC to park or defer a decision to investigate a complaint or to make a ruling, which is important because often concurrent investigations can

be ongoing, whether that is through the complaint being made to IBAC or to the police. It might be in the best interests for IBAC to defer that complaint until other matters are dealt with. In fact the previous IBAC Commissioner raised this particular issue where, under legislation, they were not permitted to defer a decision. They had to either dismiss the complaint or make an investigation, where that would not be appropriate. We certainly welcome those changes.

There are changes to how the oversight committees will work. There is going to be a merger of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee into a new Integrity and Oversight Committee. I think that is a good move as long as, as previous speakers have pointed out, it is properly resourced. It will probably be able to provide a bit more of a holistic oversight of the integrity agencies. It is certainly important given the expanded powers that that committee will have. It will allow members to develop further expertise in this area. The greater powers that the committee will have are important, because one part of a strong oversight and integrity agency is its independence from the executive.

Budgets will be determined for each of IBAC, the Victorian Inspectorate (VI) and the Ombudsman in consultation with the Integrity and Oversight Committee, and they will have their annual appropriations specified in the Parliament's appropriation bill rather than as part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. That is a welcome move, because what we have seen in New South Wales is that the government has essentially waged war on ICAC, their anti-corruption commission, which I think has now resulted in their budget being cut, and that is an appalling outcome. I am not entirely sure about the budget arrangements in New South Wales, but further independence from the executive for the budgeting of oversight agencies would limit any abuse by the executive through cutting that integrity agency's funding.

Finally, the oversight committee will be empowered and legislated to conduct an audit of IBAC, VI and the Ombudsman, which is certainly something that the IBAC Committee looked into and recommended. It will go a long way in ensuring that we have an effective anti-corruption body and oversight agencies. That is a welcome change.

Where I do think the government needs to be going in terms of integrity legislation is the oversight of members of Parliament and the integrity framework around MPs. As has been raised by other members, we

have seen scandal after scandal, over not just this term but the last term as well. The previous speaker, the member for Mordialloc, addressed the Leader of the Opposition referring himself to IBAC, as if that was a move to draw a line under the scandal that he found himself embroiled in, knowing full well that IBAC did not have the power to investigate that matter. When we look at the circumstance that the Leader of the Opposition found himself in, and a lot has been made of him going to dinner and having dinner with an alleged mobster, I think all the jokes around the lobster seemed to miss the point.

I think the real issue here is that there were people on the record who were seeking to use our very lax donations laws to funnel money into the Liberal Party. That was on the record. We had an alleged mobster as part of that plot, and then what we are supposed to believe is that the Leader of the Opposition was none the wiser — that he was just attending dinner. So it was far more serious, I think, than just having jokes about lobsters. The response to refer himself to IBAC, full well knowing that they did not have the ability to address such a matter, was really a bit of a farce, and I think it could be addressed if we could actually strengthen IBAC's role to oversight of the members and ministers codes of conduct.

We have had this year the disappointment around the second home allowance, the resignations last year of the former Speaker and Deputy Speaker from their roles in regard to this matter and again the further issue of those members not being referred to the Privileges Committee. Seemingly the government is using its powers within this chamber not to refer those members, when under the previous government, where my understanding is there was a smaller amount of money involved, the matter of the member for Frankston did actually go to the Privileges Committee in that Parliament. We have not been given any real reason as to why those members have not been referred to the Privileges Committee. Again I think that could be addressed if IBAC or an independent parliamentary standards commissioner was actually given the power to investigate and look into breaches of the members and ministers codes of conduct.

Again we have had issues around lobbyists. We have had Stephen Conroy, who the papers would describe as a factional warlord, acting as a lobbyist for the gambling industry. This normally would be in breach of federal lobbying rules, but it is not in breach of state lobbying rules. I think it would be best practice if we had codes of conduct or rules around lobbyists, not just a document overseen by a department but actually put

into legislation. I think with areas where members of a national executive were also registered lobbyists, we could iron some of those issues out.

Mr Burgess interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — We will have to wait until the Tasmanian disclosures come out before we start talking about donations from gamblers and who has got the biggest ever.

We have had the rorts for votes scandal. Again it is probably not appropriate to say that. These are allegations at this stage, but they are allegations that this government has failed and has looked to prevent the Ombudsman from investigating at every turn — every step of the way. It has taken the Ombudsman to court to prevent these matters being investigated. It is just ridiculous. There are a whole range of issues that have come up in this term of government and in the last term of government. We really need to start looking at the integrity of members of Parliament and political parties.

As I said, we should be looking at lobbyist reform and we should be making sure that we actually put out a lobbyist code of conduct and tighten up arrangements to make sure that a member of a political party's national executive cannot be a registered lobbyist. That should be in legislation. We should also be making sure that there is appropriate post-employment separation for ministers, making sure that you cannot have ministers and ministers advisers having a revolving door out of government straight into either being lobbyists or working for a company that is highly regulated by the government. It is just completely inappropriate to have a person potentially using the information and what they gained from either being a minister or working for a minister, working within the executive, to suddenly benefit a private company after they are employed.

We do need to overhaul the MPs code of conduct, and I am glad to see that that is actually on the notice paper after I raised it last year as an adjournment matter. It is good to see that the government is acting on that. I will probably speak more to that when it hopefully comes before this Parliament. I am not exactly sure what the delay is. Again I think the real issue with that is the oversight of that code of conduct, both an MPs code of conduct and the ministerial code of conduct.

At the moment the best suggestion I think the government has come up with is an ethics adviser. I think it would be appropriate to have an independent parliamentary standards commissioner with the power to investigate and make rulings on breaches of codes of

conduct and for that body to be placed potentially within IBAC itself and to have all the powers and all the resources available that IBAC has. That would mean we would not have this ridiculous situation where members have, on the face of it — and this has been reported by the Audit Committee — breached their entitlements yet are not facing sanction from this house and are not facing referral to the Privileges Committee because the government, the executive of the day, is using its numbers to protect them. It is simply an untenable situation. Certainly I think we could do a lot more towards having far better oversight and far better rules around enforcing the code of conduct for MPs and ministers.

As the member for Hastings has brought up, yes, I think we need donations reform. Again the government have indicated that they are interested in donations reform. They put something —

Mr Burgess interjected.

Mr HIBBINS — That is right, and I would give that advice right back to the Liberal Party: stop taking donations from property developers and then making decisions that benefit those property developers. I actually missed out on referring that particular incident. That particular decision looms large not over this Parliament but over my constituents. The council did not support a planning application in Forrest Hill, yet the previous planning minister moved in, changed the planning scheme at the stroke of a pen — on behalf of a developer who was also a Liberal donor — to approve it far beyond what the local planning scheme allowed. Even worse, that developer went on to not actually build the building but flip it and make millions in profit. It is just outrageous, the complete conflict of interest.

Absolutely yes, we should be stopping donations from not just property developers but the gambling industry as well. We saw what happened in Tasmania. When political parties decide to take a strong line against pokies, the gaming industry sink all their money into that campaign. It is absolutely corrupting our democracy. Yes, we need to enforce donations reform. So I would encourage the government, who made announcements last year, to actually show us this legislation and bring on this legislation, because it is absolutely critical to the proper functioning of our democracy.

We will be supporting this legislation. I am not convinced of the opposition's reasoned amendment. I think we can probably address some of the issues; it might be worth having a look. If

this bill were to go into consideration in detail, we could certainly answer some of the questions, so I am not convinced of the reasons to support the opposition's reasoned amendment. We will be supporting this legislation. We welcome the strengthening of our integrity agencies. I would urge the government not to stop there but to go further.

Ms THOMSON (Footscray) (17:59) — It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. I do so because this is a bill that actually reflects a detailed period of great consultation and the work of the IBAC Committee, and it reflects those consultations and the work that was done by the IBAC Committee in relation to public disclosures. I think that is a testament to the work that has been done by the department, by the minister and by the minister's office, in ensuring that those consultations were taken seriously and are now reflected in the bill. They were reflected in the response of the government to the IBAC report. This goes a very long way to alleviating the concerns that the IBAC Committee had in relation to public disclosures and protecting those who feel the need to disclose corruption where they see it.

