The Governor
The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor
The Honourable KEN LAY, AO, APM

The ministry

Premier .......................................................... The Hon. DM Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Mental Health The Hon. JA Merlino, MP
Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Agriculture and The Hon. J Symes, MLC
Minister for Resources

Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop The Hon. JM Allan, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Higher Education The Hon. GA Tierney, MLC
Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Industrial Relations The Hon. TH Pallas, MP

Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Roads and Road Safety The Hon. BA Carroll, MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Solar Homes The Hon. L D’Ambrosio, MP

Minister for Child Protection and Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers The Hon. LA Donnellan, MP
Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for Equality The Hon. MP Foley, MP
Attorney-General ........................................... The Hon. J Hennessy, MP

Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and Minister for Fishing and Boating The Hon. MM Horne, MP

Minister for Crime Prevention, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Youth Justice and Minister for Victim Support The Hon. NM Hutchins, MP
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Suburban Development and Minister for Veterans The Hon. SL Leane, MLC

Minister for Water and Minister for Police and Emergency Services The Hon. LM Neville, MP
Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, and Minister for Racing The Hon. MP Pakula, MP

Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services and Minister for Creative Industries The Hon. DJ Pearson, MP

Minister for Employment, Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy, and Minister for Small Business The Hon. JL Pulford, MLC

Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister for Community Sport and Minister for Youth The Hon. RL Spence, MP

Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood The Hon. I Stitt, MLC

Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs The Hon. G Williams, MP

Minister for Planning and Minister for Housing The Hon. RW Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary .............................................. Ms M Thomas, MP
OFFICE-HOLDERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT—FIRST SESSION

Speaker
The Hon. CW BROOKS

Deputy Speaker
Ms JM EDWARDS

Acting Speakers
Ms Blandthorn, Mr J Bull, Mr Carbines, Ms Connolly, Ms Couzens, Ms Crugnale, Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Halfpenny, Ms Kilkenny, Mr McGuire, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Ms Settle, Ms Suleyman, Mr Taylor and Ms Ward

Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Premier
The Hon. DM ANDREWS

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party and Deputy Premier
The Hon. JA MERLINO

Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party and Leader of the Opposition
The Hon. MA O’BRIEN

Deputy Leader of the Parliamentary Liberal Party
The Hon. LG McLEISH

Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition
The Hon. PL WALSH

Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Ms SM RYAN

Leader of the House
Ms JM ALLAN

Manager of Opposition Business
Mr KA WELLS

Heads of parliamentary departments
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Council: Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A Young
Parliamentary Services: Secretary: Mr P Lochert
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**PARTY ABBREVIATIONS**

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

Economy and Infrastructure Standing Committee
Ms Addison, Mr Blackwood, Ms Connolly, Mr Eren, Mr Rowswell, Ms Ryan and Ms Theophanous.

Environment and Planning Standing Committee
Ms Connolly, Mr Fowles, Ms Green, Mr Hamer, Mr McCurdy, Mr Morris and Mr T Smith.

Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee
Ms Couzens, Ms Kealy, Mr Newbury, Ms Settle, Mr Southwick, Ms Suleyman and Mr Tak.

Privileges Committee
Ms Allan, Mr Guy, Ms Hennessy, Mr McGuire, Mr Morris, Ms Neville, Mr Pakula, Ms Ryan and Mr Wells.

Standing Orders Committee
The Speaker, Ms Allan, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms McLeish, Ms Sheed, Ms Staley and Mr Walsh.

Joint committees

Dispute Resolution Committee
Assembly: Ms Allan, Ms Hennessy, Mr Merlino, Mr Pakula, Mr R Smith, Mr Walsh and Mr Wells.  
Council: Mr Bourman, Ms Crozier, Mr Davis, Ms Mikakos, Ms Symes and Ms Wooldridge.

Electoral Matters Committee
Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Guy, Ms Hall and Dr Read.  
Council: Mrs McArthur, Mr Meddick, Mr Melhem, Ms Lovell, Mr Quilty and Mr Tarlamis.

House Committee
Assembly: The Speaker (ex officio), Mr T Bull, Ms Crugnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Fregon, Ms Sandell and Ms Staley.  
Council: The President (ex officio), Mr Bourman, Mr Davis, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell and Ms Stitt.

Integrity and Oversight Committee
Assembly: Mr Halse, Mr McGhie, Mr Rowswell, Mr Taylor and Mr Wells.  
Council: Mr Grimley and Ms Shing.

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Assembly: Ms Blandthorn, Mr Hibbins, Mr Maas, Mr D O’Brien, Ms Richards, Mr Richardson, Mr Riordan and Ms Vallence.  
Council: Mr Limbrick.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee
Assembly: Mr Burgess, Ms Connolly and Ms Kilkenny.  
Council: Mr Gepp, Mrs McArthur and Ms Patten.
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Tuesday, 13 October 2020

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

Announcements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

Business of the house

STANDING AND SESSIONAL ORDERS

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19) (12:04): By leave, I move:

That so much of standing and sessional orders be suspended to allow the following arrangements to come into effect immediately and to remain in place until 16 October 2020:

A revised order of business

(1) The order of business is:

Wednesday
- Formal business
- Statements by members
- Statements on parliamentary committee reports
- Government business
- Question time—1.00 pm
- Lunch break and cleaning in the chamber—2.00 pm to 3.00 pm
- Matter of public importance or grievance debate—3.00 pm
- Government business continued

Thursday
- Formal business
- Statements by members
- Government business
- Question time—2.00 pm
- Lunch break and cleaning in the chamber—1.00 pm to 2.00 pm
- Government business continued
- General business.

(2) The Speaker may order additional breaks to facilitate cleaning in the chamber.

Times of meeting

(3) Unless otherwise ordered, the house will meet on Wednesday at 10.00 am and Thursday at 9.30 am.

(4) The Speaker will interrupt business under sessional order 2 for the adjournment at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, at 7.30 pm on Wednesday and 5.00 pm on Thursday.

Remote participation

(5) Members may participate in debate remotely using an audio link or audiovisual link as follows:

(a) the Chair must be satisfied that the quality of the audio link or audiovisual link allows the Chair to verify the identity of that member and for the member to participate;

(b) a member participating remotely is not counted for the purposes of a quorum and may not vote;
(c) members may only participate remotely to speak on:
   (i) motions;
   (ii) bills, including consideration in detail;
   (iii) members statements;
   (iv) statements on parliamentary committee reports;
   (v) question time—to ask questions only;
   (vi) grievance debates;
   (vii) debates of a matter of public importance;
   (viii) adjournment debates—to raise a matter only—
if they are included in the order business;

(d) members participating remotely may only speak when given the call, must comply with all the usual rules of debate and may not:
   (i) refuse leave;
   (ii) respond to questions without notice, make ministers statements or respond to matters raised in the adjournment debate;
   (iii) call the Chair’s attention to the state of the house;
   (iv) take, or speak on, a point of order unless it is taken by another member during their speech or relates to the answer to a question they have asked;
   (v) move a motion (except an amendment to a motion or bill when they have the call);
   (vi) interject;
   (vii) chair the debate;

(e) members participating remotely may circulate amendments to bills under standing order 64;

(f) in order to assist members participating remotely, the Chair will use a formal call list to allocate the call for each debate where practical and members wishing to participate remotely may seek the call by:
   (i) informing their whip, or the whip’s representative, who will inform the Chair in advance—for a government or opposition member;
   (ii) informing the Clerk, who will inform the Chair in advance—for any other member;

(g) when a member participates remotely, the Chair may exercise all their usual powers to control the debate;

(h) the Chair is given any additional powers necessary to facilitate the smooth running of the house and/or to address any technical issues, including but not limited to:
   (i) stopping the clock;
   (ii) returning to a member’s contribution;
   (iii) re-ordering business; and

   (i) the Speaker may issue guidelines about remote participation.

**Other business to be published in Hansard**

(6) Members who are not in attendance on the parliamentary precinct for a sitting day may submit:
   (a) members statements;
   (b) statements on parliamentary committee reports;
   (c) constituency questions; and
   (d) adjournment matters—
   for that day by emailing them to the Clerk by the adjournment of the house.

(7) The Clerk will accept matters up to the number usually given in the house minus any matters verbally given in the house each day, and as allocated between the parties and independents in accordance with the call lists approved by the Speaker.
(8) The house authorises and requires these matters to be published in *Hansard* at the point in the proceedings/order of business that the item would have occurred and after any contributions (if any) that have been given in the house:

(a) subject to the *Hansard* editorial policy; and

(b) if any matter contains unbecoming expressions or does not comply with the rules of debate, the Speaker may direct that the matter be removed or amended before it is published.

**Members to incorporate their speeches for bills and motions**

(9) If a member is not in attendance on the parliamentary precinct for a sitting day and they wish to incorporate their speech—

(a) for any bill on the government business program, they must email their speech to the Clerk by the time set down for consideration on that bill under the government business program; or

(b) for any substantive motion considered by the house that day, they must email their speech to the Clerk by the adjournment of the house.

(10) Incorporated speeches will be published in *Hansard*—

(a) for bills, after the relevant second reading speeches made in the house (if any) and before the minister’s reply (if any);

(b) for substantive motions, after the relevant speeches made in the house (if any) and before the mover’s reply (if any).

(11) If any matter contains unbecoming expressions or does not comply with the rules of debate, the Speaker may direct that the matter be removed or amended before it is published.

**Reduced number of members in the chamber to assist with physical distancing**

(12) Subject to paragraphs (16) and (17), the chamber will be composed of the Chair and no more than 24 other members, being 13 from the government, seven from the opposition, one Greens member and three Independent members.

(13) Except as provided for in paragraphs (16) and (17), if more members than those listed in paragraph (12) vote in a division, the Clerk will not count their vote.

**Quorum**

(14) The house gives the Chair further discretion in ringing the bells to form a quorum under standing order 29, provided the Chair is confident that a quorum is present within the parliamentary precinct.

(15) If, under paragraph (14) and standing order 9(1), the bells are rung to form quorum, the provisions under paragraph (12) are suspended until a quorum is formed.

(16) If, under standing order 9(2), there is found not to be a quorum during a division:

(a) the provisions under paragraph (12) are suspended;

(b) the bells must be rung for a further 4 minutes;

(c) the chamber will be composed of the Chair and no more than 40 other members, being 23 from the government, 13 from the opposition, one Greens member and three Independent members for the remainder of the sitting day; and

(d) if more members than those listed in paragraph (c) vote in the division, the Clerk will not count their vote.

**Divisions**

(17) For questions relating to the passage of bills on the government business program, and the question ‘That the Premier and the other Ministers of State for the State of Victoria no longer possess the confidence of this house’, the provisions under paragraph (12) are suspended and divisions will take place as follows:

(a) members will vote in up to four voting groups;

(b) for each voting group:

(i) no more than 24 members, in addition to the Chair, the Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business (or their representatives), will be permitted into the chamber;

(ii) the Chair will direct that the doors be locked and state the question being voted on;

(iii) the Chair will ask members who are voting ‘aye’ to stand in their place and, in turn, will ask members who are voting ‘no’ to stand in their place.
(iv) the Clerk will count the votes and the Chair will announce the number of votes cast for the ‘ayes’ and ‘noes’ in that group;
(v) subject to sub-paragraph (d), all members except the Chair must then leave the chamber;
(vi) the Chair will then ask the Clerk to ring the bells for 1 minute to call members to the chamber for the next voting group, or to resume the make-up of the chamber as set out in paragraph (12), as required;
(c) subject to sub-paragraph (d), members will only be permitted to enter the chamber once for each division and any member present in the chamber must vote;
(d) the Leader of the House and Manager of Opposition Business, or their representatives, may remain in the chamber for the entirety of the division, but can only stand to vote in one group; and
(e) at the conclusion of the four voting groups, the Chair will announce the result of the division.

Register of opinion on division questions
(18) If a division has taken place, a member not in attendance of the division can register their opinion on the question:
(a) any members wishing to do so must notify the Clerk in writing of their opinion (either ‘yes’ or ‘no’) on the same day the division took place by no later than 1 hour after the house adjourns; and
(b) any such opinion will be published, separately from the results of the vote, in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

I appreciate that this is a motion that is very long. It has been emailed to colleagues in the chamber, and I ask that it be adopted accordingly.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the House for that. The motion will be circulated both electronically and in paper copy.

Motion agreed to.

Members
MINISTRY

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:05): I wish to advise the house of changes to the ministry. The member for Albert Park is now the Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19. He remains Minister for Equality. The Deputy Premier has added mental health to his portfolio responsibilities. The member for Essendon has added creative industries to his portfolio responsibilities.

In the other place, a member for Western Metropolitan Region, Ingrid Stitt, MLC, has joined the cabinet as Minister for Workplace Safety and Minister for Early Childhood. The Attorney-General will represent her in this place for the portfolio of workplace safety, and the Deputy Premier will represent her for the portfolio of early childhood.

MINISTER FOR CRIME PREVENTION
MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR WATER
MINISTER FOR PLANNING

Absence

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:05): I also inform the house that today I will answer questions for the portfolios of crime prevention, corrections, youth justice and victim support; and multicultural affairs, community sport and youth. Further to this I also wish to advise you that today and tomorrow I will answer questions for the portfolios of water, police and emergency services, and coordination of environment, land, water and planning: COVID-19, as well as planning and housing.
Questions without notice and ministers statements

COVID-19

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:06): My question is to the Premier. In the resignation statement of former Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) Secretary Chris Eccles he said:

I am absolutely certain I did not convey to Mr Ashton any decision regarding the use of private security as I was unaware any such decision had been made, and I most certainly had not made such a decision myself.

Given Mr Eccles said he had no involvement with the decision to engage private security guards for quarantine, can the Premier categorically rule out that he or any member of his private office had any involvement whatsoever in that decision?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:07): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I have given evidence under oath to exactly that end, so—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: Well, it would suit those opposite, who are interjecting, to go and actually look at the question that was asked and the answer that was given. If you have done so little homework, then I have got nothing to add to my answer.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:07): I do note the question referred to his private office as well as the Premier himself, and he has just given an assurance that his private office had nothing to do with it. In his resignation statement yesterday, Chris Eccles said:

My evidence is emphatic that neither myself nor the Department of Premier and Cabinet made a decision to use private security as part of the Hotel Quarantine Program.

However, on 27 March at 1.22 pm Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton texted his Australian Federal Police counterpart, Reece Kershaw, having just spoken with Chris Eccles, noting, ‘private security will be used’ and:

I think that’s the deal set up by our DPC.

Premier, isn’t it a fact that the only office with the authority to inform DPC that private security would be used instead of police is your private office?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:08): No.

Members interjecting.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:08): Let Hansard reflect that this is a laughing matter apparently. These are laughing matters.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ripon!

Mr ANDREWS: Public safety and the sacrifices that Victorians are making—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Ripon is warned.

Mr ANDREWS: are for some in this chamber a matter of mirth, a matter of humour, a matter of levity. Those opposite ought reflect on their laughter—

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: They ought reflect on their laughter—
Mr ANDREWS: And the Leader of the Opposition can lose his cool all he wants—

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

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: He is under a bit of pressure.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will need to cease shouting across the chamber.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, I actually thought you had given the call to the Premier to do a ministers statement, not a tirade on the opposition. I would ask you to come back to getting the Premier to give us some information that we require as a ministers statement.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Premier will come back to making a ministers statement. But I do ask members on both sides of the house to cease shouting across the chamber. The Premier has the call.

Mr ANDREWS: Thank you very much, Speaker. I am very grateful for the call and to be able to inform Victorians that there have been 12 new cases of coronavirus in Victoria since the update provided yesterday. That means the 14-day average for metropolitan Melbourne is just 10 cases, and for regional Victoria just 0.4 cases, per day. I want to congratulate every single member of every community across regional Victoria. They got the numbers low and they are working hard to keep the numbers low, and that should be a point of pride for every single regional Victorian. What is more, it is not so many weeks ago, Speaker, that we had 725 cases on a single day.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: If only shouting was in any way effective against this virus, we would call upon the Leader of the Opposition and put him on the front line. Shouting does not work. Shouting does not have any impact. Neither does politics, Speaker.

It is the hard work of Victorians who have given much, sacrificed much. They have made an amazing effort, they have contributed in so many different ways, and that is why today we have but a fraction of the cases we had only a few weeks ago. That is why this Sunday we will be able to adjust our settings and give people some freedoms—connecting with the loved ones that they have missed the most. Connecting with people is such an important thing.

Members interjecting.

Mr ANDREWS: For those opposite: if you want a briefing, just ask for one. The people of Victoria are doing an amazing job, Speaker.

COVID-19

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:11): My question is to the Premier. At the hotel quarantine inquiry the Premier sought to blame former health minister Jenny Mikakos for the hotel quarantine scandal by claiming that the Department of Health and Human Services was in charge of the program. However, on 3 April this year the Premier wrote to the secretary of the DHHS appointing her as lead secretary for the COVID health emergency in a role in which he stated she would be, quote, ‘accountable to me’—that is, accountable to the Premier. Given the DHHS lead secretary was directly accountable to the Premier, why won’t the Premier accept his responsibility for the failures in that program that have cost nearly 800 lives, locked down millions of Victorians in their homes and smashed this state’s economy?
Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:12): I would refer the Leader of the Opposition to the evidence that I gave at the hotel inquiry. The control agency was the Department of Health and Human Services. That may not suit the narrative that others are running, but that is the fact of the matter.

Mr M O’Brien interjected.

Mr ANDREWS: Again, Speaker, if only the shouting of the Leader of the Opposition had any impact on this virus, we would perhaps all be better placed. But his amount of aerosol does nothing to help our public health effort. It is irrelevant. Cheap political games do not work against this virus. It is for the inquiry to write its report—

Mr M O’Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is debating the question. This has nothing to do with the inquiry. The fact is the Premier himself wrote to appoint Kym Peake as lead secretary accountable to him. My question is: if the lead secretary of DHHS is accountable to him, as he wrote, why won’t he accept responsibility for the failures of that program?

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The question included reference to the hotel inquiry.

Mr ANDREWS: I certainly did, Speaker, and I would direct the Leader of the Opposition to that very process that is entering its final stage where it will produce a report, make findings and undoubtedly have recommendations about the future.

My responsibility as the leader of this government and the leader of this state is to allow that process to run to a conclusion and then take the decisive action to make sure that these sorts of mistakes can never be made again, and that is my answer.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, former Justice Coate has made it perfectly clear that the Premier is able to answer questions that are asked of him in this place. His responsibility as the leader of this government is to come into this chamber and be responsible to Victorians, whom he claims to govern for. He needs to exercise some honesty with those people, with Victorians. He needs to be truthful with them, and hiding behind former Justice Coate is something that Victorians should be appalled by.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier was being relevant to the question that was asked and has concluded his answer. On a supplementary question, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr M O’BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (12:14): First of all, I seek to make available to the house the letter from the Premier to Ms Kym Peake, dated 3 April 2022, appointing her as mission lead secretary—health emergency, and noting:

In this role you are accountable to me for the delivery of the missions.

The SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr M O’BRIEN: Former minister Jenny Mikakos has submitted that the Premier’s reorganisation of the public service to centralise power with him was partly to blame for the confusion and dysfunction that led to Victoria’s second wave. Will the Premier now acknowledge that his centralisation of power, cutting across the traditional lines of ministerial accountability, has contributed to the catastrophic failure that was the hotel quarantine program?

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier) (12:15): No, I will make no such concession, because it is simply not right. Might I just reflect for a moment? There is a lot said about how these are unconventional arrangements. Well, I do not necessarily agree with that, but I will certainly put it to you that they are unique, because the circumstances we confront are unique. Now, I am not sure, for instance, of what has been put to me: that to run the preparation of a budget—let us just look at that for a moment—you would have a full cabinet of 22 consider every single line in the budget, so you
would have no budget subcommittee, you would have no budget subcommittee that a Treasurer might chair, and to do anything other than that would apparently be a complete subversion. That is simply wrong, and the loudness of those who have never so much as set foot in the cabinet room makes the point—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, the Premier is trying to conflate this issue. Yes, we all understand there are subcabinet committees but we don’t all—

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

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:17): I rise to update the house on continued developments and improvements in the government’s contact-tracing system, particularly as it reflects in the recent Kilmore outbreak of COVID-19.

Recently, through a seeding of the infection from a permitted worker from Melbourne into the Kilmore community, we have seen a coronavirus outbreak in that community. I wanted to just use that as an example of how the significant improvements in our contact-tracing system and the support of community have come together in what has almost been a textbook example of how to respond to this kind of outbreak. I want to particularly thank the Kilmore community and the Oddfellows Cafe proprietor for the fantastic job that they have done in record keeping and in making sure that the information was readily available to the increasingly digitised contact-tracing team. That has seen the rollout of that contact-tracing team being able to engage with hundreds of people to see almost 1000 people tested in the Kilmore community within days and to see the amazing response of the wider Kilmore community to come around in solidarity with that cafe owner and the very small number of people who have returned a positive case.

It has also been a case where the contact-tracing teams with the assistance of the community were able to deal with not just those cases who were positive and their close contacts but the close contacts of those contacts. That evolution of the system in the face of this wildly contagious pandemic has been a role model. I want to give the Kilmore community the kudos that they deserve for their efforts.

COVID-19

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (12:19): My question is to the Minister for Health, and it is timely given his statement to the house. On 27 September, after his appointment as health minister, the minister was asked:

Have you assured yourself that contact tracing is where you want it to be?

And he replied:

Um, not yet, but give me another little while.

Now that the minister has had two weeks to be fully briefed about Victoria’s contact tracing, does he have confidence that Victoria’s system is as effective as that operating in New South Wales?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:20): Can I thank the honourable member for Ripon for her question. If my memory serves me correctly, I had been Minister for Health for less than 15 hours at that time and it was, I am pretty sure, a Sunday, and amongst the first things I did upon becoming the minister and seeking the support of my department was to make sure that I was fully briefed on the whole raft of areas of how the government is responding to this wildly infectious global pandemic. That involves a range of pillars, of which contact tracing is an important one. The first pillar is around education and prevention—measures that we can all take to make sure that we keep the wildly infectious virus at arm’s length. The second is testing. Now, with over 200 testing sites around the state, with dozens and dozens more through GPs and other
circumstances, with the ability for testing to come to you in particular circumstances, that has seen a really significant advance. Indeed it is the turnaround in times where they now get back to people, the vast majority, within 4 hours but universally within—

Mr M O’Brien: On a point of order, Speaker, the member for Ripon’s question went specifically to the issue of contact tracing, and the question was: can the minister assure the house that he has confidence that Victoria’s system is as effective as New South Wales’s? The member’s question did not ask for a briefing on all aspects of the health portfolio or even all aspects of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was specific to contact tracing. I ask you to bring the minister back to answering that question.

Mr Foley: On the point of order, Speaker, the question related to briefings I had received in relation to the coronavirus and, in particular, contact tracing. Contact tracing is but one aspect of how the government responds, so I think I am perfectly entitled to place those matters in context, particularly arising from the briefings the honourable member has sought me to explain.

Ms Staley: On the point of order, Speaker, I specifically asked about being briefed about Victoria’s contact-tracing system. I did not ask about general briefings.

The Speaker: Order! I uphold the point of order. The minister should answer the question in relation to contact tracing.

Mr Foley: The third element is that part which the honourable member for Ripon touched on—that of contact tracing and its application. I have had multiple briefings from the contact-tracing and outbreak-management teams. In fact I have them daily because this is an ever-evolving global pandemic where this virus, this wildly infectious virus, presents differently. It is called a novel coronavirus because it changes, it is new; every day it varies. And in terms of how the Victorian government has gone about variously digitising, variously bringing together the local public health teams, as the on-the-ground people who apply those contact-tracing tools, I have every confidence—from the briefings that I have had, the evidence that I have seen—in those over 2600 frontline public health team officials out there responding to those outbreaks and driving down those numbers of infections. I have had many briefings. I have also had a briefing from the chief scientist, Alan Finkel, around the comparative systems whereby the Victorian government, the New South Wales government and other jurisdictions around the country line up in this space. And I would rely on Professor Finkel’s assessment that Victoria’s is in many regards at the cutting edge of this system. There is more that we can learn and there is more that we can do to evolve this—and we will.

Ms Staley (Ripon) (12:24): Figures reported by the ABC show that before 1 June this year mystery COVID-19 cases as a proportion of locally acquired infections were 33 per cent in New South Wales versus 22 per cent in Victoria. However, since 1 June mystery cases in New South Wales have dropped to 4 per cent, while in Victoria they have remained at 22 per cent. Why has contact tracing in New South Wales improved so much while Victoria’s results have remained so abysmal?

Mr Foley (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:25): I think the member for Ripon, presumably in the best of conscience, has misinterpreted how the coronavirus presents and how chains of transmission reflect across different outbreaks. The truth of the matter is that how it has presented in New South Wales, particularly since the time frames that the honourable member points to, has evolved incredibly differently, and in Victoria the disease and the chains of transmission have also expressed very differently. In Victoria we have seen it move from largely private residential aged-care settings and healthcare settings at the start of the second spike to now almost overwhelmingly complex community settings because the disease presents and develops in different ways. It is therefore not surprising that as a result the mystery cases issue follows a similar diverse pattern.
MINISTERS STATEMENTS: COVID-19

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Coordination of Treasury and Finance: COVID-19) (12:26): I want to advise the house about the work that the Andrews government is doing in getting on with the job of delivering for businesses, workers and households as they deal with the trepidations of the coronavirus pandemic, a global pandemic. It is the biggest economic shock to the world and of course to the state of Victoria since the Great Depression, and the government has responded in both substantive and immediate terms with record levels of support that will provide many Victorians with the security of a job and businesses with the opportunity to make it through as we stay the course to a COVID normal. The government is investing nearly $13 billion towards coronavirus measures to support Victorians through to the other side of this crisis. That includes $6.5 billion to businesses that have received payroll tax refunds in the last financial year worth more than $550 million, and thousands more have received full waivers.

Our $2.7 billion building works package will create thousands of direct jobs by funding shovel-ready projects across the state, and of course let us not forget the $1.2 billion of private-sector investment that the state has unleashed as a consequence of fast-tracked projects through Building Victoria’s Recovery Taskforce and what those jobs and that investment will provide in terms of economic opportunity. Independent modelling from Deloitte Access Economics has found that our economic support has helped boost economic activity in the June quarter by around $7.5 billion and protected 81,000 full-time equivalent jobs, but the road to economic recovery is only just beginning. We know that getting this virus under control is not just the key to protecting life, it is the fastest way to a sustained economic recovery.

COVID-19

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:28): My question is for the Minister for Health, and I congratulate the minister for his appointment. Over the past three months we have had thousands of health workers infected by coronavirus, many in public hospitals. This, along with the need for staff who have been contacts to furlough, has led to difficulties filling some shifts, whereas hospitals in some parts of the world, often those places with past experiences of SARS, have achieved low or zero rates of health worker infections. Given the substantial risk of another increase in incidence, what do Victorian hospitals plan to do differently to protect their staff from infection?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:29): Can I thank the member for Brunswick for his question, and can I also thank the member for Brunswick for the genuine good faith in which he goes about seeking to engage on the coronavirus pandemic with the government and me personally on this matter.

There is no more important group in battling the coronavirus than our last line of defence, our healthcare workers. As we stand here today there are now some 16 healthcare workers who are active cases, and that is substantially down from the height of the second peak. That involves not just our state-run healthcare settings but indeed primary healthcare settings and healthcare workers in other community and private residential aged-care settings.

In regard to how we can learn from global experience in what is a very new, emerging and still novel coronavirus, as I referred to earlier, that has been undertaken in a really genuinely collaborative way by our healthcare researchers and professionals in Victoria with our frontline health services, through weekly meetings about mapping the transmission of the virus both in healthcare settings and in the wider community and through sharing the information that also occurs around the nation and increasingly around the globe. Indeed there are many lessons that we can learn from other settings around the globe. In very recent times the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States has come out as to how the virus is spread in an aerosol manner as opposed to earlier iterations.
of thought that it was largely through close contact. It still is motivated by contact and surfaces, but
the science is evolving and in that regard our response is evolving.

In regard to specific measures around how we need to protect our own healthcare frontline workers
from the spread of the coronavirus, we have established a coronavirus healthcare worker wellbeing
and pandemic response group that meets weekly. I have had the privilege of joining that group twice
in recent weeks. We get the experience of those people at the front line, whether it be for PPE, whether
it be for N95 fit tests, whether it be for the issues around ambulance workers and how their aspects
need to change or whether it be for the important issues around cleaning, the important issues around
how we separate physical space within our hospital settings or the important issues around the other
wards in our hospitals and the changes that need to happen to them—ventilation. The amount of work
that is going on to make sure our frontline healthcare workers are protected and safe is enormous, but
we will not rest until we get that figure down to zero.

Dr READ (Brunswick) (12:32): The minister referred to the aerosol transmission of coronavirus
and there has been evidence of that for several months as being a significant mode of transmission,
and yet most hospital staff still have not had fit testing done for N95 masks and there is little or no
uptake of reusable elastomeric respirators, which have an even higher level of protection. Can the
minister assure us that this will be expedited and update us on that?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for
Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:32): I thank
the member for Brunswick for his supplementary question. The issue of fit testing and the highest
level of safety, which is really the issue when it comes to N95 respirators, is the one that is at the
forefront for so many of our healthcare workers, particularly in the most risky areas of COVID wards.
Fit testing and the rollout of N95 masks is underway. We are substantially down the path through our
respiratory response task force, and the trials of rolling that out, particularly in the Melbourne
metropolitan high-risk wards, are underway. Substantial work, particularly at Northern Hospital, has
been undertaken. It is not as easy as it sounds because these masks are quite restrictive—of course
they are, because they have to be safe. But the honourable member sought an assurance, and I give
him the assurance and I give all of our frontline healthcare workers the assurance that that rollout will
continue.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister
for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19) (12:34): I am
very pleased to rise today and update the house on how the Andrews Labor government has continued
with its record investment in transport infrastructure throughout the course of this coronavirus
pandemic. Work has continued, with really important and strong safety protocols in place.

Speaker, I can share with you what has happened since March of this year. In the months since March
we have removed four dangerous and congested level crossings, plus there is work underway at
another 20 level crossing removal sites. We have reached the halfway point of tunnelling on the Metro
Tunnel project, with 50 per cent of the tunnelling now completed on this transformational rail network
project. Work has continued on the North East Link, on the Monash Freeway upgrade and on a range
of road and rail projects in the suburbs and in regional Victoria. This work has saved and supported
thousands and thousands of jobs and supported those workers’ families right across the state. I want
to thank those workers, the contractors we work with and the unions who have all worked well and
cooperatively together to ensure that our Big Build agenda continues and continues safely throughout
the pandemic.

We do know that we have more to do. We know that investing in infrastructure supports communities.
It provides for better connections, it provides jobs and it provides opportunities for local businesses
right throughout the supply chain. Even now, as we know, more than ever we are focused on boosting
jobs and keeping our economy moving by continuing to bring forward projects of importance to
communities right across the state. We are bringing forward, for example, more level crossing removals: two dangerous and congested level crossing removals at Neerim Road and Glen Huntly Road in Glen Huntly will be fast-tracked. Work will also begin on removing crossings at Glenroy and Williamstown. We are fast-tracking the Waurn Ponds duplication so we can run more trains more often to the communities south of Geelong. Work will begin on the Hurstbridge line duplication. There is more to say and there is more to do as we get on with our Big Build agenda in Victoria.

COVID-19

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:36): It is a pity the Minister for Transport Infrastructure ran out of time to talk about the Murray Basin rail.

My question is to the Minister for Health. As of 13 October 2020 regional Victoria had zero COVID cases from an unknown source over the last two weeks and an average of just 0.4 cases per day. Regional Victorians have played their part in following health advice. Will the minister and the chief health officer come clean with regional Victorians and explain why they are required to continue wearing masks?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:36): Can I thank the Leader of The Nationals for his question. I want to, like he did implicitly in his question, thank regional Victoria, as I did in my earlier statement, for the outstanding work that they have done in driving down and keeping down the infection rates. Indeed the only reason that there are any current cases in regional Victoria, all of which are in Mitchell shire, is as a result of the seeding from metropolitan Melbourne that I referred to earlier.

Regional Victorians from Mildura to Lakes Entrance, from Wodonga to Portland have done an outstanding job. A part of that outstanding job has been working on the basis of the science, the evidence and the best public health advice capable of being arrived at. That advice includes, as I referred to earlier in the series of pillars, preventative measures. One of the preventative measures that every Victorian can take is the low-cost, high-result issue of wearing an appropriate mask—covering the nose, covering the mouth, over the chin—whenever they are out in public settings. That is the advice of experts, that is the advice of public health frontline leaders, that is the advice from people around the world who take this matter very seriously based on the science and the evidence.

It is working. It is working because regional Victorians know, Australians know, Melburnians know that the way in which you drive down and keep down numbers so you can safely, sustainably and carefully reopen is by following the best science and the best advice. Masks form a low-cost, high-reward part of that advice, and that is why the chief health officer, under the declaration of the public health and wellbeing state of emergency, requires all of us to do our bit. No-one likes it, no-one is rapt about having to pursue these restrictions and these changes to how we operated in a pre-COVID world, but it is driving down the infection rates. Regional Victorians who want to keep those levels down, who want to stay open, who want to make sure they open sustainably will be able to, on balance, support the limited restriction of wearing a mask in those circumstances. I thank them for it. They are doing their bit to make sure that we drive those infection rates down and keep them down.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (12:39): Minister, I wrote to both the chief health officer and the deputy chief health officer on 17 September, with subsequent follow-up letters on 24 September and 2 October, asking for the detailed health advice as to why regional Victorians should continue to wear masks. After nearly four weeks we are still waiting for those answers. Can the minister finally commit to being open and transparent with regional Victorians and provide the health advice as to why they need to continue to wear masks?

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (12:40): I will undertake to inquire of the statutory officers—the chief health officer and his deputy—as to the need
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to respond to the honourable member’s correspondence, but the evidence is there. The evidence is there in the low infection rates that have really smashed the road map targets that we set in that regard. So I will certainly—

Mr Walsh: On a point of order, Speaker, I accept the minister has said he will talk to the chief health officer and make sure there is an answer. But if the masks are the be-all and end-all of stopping COVID, why do we still have lockdown in regional Victoria if we are wearing masks—if the minister could actually answer that.

The SPEAKER: Order! Leader of The Nationals, that is not a point of order.

Mr Foley: Perhaps I should reiterate some of my earlier comments. Dealing with this wildly infectious, unpredictable, silent and deadly global pandemic requires us to stay ahead with all of the actions we need to take in this regard. I restate my strong view, based on the chief health officer’s advice, that masks are working.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS: TUTORS

Mr Merlino (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training: COVID-19) (12:42): I rise to update the house about how the Andrews Labor government is supporting students impacted by the global pandemic. This morning the Premier and I announced the single biggest boost in individual student learning support in Victoria’s history: $250 million for more than 4100 tutors to be deployed across Victorian schools in 2021, ensuring students are not left behind in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. This is direct support to around 200 000 students. We know that this year has been challenging, and every single one of our teachers and support staff has done a remarkable job. But despite the best efforts of our schools, we know that some students have fallen behind. This historic investment will deliver tutors for every single Victorian government school, providing extra support for students who need it. It will also support disadvantaged students in non-government schools.

We mean it when we say will not leave students behind. The evidence for small group tutoring is strong. This is the best intervention that we can make. The UK’s Education Endowment Foundation has shown that small group tutoring is a highly effective strategy. The Grattan Institute has found that small group tutoring can provide an additional five months’ learning in just 20 weeks. This is about supporting students to catch up on their core learning.

My call to action to retired teachers, pre-service teachers, casual relief teachers and teachers on long-term absence is: ‘We need you to put your hand up. We want you. Our kids need you’. This will make a massive difference in 2021. While those opposite play politics during a pandemic, the Andrews government is giving every child every opportunity to succeed.

Constituency questions

ROWVILLE ELECTORATE

Mr Wells (Rowville) (12:44): (4537) My question is to the Minister for Health. Minister, will you guarantee that healthcare workers are receiving adequate masks while they are on the front line? One of my constituents alerted me to the fact that when she went to a local testing facility in Knox, testing staff were wearing surgical masks but not wearing the recommended N95 masks. When the staff were questioned regarding the masks, they stated there was an ongoing dispute about the availability of proper masks. This is simply not good enough. There is no excuse for not having the right PPE during this second wave. It is not fair on healthcare workers and it is not fair on Victorians who are doing the right thing and struggling with these extremely harsh restrictions.

IVANHOE ELECTORATE

Mr Carbin (Ivanhoe) (12:45): (4538) My constituency question is to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. What I seek is updated information in regard to the very significant funding
allocation to Macleod College from our government. In particular there has been some work done by the college council to make some amendments to the plans to that significant project, which is particularly around maths and science upgrades as well as improvements to the entry to the school and some adjoining works at the primary school. I am really in support of a lot of the changes that they have suggested making. I know that there has been some work on getting that tweaked and approved by the department, and I am keen on the latest information in relation to that project. It is critical to the long-term rejuvenation of Macleod College. It has got a great heart, great outcomes, and we want to make sure over time we continue to build up the facilities there at Macleod College.