The bill will ensure that genuine disclosures of serious wrongdoing are protected. It expands and clarifies the definition of improper conduct. It simplifies the pathways for disclosure. It protects misdirected disclosures, so they can still be considered public disclosures. It protects external disclosures in limited circumstances. One of the things that we heard during the committee's public hearings was the question of when can something be taken to the media, when does it become something about which you are still protected. There is a pathway for that, a clear way of identifying and ensuring some responsiveness from the bodies that are undertaking those investigations, for the people to go back and actually get some real information about where those investigations are going. The bill also permits disclosures about two new public offices: the Victorian Inspectorate and the Public Interest Monitor.

It is very interesting that during this debate members opposite have not bothered to really talk about the bill itself, about what is contained within it. Rather they have used the debate as a grandstanding exercise, not speaking about the bill at all. Their reasoned amendment is just a stunt in the Parliament, without actually addressing the main components of the legislation.

When the member for Rowville spoke, he said that he has no problem with the legislation, that he actually supports the legislation. He indicated that everyone in the chamber would support the legislation. I do not understand why we have a reasoned amendment when members opposite know quite well that any statutory authority will be covered by this legislation. As a matter of fact, included in this legislation is a bit of broadening of legislation to those who may be in receipt of public funds. I cannot understand why, other than for political purposes only, those opposite would stand up and say that we should support the reasoned amendment. They only do it because they are putting on a political stunt. Nowhere in the debate have they actually argued against the quality of the legislation before the Parliament. In fact the member for Rowville made it very clear that he supports very much the work of the IBAC Committee. So the reasoned amendment is a little bit of a pity.

I notice that the member for Prahran talked about how great it would have been to have been able to refer the former Minister for Planning to IBAC to investigate what might have been corrupt practices. We certainly have them in the western suburbs, in a little area called Joseph Road that overlooks the Maribyrnong River. It in fact has two 31-storey towers going in there, a 28-storey tower, a 24-storey and a 27-storey tower — in a very small area of Footscray overlooking the Maribyrnong River. What is it going to mean for those people who might eventually go in there to live? It will mean they will not be able to move. They will not be able to get out of that little gated community that will be created in that little triangle, thanks to the former Minister for Planning, the now Leader of the Opposition — and goodness knows how much he got in donations to approve those buildings, because no other planning minister would ever have approved them. I know for a fact the current planning minister would never have approved them. They are outrageous, absolutely outrageous, developments that will be a blot on Footscray for generations to come. I think that the opposition leader should be investigated for those kinds of decisions he made at the time that he was Minister for Planning.

I have diverted from the bill and I should get back to it. Members will note that I have not yet mentioned lunches with mobsters and eating lots of lobsters, but it is obvious that the then minister, now the Leader of the Opposition, had no shame about with whom he dined or with whom he made planning decisions — and they certainly were not made on the best planning outcomes.

From my point of view this legislation really does also go to protecting those who make a public interest disclosure. I think that is important, too. It will ensure that they cannot be sacked from their position, that they will be supported in the action they take. In committee hearings we heard from people who had made public disclosures and had lost their jobs, and so their income, and who could not mount a case without facing additional financial costs. The bill covers those people and ensures that if anyone does appeal a matter or takes up a matter, they will not cover the costs of other parties in the hearing. It is important that we actually are protecting those who make public interest disclosures that have evidence of misconduct and corruption within our government agencies and departments.

The other area I want to talk about is the merging of committees of the Parliament into an integrity and oversight committee as a whole. I think this is crucially important. I actually sat on both committees, the IBAC Committee and the Accountability and Oversight Committee. A lot of what we do is actually duplicated. It is really good to see that this is now going to be streamlined, and most importantly we are going to see the committee engaged in the development of the budget for these agencies — for IBAC, for the Ombudsman — so that it actually goes through the parliamentary budget process and does not just come from Premier and Cabinet. I think that is a great and innovative process as well.

In my closing remarks, I am proud to have been part of a government that over the life of its tenure, over these last three years, has made changes to the integrity regime. This is another raft of legislation being brought to the Parliament. It is certainly not the first. I think what I am most grateful for is the amount of detailed and effective consultation that has gone on to make sure that we have got it right: talking to those integrity bodies themselves, seeking from them what they need by way of powers and capacity to support the work that they do, and listening to the reports that have come from various committees in relation to how to better enable the new public disclosure regime to work and operate so that you actually not only protect those who make the public interest disclosure but also protect the person whom the disclosure is made against. Ultimately what we want is a regime where a person is protected and their privacy and confidentiality are protected up until and when there is a real case to be answered.

I think the balance within this legislation is right. I thank the minister for the work that he has personally undertaken and the time he has personally given to the

construct of this legislation, and I am proud to support this legislation through the Parliament.

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (18:09) — I also am very pleased to rise today to speak on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. I firstly want to acknowledge the extraordinary work of the Special Minister of State in bringing this bill to the house. This is a really significant reform. I have had the opportunity to look at some of the stakeholder consultation that has gone on in the formulation of this bill, and I think that that, in and of itself, has been very impressive. Maintaining the highest standards within our public sector and public sector entities is absolutely critical to the confidence that the Victorian people have in the capacity of the public service and other entities to deliver for them and use the power that they hold wisely and with integrity.

As a person who worked for many years in the public service prior to becoming a member of Parliament, I did want to use this opportunity to put on the record my absolute despair at what I read in terms of the IBAC investigation into officials at the Department of Education and Training, Operation Ord. How despairing I was and how disheartening it was to read of the way in which public servants had betrayed the trust not only of the children they served as public servants delivering education in this state but of the teachers who work so hard every day in our schools, of school principals, of parents and of people like me, their colleagues. I did just want to put that on the record personally. I know on this side of the house, without question we will not stand beside people who seek to exploit their positions of power and behave in such a way that really misuses taxpayer funds in the way that IBAC found that people had.

This bill builds on improvements made by the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (A Stronger System) Act 2016 — the stronger system act — which implemented government election commitments. Since then the government has been conducting a review of the integrity and accountability framework, and this bill is the result of that work. The government issued discussion papers in 2016 which invited members of the community and interested parties to respond to questions about the operation of IBAC, the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General. The government received 33 responses to those discussion papers. The discussion papers and responses are readily available on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

The Audit Amendment Bill 2017, which was debated in the Legislative Assembly in the last sitting week, implements changes to the Audit Act 1994 which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Auditor-General. This bill responds to concerns about the operation of the integrity and accountability system raised by IBAC, the Victorian Inspectorate, the Public Interest Monitor, the Ombudsman, the information commissioner and members of the community. During the course of the review there were also a number of parliamentary committee reports that highlighted the need for change to our integrity system.

The IBAC Committee's 2017 report *Improving Victoria's Whistleblowing Regime: A Review of the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic)* recommended significant changes to improve protections for those making protected disclosure complaints. This bill implements most of the committee's recommendations. The bill makes Victoria's whistleblower protection system stronger and more accessible to encourage people to report corruption and public sector wrongdoing. The bill expands and clarifies the types of public sector improper conduct that a person can disclose in a public interest disclosure. The public interest disclosure system is currently complex and is difficult for people to understand, so this bill clarifies, simplifies and increases the pathways for making a public interest disclosure and simplifies confidentiality obligations that apply to people who make and handle public interest disclosures, including to allow access to support services.

The bill strengthens protections for those making public interest disclosures. It allows protection for those who make 'external disclosures' — that is, public interest disclosures made to people and bodies outside the integrity system — in limited circumstances; and it protects disclosers from legal costs in the event that they are unsuccessful in a claim for compensation under the act.

The bill also renames the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012 and adopts the term 'public interest disclosure' across integrity legislation. The term 'public interest' as opposed to 'protected disclosure' is more readily understood and makes the scheme more accessible to the wider community. This terminology is recommended by Australian and international best practice literature and brings Victoria into line with almost all other Australian jurisdictions.