OVENS VALLEY ELECTORATE

Mr McCurdy (Ovens Valley) (12:46): (4539) My question is to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change on behalf of Adrian Best and the thousands of other Victorians who are concerned about the roads and tracks in bushland in Victoria’s public parks. Parks Victoria have neglected our regional parks and camping sites. The evidence is clear along the Murray River, along the Ovens River and in many other popular camping spots in the Ovens Valley. As campers and holiday-makers again return to our loved natural resources and rivers, their safety will be compromised by the disastrous state of the roads that lead to the rivers. I have had concerns from Cobram SES regarding the ability to access campgrounds in an emergency, and the CFA are also aware of how difficult it will be to fight fires that become out of hand. Getting an ambulance into some of these areas will be impossible. Mr Best asks, ‘Will Parks Victoria do some serious track maintenance before somebody’s health and safety is compromised due to poor access?’ Now more than ever getting outdoors is the best thing that all Victorians can do, but with the unsafe tracks there are concerns that Parks Victoria will limit campgrounds and close camping grounds rather than invest in the maintenance that is so badly needed.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE

Mr Taylor (Bayswater) (12:47): (4540) My constituency question is to the Minister for Public Transport. I ask the minister to please provide me with information on the upgrade to the Heathmont railway station. Heathmont locals know just how much the local station is in need of a face lift, and without any major upgrades since the 1980s it is definitely overdue for one. Certainly locals have made their voices clear over the course of the journey too, with many telling me they would like to see more done here. I listened to those voices, worked with the minister and importantly worked with the community, and as a result I was stoked earlier this year to announce $1.7 million for new platform canopies, seating, improved safety lighting, CCTV, new fences and resurfacing of the asphalt as well as accessibility upgrades so everybody visiting and using the station can have the same access. Importantly, this will also put boots on the ground to create good, well-paying local jobs in Heathmont while upgrading a vital piece of infrastructure in our community. I am so proud to be part of a government that is getting on with the job of creating a world-class public transport network. From the Metro Tunnel and the Suburban Rail Loop to removing two level crossings on my patch, it will not stop anytime soon. I thank the minister for his consideration of this question.

FERNTREE GULLY ELECTORATE

Mr Wakeling (Ferntree Gully) (12:48): (4541) Many Knox residents and local environment groups have again contacted me concerning the former Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning site on the corner of Burwood Highway and Scoresby Road in Knoxfield. I have previously raised concerns with the government about the future of this site, in particular the construction of multistorey units and also the demolition of Lake Knox. I have raised concerns about the lack of community consultation, and I have called for a moratorium to halt the intended demolition of Lake Knox—all of which have been ignored. Over recent weeks I have been contacted by local residents expressing their dismay with the government’s contempt for local residents on this important issue. The views of local residents and environment groups must be heard and proper consultation must occur with local residents. Therefore can the minister confirm to Knox residents that no action will be
taken by the government in relation to the construction of multistorey unit developments or the destruction of Lake Knox before proper consultation is undertaken? My question is for the Minister for Transport Infrastructure.

**BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE**

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (12:49): (4542) My constituency question is to the Minister for Education. How can students in the Broadmeadows electorate benefit from the Victorian government’s assistance package for Victorian certificate of applied learning and VET students. This is crucial to the life chances of so many young students, and I thank the minister for the assistance package so students can access special consideration to complete their VET qualifications while guaranteeing enrolment at TAFE or dual-sector providers to finish their studies next year. Broadmeadows is home to Kangan Institute and the skills required for local jobs for local people where they are needed most—particularly in manufacturing, which is what we are trying to bring back. So redeveloping Kangan Institute for the skills for recovery is really important economically and socially. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the minister for the $250 million package for 4100 tutors for 200 000 students. This is the innovation we need right here, right now. It will deliver great results and benefits for the community.

**MELBOURNE ELECTORATE**

Ms Sandell (Melbourne) (12:50): (4543) My question is for the Minister for Education on behalf of year 12 students in my electorate who live in public housing. Students in the public housing towers in North Melbourne have had a really tough year, perhaps tougher than any other group of students in Australia given the hard lockdowns in July. They have been trying to learn at home just like every other student, but for students in the high-rises it has been extra tough because they are often cramped in with large families in poorly maintained, overcrowded apartments without a lot of good internet or technology. I am aware that all year 12 students will be assessed for special consideration for VCE based on the marks they got throughout the year, but for public housing students these marks are unlikely to reflect what they could have achieved with face-to-face school. There were also students who do not live in public housing but were visiting people in the high-rises and got stuck in the hard lockdown. So my question is: Minister, will you enable year 12 students in public housing to be given special consideration based on the marks they received before remote learning began, and will you ensure teachers are made aware of the students who experienced hard lockdown even if they did not usually live in the high-rises?

**NARRE WARREN SOUTH ELECTORATE**

Mr Maas (Narre Warren South) (12:51): (4544) My constituency question is for the Minister for Mental Health regarding services during the coronavirus pandemic. Minister, what support is available in my electorate of Narre Warren South to help people with mental health issues? I have been contacted by constituents who understand the importance of the restrictions but are concerned for those who may be struggling during these unprecedented times. I understand that an additional $59.7 million in new funding has been allocated to our mental health sector on top of the existing $135 million pandemic investment. I would appreciate any further information on how the state government is helping people in my electorate who need mental health support during COVID-19. I look forward to sharing the minister’s response with my community.

**EVELYN ELECTORATE**

Ms Valence (Evelyn) (12:52): (4545) Yarra Valley tourism has been hard hit and local jobs in this sector have been decimated. My constituency question is for the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions—COVID-19 on behalf of tourism and events operators and the thousands of locals in this sector who have been stood down from work. This includes wineries, farm gates, wedding venues, restaurants, accommodation and tour transport operators who are deeply frustrated about the lack of consultation and a road map...
for an industry in crisis. When can tourism and events businesses reopen? Will you keep the current caps on density quotients or ease these? Will you release the medical analysis that guides decisions on setting density quotients? Will you create site-specific protocols for large hospitality and wedding venues outdoors and indoors? What is the recovery strategy for tourism and events in the Yarra Valley? Sadly, many iconic Yarra Valley tourism operators may collapse. I trust them to reopen in a COVID-safe way, but they need certainty and a sensible density quotient, otherwise you will wreck these businesses and jobs.

YAN YEAN ELECTORATE

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (12:53): (4546) My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and Minister for Public Transport, and I ask: when will the new timetabling arrangements begin for buses that connect with Hurstbridge line stations? My community are waiting expectantly for this change and also are keen to see improvements to Broad Gully Road to bring more households closer to connections to Greensborough and Melbourne Polytechnic. It is all happening in roads and public transport in the Yan Yean electorate, and with the Hurstbridge line stage 2 upgrade and the Diamond Creek Trail this will bring not only more services to our community but also, importantly, jobs in this COVID environment.

The SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

Ms Green: On a point of order, Speaker, I would ask you to examine the constituency question asked by the member for Evelyn. There were several questions in there which I think could have stepped into the area of seeking action, which is more appropriately dealt with in an adjournment.

The SPEAKER: I have more recently clarified to the house—and I understand that not all members may have heard that ruling—that constituency questions should be an opportunity for members to seek information about their electorates. In the past, since the introduction of constituency questions, there has been a lot of focus on the technicalities of the wording of constituency questions. I have taken the view that if members seek information about something in their electorate in good faith, I will let those questions stand. I will review the question that the member has raised, but I just want to advise the house that I am taking a much broader interpretation of constituency questions to allow members to seek information genuinely about their constituencies and their electorates.

Bills

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (SUPPORTING VICTIMS AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety: COVID-19) (12:55): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Judicial Proceedings Reports Act 1958 in relation to publication of identification of victims, to amend the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996 in relation to delegation of certain powers, to amend the Victims of Crime Commissioner Act 2015 in relation to the Committee under that Act, to amend the Defamation Act 2005 and the Limitation of Actions Act 1958 to include further model provisions, to amend the Corrections Act 1986 in relation to certain detention orders and prisoner mail, to amend the Forests Act 1958 to enable specified persons to carry out specified activities in the Fire Rescue Victoria fire district, to amend the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 and the Accident Compensation Act 1985 in relation to pre-injury average weekly earnings, and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (12:56): I am not sure if there are any other acts that the Attorney-General actually missed, but I ask for a brief explanation, please.
Ms HENNESSY: I am pleased that the Manager of Opposition Business is here all week with quality humour like that. I would be delighted to give a brief summary of the bill. The bill essentially amends the Judicial Proceedings Reports Act 1958 to allow for victim-survivors to publicly be identified if they give written consent without the need for a court order. It amends the Defamation Act 2005 and the Limitation of Actions Act 1958 to implement nationally agreed reforms to uniform defamation law. Those are matters that have been largely led under the auspices of Attorney-General Mark Speakman in New South Wales and have been very much in the public domain. The bill amends the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996, and what that does is it allows for delegations to certain staff—from the victims of crime commissioner to Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal staff. It also further extends a provision that was supported in this Parliament in respect of those that are reliant upon Accident Compensation Act 1985 payments to ensure that workers are not disadvantaged in terms of their compensation entitlements due to the economic conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are some changes to the Corrections Act 1986 that go to addressing the importation of contraband as well, and we would be delighted to brief the opposition at the earliest opportunity on all of those matters.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

MARINE SAFETY AMENDMENT (BETTER BOATING FUND) BILL 2020

Introduction and first reading

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (12:58): I move:

That I introduce a bill for an act to amend the Marine Safety Act 2010 to provide for the establishment of the Better Boating Fund and for other purposes.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (12:58): I ask the minister for a brief explanation.

Ms HORNE: This bill seeks to deliver an election commitment made in the ‘Better boat ramps, free parking and more fish for Victorians’ statement by making the legislative changes necessary to establish the Better Boating Fund. The bill implements the government’s election commitment to make sure that every cent of licensing and registration fees is spent on boating safety and facilities and to establish a Better Boating Fund to facilitate urgent boat ramp upgrades and continual maintenance for Victoria’s boating infrastructure.

Read first time.

Ordered to be read second time tomorrow.

Committees

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 9

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (12:59): I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee, being Alert Digest No. 9 of 2020, on the following bills and subordinate legislation:

Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2020
COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020
Parliamentary Committees Amendment (SARC Protection Against Rights Curtailment by Urgent Bills) Bill 2020
Worker Screening Bill 2020
SR No 24—Victoria Police Amendment Regulations 2020
Notices under section 3.6.5A of the Gambling Regulation Act 2003 fixing the value of the supervision charge for venue operators for 2018–19
together with appendices and a minority report.

Ordered to be published.

Documents

Incorporated list as follows:

DOCUMENTS TABLED UNDER ACTS OF PARLIAMENT—The Clerk tabled the following documents under Acts of Parliament:

*Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978:*
- Orders under s 17B granting licences over:
  - Alexandra Gardens Reserve
  - Domain Parklands Reserve
- Orders under s 17D granting leases over:
  - Lakeside Stadium Reserve
  - Royal Park Reserve

*Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984*—Notice under s 32(3)(a)(iii) in relation to Statutory Rule 83 (Gazette G39, 1 October 2020)

*Ombudsman*—Investigation into corporate credit card misuse at Warrnambool City Council—Ordered to be published

*Planning and Environment Act 1987*—Notices of approval of amendments to the following Planning Schemes:
- Bayside—C126
- Boroondara—C321
- Casey—C277
- Macedon Ranges—C134
- Maroondah—C143
- Melbourne—C368, C386
- Moonee Valley—C214
- Moreland—C174 Part 1
- Moonee—C66
- Stonnington—C310
- Victoria Planning Provisions—VC169, VC183
- Warrnambool—C206
- Yarra—C231 Part 1, C231 Part 3, C284, C285

Statutory Rules under the following Acts:

*Building Act 1993*—SR 101
*Bus Safety Act 2009*—SR 102
*City of Melbourne Act 2001*—SR 100
*COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020*—SR 107
*Gender Equality Act 2020*—SR 97
*Local Government Act 2020*—SR 100
*Magistrates’ Court Act 1989*—SR 94
*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*—SR 106
Port Management Act 1995—SR 108
Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008—SRs 93, 99
Residential Tenancies Act 1997—SR 95
Road Safety Act 1986—SRs 96, 105
Supreme Court Act 1986—SR 98
Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983—SRs 103, 109
Transport (Safety Schemes Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2014—SR 104

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994:
Documents under s 15 in relation to Statutory Rules 90, 94, 96, 98, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109
Documents under s 16B in relation to the Gambling Regulation Act 2003—Instrument specifying content of training requirements


PROCLAMATIONS—Under Standing Order 177A, the Clerk tabled the following proclamations fixing operative dates:
Petroleum Legislation Amendment Act 2020—Section 28—6 October 2020 (Gazette S504, 6 October 2020).

Bills
COVID-19 COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (EXTENSION) BILL 2020

Royal assent

The SPEAKER (13:01): I inform the house that the Governor has given royal assent to the COVID-19 Commercial and Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Extension) Bill 2020 and the Retail Leases Amendment Bill 2019.

WORKER SCREENING BILL 2020

Appropriation

The SPEAKER (13:02): I have received a message from the Governor recommending an appropriation for the purpose of the Worker Screening Bill 2020.

Members
MS MIKAKOS

Resignation

The SPEAKER (13:02): Members, I have received a letter from the Governor advising that she had, on 26 September 2020, received the resignation of the Honourable Jenny Mikakos as a member of the Legislative Council.

Joint sitting of Parliament

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

The SPEAKER (13:02): I have also received a message from the Legislative Council proposing that the Council meets the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of sitting and voting together to
choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Honourable Jenny Mikakos and that the place and time of such meeting be the Legislative Assembly chamber today at 1.30 pm.

Ordered that message be taken into consideration immediately.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19) (13:02): I move:

That this house agrees to the Legislative Council’s proposal for a joint sitting today at 1.30 pm in the Legislative Assembly chamber for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Honourable Jenny Mikakos.

Motion agreed to.

Ordered that message be sent to Council informing them accordingly.

Committees

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Membership

The SPEAKER (13:03): I have received the resignation of Ms Taylor, MLC, from the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee effective today.

Mr Wells: On a point of order, Speaker, sorry, the committee resignation, I thought that was for the upper house member Stitt. So is this an addition?

The SPEAKER: Order! On the point of order, I have a resignation from Ms Taylor, MLC.

Business of the house

PROGRAM

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19) (13:04): 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 pm on Thursday, 15 October 2020:

Cladding Safety Victoria Bill 2020
Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2020
Worker Screening Bill 2020.

I will only speak for a few moments on this government business program motion because I am pleasantly advised by the Manager of Opposition Business that we may have agreement on our government business program for this week, which is fabulous news. It is just fabulous news and demonstrates the remarkable amount of cooperation that has been going on across this chamber and indeed across the Parliament as we work together to ensure that Parliament continues to operate effectively during the course of this COVID-19 pandemic which has changed so much of the way we live and work. It is pleasing to see that we are able to continue to have the Parliament sit to debate and consider legislation, to debate important issues for the community in Victoria that of course we are all very proud to represent. The three bills that the government presents for the government business program debate this week are all big and important bills that I am sure will generate a lot of important debate by members.

I will also point to a few other arrangements that have been put in place for this week, and continuing that theme of the spirit of cooperation for the course of this week can I again acknowledge the assistance of all parties and the Independent members of the Parliament in ensuring that we have the appropriate sitting arrangements in place that will allow this chamber and the Parliament to both sit and sit safely in accordance with the guidelines that we receive from public health authorities. These are arrangements
I am sure we will need to have in place, week to week, for some time, and it is pleasing that we have a bit of a groove on in terms of getting these arrangements put in place rather smoothly.

Can I also acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of all members of this place in enabling the joint sitting for our new member for Northern Metropolitan Region to take place in about 24 minutes, at 1.30 pm. This will be a historic moment for all members. It will be exciting for us to welcome to the Labor Party side of the chamber our first Indigenous woman to represent Labor for the Victorian community, and we look forward to welcoming Ms Sheena Watt to the Parliament shortly.

I also note that arrangements have been put in place for the rest of today to allow for debate to be held on the no-confidence motion that the Leader of the Opposition gave notice of last sitting week and that we will not be adjourning at the normal time of 7 o’clock tonight should the debate still be continuing. There is an agreement from the government to allow the debate to exhaust—and members to exhaust themselves in the course of contributing to that debate. I will leave the commentary about the substance—and lack thereof—of the no-confidence motion for the debate, but I do note that those arrangements have been put in place.

Also I would like to note that there have been some modest adjustments to other regular scheduling—of question time and the commencement and adjournment of the houses for the rest of this week—to again accommodate the safe sitting of both chambers. With those few comments and with that spirit of cooperation I commend the motion to the house and look forward to an equally optimistic contribution from the Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (13:07): We do actually have an agreement, so the opposition will not be opposing the government business program. I do have to thank the Leader of the House for the negotiations and discussions, which seemed to go on for days and days and days and days, but in the end we actually got there. So this is the first week that we have had three full sitting days probably since March this—

A member: June.

Mr WELLS: Oh. It is three full sitting days, so it is good we are at this point. The Leader of the House has mentioned the no-confidence motion, which the opposition has the right to be able to put forward once per term. Today is our day, and we are expecting that many in the Labor Party, on the government side, will be voting with us on the motion of no confidence in the Premier and his government; we are very hopeful of that.

We have also said that we have agreed to the staggered start tomorrow, the staggered lunch and the slight change in closure on Wednesday, so we accept that. We understand in the lunchbreaks there will be cleaning of the chamber, and we have accepted that that is true and proper.

We also this week have the ability to stand for constituency questions, committee reports, members statements and the adjournment, which is a big difference from what has happened in past months when we have been submitting electronically. So with those few words, as I said at the start, we will not be opposing the government business program.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (13:09): Given the expression of acclamation for the government business program from those opposite I will keep my remarks brief so we can get to the details and the nub of the government business program this week, including those three bills that have been outlined by the Leader of the House—the Worker Screening Bill 2020, the Cladding Safety Victoria Bill 2020 and our Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2020—which are all very significant in relation to the wellbeing of the Victorians. I would particularly like to give a brief shout-out to our national disability insurance scheme workers in relation to worker screening, to the many people who rely on the vigilance and the safety of our authorities in relation to cladding safety and of course in relation to all of our rights as consumers in Victoria under the consumer law.
I would also like, from a seat that bounces around between the Northern Metropolitan and Eastern Metropolitan upper house regions, to note that the joint sitting that is scheduled as part of the business program this week will include the opportunity to welcome Sheena Watt to the Labor caucus, all being well, and I look forward to joining members in that process later today.

Just lastly I note that perhaps the desire to work on the no-confidence motion provides that opportunity to those opposite to join in supporting the government business program and of course note that that is a card that only gets played once a term. The current Leader of the Opposition, the member for Malvern, is obviously choosing to play that card of a no-confidence motion before any subsequent leaders of the opposition this term have the opportunity to do so, so perhaps it is a reflection of where things are at over on the other side of this chamber. So with those comments and the opportunity to move quickly with acclamation to get started on the government business program, I commend it to the house.