The bill also will make Victoria's integrity and accountability system more cohesive, robust and

effective. It does this by modernising and clarifying the Ombudsman Act 1973 to ensure the Ombudsman can effectively resolve complaints, investigate maladministration and promote improved public administration; giving the Ombudsman clear jurisdiction over complaints about publicly funded services; giving the Ombudsman modern functions to help her resolve complaints and promote improved public administration; modernising and clarifying the Ombudsman's investigation powers, including by allowing complainants aged 10 to 16 to provide information to the Ombudsman on a voluntary basis, subject to appropriate safeguards; allowing the Ombudsman to share information and collaborate with the public sector, effectively resolve complaints and help authorities to improve their practices and procedures; streamlining parliamentary oversight over key integrity bodies; merging the Accountability and Oversight Committee with the IBAC Committee and renaming that merged committee the Integrity and Oversight Committee; and providing the Ombudsman, IBAC and the Victorian Inspectorate with greater budget independence, similar to the Auditor-General model.

The bill acquits a significant number of government commitments and public recommendations to strengthen the integrity and accountability system and delivers a robust integrity and accountability system for Victoria. The bill also addresses recommendation 18 of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's 2015 report on sex discrimination and sexual harassment in Victoria Police by removing confidentiality barriers that prevent people involved in protected disclosures from accessing support services; recommendation 24 of the 2015 review of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, that the Ombudsman should have clear jurisdiction to consider human rights issues relating to the administrative actions of all public authorities under the charter except police personnel; the Accountability and Oversight Committee's recommendation that the government introduce reforms allowing the Ombudsman to notify relevant complaints to IBAC other than in writing; and provides the Ombudsman with a legislated education function, which comes from the 2017 report of the inquiry into education, training and communications initiatives of Victorian oversight agencies.

In conclusion, this is a comprehensive bill, one that continues the Labor Party's and the Labor government's proud legacy of reforming and striving constantly for reform of our integrity system. As I said, there is in my mind no greater breach of public trust

than for there to be corruption within government or in public service and public service entities. I am very proud of the work that this government is doing in order to ensure that we have a very robust integrity regime and one that assures Victorian community members and Victorian taxpayers that public entities and people who work within them are always behaving in a manner which we would all expect them to behave.

Again I commend the minister for the enormous amount of work he has done in bringing this bill to the house. It is a very good and very comprehensive bill, and it is one that I am very pleased to commend to the house.

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (18:19) — Increasing scrutiny, accountability and compliance is at the heart of this bill. I want to acknowledge the Special Minister of State, the advisers, the public servants and all of those who have contributed to this bill. It is an enormous undertaking which simplifies, clarifies and gives people greater certainty about definitions, and it provides a better system across a whole range of previous entities to make sure that we have scrutiny, accountability and compliance.

Put simply, some of the key reforms expand and clarify the types of public sector improper conduct that a person can disclose, to increase the pathways for making disclosures and to simplify confidentiality obligations. I know from an earlier part in my career when I was an investigative journalist that confidentiality is critical for people to speak up and to have faith in the allegations or issues that they raise not coming back to bite them, which too often has happened with whistleblowers in the past. That is one of their greatest fears; if they speak out in what they perceive to be the public interest, that it does not end their career or have other dramatic impacts on their lives. One of the other key reforms is protecting disclosers from legal costs and better enabling them to seek support services. They are three key propositions that give people the opportunity to make the disclosure. That is the first part.

The bill also makes further improvements to Victoria's integrity regime to ensure our state has the modern and effective structures needed to boost transparency and accountability in government. Amendments to the Ombudsman Act 1973 will clarify and modernise the Ombudsman's power and functions, which includes providing them with clear jurisdiction over publicly funded services and improving their powers to deal with complaints. The bill includes other improvements to enable the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption

Commission, the Ombudsman and other relevant bodies to work together effectively to further integrate Victoria's integrity and accountability system, including the better sharing of information to resolve complaints.

We have seen how this works in a whole range of different sections of the bureaucracy. What we are trying to do is get beyond the silo mentality and turf wars that can occur between departments and entities. This is about how we get better sharing of information in the public interest but also protect privacy, so it is trying to strike that balance.

These changes include improving fairness and safeguards for IBAC public examination, strengthening the Victorian Inspectorate's oversight of coercive powers in integrity bodies and streamlining parliamentary oversight by merging the Accountability and Oversight Committee with the IBAC Committee. The bill also includes other improvements to provide IBAC, the Ombudsman and the Victorian Inspectorate with greater budgetary independence, and that is important as well for them to be able to investigate and is similar to that of the Victorian Auditor-General. This is a move that is designed to protect their independence from government.

So again this is a fine balancing proposition. They need to have independence from government, they need to be able to investigate where the allegations and then the facts take them, and pursue with rigour. The reforms will help to build and maintain community trust. That is the aim. By promoting the highest possible standards of public sector conduct in a modern and transparent framework, whether it is modernising the Audit Act 1994, banning taxpayer-funded party political advertising or giving IBAC more teeth and more power, the Andrews Labor government is looking to boost public sector transparency and accountability. They are the broad themes and the overview that this legislation is attempting to crystallise.

Other key reforms about whistleblowers, if I can go to that, are:

- renaming the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 ... and adopting the term 'public interest disclosure';

- expanding and clarifying the types of public sector improper conduct that a person can disclose in a public interest disclosure;

- clarifying, simplifying and increasing the pathways for making a public interest disclosure;

- protecting external disclosures ... in limited circumstances;

- simplifying confidentiality obligations ...

That goes to the key points.

On the public interest disclosures, the bill acquits the government's commitment to review the Protected Disclosure Act 2012. Since this act was introduced IBAC, the Ombudsman, Victoria Police and other bodies have raised concerns that the act is complex and overly prescriptive and may actually deter people from making disclosures.

That is what I was referring to earlier. In an earlier part of my career I had to deal with people who were whistleblowers, who did want to speak out in the public interest, and this can become a harrowing test for a lot of people because it is not just about their professionalism, it is about their family and about how do they actually have trust that this will not end their career or have even more serious consequences. I have had to walk people through it. I have got them to get legal advice, to seek independent reference, to actually in one case go home and sit down the family and have the discussion, because you need to know what the consequences are — and too often in the past the consequences have been horrendous for whistleblowers. That is not what was intended, but that can be the consequence.

I have seen people who want to pursue an issue and who feel it is the right thing for them to then find out later it has had unintended consequences that have had a severe impact on their lives. So this bill looks to address a number of these critical issues, systemic issues, to put more light into those areas where government needs to be able to address what is actually happening so that we do not have wilful blindness, we do not have codes of silence and we do not have noble cause corruption. This is the proposition that the reputation of institutions should stand above justice for individuals. These are some of the key attributes this bill is addressing. The bill broadens and simplifies the types of improper conduct that a person can disclose in public interest disclosures by removing the complex and prohibitive general threshold that to be improper conduct, wrongdoing must constitute a criminal offence or grounds for dismissal.

The next point is more clearly setting out the categories of improper conduct in the act and including in the definition of improper conduct all serious professional misconduct and criminal conduct committed in an official capacity, instead of only corruption-related criminal offences and misconduct. The bill also clarifies that conduct that is trivial does not constitute improper conduct. This is a catch-all mechanism to ensure that the broadened definition of improper conduct does not

inappropriately capture less serious complaints. Again this is a fine-line balance that the minister and the government are trying to pursue. Also, it looks at expanding the definition of improper conduct to ensure that disclosure about all serious public sector wrongdoings can be protected under the act.

Clarifying the definition of improper conduct will help people understand the scope of the public interest disclosure scheme and encourage people to disclose improper conduct. The broadened definition is balanced by reforms to ensure that low-level complaints are not inappropriately captured by the public interest disclosure scheme — for example, by specifying that trivial conduct does not constitute improper conduct.

In summing up, this is a bill that looks to give people more faith in being able to be whistleblowers. It is trying to find the balance so that trivial issues are not captured, and then it is trying to set up a process where there is independence for the agencies that are the investigators, particularly with their budget, which allows them to proceed as they see fit and then also have the compliance mechanism and the rigour to back that up. I want to again acknowledge the minister and everybody who has worked on this, the consultation that has been done and commend the bill to the house.

Mr WYNNE (Minister for Planning) (18:29) — I rise to make a contribution on this important bill, the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. It is a long title but a very, very important bill.