Mr D'O BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:11): It is good to speak briefly on the government business program, and it is good to be back in the chamber and actually speaking in the chamber. It is always nice to follow members opposite. When the member for Ivanhoe is talking about leadership rumblings I think he should be looking around his own side. If he has paid any attention to things going on in the last couple of months, I think he is in more trouble than we are over on this side.

But it is good to speak very briefly on the government business program. I would like to say that we are all here working in a COVID-safe manner. Actually the best thing about getting up to speak is being able to take your mask off. But I do thank the staff, the clerks, all the team here, you, Speaker, and the parliamentary staff for the work that they have put in to get us back here. For those of us who are lucky enough to be from regional Victoria, we have to remind ourselves that things are still fairly serious here in Melbourne, and I would say that the procedures that we go through to come into the building now are a bit of a reminder of that—having to fill in a form and have our temperature taken and the like. But we are working in a COVID-safe manner. I long for the day when we can get back to Parliament being normal and all of us being back in this chamber, but it is good to be able to be here this week. I thank the Leader of the House for her forbearance in working with the opposition on this week’s arrangements and particularly, as I said, allowing us to get up and speak. It is not the same as presenting a written submission, so it is good to have that.

Three bills have been mentioned this week—the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2020, the Cladding Safety Victoria Bill 2020 and the Worker Screening Bill 2020—but from my point of view, the most important issue of course is not on the government business program, and that is the no-confidence motion that will be debated shortly. I would say—and yes, there has been a lot of negotiation—that the Leader of the House said that we will be exhausting the speakers. Well, we are not exactly exhausting them, because some of us will not get a chance to speak on that no-confidence motion, so I place on the record now that I certainly support that no-confidence motion, and I would hope that others on the other side might have a look into their conscience and see what they think their government has been doing these last six months. But I look forward to the debate and to the week progressing as close to normal as possible.

Ms CONNOLLY (Tarneit) (13:13): It is a pleasure to stand with my colleagues here in the house this afternoon to talk in favour of the government’s business program. We have very much a packed agenda again this week. Despite us continuing to sit and to sit safely during coronavirus, it is great to see that we are going to debate three bills here in the house this week.

I am very excited, like many of my colleagues, to see the swearing in of Sheena Watt. I have no doubt she will make an incredible contribution to this government. We will very much welcome her at 1.30 pm today.

The three bills that are going to be debated here before the house are pretty exciting for my community in Tarneit, most notably the Consumer Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. We are going to amend the Retirement Villages Act 1986 to remove regulatory obstacles for former residents of retirement
villages seeking to recover unpaid ingoing contributions where the owner of the retirement village has become bankrupt or insolvent. It gives me great pleasure to talk to amendments when it comes to retirement villages. Tarneit has some pretty awesome retirement villages that really do make up the cornerstone of our community. I am looking forward to heading back out to those retirement villages. In particular what comes to mind is a visit to Lifestyles, right there in the heart of Tarneit, to see my very good friends Noel and Margaret Canning, who moved into that retirement village a couple of years ago and in their 70s have said that it has no doubt been the best move of their life.

We are also going to be debating the Worker Screening Bill 2020. This bill is going to protect Victorians who access services under the national disability insurance scheme by creating new worker screening to implement the intergovernmental agreement for nationally consistent NDIS worker screening. When I am out and about in my community, even during these challenging times of coronavirus, it is really great to talk to people in my community who either are disability workers or have friends or loved ones who have a disability. Anything to streamline and provide further protections and safeties for people working in this sector is very much going to be welcomed by my community, and I look forward to debating it in this place.

Finally, we will get to the Cladding Safety Victoria Bill 2020. This bill very much continues our government’s determination to make sure that our buildings are built with the safest materials. It seems like a lifetime ago that combustible cladding was one of the most pressing issues that required government action. I very much look forward to debating this bill. I know many people in my community will be very excited at the possibility of it passing here in the house. I will not take up any more time. I thank those opposite for supporting us today in the government business program, and I commend the motion to the house.

Mr BLACKWOOD (Narracan) (13:17): Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the government business program today. As the Manager of Opposition Business has said, we will not be opposing it, which is not a normal position we have been taking with this government, but it is pleasing to note that we do agree sometimes. Mind you, it took me a fair while to talk the Manager of Opposition Business into supporting this government business program; however, he acceded to my request and I am very pleased about that.

A major part of our program this week of course is the no-confidence motion to be debated later today. This will give us an opportunity to really put on record our concerns on behalf of all the Victorian people about the response to the COVID pandemic. I am not going to start bashing anybody up about this at the moment, but I think it is very important that we in opposition in particular stand up for Victorians; indeed everybody in this house should be standing up for Victorians. I guess that is why I am pleading with the member for Ivanhoe and his colleagues to consider crossing the floor as a way of standing up for their respective electorates. I am sure if the numbers get tight that the Speaker will do the right thing when he casts his vote. But to be here for three full sitting days is a great thing, and we are now getting close to doing what we should always be able to do for our constituents, our electorates and for Victoria, and I am very pleased that we could come in from regional Victoria for this sitting week and partake in the appropriate way.

Can I commend our Gippsland people for the way they have responded to the pandemic. They deserve applause, but also so do those in metro Melbourne, being under very tight restrictions. I think we should all be cognisant of and remember just how tough it is for those people, those small businesses and in particular those elderly people suffering from and living with social isolation. We need to commend them all for the work they have done to deal with the restrictions, good or bad, over the past three or four months.

Motion agreed to.
Members statements

COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (13:19): This statement condemns the government for their terrible handling of the CFA. The huge number of resignations under Daniel Andrews is a clear indication that he is irresponsible and has lost control of the situation. Since 2016 the Andrews Labor government has been undermining the CFA as part of its mission to establish Fire Rescue Victoria. A minister, CFA board members and numerous senior officers of the CFA have either quit or resigned in recent years, and volunteer firefighters have been left with no effective voice and no effective leadership. The fact that even Daniel Andrews’s hand-picked man would not agree to sign Labor’s CFA takeover shows how rotten this deal is for volunteers. Daniel Andrews’s war on the CFA has been waged for more than five years now. It is clear—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will use correct titles. Correct titles, please, Manager of Opposition Business.

Mr WELLS: The Premier’s war on the CFA has been waged for more than five years now, and it is clear that he will stop at nothing to hand power to his mates in the United Firefighters Union. The Victorian Liberal-Nationals announced a policy to rebuild and restore the CFA. On 30 September the Shadow Minister for Emergency Services and member for Ferntree Gully launched an online consultation process with local brigade members and volunteers to rebuild the CFA and restore the CFA’s power to select, recruit and manage its own staff and wear the CFA uniform. The Liberal-Nationals firmly believe the only way to rebuild the CFA is to receive genuine feedback from CFA volunteers.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (13:21): It is National Carers Week 2020. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Parliamentary Secretary for Carers I would like to recognise the challenges faced by Victoria’s 736,000 carers every day. I would like to thank all our amazing carers who provide support to vulnerable persons, particularly during the impacts of the coronavirus worldwide pandemic. Our carers have demonstrated great resilience and the ability to adapt to a changing environment. The Andrews government understands the challenges and opportunities the pandemic has posed for carers and the carer relationship, in particular the many changes to face-to-face supports that have changed and moved to virtual support. Supports have been provided in different ways, like online appointments, telehealth services and activities like online cooking classes instead of face-to-face respite services.

Our Support for Carers program data tells us there has been an increase in supporting carers to access new technology, including training on how to use IT for linking to programs and other supports. Our Victorian Carer Strategy 2018–22 includes $49.5 million in funding to boost access to vital respite care, support programs and innovative projects via grant applications. Our sector is fortunate to have the strong advocacy of organisations like Carers Victoria, Tandem and Little Dreamers Australia who put carers first and who have been key contributors to the development of the Victorian Carer Strategy and its implementation. My thanks to the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers for his policy leadership in this crucial area where nationally it is estimated that carers contribute $15 billion to the economy. We salute our carers today.

COVID-19

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (13:23): When Victoria and Australia faced the start of the pandemic earlier this year we were proud of our achievements in flattening the curve. Indeed I think this government actually handled the early stages quite well. What we did not know was that the seeds of the disastrous second wave had already been sown in fateful policy decisions taken by the Premier and his government. The second wave has cost nearly 800 Victorian lives and thousands of livelihoods
and seen millions of Victorians locked up at home and our economy smashed. No other state has had a second wave, because they did not bungle their hotel quarantine programs.

The Premier and the chief health officer have acknowledged the program directly seeded 99 per cent of cases in the second wave, with untrained private security guards spreading coronavirus into the community—exactly what the program was designed to stop. A rational person would forgive the government for those early mistakes if they were corrected, but warnings went unheeded. The government rejected repeated offers of assistance from the ADF, a fact the Premier still refuses to acknowledge despite an avalanche of evidence against him.

Victorians might have cut the government some slack if they had just taken some responsibility, if there had been accountability so we could learn the lessons of the failures and ensure they were not repeated. But from the Premier, ministers and senior public servants we have seen nothing but finger-pointing, duckshoving and, frankly, untruths. This is their great failure, and Victorians have paid for it. That is why I have no confidence in the Andrews Labor government.

**BROADMEADOWS ELECTORATE REVITALISATION**

Mr McGuire (Broadmeadows) (13:24): Australia turns to Broadmeadows in times of existential threat. This state district stands as a centre for recovery from the worst recession since the Great Depression and the COVID-19 pandemic. Broadmeadows is fast-tracking through deindustrialisation to advanced manufacturing. It is vital in an international quest for a vaccine against the coronavirus and Australia’s mission to secure independent supply chains and national sovereignty. A leading Australian company, CSL, will manufacture any vaccine against COVID-19 for Australia at its Broadmeadows plant that already exports life-saving blood products.

Less than four years after the Ford Motor Company’s iconic assembly lines fell silent, devastating Broadmeadows and signalling the demise of Australia’s car manufacturing industry, Ford has adapted, manufacturing 100,000 face shields in response to the pandemic alongside its Asia-Pacific centre of excellence for innovation. Success in attracting hundreds of millions of dollars in private sector investments has proved critical in underwriting this comeback strategy, driving Broadmeadows as a prototype for economic and social recovery, creating jobs, attracting investments, facilitating community development and harvesting the benefits for local families. The purpose of the Broadmeadows Revitalisation Board 4.0 is to enable the comeback strategy to maximise a unique opportunity: record funding in federal and Victorian budgets allocated by May and partnerships with Hume City Council, business and civil society for this proud, resilient community.

**BUDGET**

Ms Britnell (South-West Coast) (13:26): Over the past week parts of my electorate experienced a deluge of late spring rains which resulted in significant flooding. Properties in Allansford, Warrnambool and Port Fairy were affected, as were many farms that lost fencing and even bridges. As usual our community pulled together, filled sandbags in the middle of the night and helped each other out. Again I am impressed but not surprised by the response; it is what we do well in the country. I thank our local SES and CFA volunteers, police and other emergency services personnel and local government staff, who showed once again how well we respond to a local crisis. These floods again show how desperately a new SES-CFA joint base in Port Fairy is needed. Perhaps the minister will listen to this and ensure there is funding allocated for the project in the upcoming state budget. I also take this opportunity to call on the government to provide natural disaster funding to people impacted by these floods.

Last week the much-needed redevelopment of the Warrnambool Base Hospital took a step in the right direction with the purchase of land for a regional logistics distribution centre. This is a positive step, but there need to be a few more steps taken as soon as possible to get the much-needed redevelopment of the hospital completed to ensure our hardworking nurses and doctors have the facilities they need.
to continue their life-saving work. The stage 2 redevelopment must be fully funded in the upcoming budget to give my electorate a fit-for-purpose health facility.

COVID-19

Mr RICHARDSON (Mordialloc) (13:27): Coronavirus has tested the resolve of Victorians like never before. No-one could have imagined or planned for what we have faced in 2020. Over the period, I have received many thousands of messages, emails, phone calls and comments on the struggles that Victorians are facing. The impact on mental health and community wellbeing has been significant. The task of protecting our communities from the virus—the task that they have dedicated themselves to—has been selfless in its entirety, but it has come at a cost. It is something that is reflected on by Professor Patrick McGorry, and it is rightly termed the ‘second phase’ of the pandemic. That is why every single recommendation of the royal commission and its findings is so very important. Every recommendation needs to be accepted.

Yet through these tough times we have seen the hope and prosperity in our communities. In under a month we have seen Victoria’s active cases go from 7000 down to 200 and a rolling average that has dropped down to 10. In Kingston we have seen the peak of 136 active cases now down under five. This incredible achievement is a result of working together as a community and as Victorians, and in my community more than 4500 residents have been tested each fortnight. And we have seen the most beautiful and compassionate examples of caring—whether it is school students giving aged-care residents letters, Spoonvilles, rainbows and teddies in windows, or the kindness of collecting shopping for others—because through these difficult times we will prosper together.

The SPEAKER: Before calling the next speaker on members statements, the time has arrived for us to meet jointly with the Council to select a new member for the Legislative Council. I remind members that the bells will be rung now to bring members to the chamber for the joint sitting, and then the Clerk will again ring the bells after the joint sitting to resume this session of members statements.

Sitting suspended 1.30 pm until 1.36 pm.

COVID-19

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (13:36): I was very saddened last week to receive a telephone call from one of my local priests. He asked me when his church could reopen and, sadly, I was unable to give him an answer. He told me the heart-wrenching story of an older church member who he found kneeling on the church steps crying and begging to be allowed into the church. He said with over 400 square metres inside they could easily allow 100 people in and still comply with all the social distancing requirements. Many residents and numerous faith leaders have contacted me asking when places of worship will be reopened. Yesterday I received a copy of an open letter to the Premier signed by 295 church pastors and leaders urging him, and I quote:

… to consider church services as an essential service for the hope and wellbeing of our community in this pandemic.

For many people in the community their faith is an extremely important part of their lives, and they are feeling very severely the loss of being unable to celebrate their faith and worship in their church. This, combined with a lack of fellowship and interaction with other church members, has been felt very keenly and in many cases is causing great anguish. Faith leaders have contacted me and told me of the increasing incidence of mental health issues, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, enveloping some of their members both young and old. Some older members are desperately needing churches to reopen and are starting to lose heart. The Bible, in Proverbs 13.12, says:

Hope deferred makes the heart sick …

That is what we are now seeing in the community with a seemingly endless lockdown and ongoing restrictions which in many cases are just totally arbitrary and meaningless. I share the concerns raised
by these faith leaders and call on the Premier to reclassify faith organisations as essential services and allow them to recommence operations, albeit in a totally COVID-safe and compliant manner.

COVID-19

Mr Taylor (Bayswater) (13:37): I want to start off my members statement by just saying a massive thank you to all of our school communities, our teachers and our educators. What a tough year 2020 has been. Our educators, from early years all the way through primary, secondary, TAFE and tertiary, have done an amazing job. A massive thank you to all the school communities and families out there for supporting kids right across the state—a million students in our primary and secondary schools—to remotely learn. An amazing job; you should all be proud of yourselves. And I am so glad to see this week some nearly 600,000 kids returning to the classrooms. Locally in my area I cannot wait to get back out there and see them in person. So enjoy the week at school, kids. I am looking forward to seeing you.

BAYSWATER ELECTORATE PROJECTS

Mr Taylor: Of course it has been a tough year, but we are continuing to deliver locally. There is $620,000 for a major revitalisation of Boronia at Lupton Way; $89,000 for new cricket nets at Miller Park; $80,000 to back in local live music icon the Oak Tree Tavern; mental health practitioners as another tool in the kit box to all government secondary schools in the local area; $125,000 for new lights at Milpera Reserve; $5 million for a brand-new state-of-the-art regional netball facility in Knox; $600,000 for a new train park and new pavilion at Marie Wallace reserve as well as solar lighting; the Bayswater education plan working with local schools; and $1.7 million to fix the Heathmont railway station. These are important projects that will deliver local jobs, and that is the Andrews government getting on with delivering for locals. And I want to thank the nearly 400 people who have signed the Back in Boronia campaign petition to help see further change in Boronia. Thank you so much. Link just here and in the comments, Back in Boronia. Thank you very much.

NATIVE FOREST LOGGING

Mr Blackwood (Narracan) (13:39): The Victorian Labor government continue to mislead Victorians about their COVID response. They continue to mislead Victorians about the real impact of their plans to end native forest harvesting by 2030. Victorians deserve far more than the spin that the Labor government seems to be well trained in delivering. When it comes to COVID it has been well documented that the Premier will avoid the truth, fabricate details of his knowledge of events and refuse to answer questions that might incriminate him. To make matters worse, the Premier will throw anybody under the bus if in doing so he can take the focus and blame off himself. As Mark Twain said, ‘If you tell the truth, you do not have to remember anything’.

Sadly, the Minister for Agriculture has caught a strain of the same disease as the Premier, last week announcing her plan to call for expressions of interest from the private sector to invest in plantation establishment to provide resource for the native forest industry to transition to by 2030. It is one thing to spin a story, but it is a real worry when the minister appears to be ignorant of the basic facts about forestry at a time when it has never been more important to have a competent person managing the future of this industry. It takes a minimum of 50 years to grow a hardwood sawlog, and yet the minister talks about transition in nine years. It takes a minimum of 12 years on a good site to grow fibre, and still the minister talks about transitioning to plantation by 2030. Victoria has never had a more dishonest government in its history, and no Victorian has any confidence in the Premier. I do not have any confidence in the Premier myself.

COVID-19

Mr Fowles (Burwood) (13:40): We live in extraordinary times and we are facing extraordinary challenges. Even as we enter a more optimistic phase we cannot deny that in the coming months there will still be pain and worry and stress. This pandemic is not of our own choosing. We did not expect nor did we invite this confrontation with a ferocious and feckless enemy, and the measure of our
success will be in responding to the moment, not running from the moment. If we think we have reached the limit of our resolve, we need only to look around us to the heroes putting themselves in harm’s way each and every day: the teachers and the nurses; the drivers and the doctors; the police and the paramedics; the couriers, cleaners and contact tracers; the civil servants and psychologists; the security guards and soldiers; the food workers and firefighters; the technicians in the laboratories and the chemists in the pharmacies; the workers in abattoirs, airlines, service stations and supermarkets; and all of those working in aged care, disability care and health care. If we think we have reached the limit of our resolve, we need only to look to these heroes and decide that our resolve may well be limitless. This is a time for selflessness. We will do what is hard because we can do better and we must do better and we will do better. As a community we will get through this. As a community we will again look forward with optimism, not fear; with excitement, not anxiety; with determination, not consternation; and with hope.