I should first of course acknowledge the extraordinary amount of work that has been done by the Special Minister of State in bringing this bill into the Parliament. It is a weighty bill in every respect, and I think it is incumbent upon me to acknowledge my colleague, who has done a really splendid amount of work and really has brought a bill that I think will enhance both the life of this Parliament and indeed the public sector more generally.

I am pleased to follow the member for Broadmeadows, who has provided a particularly acute insight into the importance of this bill from the perspective of his former professional life as a journalist. Of course we well know of the member for Broadmeadows's distinguished career in journalism, and I think the insight that he provided to us through his contribution tonight was important, particularly when you are dealing with questions around whistleblowers — people who have been very, very courageous, people

who have been prepared to often put themselves on the line in the most precarious of circumstances where potentially their career could be destroyed. We do stand and acknowledge those people today, and I thank the member for Broadmeadows for the insight that he has provided to the debate today. It was very apposite.

In developing the bill the government has consulted very broadly with key integrity and accountability stakeholders on many aspects of the bill, including obviously IBAC, the Victorian Ombudsman, Victoria Police, the Victorian Inspectorate, the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, the principal public interest monitor, the chief examiner, the Auditor-General, the heads of jurisdictions, Court Services Victoria, and the Judicial Commission of Victoria. By any measure you would have to say that this bill has really been ventilated in all of the appropriate areas of government and that it has had very, very significant exposure and input from all of those distinguished bodies.

So what does the bill do? The bill obviously helps to acquit the government's commitment to provide Victoria with a robust and effective integrity and accountability regime, including by acquitting a number of public commitments, in particular evaluating the protected disclosure system, reviewing IBAC's public examination function and considering reforms to facilitate collaborative efforts between the Ombudsman and the public sector to resolve complaints. This was an election commitment that we went to the 2014 election with, and I am so pleased that we have been able to acquit that election commitment here in the Parliament today.

The bill will make Victoria's integrity and accountability system more cohesive, robust and effective. The bill will acquit public and election commitments, as I indicated, and the bill will address concerns about the operation of the integrity and accountability system raised by key stakeholders, including, can I say, in response to the government's discussion paper on the roles of the Ombudsman and IBAC, released in March 2016.

The bill will make Victoria's whistleblower protection system stronger and more accessible to encourage people to report corruption and public sector wrongdoing. The bill will modernise and clarify the Ombudsman's legislation to ensure the Ombudsman can effectively resolve complaints, investigate maladministration and promote improved public administration.

The bill's key reforms to the whistleblower protection system include some of the following: the renaming of the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 as the Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012 and adopting the term 'public interest disclosure'; expanding and clarifying the types of public sector improper conduct that a person can disclose in a public interest disclosure; clarifying, simplifying and increasing the pathways for making a public interest disclosure; protecting external disclosures — that is, public interest disclosures made to persons and bodies outside of the integrity system — in limited circumstances; simplifying confidentiality obligations that apply to people who make and handle public interest disclosures, including to allow access to support services; and protecting disclosures from legal costs in the event that they are unsuccessful in a claim for compensation under the act.

These are important reforms because as a Parliament and indeed as a government we must always be alert to the corrosive elements of corruption in public life. Our job as elected representatives is to ensure that right across the public sector we have in place the most robust and the most transparent reforms that ensure that there is confidence both in the Parliament and in the public sector more generally. When you see some of the work that has been undertaken both by the Ombudsman and by IBAC itself in terms of the number of high-profile investigations that have been both published and of course tabled in this Parliament, and indeed are currently under investigation, it is clear that we must ensure that we have vigilance in every respect in relation to the activities of parliamentarians and public sector employees more generally. This bill absolutely goes to that question, because we believe that we must ensure that the most fulsome set of tools are made available to these investigatory arms of government.

Increasing IBAC's public examination threshold to conduct that it consider to be serious or systemic corrupt conduct or serious or systemic police personnel misconduct, and specifying procedural fairness safeguards in relation to the examination, is something that we regard as very important. Abrogating the Crown counsel's privilege and overriding statutory secrecy obligations for all public officers, not just Victoria Police personnel, is again an important feature of this bill. The bill clarifies and strengthens the Victorian Inspectorate's oversight of coercive powers used by other integrity bodies, and again the use of the coercive powers is a very, very serious step. There must always be caution and checks and balances in the use of coercive powers such as those.

Obviously streamlining parliamentary oversight over the Ombudsman, IBAC, the information commissioner and the Victorian Inspectorate by merging the Accountability and Oversight Committee with the IBAC Committee, and renaming that merged committee the Integrity and Oversight Committee, is an appropriate role for the Parliament and one that I hope enjoys the support of the opposition parties, because for the Parliament to continue to have an oversight of these very, very important functions is an important role. It does also provide the Ombudsman, IBAC and the Victorian Inspectorate with greater independence in their respective budget processes, similar to the Auditor-General model. Again, giving independence to these bodies, particularly when they are needing resources through the budgetary process, sends a very clear signal of just how important these reforms are to the government and indeed more generally.

Finally, I am very proud of this piece of legislation. This is very, very important legislation because we must always be vigilant and we must always be clear-eyed about ensuring that the corrosive elements of corruption are both scrutinised and —

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

Mr WAKELING (Ferntree Gully) (18:39) — Here we are standing in this house debating the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. Can I start by saying that those opposite, when they were in opposition, actually criticised and opposed the introduction of this legislation. They actually opposed the establishment of IBAC. They actually opposed this type of integrity body being created in the state of Victoria. But as we know, this government is a tricky, murky government. We know that so much about this government is on the nose with Victorians. I just look at the first two main words in the bill's short title — integrity and accountability. You could not be further from the truth when you look at the way in which this government operates and the way that those opposite cover up all forms of activity that occur under their watch.

There is an absolute litany of actions that have been done by those opposite which they have fought tooth and nail to stop being investigated by the Victorian community. I know that the two members sitting up the back are exempt from this. They were not sitting in this house four years ago, but let me tell you, many of their colleagues who sat in this house four years ago were engaged in the red shirts campaign. One can only say

when we talk about integrity and when we talk about accountability: where is the government today? Where are the government members today to stand up and put themselves to the test of whether they acted with integrity and whether they acted with accountability? We know that Victorians know because the government went all the way to the High Court to stop that investigation from occurring. Let me tell you, there was no integrity and there was no accountability being acted upon by this government.

When we look at the activities of the roting member for Melton and the roting member for Tarneit, when we talk about integrity and accountability, where have been the actions by this government to bring those two roting members of this house to account? We know that this government is tricky and murky. This is a government that runs and hides from scrutiny. It is an absolute joke that here we are in this house talking about amending a piece of legislation brought in by the former coalition government and opposed by those opposite. Now they are sitting in this house amending the legislation and talking about strengthening integrity and accountability in the state of Victoria, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If Victorians want to know how this government actually deals with issues surrounding integrity and accountability, the horrendous situation involving the member for Melton and the member for Tarneit is still not being investigated by this house.

We had the member for Melton today with his question without notice. I thought this government had abolished Dorothy Dixers — the old days when a backbencher was handed a question and told, 'Ask this question of a minister'. That is exactly what we saw today: the member for Melton working in concert with the Minister for Education. We know that this government is not about integrity. We know this government is not about accountability. We know that this government is doing everything it can to protect the member for Melton. In fact they still count him as one of their own. He is still seen as a member of the Labor Party, and we saw that, plain and simple, today. Do not stand up in this house and lecture Victorians that you are strong on integrity and that you are strong on accountability, because Victorians know it is further from the truth of what we actually seek.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr WAKELING — The problem with the poor member for Mordialloc — we know all the problems that beset him at the moment in his local community. He would be better placed if he were to go and be out in

his community, to distance himself from the member for Melton and from the member for Tarneit, to actually say, 'I listen to my community and I understand my government, of which I am a member, is upsetting my community'. But no, he is toeing the line and being a good boy and is not prepared to stand up and fight for what he believes is right. We are putting him to the test. Is he prepared to stand up for his community? Is he prepared to fight for the issues that his residents are upset about? There is a test for you: show a bit of backbone, show a bit of integrity and show a bit of accountability. It is all there and it is ready for you, member for Mordialloc. Your residents will wait to see whether or not you are prepared to take up this matter.