COVID-19

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (13:42): Under the Andrews government’s current road map people of faith and places of worship are not being given fair and equitable treatment. Step 3 allows hospitality to open for 50 people outdoors and 20 people indoors while restricting places of worship to 10 people outdoors and individual households indoors. Just as I have stood by businesses, individuals and families through this crisis, I now proudly stand shoulder to shoulder with people of faith in our state. As of this morning some 10,619 Victorians had signed the equality for faith grassroots petition requesting the Premier give equitable treatment for religious communities so they may practice their faith in a COVID-safe manner. This petition is supported by peak religious organisations, including members of the Victorian Council of Churches, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, the Islamic Council of Victoria, the Hindu Council of Australia, the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and the Brahma Kumaris. This cause is also supported by 295 church pastors and leaders who wrote to the Premier yesterday, as well as the Catholic bishops of Victoria who sent a similar letter two weeks ago. People of faith in this state are not asking for special treatment, they are simply asking for equal treatment, and I urge the Premier to favourably consider this respectful request.

SUNBURY TRAIN STATION CAR PARKING

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (13:43): I was absolutely delighted recently to be able to announce the Andrews Labor government’s plans for a multilevel car park in the Sunbury central shopping district servicing shoppers, local businesses and traders as well as commuters at the Sunbury station. This is a fantastic project that is a partnership that has been struck with Hume City Council to create over 500 new parking spaces, with 300 of those spaces dedicated to local commuters. The remaining spaces will be for shoppers, local businesses and traders. I want to take this opportunity to thank the ward councillors, the Hume City Council mayor, Carly Moore, and the CEO. Most importantly I do want to take this opportunity to thank the many in the local community that have talked to me as their local member about the need for additional car parking. It is a terrific announcement that has only been made possible by the Andrews Labor government. Again can I take the opportunity to thank the community for their sustained and consistent advocacy. I also take the opportunity to acknowledge the work of Leigh Johnson, Jana Taylor and Geoff Porter from Hume City Council, who have for many years advocated very strongly for the needs of our local community. They have been terrific local ward councillors, always working very closely to get things done, and I really want to acknowledge their contribution and service to the local community.

TUTORS

Mr J BULL: Finally, a terrific announcement by the Deputy Premier this morning to see thousands of tutors across our schools.
COVID-19

Dr READ (Brunswick) (13:45): If you wander up Nicholson Street, just up there, in the late afternoon, you might catch the Brunswick East Entertainment Festival—four women in fluoro wigs and hot pink dancing on their lawn to 1980s disco classics. They are greeted by toots and waves of support from grateful locals, starved of any variation from the sameness of lockdown. They are performers, exponents of physical theatre, with nowhere else to perform. Indoor performance was first to close and likely will be last to reopen, thanks to the COVID shutdown. Performers and the whole ecosystem of creative and technical people who support them have no work and no income, save for the recently diminished JobSeeker and an inadequate patchwork of small grants. There is nothing quite like live performance. Every performance risks something going wrong or falling flat, and that risk excites the audience and we are relieved when it all works—they got away with it, we had fun watching. Perhaps that is part of the healing power of the arts, something we all need right now. So with indoor performance cancelled for some time yet, I encourage the state government to support indoor performers so they are still there to delight us in the future.

VICROADS LICENCE TESTING

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (13:46): This government has turned its back on young people. The suspension of learners permit testing and the stupidity of driving practice rules are hurting—and few have faith in the government delivering any utopian online system. As Maxine said:

Can anything be done about this? There's a huge backlog …

Young Victorians have suffered enough.

COVID-19

Mr NEWBURY: The government has banned choirs and woodwind and brass instruments in schools. As the president of the Association of Directors of Music in Independent Schools, Elizabeth Furman, has written to the Premier:

Medical research investigating music and COVID-19 indicates that musical activities can be continued in a safe manner.

This government keeps turning its back on young people.

COVID-19

Mr NEWBURY: So many across Elwood are doing it tough. The decision by the City of Port Phillip to slug residents with a 2 per cent rate increase has king-hit Elwood ratepayers. As Julie has said:

… these rates are a considerable amount and the lack of compassion to assist at this time is extremely disappointing, not to mention creating unnecessary financial hardship.

Council should spend less time basket weaving and address the significant strain in our community.

COVID-19

Mr NEWBURY: This government has yet again let the private sector down. Pharmacies are not eligible for the third round of the government’s Business Support Fund, yet brothels and prostitution services are. As Stephen has said:

My business has been decimated … I’m currently operating at 20% of my normal trade … I can’t understand why pharmacies would be excluded as a category to receive assistance.
Following statements incorporated in accordance with resolution of house today:

NORTHERN BAY COLLEGE

Mr EREN (Lara)

I am pleased to inform the house about the wonderful announcement I was able to make at one of my local schools, Northern Bay College, this week.

Thanks to the Minister for Education, I announced $690 000 to plan for future works at the college.

The Victorian government is investing $42 million into planning for school infrastructure projects to fast-track the state’s long-term economic recovery hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Northern Bay College is one of 33 schools given the green light to start planning for upgrades and new builds under the Infrastructure Planning and Acceleration Fund.

Northern Bay College will receive $690 000 to plan for the delivery of the next stage of Northern Bay P–12 College’s master plan at Goldsworthy Road 9–12 Campus.

The Victorian School Building Authority will work with the school community and provide the principal and school leaders with Bricks and Mortar training, which covers the process schools should follow to successfully manage their project.

Developing detailed designs now will mean these projects will be shovel-ready once capital funding is allocated in a future state budget.

I am proud that the Victorian government is supporting schools in the Lara electorate to help their students achieve their best results by planning for a future upgrade for their school community.

The Victorian government is investing an unprecedented $7.2 billion in Victorian school infrastructure, which is delivering more than 1460 school upgrades and 100 new schools by 2026, ensuring every child can access a great local school where they can achieve their best.

We are providing students and teachers across the state 21st-century learning facilities to enable them to reach their full potential—that’s why Victoria is the Education State.

Special thanks to college principal Scott Diamond, along with past principals Scott Dellar and Fred Clarke, and also school council president Shona Friswell, for the hard work they have done over the past years.

This stage is the last stage of the Corio-Norlane education regeneration project for Northern Bay College. The project has been a massive overhaul of the local schools and I am proud that it was started by a Labor government and planning for its last stage is also being done by a Labor government.

THE GORDON RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Ms COUZENS (Geelong)

The Gordon TAFE has been a significant institution in Geelong, held in high regard for over 100 years.

I was very proud to attend the online launch of the Gordon TAFE Reconciliation Action Plan, officially launched by the Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education and parliamentary colleagues the member for Lara and the member for South Barwon. Also in attendance were many elders and Aboriginal community members and community leaders.

The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group consisted of 14 dedicated people committed to the final plan, with the strong leadership of CEO Joe Ormeno, the board chair Justin Giddings and Wadawurrung traditional owner and Gordon board member Corrina Eccles.

The fantastic artwork dedicated to the report was done by traditional owner Billy O’Toole which includes the cover and inside the plan and tells the story of Wadawurrung country.

Of course, with any RAP there needs to be action, and that’s exactly what the Gordon is doing with the redevelopment of the Kitjarra Aboriginal Learning Centre, a focus on art and culture and the recruitment of Aboriginal teachers which provide a culturally safe learning environment.

I want to thank Jasmine Kildea, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, for her leadership and Aboriginal elders and community for their involvement in this significant work.

The plan acknowledges the painful realities of the past while forging a new path for the future in partnership with First Nations communities and organisations.

It is a commitment to ensuring the knowledge, voice and contributions of First Nations people are part and parcel of the delivery of vocational education and training at the Gordon’s campuses.
Above all, this plan cements a shared vision of the power of education to transform individual lives to foster a deeper understanding, respect and appreciation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, the oldest continuing cultures on this planet.

As the member for Geelong I am proud of the commitment made by everyone at the Gordon Institute of TAFE and the Aboriginal community to ensuring meaningful action on the journey to reconciliation and inclusiveness.

REGIONAL VICTORIA

Mr CHEESEMAN (South Barwon)

I would like to thank and congratulate regional Victoria for their hard work, which has continued to see low or zero case numbers across regional Victoria. It has been a number of weeks since the restrictions were eased, and many businesses are beginning to recover thanks to enthusiastic community support. I’ve been very proud to go out for lunch or for a walk on the beach and see locals out supporting small businesses, complying with the guidelines and through their custom rebuilding from the impacts of coronavirus.

I’d like to encourage all regional Victorians to take this opportunity to get out and about in your communities and take a Victorian holiday. Go to a local cafe or restaurant with the family and create jobs with your dollars. Go on a road trip with your household, go camping in one of our fantastic national or state parks, just get out of the house and support Victoria’s recovery. Experience the amazing things that regional Victoria has to offer and explore our great state. It has been a tough year, but by working together we can come back stronger and more vibrant than ever.

WENDOUREE ELECTORATE

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree)

The Andrews Labor government is continuing to deliver for the Ballarat community by supporting local manufacturing, small businesses, community organisations and sporting clubs through grants to help them through COVID and injecting money into the Ballarat economy to create jobs. Our $6.1 million investment into the establishment of the Orange Door will address issues of family violence in our region and has created 46 new jobs in the sector. We have provided $50,000 to Commerce Ballarat to support Ballarat businesses through the Victorian government Grants for Business Chambers and Trader Group program. We have invested over $1.5 million at Urquhart Park Primary School in the new 21st-century architect-designed modular building to give students the best learning environment, and work has commenced on the $6.5 million Delacombe Primary School gym which will be constructed by local firm H. Troon. We have awarded $140,000 for renewable energy technology for Pinarc Disability Support and Hockey Ballarat that will save them money and create jobs. We provided $545,000 in funding for building upgrades at Ballarat Health Services aged-care facility, Talbot Place. The Andrews Labor government has also provided nearly $400,000 in grants for Ballarat live music venues including Volta, Trades Hall, The Eastern, Main Bar and Hop Temple so that they can stay afloat. Further to this, we have outliers $600,000 to commence stage 2 upgrades at Mars Stadium for female friendly change rooms. We are also supporting local manufacturing by providing business adaption grants to businesses, including Springhill Farm in Delacombe. We are supporting even more local sports association clubs including Ballarat & District Soccer Association, Ballarat Cricket Association, Victoria Park Football Club and Ballarat Fish Protection Society and Ballarat Anglers Club through the Short-term Survival Package. I am so proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government and will continue to work hard every day for our community.

CASTLEMAINE ARTS ORGANISATIONS

Ms EDWARDS (Bendigo West)

The Castlemaine Art Museum, the Castlemaine State Festival and Castlemaine’s artist-led live arts organisation, Punctum, have received significant Victorian government support to pivot their work, adapt their businesses and prepare for the future.

This funding is aimed at protecting creative jobs, helping organisations survive the prolonged period of restrictions and supporting some of the state’s best creative companies, festivals and venues to find creative and COVID-safe ways to welcome back audiences and earn revenue.

Castlemaine Art Museum Orbit received $94,970 to bring in existing and new audiences through its programs: Going LOCAL by pivoting to the Central Victorian cultural ecosystem and Going DIGITAL by upgrading its capacity to create, exhibit and share great content.
Castlemaine State Festival: Slower, Longer, Wider—CSF 2021 Under COVID received $91 100 to develop new opportunities for the festival and its audience and artists, including increased online presence focussed on providing the region’s school-aged children with a full festival experience.

Punctum’s organisational pivot, the Hyper-Local, received $54 811 to provide local artists and arts workers with opportunities connected to its local cultural and creative industry ecology alongside a recalibrated touring strategy and a refresh of its digital assets.

The $13 million Strategic Investment Fund is part of the Victoria government’s overall $90 million investment to help the state’s hard-hit creative sector survive the impacts of the pandemic.

In ordinary times, Victoria’s creative sector is worth $31 billion to the economy each year. Creativity creates jobs, draws tourists and can put a Castlemaine on the map as a great place to live, work or visit. But the creative sector has been hit hard by the pandemic and needs our support to survive. Castlemaine is renowned for its creative sector; it is the central location in Victoria that attracts artists, musicians, and performers. This funding will ensure that these three organisations can continue to thrive both during and post COVID-19.

**THE ORANGE DOOR**

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong)

- From Wednesday, 14 October, the Orange Door Network will begin providing family violence and child wellbeing support to families across the Central Highlands region.
- The Orange Door Network is a free service for adults, children and young people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence and families who need extra support with the care of children.
- It’s an integrated model which means that families are not bounced from service to service to get the help they need.
- The message to local families is that help is here, and it is closer and more readily accessible than ever.
- Bringing the Orange Door Network to the Central Highlands has been 12 months in the making and I want to thank Child and Family Services Ballarat, Berry Street Western Region and Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative for their commitment and passion in establishing this Australian first model in the Central Highlands.

- Opening the primary site in Ballarat is only the beginning.
- The network in Central Highlands will also include an access point for Moorabool shire and outposted services in the Rural City of Ararat and Hepburn shire for people seeking face-to-face support.
- The Orange Door will deliver crucial support for adults, young people and children in need, including risk assessment, safety planning and crisis assistance, as well as vital links to services for ongoing support, bringing together workers from specialist family violence, child and family, Aboriginal and men’s services.
- It represents a $6.1 million investment by the Victorian government, part of a $448 million investment to roll out 17 Orange Door networks across the state.
- This investment will see 46 staff employed by the Orange Door Network across Central Highlands to deliver critical services to local families.
- I am proud to be part of a government that has committed to adopting all 227 recommendations out of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.
- I want to thank the Minister for Women for her commitment to rolling out the Orange Door Network across Victoria and bringing it to the Central Highlands in 2020.

**Joint sitting of Parliament**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

The SPEAKER (13:48): Order! I wish to advise that the house met today with the Legislative Council for the purpose of choosing a person to hold the seat in the Legislative Council rendered vacant by the resignation of the Honourable Jenny Mikakos and that Sheena Watt has been duly chosen to hold that vacant place.
Motions

NO CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition) (13:48): I move:

That the Premier and the other ministers of state for the state of Victoria no longer possess the confidence of this house.

As Leader of the Opposition it gives me no joy, none at all, to move this motion of no confidence in the Premier and the ministers of his Labor government. In usual circumstances I believe that an elected government should have the opportunity to serve out its full four-year term before facing the judgement of the people of this great state at an election.

But today in Victoria, in October 2020, circumstances are far from usual. Today millions of our fellow citizens are confined to their homes under the direct orders of government and backed by the threat of fines and arrest, only being permitted to leave home for one of four specified reasons. Today tens of thousands of Victorian enterprises, most of them small businesses, have been ordered by this government to close their doors, unsure when or even if they will be able to trade again. Today hundreds of thousands of Victorians are unemployed, while hundreds of thousands more have seen their incomes slashed by a Labor government literally preventing them from going to work. Today we mourn 792 Victorians who have lost their lives due to this government’s gross incompetence in allowing a virus to escape back into our community—792 lives that should be with us still. Today we face a Premier of this state who has subverted the democratic principles of this state, restricting the Parliament, sidelining the cabinet, ignoring the fundamental rights of Victorians and concentrating power in his own hands. Because of these extraordinary circumstances, because of the urgent need for change and because of the immeasurable damage that the Andrews Labor government is doing to the state that I love, I move this motion of no confidence today.

How did it come to this? How did Labor take Melbourne from being the world’s most livable city to the world’s most locked-down city? How did our state, the Education State if you believe the slogan on the numberplates, keep so many of our children out of the classroom for so much of this year, hurting their ability to learn?

I look around and I see so many of the things that define us as Victorians have been lost. Our major events are either cancelled, like the Formula One Grand Prix, or poached by other states, like the AFL Grand Final—not to be played at the mighty MCG but at the Gabba among the footballing heathens of Queensland. We are the live music capital, yet the music has stopped, the venues have closed and many wonder whether they will survive. We have the best dining in the nation, but our restaurants, our cafes and our pubs are closed or are so restricted that many do not bother to open.

A state of creativity where you cannot visit a gallery or go to the ballet or the cinema. A state that embraces so many faiths, but the only thing they have in common is harsh government restrictions on how they can worship. A multicultural state that has banned community gatherings. A sporting state that has for all intents and purposes banned the playing of sport. An industrious, hardworking, entrepreneurial state whose people are denied the opportunity to just go to work. This is the legacy of the Andrews Labor government’s mishandling of the response to COVID-19, and the damage that it has done strikes at the very heart of what it means to be a Victorian.

In December 2019 what we now know as COVID-19 is believed to have originated in China in the city of Wuhan—a new form of coronavirus that proved highly infectious and had fatal consequences in some instances. Extreme measures were taken there, including sealing off the city and strict home detention to limit the spread. The virus is believed to have taken over 3800 lives in Wuhan, with over 50 000 people affected. Other countries noted with concern what was occurring in China. The warning bells were sounded. On 25 January this year the then Minister for Health in the Andrews Labor government, Jenny Mikakos, sent out a tweet. The tweet says:
We have confirmed a case of the 2019 novel coronavirus in Victoria—the first in Australia. There is no need for the community to be alarmed, our health system is well prepared to manage infectious diseases.

Goodness me! If Twitter was only reality, things would be very, very different. If Twitter was reality, Hillary Clinton would be in the White House and Bill Shorten would be in the Lodge. If Twitter was reality, Victoria would have been properly prepared for the global pandemic that made its way to our shores—as the health minister boasted back in January—but that was not the case. We were not prepared at all. The Age reported, and I quote:

Victorian Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton’s team was so poorly funded that top bureaucrats warned the Andrews government multiple times the state’s public health unit was the worst resourced in the country.

I make that point again: the worst resourced in the country. The warning to government even claimed, and I quote:

… a doubling of current staff numbers would still see Victoria as the least resourced state in terms of staff undertaking public health officer duties.

So Victoria started off behind the eight ball. We were not prepared. We were not well resourced. We were not able to cope when the wave hit. We had a grossly underfunded public health team and an arrogant government that just assumed everything would be okay because the health minister tweeted that it would be. Arrogance and incompetence are a very toxic combination, but that has been the hallmark of this Andrews Labor government: arrogance and incompetence.

In Victoria we saw infection numbers move slowly from that very first notification. It took from 25 January to 4 March for Victoria to move from one to 10 infections cumulatively. From 25 January to 4 March—that is the time we had to prepare. Even if we were not prepared before the first case hit, we were given a window of opportunity between 25 January and 4 March. What actually happened then? Where were the plans put in place to make sure that we had the testing kits available? Where were the plans put in place to make sure we had the personal protective equipment we needed available for our frontline healthcare workers and for others who needed them? The fact is nothing was done, or whatever was done was far too little and far too late.