As I have said, this bill, which is about integrity and accountability, is anything but about integrity and accountability because this is a government that has proven to Victorians, when it has been put to the test, that it fails when it comes to integrity and it fails when it comes to accountability.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (18:45) — I rise to make a brief contribution on the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (Public Interest Disclosures, Oversight and Independence) Bill 2018. At the outset I will talk about the purpose of the bill, if I may. The bill is designed to encourage and facilitate the reporting of improper conduct in the public service, to expand the range of bodies that may investigate a public interest complaint and to amend the various integrity and accountability body acts in order to make processes clearer and more efficient. There are a number of main provisions, and I will touch on a few before addressing some areas of concern in the opposition's position on this bill. Then perhaps I will expand on a few points that were so capably made by the member for Ferntree Gully when it comes to integrity and accountability.

In terms of the main provisions, part 1 of the bill provides for the purposes and commencement of the act. Part 2 relates to public interest disclosures, including issues of confidentiality and complaint-making processes. The various divisions under this part describe these provisions for the various integrity and accountability bodies. It also merges the Accountability and Oversight Committee with the IBAC Committee to form the Integrity and Oversight Committee. I will make just a couple of comments on that. It would have been respectful or courteous if the member in the other place — what is his title? — the Special Minister of State —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HODGETT — When a Parliament starts, governments and oppositions go through the process of setting up committees. They are formed by agreements, and obviously legislation is debated in this place. In this case I had the task of negotiating with the Special Minister of State about the make-up of committees, how that would work and who would chair them. I modestly say that I think we arrived at a very good outcome where the government made some concessions and we made some concessions. We had a good committee structure. Committees work very well in this place.

But with this bill the Special Minister of State has chosen to merge two committees. He is quite within his rights to do so, but it would have been courteous if the minister had perhaps come and talked about that, because it obviously changes the make-up structure and chairs of those committees, and it relies on our goodwill to maintain our agreement in relation to the rest of the committees for the balance of this Parliament. I just make that point, and I will take that matter up separately with the Special Minister of State. I work quite well with him, but it would have been a common courtesy for him not to just gloss over this but to have come and had some discussions around it.

Part 3 covers various amendments to integrity and accountability body acts, including changes to definitions, investigation procedures and the form of subsequent reporting. I will not go through the rest of the main provisions, but I will make a number of points about parts 4, 5, 7 and 8.

The legislation is designed to clarify the processes and procedures around corrupt or improper conduct in the public service and across government. In this regard the bill discharges its aim in establishing clear lines of responsibility, supporting a whistleblower's confidentiality and observing the rights of witnesses as well as articulating the methods of oversight of and for integrity bodies, which we recognise as being very important. The various integrity bodies have reviewed and given support to the areas of the bill that affect them. The opposition certainly supports a strong and robust integrity regime which aims to give confidence to those who would report corrupt or improper conduct and to deter those considering taking advantage of their positions in government and the public service.

That is an important point because it would give us confidence and give the public confidence if the Premier and the government actually did sign up and set an example of integrity and accountability. We are talking about deterring those considering taking

advantage of their position in government and in the public service. I have heard the contributions from both sides of this house, and certainly on our side of the house we have pointed to the examples of the member for Melton and the member for Tarneit, who rorted their second residence allowance. It paints all politicians in a bad light when people take advantage of and abuse the system and rip that money off. It is a pity that the Premier does not set an example here whereby he forces those members to pay the money back or certainly, as suggested in a motion moved by our side of the house, refers them to the Privileges Committee to go through those processes.

It gives the public no confidence whatsoever when people who have rorted their allowances get off scot-free and are not transparent or accountable in this place. It is seen that they get away with it, and that gives the public no confidence at all. So, as I said, this integrity and accountability legislation is very much a case of the Premier saying, 'Do as I say, not as I do'. We have heard the Premier say numerous times, 'The standard you walk past is the standard you accept', so it is a pity that the Premier would not actually put his money where his mouth is and set an example of integrity and accountability rather than just rely on others, saying, 'Do as I say, not as I do'.

Also mentioned a number of times in this debate are of course the red shirts — the community engagement group. Again it is hypocritical of the government to introduce an integrity and accountability bill when they blocked, stifled and fought in court and wherever they could, at every opportunity, an investigation into the red shirts. You have to ask what they have got to hide. If they have nothing to hide, why wouldn't they allow the investigation to go ahead rather than spending thousands of dollars to try to block such an investigation going through? To dish up an integrity and accountability bill smacks of hypocrisy. How can the public have any faith in the Premier or his government when you have got those two examples that I have mentioned, let alone many that we will expose and shine a torch on over the coming months?

On that note, I know there are other speakers on our side of the house who are very keen to make a contribution on this important bill.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr HODGETT — We share, mate. I did not see you get up and speak. I will conclude my contribution there to allow my colleague the very able member for Caulfield to make a contribution on this bill.

Mr SOUTHWICK (Caulfield) (18:53) — It is my pleasure to follow the member for Croydon, who made such a fine contribution, and the member for Ferntree Gully, who pointed out today a key element of the issues when it comes to integrity and accountability. We are dealing with a very, very important issue, and certainly we have heard from some people on this side and some of the others talking about the importance of integrity and accountability. But how —

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — Let us be serious, member for Mordialloc. How can we be serious when talking about an issue like this when we have a government that was formed doing everything that it possibly could to rip off the system? Imagine this for a minute: you see some advertisements in the paper saying, 'Come on down and be recruited into an office to be a staffer in the Victorian Parliament', and then you are told that you will not actually get to meet your member. Instead you will be issued your one and only red T-shirt, and that T-shirt will be used for you to go out there and campaign. On the front of the T-shirt will be three letters: CAN — Community Action Network. You would be out there and you would be doing everything you possibly could on the taxpayer to get as many votes as you possibly could.

Do you for one minute think that this has got anything to do with integrity? Has this got anything to do with integrity when you are using taxpayers money and when those individuals should be out there working on constituent issues and working as representatives? Instead they are doing everything they possibly can to rort the system. That is the way this government started in their election process, from their campaign to government and all the way through. We have not seen it change ever since. It has been like that from day one.

Mr Richardson interjected.

Mr SOUTHWICK — The smiling member for Mordialloc up the back in the fourth row has got his colleague the member for Melton getting up and asking the kinds of questions that he did today — Dorothy Dixers — after which of course the Minister for Education gets up and pulls out his preprepared answer and cheers away, saying what a fantastic job the rorting member for Melton is doing. He used a caravan for a second residence allowance, taking every single dollar that he could possibly grab on the taxpayers watch. That is what they have done — for the member for Tarneit it is the same deal. It is unheard of.

Where else would you have heard that you have got a Speaker, a Deputy Speaker and a Deputy President in the upper house all having to be removed in one term of government? Where would you hear this — three officers of the Parliament? We are not making this stuff up. You would not be able to create a movie this good. I mean, seriously, people out there would be thinking to themselves, ‘Well, a Speaker, a Deputy Speaker, a Deputy President — three out of four people who actually run the place’. This great place that we sit in, filled with years and years of history, is being absolutely tarnished by the Labor Party, tarnished by this government, tarnished by the Andrews government, and they have the absolute gall to bring a bill into this house with the title ‘integrity and accountability’. What a joke.

This party, when in opposition, would not support our IBAC bill, which was going to start the whole process of integrity and accountability. They have been missing in action when it comes to actually doing the hard yards. It is one thing to talk about this kind of thing. It is another thing when you are actually lacking in action. That is what has been happening in this government: they have been lacking in action.

We had a former minister in the upper house, Mr Herbert — let me just say ‘Dog-gate’ — using a chauffeured vehicle to take his dogs up to the country residence on the taxpayers purse. It is absolutely a joke of a government that has no integrity and accountability. If you wanted to make a movie, if you wanted to write a screenplay about something to show a rotting, murky, corrupt, tricky, disgraceful government that is out of control and looking for every possible way to get their hand in the cookie jar, then this is the government for you.

Before I finish, we just need to have a look at the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the United Firefighters Union. If that is not murky, if that is not a situation in which we do not have a department with full accountability, where we do deals to look after our union mates, where we look at corruption in the heart of everything that we do here, then I do not know what is. It is very simple: we know exactly where this government is heading. We know exactly what this government has been up to. This government is first and foremost looking after their mates, and they have no respect for the community and no respect for taxpayers. You know what? Many — not all, but many — started in this job looking at how much they would get out of it, and unfortunately it comes to bear —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The time appointed by sessional orders for me to interrupt business has now arrived. The honourable member may continue his speech when the matter is next before the Chair.

Business interrupted under sessional orders.

ADJOURNMENT

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

Maroondah Highway–Yarra Road–Kent Avenue, Croydon

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (19:00) — (14 086) I rise to draw to the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety the intersections of Maroondah Highway with Yarra Road and Kent Avenue and their need for improvement. The action I seek is for the minister to allocate funding to upgrade this intersection in this year’s state budget. This section of Maroondah Highway, Croydon, is heavily congested at the best of times and in particular during peak hour and school times, which forces a backlog of traffic onto local roads and creates thoroughfares through what are normally quiet residential streets. Residents living on streets that run off Maroondah Highway often contact my office asking for options and resolutions to the busy and sometimes dangerous levels of traffic flow on their doorstep.

This stretch of Maroondah Highway has two signalised north–south T-intersections in close proximity — one from the south and one from the north. Both Maroondah Highway and Yarra Road are under the control of VicRoads, and these roadways provide important links between local areas for pedestrians and school students. Consequently Maroondah City Council has a keen interest in ensuring suitable and safe pedestrian infrastructure is provided in and around this area. An independent review of the intersection was conducted, and it recommended a number of modifications be made to improve both pedestrian safety and vehicle movement in the area. The project is estimated to cost \$3 million, which is subject to a detailed estimate by VicRoads. I encourage the minister to look carefully at progressing this important intersection upgrade.

This intersection upgrade would deliver enormous benefits to the local community, with local schools Luther College and Yarra Valley Grammar carrying a lot of the through traffic from this intersection together with Croydon Hills Primary School and Yarra Road Primary School. It also serves as the major road into the

suburb of Croydon Hills, servicing the many local homes and businesses, the McAdam Square shops, Lipscombe Park Reserve, Yarrunga Community Centre, local churches, Candlebark Walk Reserve, Settlers Orchard Reserve, Yarrunga Reserve and many, many other parks, walks and reserves. This really is a beautiful area and a terrific place to live and enjoy.

I invite the minister to come out to visit to observe how these intersections currently operate and to witness firsthand the benefits an upgrade would deliver for the local community. The intersections of Maroondah Highway with Yarra Road and Kent Avenue are in great need of improvement. I draw them to the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in the adjournment debate, and the action I seek is for the minister to allocate funding to upgrade this intersection in this year's state budget.

Autism services

Ms WILLIAMS (Dandenong) (19:02) — (14 087)
My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and the action I seek from the minister is that he provide funding to Aspergers Victoria and also to Different Journeys to support their great work in assisting and empowering individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or Asperger's, and their carers. This is particularly important during this time of transition to the national disability insurance scheme, when many organisations like Aspergers Victoria and Different Journeys need extra support.

I met with representatives from both Different Journeys and Aspergers Victoria recently and discussed their work and the challenges that they face. For those who do not know, Different Journeys empowers young people with ASD to engage and participate in our community. They offer opportunities for people and their family carers to socialise with others, form connections and link with services and support. Aspergers Victoria also does invaluable work in our community, providing important programs, resources, information and advocacy for individuals with Asperger's and also their carers. They have a particular focus on empowering individuals with Asperger's to achieve their full potential. They were keen to emphasise to me the unique qualities of people with Asperger's and the enormous contribution they make to our community in ways that many of us may not realise.

Finally, I want to acknowledge that both Aspergers Victoria and Different Journeys are organisations that are run by carers, often at a huge personal cost both financially and certainly emotionally. Unpaid carers are

the unsung heroes of our community all too often. They make an invaluable contribution to society and have a profound impact on the lives of others. It is important that we recognise the important role that carers perform, that we respect their expertise and that we fund the organisations that support them and the work that they do each and every day.

Firewood collection

Mr McCURDY (Ovens Valley) (19:04) — (14 088)
My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The action I seek is that firewood collection coupes be located closer to country towns, particularly where there is an abundant supply. Trevor Beach of Yarrowonga only has wood-fired heating in his home. Over many years people who reside within the Ovens Valley electorate have had the opportunity to collect firewood from roadsides, forests and other areas where timber collection is sustainable. Currently Trevor must drive over 100 kilometres in order to collect firewood, which is very difficult, particularly when there is ample firewood within 5 to 10 kilometres of Yarrowonga. My constituents tell me that paying a fee to collect firewood is acceptable but the distances that people must now travel are extreme. I ask the minister to re-evaluate the firewood collection coupes in and around the Yarrowonga-Cobram region and request that coupes be opened where there are sustainable levels of timber.

Family violence prevention

Ms THOMAS (Macedon) (19:05) — (14 089)
In the week that we celebrate International Women's Day the matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and the action I seek is that the minister join me for a roundtable meeting with local service providers, including child and family services, the Centre for Non-Violence and Cobaw Community Health, to discuss progress on the implementation of initiatives following our government's adoption of each of the 227 recommendations of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Family violence is still the number one law and order issue in Victoria. The numbers do not lie: family violence takes up around 60 per cent of police time. A police officer is called out to attend a family violence incident every 7 minutes. We know that one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence and on average one woman a week is killed by her current or former partner.

This issue is very important to me. That is why I initiated the Macedon Ranges and Hepburn Shires Say NO to Family Violence campaign almost three years ago. This campaign aims to give courage and confidence to victims to take action and to let perpetrators know that their behaviour is not acceptable in our community. I look forward to hosting the minister in my electorate to discuss the progress that we are making to eliminate family violence in Macedon.

Country Fire Authority Armstrong Creek station

Mr KATOS (South Barwon) (19:07) — (14 090)
My adjournment matter this evening is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The action I seek is for the minister, in the upcoming state budget, to fund the acquisition of land and construction of a Country Fire Authority (CFA) station in Armstrong Creek. The land for the Armstrong Creek CFA station is located on the south-east corner of the Surf Coast Highway and Boundary Road intersection and was identified during the precinct structure planning process. The land in question is 1.5 hectares and it is proposed to house the CFA regional headquarters, an incident control centre, the Armstrong Creek CFA station and also a future ambulance station. The land to house all of these facilities needs to be acquired. The most pressing need is for the Armstrong Creek CFA station to be built. The ambulance station would be next cab off the rank, followed by the CFA regional headquarters and the incident control centre.

In a report prepared by Tract Consultants for the City of Greater Geelong the following is said about a CFA station for Armstrong Creek at page 5, and I quote:

In the early stages, the proposed CFA fire station may be volunteer operated, but the building design would be easily upgraded to an integrated fire station should Armstrong Creek service demands grow as the population becomes established.

Ultimately the land requirement for the Armstrong Creek fire station is approximately 6000 square metres with a 70-metre street frontage along Boundary Road. This level of fire station is estimated to cost approximately \$5 million.

Through CFA's future operational infrastructure planning (FOIP), steps are being taken to gain CFA organisational commitment and funding to establish a fire station in Armstrong Creek.

The FOIP identifies that the current Grovedale fire station, built in 1985 with limited space, is located within the Belmont brigade response capability footprint. The overlapping of the response footprints between Belmont and Grovedale creates an opportunity to relocate Grovedale brigade further south to support residential growth in Armstrong Creek without compromising service delivery to Grovedale.

I have spoken to the Grovedale volunteers. Although they agree that the station should be built at Armstrong Creek, they would like to stay as a satellite station supporting Armstrong Creek. Regretfully on Boxing Day this year there was a fire in Armstrong Creek where tragically a young lady passed away. Regretfully too, the Andrews government and the United Firefighters Union have tried to politicise this situation and effectively lay the blame for this at the feet of the opposition. The minister put out an absurd media release on 22 February in which he effectively did that — he blamed the opposition for there not being a fire station in Armstrong Creek.

Minister, you are the government, you control the budget and you make the decisions. You could buy this land tomorrow and fund the construction of the Armstrong Creek CFA station. In fact as the local member I would welcome this. Minister, you need to stop trying to blame the opposition, take responsibility and fund this important piece of infrastructure in the upcoming state budget.