By 11 March Victoria had recorded a cumulative total of 21 cases. In just one week’s time that figure had jumped from 21 to 121 cases and COVID-19 was off and running in Victoria. It even caused the cancellation of the 2020 Australian Formula One Grand Prix. On 16 March the Premier declared a state of emergency in Victoria. By 27 March Victoria’s cumulative infections had risen to 574, including three deaths, so there was no doubting the seriousness of this pandemic or that most of the infections had been sourced from overseas travellers returning to Australia. And this is a key point: we did not start off with any cases in Australia domestically sourced. They were all imported at the start, and that was our opportunity to stop this virus from spreading. In fact so serious was it that the national cabinet met that day.

Now, the national cabinet was, I think, an innovation that Australians welcomed. You had the premiers of the six states, you had the chief ministers of the two territories and you had the Prime Minister meeting in a group to try and make sure that decisions could be taken in the national interest to protect us from the damages and the risks of coronavirus. On 27 March the national cabinet determined that to minimise the risk of further importing this virus a system of hotel quarantine would be established for all returning travellers. And the wording of the decision is important. It states:

Designated facilities will be determined by the relevant state or territory government…

These requirements … will be enforced by state and territory governments, with the support of the Australian Defence Force …

Now, our Premier—Premier Andrews—sat around that virtual table as a member of the national cabinet. In fact he had boasted that hotel quarantine was his idea. He said, ‘This was my suggestion. I’ve put it forward’. You would have thought that on that basis he would have been listening to the decision. He would have been part of it. Because the decision said it would be enforced with the support of the Australian Defence Force. But give him the benefit of the doubt. The Premier is a busy
man. Maybe he did not read the text of the decision of national cabinet. So let us listen to what the Prime Minister said at his press conference that day. He said:

... by no later than midnight tomorrow, that is 11:59 pm Saturday states and territories will be quarantining all arrivals through our airports, in hotels and other accommodation facilities for the two weeks of their mandatory self-isolation before they are able to return to their home.

...

We will be supporting them also by providing members of the Australian Defence Force to assist in the compliance with these arrangements … The ADF will be there to support those enforcement authorities.

It could not be clearer. The decision of national cabinet said the ADF would be there to support states and territories with enforcement. The Prime Minister’s press conference of that day made the same point. ‘But maybe the Premier somehow inexplicably missed this offer’, you might say. Well, that might stand up except for the fact that the Premier himself put out a press release on the same day, on 27 March, and under the heading ‘Enforced quarantine for returned travellers to combat coronavirus’ it says, and I quote:

It has also been agreed that the Australian Defence Force will be engaged to support the implementation of these arrangements.

Well, why does this matter? I make this point for future readers of Hansard, for those who have not lived through the hell that has been Victoria over the last few months. It matters because the hotel quarantine inquiry heard as uncontradicted evidence that the government’s failure to manage hotel quarantine is directly responsible for Victoria’s second wave of COVID-19. Over 99 per cent of all COVID infections in this state are directly sourced to outbreaks from quarantine hotels—outbreaks caused by the Labor government’s decision to turn their backs on the Australian Defence Force; to turn their backs on the offer that they were given; to turn their backs on trained professional people who understand about infection control, who are disciplined, who were not moonlighting doing other jobs, who were not nightclub bouncers brought in because they wanted to give them a job rather than get somebody who knew how to do the job. That is why it matters.

I will tell you why else it matters. It matters because this Premier has tried to say that black is white. He has tried to say that night is day. He gave evidence before this Parliament’s Public Accounts and Estimates Committee in August this year, and when he was asked about ADF support he said, quote:

... it is fundamentally incorrect to assert that there were hundreds of ADF staff on offer and somehow someone said no.

What, so the decision of national cabinet was not enough for you? The Prime Minister’s press conference was not enough for you? Your own press release, Premier, was not enough for you? Why are you taking us for fools, Premier? Why do you expect us to believe what the facts prove otherwise? Now, the Premier has been dishonest in seeking to deny those objective words—the objective words of the decision of national cabinet, of the Prime Minister’s press conference and of his own press release.

It is not even as though there was something that was offered once and then slipped out of the collective mind of the Labor government. In fact there have been a number of different offers of ADF support to Victoria to assist with hotel quarantine. On 8 April the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Philip Gaetjens, emailed the then Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Chris Eccles, because Chris Eccles had asked the commonwealth for financial assistance with the hotel quarantine program. Mr Gaetjens replied that the only financial help the commonwealth could offer was ‘in-kind provision of ADF personnel’ as it had done in New South Wales. Mr Gaetjens said:

I am sure the Commonwealth would be willing to assist Victoria if you wanted to reconsider your operating model …

to which Mr Eccles replied:

Thanks Phil.
Now, isn’t it interesting that at the hotel quarantine inquiry Mr Eccles could not remember whether he had passed this offer on to the Premier or the Premier’s office? Just another piece of evidence of amnesia that we got from so many witnesses, so many politicians and so many senior public servants at the hotel quarantine inquiry.

But even that was not the only time the ADF was offered. We know that on 24 June emergency management commissioner Andrew Crisp formally requested 850 ADF troops to help with hotel quarantine and had that granted only to rescind the request the very next day—the very next day. You have got to ask: what were these people on? How could they get it so wrong? Why would they say no to the Australian Defence Force looking after hotel quarantine? Hotel quarantine was not there as some sort of employment program. It was not running a holiday camp for returned travellers. It was a frontline public health defence. It was what we needed to do to stop the virus coming into our community and causing death and causing devastation, which is exactly what has happened. Victorians want answers. They demand answers. They are entitled to answers because Victorians have been the ones to pay the price for this government’s failure. It was not just the decision to turn their backs on using the ADF in hotel quarantine, it was also the decision to use untrained, unprofessional private security guards. They could have used Victoria Police. They could have used corrections staff. They could have used a host of other people who would have been better at dealing with returned travellers and infection control than a bunch of unemployed nightclub bouncers and part-time Uber drivers—because that is where some of those people were recruited from.

To think you are going to have your frontline health defence recruited via Gumtree tells you that this government was more interested in creating jobs than it was in actually getting a job done right, and that was reinforced by the fact that a Parks Victoria employee who was seconded to work over in hotel quarantine was advised he had to undertake mandatory training in diversity but nothing in infection control. Is it any wonder this has turned out to be a complete and utter fiasco?

We found out recently through the hotel quarantine inquiry that in fact apart from a lack of tenders for the private security guards who were engaged, we also had Trades Hall, Victoria’s peak union body, involved in the decision over selections. Now, was Trades Hall there to make sure the right people for the job got the job? Was Trades Hall at the table to ensure that the taxpayers got value for money, that the most professional and qualified people were given the contracts? Or was Trades Hall there to try and make sure that the most union-friendly firms were given the contracts? What is important to this government? Was it a public health outcome or was it looking after your union mates? Because we know what happened. We know what happened: unqualified, unprofessional people who were not up to the job were given the job by your government, and the consequences of that have been absolutely devastating.

And of course the tragedy is that Victoria had actually beaten off the first wave of coronavirus. We had suffered restrictions. We had suffered lockdowns. Yes, there was pain. There was pain but we had seen it through. You could say we had effectively seen it off. We had gotten down to very low case numbers—zero on some days, low single digits on other days—and we were ready to open up again and we had started to do that. And just as every other state was opening up and getting their schools open and their businesses open and their lives back and their jobs back and their freedoms back, Victoria alone went backwards. Victoria alone sank into the mire of a second wave—and a second wave created by the failures of hotel quarantine. This government has let this state down like no other government has done before. You cannot blame anyone else. You cannot blame the returned travellers. You cannot blame even the guards. You cannot blame anyone but a government that put people in charge who were not up to the job.

As I say, the hotel quarantine inquiry made it very, very clear this was a government that had failed to do its job properly. But the trouble is no-one is putting their hand up. Absolutely no-one is putting their hand up and accepting responsibility for what this government has failed to do. And I think a lot of Victorians are distraught and upset and depressed. They look at this government, they look at politics in this state and they understand that in a pandemic things happen and things happen quickly.
What they do not understand is this government’s failure to take accountability for what they have done. Where is the person in this government putting their hand up and saying, ‘Yes, we made the mistake. I made the mistake. It’s my fault. I’ll go’. It does not happen, and that brings me to the hotel quarantine inquiry. Initially a $3 million, now a $6 million—it will probably wind up being much more than that by the time we get to the end of it—inquiry to find out the truth, to answer that question that the Premier seems unable to answer: who decided to use private security guards for hotel quarantine that led to this disastrous outcome? Normally you find the truth by asking a question and giving an honest answer, but clearly this government thought that was not something that they were capable of doing.

Victorians have been shown contempt by so many witnesses at this inquiry. Have Victorians seen the truth? No. They have had an avalanche of amnesia. They have had a cavalcade of cover-ups. They have had a litany of lies. They have had everything but the truth, and that is what Victorians deserve. We have had ministers who get up there—people who are paid very handsome salaries courtesy of the taxpayer, people who are given very large and important responsibilities by the Parliament and by the Governor to do their jobs—but all of a sudden, when it comes to the big questions, the biggest issue this year, their memories go hazy. Their memories go blank. They just cannot remember who said what to whom.

And it is not just the Labor ministers; it is some of the people that this government has appointed to the most senior positions in this state. Former Department of Premier and Cabinet secretary Chris Eccles, somebody who was one of the highest paid bureaucrats in the country, gave evidence that he did not call Graham Ashton, the former Chief Commissioner of Police, in response to his text. ‘No. I didn’t call Graham Ashton. I didn’t call Graham Ashton’. And he clung to that lie until the very day that the hotel quarantine inquiry said, ‘Produce the phone records, Sunshine’. Then guess what happened? All of a sudden that phone conversation that he could not remember, ‘Oh, yes. Well, it must have happened’. But even though Chris Eccles cannot remember the conversation, he knows this thing about the conversation that he cannot remember: he did not convey a decision about hotel quarantine and the use of private security guards. It takes a particularly twisted form of logic, a particularly flexible form of the truth, can I say, for somebody to say, ‘I do not remember a phone conversation with the former Chief Commissioner of Police but I remember what I did not say’. Unbelievable. It is literally unbelievable, but the sad thing is clearly Mr Eccles believed that we would believe it. And he would have got away with it if it was not for those pesky phone records.

You just have to wonder how many other ministers, how many other people who have given evidence to that inquiry should be back in that box, back answering questions once they have actually had their records produced. Because there is one thing we can be very confident of as a state, and that is that as a state we cannot take on trust anything that these ministers say and anything that their senior public servants say when it comes to the hotel quarantine scandal. They are all running for cover. They are all ducking and diving and weaving, desperately trying to avoid responsibility for what is the greatest failure of public administration in this state’s history.

We look forward to the hotel quarantine inquiry continuing its work. But I say the inquiry must recall all those key witnesses. It must obtain the phone and electronic messaging records of all those key witnesses, otherwise it will lack credibility. Victorians deserve the truth. Too many people have died, too many people have suffered. There has been too much damage done for this to be swept under the carpet. It is more important to find the truth than it is to stick to an arbitrary time line for a report. The Premier has previously said that anything the inquiry has asked for he has given it. Well, the inquiry should ask for more time—as much time as it needs—to find out the truth because the truth, if it does not set you free, will at least grant some peace to Victorians who have been so badly affected and so hurt by this government’s failures.

I would like to turn to other aspects of why this no-confidence motion is so important, because it is not just the failure over hotel quarantine. It is not just the failure to manage the pandemic properly. In many cases it has been the response, because this response has been dreadful. Those who should have
been supported have not been. This government has played favourites, picking who it wants to back and letting other people go under a bus. It has been absolutely disgraceful, in particular the way that small business has been treated by this government. If you are in a large unionised workforce, if you are in manufacturing, for example, or construction doing work on the government’s projects, this government has bent over backwards to make sure that the CFMEU members can get back to work.

But if you are a sole trader, in many cases you cannot even work. Not only are you denied the opportunity to work but you are denied any financial support whatsoever from this state government. It is absolutely appalling.

Why is it that until very recently somebody working as a gardener for a council was entitled to go to work and cut grass but if you were a franchisee for Jim’s Mowing, you could not go to work and cut grass? Does the government seriously believe that there is any difference in health risk from somebody depending on whether they work for a council or whether they are a sole trader, a franchisee? Absolutely not. This is a government that is simply interested in looking after its mates. It is clearly playing favourites and it is actually hurting a lot of people who are just not in a position to fight back.

Ms Britnell: They don’t care.

Mr M O’BRIEN: Because they do not care, as the member for South-West Coast points out. They do not care. There are not too many paid-up union members amongst the small business community so this government has decided to send them under a bus and say, ‘We just don’t care about you. We don’t care about you at all’.

We have seen a complete lack of support for sole traders. Sole traders make up about 300 000-plus jobs in this state. Sole traders are the smallest of small businesses, and they have been so badly damaged by this government’s restrictions, so badly damaged. People who have the ability to go to work and to do so without any contact with anybody have been denied that opportunity. So whether it is your Jim’s Mowing franchisee, whether it is somebody like a window cleaner, whether it is somebody who might be a personal trainer—until very, very recently these people have been denied the opportunity to simply go to work. And yet the government has said, ‘Not only are we denying you the opportunity to work but we are also going to exclude you from any financial support whatsoever’. How mean, how cruel, how vindictive to say to hundreds of thousands of sole traders, ‘We are going to deny you work and deny you financial support at the same time’.

An ideological attack is what it is. It is an ideological attack by a Labor government who has always hated small business—always hated people who want to go and work for themselves. That is what it comes down to, and that is what we have seen from this government. And even when they actually came out with their pathetic, paltry, belated $3000 grant they had to admit that more than 90 per cent of sole traders would not be eligible for it. What a slap in the face, but this comes from a government whose members by and large have never worked in business, do not know the first thing about it and only regard it as being an ideological enemy. That is the way they regard it.

So we have seen the attacks on small business, we have seen the failures to deal properly with and to tell the truth over the hotel quarantine debacle, but it gets worse. Think about some of the measures that have been put in place that just simply do not add up. Think about the captain’s calls we have seen from the Premier. Think about the curfew, for example. What about the curfew? We have gone through wars. We have gone through civil unrest—not a lot, thankfully. But in our history we have gone through challenging times as a state, and yet in all that time we have never, ever had a curfew to lock people in their homes from 8.00 pm until 5.00 am. Yet that is what this government put in place. What was the public health basis for that curfew?

Ms Vallence: None.

Mr M O’BRIEN: None. We had a Premier who admitted that the chief health officer never asked for a curfew. We had a Chief Commissioner of Police who admitted he had never asked for a curfew. This was the ultimate captain’s call. What sort of man makes a captain’s call to lock up 5 million
Victorians in their homes without a basis for it? This Premier is the sort of man to do that, and that is why Victorians can have no confidence in him.

Now, I have been proud to stand with Michelle Loielo, who is a small businesswoman, a mother of three, who has taken the step of challenging that curfew in the Supreme Court of Victoria. It may be the case that the opposition does not have the numbers in this chamber, but this government must still be held accountable. This government must still be held accountable before the law, and this government must be treated equally under the law like any other citizen. I congratulate Michelle for her courage in taking on this government, and I congratulate her pro bono legal team for doing the right thing—not as something to advance their careers but because they saw something that was wrong and they wanted to right it in the best traditions of the bar, the best traditions of legal practice: speaking truth to power.

And isn’t it a coincidence, or maybe not, that at 5 o’clock on the Monday morning that the case was being heard in the Supreme Court of Victoria the curfew suddenly disappeared? This was something that the Premier announced was so important and was essential to stopping the spread of the virus, and the minute that he got challenged what happened? Off it went. The curfew disappeared, never to be spoken of again. Well, I am so pleased that the court has continued to hear that case, and I look forward to the judgement of His Honour. Clearly I do not know what it is going to be, but I do hope that if this government has acted illegally, if this government has acted unlawfully in locking up 5 million Victorians in their homes with no basis for it—there must be consequences. Because what gives you the right, Premier? What gives this government the right to lock up Victorians in their homes, particularly when there is no basis for it?

Now we see others have been increasingly empowered and emboldened to challenge and to stand up to what this government is doing. We see that High Court proceedings have been initiated this week to challenge some of these restrictions that make no sense. That is the thing: the mantra that we are all in this together—this government does not believe it. This government does not believe we are all in this together, because it has restrictions that suit it and then others that do not. It changes things around depending on its political interests, not on health interests. It puts people under curfews not with any rational public health basis but because the Premier thought it was a good thing to do.

You have got the single-person bubble, which says that one person can have a bubble with one other person. Professor Catherine Bennett, the chair of epidemiology at Deakin University, made the point, ‘What’s the point of that?’ If you are one person and you have got coronavirus and you meet with someone else and you give it to them or they give it to you and you go home to your household, guess what—you are all going to get it. It makes no logical sense, and this is what we see time and time again: a government imposing restrictions with no proper health basis and no valid scientific basis, just a simple desire to control Victorians. Because ultimately that is what happened. When this second wave hit, when we got up to the hundreds of new cases a day, we had a government which had to admit it could not control the virus, so it decided to control Victorians instead, and that is no substitute. That is not the job of this government. It is not the responsibility of this government to try and lock up the people of this state, to restrict the people of this state to make up for its own failings.

If we had a government that did a proper job when it came to testing, the second wave would not have been as prolonged as it has been. Because remember this: hotel quarantine created the second wave, but the only reason we are still in it months and months later is because this government has stuffed the basics. You have stuffed the testing, you have stuffed the PPE and you have stuffed the contact tracing. That is why we are still in this hole, and we are not going to get out of this hole while we have an arrogant government that will not admit it is wrong, while we have an arrogant government that will not fix its mistakes and while we have an arrogant government that will not change. That is why if we cannot change this government’s mind, we must change this government, and that is what this no-confidence motion is about.
Let us look at some of the testing issues. We know that early on there were not enough testing kits. As I mentioned earlier, the government had been given warning of the coronavirus in Australia and in Victoria. It had effectively a month between the first case and the increase in cases after that. What happened? Where were the testing kits? Who knows.

Early on we had confusion over who could be tested. Could asymptomatic people who were close contacts of a confirmed case be tested? There was confusion back then. Seven months later there is still confusion. Even today we had the Premier and the Minister for Health boasting about the wonderful response at Kilmore and the Oddfellows Cafe and how people were lining up to get tested, but that is because the government allowed asymptomatic testing. That meant if you did not have symptoms you could still be tested. But what happened with the Chadstone cluster? Could asymptomatic customers of the Chadstone cluster get tested? No, they could not. So even to this day we have mass confusion. Now, I do not know whether it is penny pinching. It is hard to explain. We have had medical practitioners crying out there saying, ‘For goodness sake, just test, test, test’. That is the best way to try and reduce the spread in the community. The more you can test, the more you can identify cases. You then isolate them and it stops the spread. It is not rocket science. Even someone like me can understand it, but this government seems incapable of understanding it and acting on it. Why on earth would this government treat the people of Chadstone so, so differently from other people? Why would you have different regimes for testing? It makes no sense whatsoever.

Let us have a look at contact tracing. Contact tracing is how you put a fence around the virus. Contact tracing is why New South Wales has been able to stay open despite the fact it has had as many cases a day in some instances as Victoria has, because contact tracing is about making sure that once a case is identified it cannot spread further, or you limit how it spreads. New South Wales has done it well. What was Victoria’s technology when it came to contact tracing? Fax machines. Fax machines! Hello, 1980s? Your public health policy has called. For goodness sake. Other states have got it right. Not every state was perfect at the start, but they learned their lessons and they improved and they got it right, and Victoria has failed to do that.

All the time we heard from the Premier, ‘Oh, no, things are fine. There are no issues here. We’re doing really well—we’re doing extremely well. Don’t worry about that. Victoria’s fantastic’. There was actually a very—well, it would have been amusing had it not actually been so concerning. We actually saw the Premier claim not all that long ago that in fact New South Wales was following Victoria, that in fact they felt that we were actually ahead of where New South Wales was. The funny thing was New South Wales came out very, very quickly after that and made the point that, ‘No, we are not following anything Victoria’s doing’. And why would they? This is a Premier who will say and do anything—absolutely say anything and do anything—simply to try and skate through a press conference regardless of whether it is the truth or not. If you cannot fix up contact tracing, you are never, ever going to be able to get the state open as much as it can be.

Now, of course we had very early instances where the government was aware of issues and failed to act. Does anybody remember Cedar Meats, about five months ago? This government had actually been very keen to come out and publicly name and shame and identify certain people who had been infected with the virus—for example, a doctor in Toorak who had caught the virus but did not have the symptoms that would require him to get tested under the government’s own guidelines, but out of an abundance of caution because he was a very careful person he got tested anyway and confirmed that he was positive. Then we saw the then Minister for Health coming out and attacking him as being
unprofessional. Well, I have never seen a reaction from the Australian Medical Association and from Victoria’s doctors like the one I did to that appalling attack by former Minister Mikakos on that particular doctor. People knew he had not done the wrong thing and the minister was completely out of line in attacking him.

So the government was very keen to come out and name and shame and identify people who had caught the virus in some circumstances, but when it came to Cedar Meats, which was a company who might have donated $15,000 to the Labor Party, all of a sudden the shutters went down and the government was extremely concerned not to have any identifying details come out. People knew that there were issues, but the government would not confirm it—it would not confirm the identity of the place. And then a media outlet—I think it was Channel 7—broke the story and confirmed there was an outbreak at Cedar Meats, something the government had tried to keep to itself. Typical of this government: ‘Let’s try and publicly shame a hardworking local doctor, a hardworking local general practitioner, because he happens to be in Toorak, but let’s try and keep secret the name of one of our donors where there has been a massive outbreak of coronavirus’.

And of course the failure to publicly name Cedar Meats early on arguably led to an expansion of the cluster, because how many couriers and transport workers and meat inspectors and contractors and others had gone through that premises while it was still infectious because the government never released the name of it? So you see a government prepared, as I said, not just to play favourites but to compromise public health outcomes based on political partisanship. That is another reason why Victorians can have absolutely no confidence in this government.

Still on contact tracing, I raised in Parliament question time a few weeks ago a situation of a woman who sadly contracted coronavirus in July and passed away, and in August, after this lady had died, DHHS contacted the family to start the contact-tracing process. It is a little bit late when the patient has died. This was in August this year. So despite all the Premier’s claims that contact tracing is fine, it has all been fixed, we are better than the rest, New South Wales is coming to us for advice; it is just not the case, and it never has been.

As the Shadow Treasurer mentioned in question time, the ABC recently referred to the fact that until 1 June the proportion of mystery cases in New South Wales out of the total of local cases was 33 per cent. Between 1 June and 10 October that proportion came down to just 4 per cent, a massive reduction. Why is that important? Because mystery case are the ones that you worry about, where you have got to identify clusters and you know the people who are close contacts. Even if the numbers are out there, you can at least isolate those people because you know they are close contacts. The mystery cases are the ones that the epidemiologists, the public health experts worry about more. New South Wales were able to decrease their proportion of mystery cases from 33 per cent down to 4 per cent. In Victoria our numbers for that period up to 1 June were 22 per cent. You know what our numbers were between 1 June and 10 October? Twenty-two per cent. We had not got any better. We had got no better at all. How many more months do you need? How many more cases do you need? How many more deaths do you need before you just fix up contact tracing? They are just not capable of it. They are not capable of it.

As I said earlier, arrogance and incompetence is a very toxic cocktail, and this government has it in spades: the arrogance to believe that they are doing it perfectly—or to quote the former health minister when it came to Cedar Meats, ‘absolutely perfectly’—the arrogance of that and the incompetence to not know what you are doing. That is why this government is a danger to the health of Victorians, because you are not getting it right and you cannot admit you got it wrong. So how on earth can we trust you? How on earth can we have confidence in you to fix it?

Let us look at the issues around personal protective equipment. We have seen that PPE is absolutely critical to making sure that those who are working with COVID patients are protected. We owe it to our frontline healthcare workers to look after them. They put themselves in harm’s way, they do a job that many of us could not dream of doing, with a lot of challenges. The least we owe them is the ability
to actually look after themselves and protect their health while they do that important work. Yet in Victoria we have seen on too many occasions there has been insufficient personal protective equipment. It just has not been available. Even, appallingy, a report in the *Herald Sun*, or I believe it was the *Herald Sun*, that at the Alfred hospital certain health teams had the choice of either effectively stealing—I might say borrowing without authorisation—PPE from other sections of the hospital or paying for it themselves. None of our public healthcare workers, none of our frontline healthcare workers should have to face that choice of putting their hands in their own pockets to actually protect themselves at work or having to borrow without authorisation from other sections of the hospital. That is just outrageous.

We had the former Minister for Health, Jenny Mikakos, claim in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that healthcare worker infection numbers were in fact quite low—quite low. Then the actual data came out and it turned out she had been giving misleading evidence again. It was up around 70 per cent, not the sort of 10 to 15 per cent that she had been claiming. It is just bizarre. How can one government get so many things so badly wrong?

Ms Britnell: Too busy covering up.

Mr M O’BRIEN: The member for South-West Coast says they have been spending too much time trying to cover up, and I think she is right. We have seen under this government a tendency, not just of this Labor government but particularly its Premier and its senior ministers, to centralise power, a willingness to sideline everything and everyone that does not agree with them or that might have a contrary view. This Parliament has been sidelined for most of this year. Compared to other years we have barely been able to sit. Now, this could have been done. We could have been sitting. We could have been sitting in a COVID-safe way, but the Premier does not like accountability. The Premier does not like scrutiny. The Premier does not want to answer questions. That is not Dan’s way. No-one challenges him. Dangerous is what it is. It is dangerous.

Apart from ignoring the Parliament, he has gone and sidelined his own cabinet and created this COVID crisis committee—the gang of eight—who are running the state, sidelining every other minister, keeping them out of the loop. We know that even amongst that gang of eight there are the ones that are on the inside and there are the ones that are on the outside. We know how it really works, because effectively this Premier wants to be in charge of everything. When he announced his decision on 3 April he said:

That is why I have today established a Crisis Council of Cabinet (CCC) the core decision making forum for the Victorian Government on all matters related to the coronavirus emergency.

If you thought this was just about a few important issues here and there where they needed a quick response, it was nothing like that at all. This was all about the Premier asserting control over his own cabinet and over this Parliament and just avoiding anything that looked like accountability, because that is the way this Premier operates.

We have seen that unwillingness to follow proper advice through some of the initiatives that have been introduced. When it comes to masks, the Leader of The Nationals raised questions today about mask-wearing in regional Victoria. The Premier admitted that his advice—not his advice, his actions have gone beyond the advice. Who is the member for Mulgrave, who is the Premier of this state to decide that he knows better than the public health experts who are not telling him to go as far as he has gone? For goodness sake, we are all subject to the whims of this man, to the whims of this Premier, not based on medical advice, not based on scientific advice, not based on public health advice but because of the way he feels about it, the way he wants to do it. Well, that is not good enough. It is absolutely not good enough.

We see that in the lack of a realistic road map. This state must be able to open up. We need our lives back. We need our jobs back. We need our kids back in school—all of them, Deputy Premier. They all deserve to be back in school. But it is not happening. Why is it not happening? We have now got a
Premier who is trying to chase an elimination strategy, and we know why. I think it is a question of trying to expiate his guilt over having given us the second wave. I think he knows his legacy is in tatters, that he will be remembered for one thing and that is the damage that he has done to this state. God forbid the Premier ever gets his 3000 days up and gets his bronze statue outside the front of 1 Treasury Place. But if he does, it will have a mask on it, because that is how he will be remembered.

What we are seeing is a Premier who has gone rogue, a Premier who is not following the advice that every other state has followed, because if this Premier was serious about getting this state open again, about giving people their lives back and about letting families and friends come together again safely, other states have given us the road map. New South Wales averaged more than 10 cases a day every day in July and August. Did they shut down the entire state? Did they shut down all their schools? Did they shut down all their small businesses? Did they cancel all sport? No. They stayed open and they did it safely, because that is the only alternative. Unless you are willing to close down the state with all the damage that that will do, we must learn to live with this virus until there is a cure or a vaccine. That is the only realistic option, but it is not one this Premier is willing to pursue.

The former health minister, Jenny Mikakos, when she resigned let the cat out of the bag that it was actually an elimination strategy that was being pursued. Even last Sunday we heard the chief health officer, Brett Sutton, talk about how we can squash this virus down to zero. No-one in this country realistically thinks that that is going to happen, and even if it was possible, the pain, the devastation, that you would go through to get to that point would not be worth it. How many people are going to die through suicide? How many people are going to die through people not going to hospital for their cancer checks? How many people are going to suffer immense mental health episodes if this Premier continues to have his foot on the throat of this state for much longer?

Ms Britnell: Haven’t we flattened the curve?

Mr M O’BRIEN: Well, member for South-West Coast, you said, ‘Haven’t we flattened the curve?’ That is a three-word phrase you do not hear very often these days from the mouth of this Premier, isn’t it—‘flatten the curve’. Remember that? Remember that was what it was all about? The strategy was all about buying us time so that our hospitals could cope with any outbreaks. Well, at the moment I think we have zero cases in intensive care.

Ms McLeish: No-one on a ventilator.

Mr M O’BRIEN: Not a single Victorian on a ventilator relating to COVID-19. You would have thought that is a pretty successful example of having flattened the curve. We have got well under 200 active cases in the entire state. There is a better way, and you do not have to take my word for it. You can listen to epidemiologists like Dr Catherine Bennett. You can listen to modellers like Professor Tony Blakely. People have actually advised the Premier in the past, and they say, ‘We don’t need this. It doesn’t need to be this harsh’. For the good it is doing, which is questionable, the damage it is doing is much, much worse.

A member: What about WHO? What about the World Health Organization?

Mr M O’BRIEN: You have got the World Health Organization recently coming out and making the point that lockdowns are the worst way to deal with it—it is a last resort. What a lockdown is very effective at doing is making poor people even poorer. And you would have thought that a Labor government—self-proclaimed champions of the underdog, self-proclaimed champions of the oppressed and the downtrodden—might have actually had some care, some concern, some compassion for people in difficult financial circumstances, but this government has made a deliberate decision to make it worse.

Ms Vallence: Public housing towers.
Mr M O'BRIEN: As the member for Evelyn reminds us, the public housing towers. People were locked up in their homes with zero notice and then given out-of-date food and not provided with the sanitary and health products that they needed at the time—just appalling.

As I said, there is a better way. We have already laid out our alternative road map for immediate action—that is, abolishing the 5-kilometre rule, which makes no sense and is just simply cruelly keeping families apart and keeping friends apart. All of our school students should be back in the classroom. Speaking as a parent of a year 8 student and a year 10 student, I can tell you it has been a challenge for mum and dad but it is much harder on the kids. The kids deserve the chance to finish off what has been a shockingly hard year with a full term in the classroom, and this government has denied them that.

Retail, restaurants and offices should reopen—yes, with masks and, yes, with density limits, but they can be reopened safely as they have been in other states. We should be easing restrictions on weddings and funerals and religious services. This can be done safely—social distancing, yes; masks, yes, if you need them. But for goodness sake, just banning them or limiting them to five people outside—that is never going to fly.

We have got to resume junior sport. Our kids deserve to get back out there. They need it for their physical health. They need it for their mental health—they so need it for their mental health. And non-contact community sport should be back as well: the bowlers, yes; the tennis players, yes; the cricketers, yes; even the golfers—let them have a go. For goodness sake, you can be cheek by jowl with people in Dan Murphy’s, but if you are on a golf course separated by a fairway, apparently that is a greater risk. That makes no sense at all.

We should be immediately introducing current New South Wales rules for regional Victoria. We have next to no cases in regional Victoria, and outside Mitchell shire I think we actually have no cases—no cases at all in the entirety of regional Victoria outside Mitchell shire, which is simply an expansion of the Chadstone issues. There is no way that Victoria should remain locked down, but I fear that this government is hostage to a Premier who is pursuing an elimination strategy that is only going to eliminate jobs, that is only going to eliminate hope, that is only going to eliminate the bright future this state deserves.

The other thing is that we have no indication whatsoever of when this Premier is going to ease up. We were supposed to be getting the big relief this Sunday, then all of a sudden the Premier said, ‘Oh, actually, no, that’s not going to happen now’. He has still got this fantasy that we will only get the restrictions eased to a larger extent when we get 14 days of zero cases. It is not going to happen. Are we really going to be held hostage to this Premier, to this government and their weird concepts of elimination when no other state has sought to do that and every other state has been able to do what they have to do to reopen safely?

This is going to be a generational disaster. The mental health aspects of this will be playing out for years and years to come. Earlier this year we saw there was, I think, a 33 per cent increase in presentations at hospital amongst young people over self-harm and attempted self-harm. That is such a worry—it really is—when you see this lockdown is having such a terrible impact on our young people. At what point is the government going to say, ‘We’re wrong’? At what point are members of the Labor Party going to say to their Premier, ‘Mate, you’ve got this wrong. You can’t keep doing this to us’? Find your voice. Find your conscience. Find your heart for Victoria. Vote to protect Victorians. Do not protect Dan. Vote to protect Victorians’ jobs. Do not protect the Premier’s job. Do the right thing. You know, there are some very good people on the other side, and I know that—

Mr Walsh: Name them.

Mr M O'BRIEN: Interjections are unruly, thank you, Leader of the Nationals. But there are some good people on the other side, and you know that this is the wrong thing for Victoria. You know that until this Premier goes it is not going to stop, it is not going to get any better. I know it is a big ask,
and I know that you are probably not going to do it, but I just hope that you think about it. I hope there is a little twinge of conscience there. It is not all about the team colours. It is about team Victoria. It is about getting this state back. It is about giving us hope. It is about giving us life. It is about giving us something to look forward to.

This is the worst thing I think this state has ever experienced, I would say, without a doubt. What we face is a pandemic that has not just taken hundreds of lives, it has closed down tens of thousands of businesses and it has cost hundreds of thousands of jobs and kept millions of Victorians locked down in their homes. It is the biggest failure of government in this state’s history, arguably in the country’s history. I do not have any confidence in this Premier, but I have got every confidence in this state. I have every confidence that with the right leadership we can come back from this, and we will come back from this. But if we are going to change, we need to change at the top. If we are going to change the way we are dealing with this pandemic and give ourselves a chance—a chance to reopen and get our lives back and get back to work and get our kids back into school—we need to change the government. And that is what today’s motion is about; it is about giving Victorians the chance that we deserve, because too many Victorians have suffered too much for too long and we cannot keep living like this. This is not living. It is not living at all, and Victorians deserve better.

I will conclude by quoting once again Peter Hartcher from a piece in the Age from a few weeks ago now, but I think it is very apt. He talks about ministerial responsibility, he talks about the pandemic and he talks about what has gone wrong. He says:

Everyone is sorry. No one is responsible. Ministers preside over catastrophic failure, illness and mass death. And keep their jobs. And their powers. And their privileges. It doesn’t matter how glaring the failures of their departments, how many people die as a result. The dead go to their graves. The ministers go back to their jobs.

Today is an opportunity for this Parliament to speak with a voice for Victoria, not Liberal, Labor, National, Greens. A chance to speak up and say we need a fresh start. We cannot keep living like this, and we do not have to. A vote of no confidence in the Premier is a vote of confidence in Victoria and its future, and I commend the motion to the house.

Mr MERLINO (Monbulk—Minister for Education, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for the Coordination of Education and Training: COVID-19) (14:52): I rise to oppose this motion and to oppose the deeply cynical, deeply political motivation that underpins it—politics in the middle of a pandemic. We are facing a one-in-100-year event, a deadly enemy responsible for more than a million deaths around the globe, and yet here we are wasting time and energy on a no-confidence motion designed to deflect from a Leader of the Opposition who has lost the confidence of his own party room. A man so desperate to make some kind of impact, any kind of impact, that he has taken to delivering cheap political stunts—tasteless, senseless, heartless stunts exploiting the tragedy of grieving families and communities. It is, as I say, deeply political, deeply cynical, and for the Leader of the Opposition, deeply, deeply personal. Make no mistake, this debate is all about the bloke sitting in the Leader of the Opposition’s chair.

But before we get distracted by all of that, let us remind ourselves of the challenge that was ahead of us earlier in the year and the breathtaking speed at which it moved. It was seven months ago, almost to the day, that the World Health Organization first declared coronavirus at pandemic. Even then I do not know that anyone could have imagined just how wildly infectious and dangerous this virus would be. It took 46 days for Australia to record its 100th case of coronavirus. It took just four days to reach the next 100. By 16 March Victoria had 71 confirmed cases. But still, we were faring better than other parts of the world. By way of comparison, the United States had 3700 cases, Spain had almost 11 500 cases and Italy was tipping 24 000. By 22 March, just six days later, those numbers had exploded. Italy’s numbers had doubled, Spain’s numbers had tripled and America’s confirmed cases had grown fourfold. Internationally cases had surpassed the 300 000 mark and more than 14 000 people had already died. Visions of makeshift wards, mounting body bags and mass graves had somehow become normal. Around the world we saw established, reliable health systems crack and crumble; nurses and doctors overwhelmed by the onslaught; and patients on hospital trolleys...
MOTIONS

Legislative Assembly
Tuesday, 13 October 2020

waiting, praying for a ventilator to become available. They are pictures that will stay with many of us for a lifetime, and they are pictures that very easily could have become our own reality.