King George VI Memorial Reserve pavilion, Bentleigh East

Mr STAIKOS (Bentleigh) (19:10) — (14 091) My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Treasurer and concerns an unfortunate funding shortfall in the upgrade of the King George VI Memorial Reserve pavilion in East Bentleigh. The action that I seek from the Treasurer is that he consider what assistance the Andrews Labor government can provide in meeting the shortfall.

It was announced last year, and it was a very pleasing announcement, that the pavilion at King George reserve would be getting a much-needed upgrade. It was an announcement that was welcomed by the families of the clubs that had outgrown the old and tired facilities at the reserve. One of the many problems with the current facilities has been the lack of toilets and changing rooms for women and girls. The current pavilion, like so many other pavilions, was built at a time when people did not think about women playing sport. Thankfully that has changed, but the infrastructure has not kept up with that change. Indeed the infrastructure is still outdated. The other major problem is the lack of a space for the clubs and community members to gather and hold functions or meetings.

I had announced a state government funding contribution towards the provision of facilities for female participants and shortly after council announced an \$800 000 upgrade of the pavilion. This was great news for the Bentleigh Junior Football Club, Bentleigh

Auskick, the Bentleigh Cricket Club and the East Bentleigh Central Cricket Club. But unfortunately the clubs have now been advised by council officers that the project has encountered a \$550 000 shortfall due to unforeseen structural issues with the building. Therefore council officers have said that the scope of the project will need to be scaled back. This is just a massive blow for the many families associated with that pavilion through the footy, Auskick and cricket clubs. I therefore ask the Treasurer to consider what assistance can be provided to meet the shortfall, because the families at all of these clubs have waited far too long for proper facilities at King George reserve.

Northcote electorate multisports stadium

Ms THORPE (Northcote) (19:12) — (14 092) My adjournment matter today is for the Minister for Sport. The action I seek is for the minister to commit, in the forthcoming budget, the required \$25 million to build the desperately needed sports stadium in Northcote for girls. For a number of years now Northcote community sporting facilities have failed to meet the needs of the community. One key example of this is that for years girls and women have been forced to travel outside the area to play netball as there are very few facilities in the area. This significantly increased the barriers to girls' involvement in the game and resulted in Darebin having participation rates less than one-third of the state average according to a 2014 Netball Victoria report. While the government has made some commitments to build more netball courts, the most important investment required to enhance women's participation, particularly in the evenings and over winter, is the proposal for the new multisports stadium at John Cain Memorial Park in Thornbury.

I want to acknowledge the excellent work of Darebin local councillors who have brought the issue to the Victorian government's attention. In 2014 the Darebin council conducted a feasibility study and in 2015 announced plans for a multisports stadium at John Cain Memorial Park. The stadium master plan was released in November last year, revealing the precinct will house six netball courts, a function room and dedicated changing rooms for girls. The stadium would benefit 5000 women and girls as part of the Let Them Play campaign — an incredible achievement. We know women still fall dramatically behind men when it comes to access to appropriate sporting facilities. It is astonishing to think that in this day and age girls have to change in cars as there are no women's changing rooms, and yet that is the situation in Northcote. This stadium will fix this situation and will be an important step in bringing greater equity to community sports.

I understand that the council has set aside \$6.5 million for the development of this stadium. Further, in light of the tragic death of our respected colleague and her fantastic work in championing women's causes, we call on you to name the new sports stadium the Fiona Richardson Stadium in her honour.

Regional and rural transport infrastructure

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (19:14) — (14 093) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and the action I seek is that the minister advise my community and indeed all regional communities on the detail of what is required to operate a modern regional train network, not only the infrastructure needed but more broadly on how this investment in infrastructure is supporting jobs and industry.

On the Seymour line we have seen new stations at Donnybrook and Wallan, and very soon we are starting with a new bus network for Wallan which will serve new estates and meet each train. Two budgets ago we saw a study into how we might possibly connect the Seymour line to the Upfield line, which would give a much better path and quicker services in that growing area and also up throughout the north-east. Throughout all the Labor government budgets there has been a focus on ordering new regional train carriages with 87 new V/Locity carriages ordered so far. This was first set out in our 2015 *Trams, Trains, Jobs* strategy.

Those on the other side had their chance, and they completely failed to invest in our regional network for regional communities. They certainly did not think about the needs of those in the outer suburbs that would potentially swamp the regional commuters. They made no plans. They were not concerned about local jobs in the industry.

Millgrove River Road footpath project

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (19:16) — (14 094) My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the action I seek from the minister is that she work with the Millgrove community through the Millgrove Residents Action Group (MRAG) and the Yarra Ranges Shire Council to bring to life the Millgrove River Road footpath project.

Millgrove is a small town situated in the upper reaches of the Yarra River. The river is a significant environmental asset of the town. This project is being driven by the local community in order to make their town more attractive to tourists and of course for use by

the locals. It is definitely a grassroots project. Established in 2005, the Millgrove Residents Action Group is one of the longest serving township groups in the Yarra Ranges. The community take great pride in their town and are constantly looking at ways to improve it. The group have credibility and are certainly known for their ability to get things done. In 2015 MRAG put together a community plan, which was acknowledged by Yarra Ranges Shire Council in December of that year. To develop the plan they went to considerable effort to engage with the local community. They had workshops, they had displays at the local market and they had a terrific program to engage with the local primary and secondary schools. It was a highly commendable approach.

The proposal to establish a river walk along River Road is a high priority within the community plan. It will complement the existing Dee Road river reserve trail and create a walking loop. MRAG last year coordinated a subcommittee to drive this necessary project. They have done a lot of the background work and have a very strong idea about what this would look like and where the footpath could go. But it is also important to look at the separation here of pedestrians from traffic along River Road. It is a busy road. It carries a lot of transport, including trucks that are not able to use the Dee Road bridge because of the weight restrictions, and sometimes the speed restrictions are not observed. There are children of all ages regularly using this to reach schools, shops and public transport, but a lot of older, more mature members of the community use it as well.

It is a great initiative and a wonderful project, and I really think that the minister should get behind it and work with the action group as well as the council. Melbourne Water will also need to be involved with that. It is something that can be driven and can be a great outcome for the Upper Yarra and in particular for Millgrove. It would certainly be money well spent to support such a strong community group.

Banyule Primary School

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (19:19) — (14 095) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education and Deputy Premier. The action I seek is for the Minister for Education to fund the Banyule Primary School master plan. I am pleased to say that in last year's budget the Andrews Labor government funded a \$1 million master plan at Banyule Primary School. I was pleased to take the Premier out there last Wednesday, where we accepted a petition from over 500 parents and local community representatives. We accepted that petition from William and Hannah, the school leaders, and Lisa and David, parent

representatives on the school council. My thanks to them and principal Sharon Marmo for briefing us on the master plan, which has now concluded.

We will work our way through pursuing funding for that master plan. My request of the minister is that we fund the master plan in this year's budget and that we work towards that. Obviously with a school of nearly 700 students it is really important that we stage and manage those works because the school needs to continue to operate while any capital works are underway.

Can I also say that over \$30 million in funding has been provided to Ivanhoe electorate schools in just the past three years: \$11.5 million at Viewbank College, my old school, which I was pleased to take the Premier to last week when we looked at the new performing arts centre and the classrooms already being used; and \$2 million for the new junior school at Ivanhoe Primary School. My mother taught there for many years, so it was nice to also see those works underway. There is \$10 million of course for the Banyule-Nillumbik Tech School, a tech school that is being built. My father taught at Banyule High School for many years. There is \$6.28 million for Rosanna Golf Links Primary School. Our daughter started school there this year, so I am pleased to see those works, which will conclude later this year. We have got \$3 million at St Martin of Tours Primary School, the parish in which we reside — that project is underway now with the Catholic Education Office — and \$6 million for a total rebuild of Olympic Village Primary School, a school that I represented as well when I was a City of Banyule councillor for Olympia ward.

What I would say is that if you want to represent the electorate of Ivanhoe, it is pretty important that you can demonstrate very clearly that you have lifelong links and that you are accountable to the Ivanhoe community. You live there, and every day you walk out the door you are accountable to the people in that community because you have lifelong links to the way in which you represent them and advocate for their needs. You empathise with them and understand what is important to them.

We are not waiting any longer. For the first time in three years we have over \$30 million of capital investment in schools in the Ivanhoe electorate. It is a great electorate. It is a place that got nothing under the four years of the previous government. In just three years alone there has been over \$30 million of capital investment. We know that we have great Catholic, independent and public schools in Ivanhoe, and that will continue under the Andrews government.

Responses

Ms ALLAN (Minister for Public Transport)

(19:22) — It is indeed a great pleasure to once again respond directly and immediately to the member for Yan Yean in regard to the adjournment matter that she has raised this evening. Yet again she has raised the issue of improved public transport services to her part of the world and indeed beyond, into regional Victoria as well. I think it is a timely opportunity to raise in the house and remind the broader community about what it takes to run a viable, modern public transport network. Certainly to run train services, guess what you need. You need trains to run train services. This is certainly something that the Andrews Labor government knows very, very well.

In every one of our three budgets we have put in an order for new regional trains; 87 VLocity carriages in total have been ordered over our first three budgets. Of course they are made over in Dandenong, in the member for Dandenong's electorate, at Bombardier. Why are they being built there? It is because Labor governments have historically set strong local content requirements to ensure that we are supporting our strong local rolling stock industry.

Of course, it has not always been this way, that we have had these sorts of orders for rolling stock. You can imagine our frustration and disappointment when we came to office at the end of 2014 to be told that because of the two-year drought that we inherited from the former government, which did not order new regional rolling stock for two full years, we had some catch-up to do. But we have certainly been working very hard to do that and have put in significant investment — 87 VLocity carriages, as I said — to purchase more VLocity trains.

As part of that rolling stock investment, we are also making sure that we are doing the work now so that when our regional rail revival package of works on the tracks has been completed we can run these new modern trains to places like Warrnambool and Bairnsdale and to places like Shepparton as well. Part of this is some of the redesign work. As part of one of our previous budgets we provided \$15 million for the redesign work of the VLocity carriages so that they can run those longer haul journeys, which is very important.

The other important thing to note is that you cannot just put this new rolling stock on track that is not equipped to take these trains. I know that this is not something that is well understood by those opposite, so I will take them through why this is important. You cannot put on these new, more modern trains unless you upgrade the

level crossings and you address the signalling works and address the track works.

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — Oh, my goodness. Can I put on the record that the member for Murray Valley — Ovens Valley; the member for Murray Valley was a good bloke — the member for Ovens Valley has said on the record that I am wrong. Guess what, member for Ovens Valley, I am taking my advice from the experts and the engineers.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — They are saying I had better get some new experts. It is so typical of those opposite. They want to sack public servants; they want to sack anyone who is involved with V/Line. They had a secret plan to sack 100 workers at V/Line, and it appears that they are still at it. They want to get in there and sack anyone who gives them decent advice. As I said, you cannot run —

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is not me saying this. Do you know who makes this a requirement? It would be the national safety regulator. The national safety regulator puts in place these safety requirements around what you can run, the speeds you can run —

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I am happy for you to put up a substantive motion and have this debate. I reckon we will have this argument and beat you every single day of the week on this argument because the facts are irrefutable. You cannot run the new VLocity trains on these longer haul tracks without addressing the level crossings and the signalling. Guess what, that is exactly what we are doing as well, as part of the regional rail revival package. So we are doing both: we are making those investments in the rolling stock that we need now, we are doing the design work on the long-haul services for the VLocity trains and we are doing the track work as well, as part of our regional rail revival package so that they can take those services. One of the great frustrations of course is that because we have had some delays coming out of Canberra we have not seen that regional rail revival money released. We will continue to work very, very hard to get that funding released.

One of the reasons why I am at pains to present this to the house tonight is that there has been an alternative proposal put into the marketplace. Isn't it a coincidence to see the Liberal-National opposition only talk to

country people on our country rail services in an election year? They are not interested at any other time of the election cycle. They only talk to country people about country rail in an election year. They think that coming along in an election year with a half-baked proposal, with a proposal —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — You cannot put these new trains on the tracks. What we have seen from this half-baked proposal from those opposite is that yet again they are wanting to dud country people. Not content to cut country rail lines when they were in government, not content to cut the V/Line budget, not content to have a plan to cut 100 V/Line jobs when they were in government, now in opposition they are being exposed because they are also wanting to short-change country people with their policy. Do you know what makes it even more interesting?

Honourable members interjecting.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Members who are not in their correct seats would be encouraged not to interject.

Ms ALLAN — Isn't it interesting that the empty vessels of those opposite that are making this much noise are refusing to understand the facts of the matter?

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is really interesting that the member for Ovens Murray yesterday walked out of an opportunity to be briefed by the expert engineers about the facts of what is going on on the north-east line. He was not bothered or interested to stay around and listen to the facts and was not interested in asking the questions of the engineers and the experts in the room. He chose to leave the room. He walked out of the opportunity to be presented with the facts. Thankfully other members of his community stayed and heard the facts. He may have walked out so he can run a political line in his community. And can I tell you what, Deputy Speaker, that is exactly why the north-east line is in this situation. For decades the community have been let down by Liberal and National politicians who have failed fundamentally in their responsibility to fix this line. The history of the north-east line is a troubled one.

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — It is an absolutely troubled one, and the first opportunity you had to sit around a table and join in a bipartisan way —

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I tell you what, Kenny Jasper would not have walked out on that meeting. This pale imitation of a local member over here. Ken Jasper would not have walked out on a meeting, and for the first time —

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — I am going to ask you to withdraw that. That is unacceptable.

Mr McCurdy — I withdraw.

Ms ALLAN — You know what? If I am a bit fired up about this issue, it is because we —

Mr McCurdy interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I would encourage the member for Ovens Valley to cease interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — We have a great opportunity —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms ALLAN — Well, if you would just be quiet for a minute and listen —

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! I would encourage the minister to not respond to interjections.

Ms ALLAN — We have got an opportunity, and yesterday in Benalla, just for the record, a member for Northern Victoria Region in the Council, Jaclyn Symes, and I invited the federal Independent member for Indi, the Liberal member for Benambra, the National Party member for Ovens Valley and the National Party member for Euroa to a broader community forum to talk about how we can address the issues on —

Mr McCurdy interjected.

Ms ALLAN — Well, you know what? You walked out! You walked out, so what would you know? You walked out. This is what we have had in the north-east: a history of National and Liberal Party members who have been more interested in taking for granted their community than getting things done. I am prepared to work with anyone. I have been working with National Party members in the federal government —

Mr Hodgett interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! Are you in your correct seat? I would encourage you to stop interjecting unless you want to move seats.

Ms ALLAN — I have been working very hard and productively with National Party ministers in the federal Parliament to get this improvement. The National Party member for Ovens Valley may choose to walk out on that opportunity, but I am not going to walk away from an opportunity to address the issues on the north-east line. That is why I am very keen to put on the record some of the issues around alternative policy proposals that are about short-changing country communities — short-changing those communities that need it the most — in stark contrast to the Andrews Labor government, which has been investing in rolling stock in every single budget.

Ms McLeish — On a point of order, Deputy Speaker, the minister at the table I think has gone well beyond the request in the adjournment debate made by the member for Yan Yean, because she is extending way into northern Victoria. The member for Yan Yean represents a very small area just out of Melbourne, so I would ask you to make sure that the minister is on topic.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Thank you, member for Eildon. The member for Yan Yean referred to all regional communities in her matter, so I find the minister's response to be on topic. Is the minister going to respond to other honourable members? The minister is continuing her response.

Ms ALLAN — Let the record show that the Liberal member for Eildon tried to gag debate while the member for Ovens Valley is walking out on meetings. It is just a joke from those opposite. I am very pleased to say that we are proud of our record investment in rolling stock. We are proud of our extra services. We know there is more work to be done, and we will not be short-changing country communities like those opposite, who only turn up at 5 minutes to midnight, run out empty promises and in government do the complete opposite, cut country rail lines and cut funding to country services. Country people know this too well.

Nine members raised matters for other ministers, and they will be referred to them for their response.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER — Order! The house now stands adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned 7.35 p.m.