In that very same time frame and in line with international experience Victoria’s total number of cases had grown almost fourfold, and across Australia cases were doubling every three days, surging from just under 200 to more than 2000 in less than 12 days. We were on the same trajectory as the United States and Europe, potentially just weeks away from what was unfolding in Italy. Minutes mattered more than ever. The virus was moving fast and we had to move faster. On 16 March the Premier took decisive action, and a state of emergency was declared in Victoria. Large, non-essential mass gatherings were banned. Big events were cancelled. Some of our most loved cultural institutions—the National Gallery of Victoria, the State Library of Victoria, Museums Victoria—were closed. We began making our health system even stronger too. New hospital beds were readied and opened, additional PPE was purchased and stockpiled, extra staff were trained and deployed. It was a mammoth effort, but as much as we could achieve as a single state, this was a national challenge that required national leadership.

On 22 March, aided by other state and territory leaders, Victoria successfully called for the next national cabinet meeting to be brought forward by 48 hours—48 hours that may have seen our cases double and double again, 48 hours that would be crucial to us stemming the spread and saving Australia from that awful fate that we were seeing and witnessing across the world. Ahead of that meeting the Premier also announced Victoria would act to limit a number of non-essential services, school holidays would be brought forward and the advice of our public health experts would continue to shape our rapid response. The New South Wales and ACT governments announced similar plans. As the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners described it, it was an act that helped push other Australian governments into action, pulling our entire nation towards a collective health response. Katharine Murphy of the Guardian concurred the national cabinet had been jolted into urgency, and in doing so had undoubtedly saved lives. We acted—and acted just in the nick of time. While the case count and the death count grew exponentially overseas, Australia—because of the advocacy of Victoria—was able to slowly stem the spread of this virus.

At a state level our government’s next actions were similarly swift. After smaller stages 1 and 2 and reflecting the national cabinet’s consensus that different states were at different steps in the pandemic, Victoria’s stage 3 restrictions were introduced at the end of March. It was an immense but unavoidable decision. Only by restricting movement were we able to restrict the potential spread of the virus. That is how wicked and wildly infectious this virus is—highly contagious and absolutely ruthless. Even now we still do not understand the long-term and enduring impacts this virus can wreak on those who have had it—lung scarring, brain damage, nerve pain, permanent fatigue and PTSD. We have seen that here and we have seen it around the world. It is why in July, when our case numbers began to spike again, we again rushed to respond. The decision to introduce stage 3 and then stage 4 restrictions was never going to be an easy one, but it was without doubt the right thing to do, because that is what leadership is. Leadership is not about doing what is easy or what is popular. It is about doing what is right. That is what leadership is about.

Can I say leadership is also about acknowledging when mistakes are made and, critically, ensuring that they are not made again. It is the reason the Premier asked the Governor to establish an inquiry led by former justice Coate to fully and independently examine the failures of the hotel quarantine program. As the Premier has said, mistakes were made and answers are required, because only with answers can we make sure that those mistakes never happen again. It is a level of accountability that I think every government should hold themselves to and yet a level of accountability that we rarely see.

In addition to the wildly infectious nature of this virus, this pandemic has also shone a bright light into the dark cracks of our nation’s aged-care sector. For years the experts have been telling us just how vulnerable this sector is. Indeed there had been a royal commission established to examine this very issue, but it took this virus to show just how heartbreaking true those warnings were. As community transmission in Victoria grew, so too did the devastating cracks in our aged-care system—a federal
responsibility. It is why as Victoria was on the cusp of its second wave it was critical our Premier and government were again willing to take bold, brave and decisive action. As I have said, it was not an easy decision to make, but—as we have seen around the world—when it comes to protecting people, particularly our most vulnerable, it was the only decision that we could make.

None of this has been easy—none of it—for any of us. I know personally that grandparents are desperately missing their grandkids. Families are longing to be with their loved ones. We have had restaurant, cafe and business owners, those who have built their dreams and created the city that we so love, see those dreams put on hold; people of faith missing out on that core spiritual connection, that central sense of being and belonging; the loss of employment and opportunity around our nation, particularly for those in insecure work; and women, already with the systemic odds stacked against them, left hardest hit by this pandemic. But as desperately difficult as this has been, we know the alternative would have been much, much harder.

Even as I stand here today nations and states across the globe are battling second waves far bigger than their first. Last week the World Health Organization recorded the greatest single increase of new cases since the beginning of this pandemic. This is not over—it is not over by a long shot. Just days later it eclipsed that record again, setting a grim new global milestone. Yet we are thankfully firmly on top of our wave. Others unfortunately have not been so lucky. Earlier this month France broke its record for new infections four times in just eight days. The Spanish government this week has had to declare a state of emergency to enforce new lockdown measures in its capital, Madrid. Sweden, once held up as the poster child for ‘living with the virus’, as some of those opposite would say, has a death toll seven times our own and compares poorly with its neighbours who took a health-first approach. With ICU beds rapidly filling, the United Kingdom has just announced today that it is implementing its own tough new city-based restrictions. Other nations once thought to be out of the woods are also seeing just how evasive this virus really is. In its first wave, cases in Israel peaked at an average of 633 cases a day before dropping to single digits in May. By the start of July Israel’s second wave was again setting new records for daily cases. A new national lockdown was delayed until 18 September, when average daily numbers had reached over 4000, showing just how hard it is to contain and control this virus once it gets away. Even under these new restrictions, close to a month later Israel’s cases are still rising by around 2000 every single day.

These examples show us what might have been. They show us how close we came. Because it is true: our state is not the only place in the world to have suffered a second wave. But thanks to the determination of all Victorians, our frontline workers and this government, we are almost singular in our success of slowing its spread. From 725 a few weeks ago to 12 today—what we are doing is working. It is also an approach that has been supported by no less than the World Bank. Victoria, it has said, was right to act early and decisively to control the first and second waves of coronavirus. I quote from its report:

As long as significant health risks persist, economic activity is likely to remain subdued.

Alternatively, as Reserve Bank of Australia director Carol Schwartz put it:

Look at what’s happening around the rest of the world, it’s a complete disaster when governments don’t take control and let the virus rip.

In short, without addressing the health challenges there is no managing the economic challenges. It has been this approach that has guided us from the very beginning—listening to the health experts and acting on their advice. It is why we have been able to drive down transmission and begin those safe, steady and sustainable steps towards reopening. It is an approach that has not been shared by those who sit across from us—those who have been more than willing to sacrifice public health for cheap politics. While the opposition may not fully comprehend the urgency with which the government was called to act, one of their former colleagues more than understood. I quote from an opinion piece authored by a former member for Hawthorn John Pesutto and published in the Age on 22 March:
Whilst I have enormous respect for our federal and state chief medical officers, we should have gone harder and sooner given the experiences overseas.

... We’re all familiar with the arguments over why schools are not being closed down, but as a parent, I know I’ll feel a lot more comfortable when my kids are home, not only for their sakes, but for staff as well.

I am sure the former member for Hawthorn would have been very pleased when we acted to bring forward the school holidays that very same day. If only, though, we could have found that same level of consensus and collaboration from the Leader of the Opposition. Instead we have got a man white-knuckled on the grip of his leadership, a man willing to say whatever he can to keep himself in the job just one day longer.

This is a desperately difficult situation—a one-in-100-year event that nations around the world continue to grapple with—but as much as we do not yet know about this virus, we do know that it should never be used as a political plaything. It has been the whole way through the pandemic. The Leader of the Opposition is so distracted by his own colleagues—their views about him—that he will say and do whatever he can to keep his backbench onside, global health crisis or not. When we cast our minds back to earlier this year, when case numbers began to slowly tick upwards, what was his response? Was it to defer to medical experts, listen to their advice, learn from their experience? No, according to the Leader of the Opposition it was to fling open the doors and open up all of Victoria. He must have got his medical qualifications from the same place that the member for Caulfield got his. Even more shockingly—

Mr M O’Brien: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I do not raise a point of order lightly. I was just wondering if the Deputy Premier can clarify that he was not quoting me in his most recent remarks there, because if he is suggesting he was quoting me, he is misleading the house. If he could just clarify that he was not quoting me, we can leave it here.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Carbines): I am not clear that there is a point of order from the Leader of the Opposition. The member might choose to take on the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr MERLINO: Even more shockingly, it was a proposal supported by his Shadow Minister for Health. I quote from the ABC transcript on 23 June. Here are some quotes for you. Virginia Trioli:

Would you go ahead with loosening the restrictions … or, in the face of infections, would you stop?

A member for Southern Metropolitan:

We’ve been very clear. We need Victorian businesses to open and if it means easing of restrictions slowly … yes, we would have done that.

Then:

You’d push ahead.

Her response:

We would push ahead.

And they are still agreeing to it now. I do not want the gravity of this situation to get lost, but imagine if this was the man and the party leading this state. It would have been nothing short of a total disaster.

The spluttering, stuttering inconsistencies do not stop there. First, he wants more masks. Then he wants fewer. The Leader of the Opposition proposes electronic monitoring bracelets for people with the virus, but then he is worried about personal freedoms. He says he wants to keep regional Victoria safe, but then he rejects the science to actually achieve it. Well, he is a member of the same political party as Craig Kelly.

It is no wonder that the Leader of the Opposition has lost track of his own policy positions—he is too busy keeping track of the other people auditioning for his job. The former Leader of the Opposition,
the member for Bulleen, launched a brand-new social media strategy. The member for Kew has been calling his own press conferences. The member for Gembrook was releasing his own restrictions road map, an alternative road map, such is the member’s belief in his own leader’s sound policy approach. It shines in sharp relief. The Leader of the Opposition is not a man concerned with the health of Victorians. This is a man obsessed with the health of his internal popularity. He does not care about Victorian jobs, he cares about his own, and he will do anything—anything—to hold onto it.

Now, let us be clear: no-one wants these restrictions to be in place a moment longer than they need to be. But what Victorians want most of all is to see the numbers go down. And this is the thing that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues do not understand: the thing Victorians most want to see is the numbers going down, for us to get on top of this thing, for us to avoid a third wave so people can enjoy Christmas, New Year and the summer holidays with family and friends. They do not want to put this at risk, and that is exactly what those opposite are proposing. The last thing Victorians want, the last thing they deserve, is petty politics being put ahead of public health. So please let us call this what it is: the desperate final throes, the last gasp—a no-confidence motion—of a man who has lost the confidence of his own party room.

There could not be any clearer contrast between those opposite and our government, which has worked every single day to support every single corner of our state. This includes building one of the strongest, most rigorous testing responses in the world. In regional and metro communities alike we continue to test more people than anywhere else in Australia. In fact if Victoria were its own nation we would have the eighth highest rate of testing per capita in the world. That is what we are delivering.

We also continue to provide unprecedented support for Victoria’s businesses and industry. Just last month we announced a new $3 billion package with cash grants, tax relief and cash flow support for Victorian businesses—the largest business support package in our state’s history, taking the government’s total industry assistance to more than $6 billion. It is an investment that means to date more than 108 000 businesses have shared in close to $1.5 billion in support.

Then there is our $500 million Working for Victoria scheme, helping Victorians find paid work and contribute to our response and recovery efforts; $100 million to support our state’s struggling sole traders; and our $2.7 billion works program to deliver shovel-ready projects from big to small. It is an investment that is creating some 3700 direct jobs—plasterers, plumbers, admin staff and more—while supporting thousands of extra jobs across the state’s supply chains. At the centre of our building works package is more than $1 billion invested in education infrastructure, ensuring space for more than 21 000 extra students in our state’s education system and creating 1600 construction jobs. It is an investment that will deliver 10 new schools and deliver a further four stages of new school projects, upgrading and modernising 57 more schools and delivering access improvements for students with a disability as well as carrying out rapid job-creating maintenance on schools and TAFEs across the state. It is an economic response and it is working, with independent modelling from Deloitte Access Economics finding that our collective business support has helped boost economic activity in the June quarter by around $7.5 billion, protecting around 81 000 full-time local jobs.

We have also made important investments to address the unique social challenges imposed by this pandemic. We are upgrading 23 000 public housing homes, delivering new kitchens and new bathrooms; and building 168 brand-new dwellings—because right now home matters more than ever. We have also found new ways to respond for victim-survivors of family violence, introduced nation-first support payments for vulnerable workers, supplied emergency food relief for those who need it most and found new ways to connect with our multifaith and multicultural communities. We have also provided culturally tailored support for Aboriginal Victorians, ensured additional help for Victorians living with a disability and stepped up our investment in mental health. This includes more than $200 million to help meet the demand for mental health support during this pandemic. I want to call out specifically the additional services in regional communities—Ballarat, Warrnambool, Mildura, Albury-Wodonga—that make sure that wherever they live, every Victorian can get the support they need.
In a very real way this investment is delivering new beds, earlier care, extra clinical support and additional telehealth counselling services, but it is also making sure that as we begin to emerge from this health crisis we do so in every sense of the word. In my capacity as the newly appointed Minister for Mental Health and in marking Mental Health Week, I know maintaining that effort remains as important as ever. The summer’s devastating bushfires and now this devastating virus have reinforced just how important it is that we have a strong and reliable mental health system here in Victoria, and I look forward to working with the sector, communities and families as we respond to the enduring impacts of this pandemic and set about rebuilding our mental health system from the ground up.

If I may, I would also like to take a moment to specifically pay tribute to our school communities and the families that they support. Every Victorian student, parent, carer, teacher, staff member and principal across all three sectors—government, Catholic and independent—has done a remarkable job. I will not sugar-coat it: remote and flexible learning has been hard, and it has not always been perfect. But from virtual science fairs and online art classes to PE lessons from the lounge, our school staff have worked incredibly hard to engage our kids at home. From the hundreds of schools across our state, a handful of examples: Glenroy Specialist School, a proud school community, pulled together to provide daily online support sessions, including physio and allied health services for its kids and their families; Mallacoota P–12, still recovering from the bushfires of earlier this year, went out of its way to make sure its students felt supported and safe; and Kings Park Primary School, in addition to supporting learning from home, made sure it was supporting kids growing from home too with the delivery of breakfast club hampers and a few extra snacks to keep busy minds busy. In fact across the state our breakfast club program, our schools, have delivered 2.5 million meals at home during this period of remote learning. Each of these schools—and indeed every one of our schools—has also done an amazing job in supporting those who needed to attend on site—children with additional needs, children of essential workers. Our success really is due to the efforts of the staff and school communities. To each of them, to all of them, I want to say thank you. I have never, ever been more proud of the education profession than I have been this year.

Our success is also steeped in the strong cooperation between the government and non-government sectors. Every decision that we have made about the operation of schools has been on the basis of advice from our health experts. That in turn has meant that every school, irrespective of their sector, has been working to the same set of rules and guidelines. The government, Catholic and independent sectors have all been in lock step through every stage of this pandemic, and I acknowledge the deep collaboration between the Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Independent Schools Victoria. This has been an experience that has provided a unique perspective on how we might be able to do things differently and better going forward. Just one example is that the attendance rate of students has actually been better than it was when schools were on site this time last year, giving us new insights into how we can continue to reach kids at risk of disengaging. It also allows us to build on the investments that we have made over the past seven months. This includes a $68 million refresh of critical school IT infrastructure, including establishing our statewide learning platform in Webex.

We have partnered with over 100 other providers, including Zoos Victoria, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the Geelong Gallery and the Australian Children’s Television Foundation to make over 670 virtual learning experiences available to students and their schools. To keep kids connected—vulnerable kids, disadvantaged kids—71 000 laptops and tablets and 28 000 internet devices were given to families in need across the state.

As onsite learning returns, though, it is vital we continue to support those kids who will need a bit of extra support to catch up. Today the Premier and I announced a further $250 million to recruit and deploy more than 4100 tutors to every single government school and every non-government school in need in 2021. It is the single biggest boost in individual learning support in our state’s history. Using an already skilled workforce of preservice teachers, teachers on long leave, recently retired teachers and casual relief teachers, it will see around 200 000 Victorian kids get the extra, dedicated focus that
they need. If your child has fallen behind, we will get them back up to speed. We will also provide support for kids to re-engage, with 16 additional Koori engagement support officers and 60 additional multilingual and bicultural workers.

I also want to pay special tribute to our VCE and our VCAL students, particularly those in their final year of school. I know that 2020 has not been the year that you had hoped for. You have missed out on friends, study sessions, parties, graduation dinners. This has not been the year that you thought it would be. But you are coming out the other side strong, connected and resilient. Last week was evidence of that: over 85,000 students completing the GAT, the general achievement test, in 582 different locations across the state and even a number overseas where those students could not get back home. My message to these students: as we get closer to the exams and the end of the year all you need to do is focus on doing your best. I promise we have got the rest.

In recognition of the year that this has been and to ensure every VCE student is assessed fairly, that this is a year of meaning, that their results, their ATAR rankings, reflect their abilities and their efforts, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority has introduced a new consideration of educational disadvantage process. Through this process every student will be individually assessed for special consideration, making sure that those who have been particularly disadvantaged through this pandemic do not miss out on the results that they deserve. Students undertaking VET studies will similarly be supported. Students will graduate with their VCAL certificates. The impact of COVID will be taken into consideration in that assessment. We have also announced that students who have not been able to finish their VET qualifications due to being unable to complete practical work and on-site assessments will be guaranteed enrolment at a TAFE or dual sector provider next year. Better yet, we are going to completely waive those fees. We will also make sure that students have their VCE and VCAL results, their certificates, by 30 December, making sure that they can begin planning for 2021 and the rest of their lives.

As I have said, the impact of this pandemic will be enduring, particularly when it comes to the mental health of our young people. Already we have invested more than $28 million to ensure more students can get more support, including through the Navigator program, the Lookout program for kids in out-of-home care and the mental health in primary schools pilot. We will have mental health training for 1500 additional teachers, and because we know it is more important than ever before, all Victorian government secondary school students have been able to access counselling via voice call or videoconference through our Headspace counselling partnership or via their school-based mental health practitioner.

Doctors in Secondary Schools has continued to conduct telehealth appointments, while Student Support Services maintained its assistance online. In recognition of just how much it matters, we have brought forward the rollout of mental health practitioners in secondary schools, to be completed by the end of 2021. This will see qualified mental health professionals at every government secondary school campus across the state—psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists and mental health nurses. It will mean dedicated onsite mental health support for any student who needs it, and it will be one of the many vital investments we make as we begin our long road to recovery.

Because this is what real leadership looks like. It is not petty politics. It is about driving this virus down, and then it is about setting out a long-term vision for Victoria to not only repair the damage of this virus but to begin work on a recovery that will make us stronger than ever before. We need a government and a Premier that are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work, that have a record of delivery, that have a record of investment and that have a record of getting things done. That is our government, that is our Premier, and that will be what we deliver for the people of this state. There is, as I said, a long road ahead of us, but working alongside the determined efforts of every single Victorian we will get through this and we will get through it together.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) (15:30): I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition in his no-confidence motion in the Premier and other ministers of state. I would like to remind the Deputy
Premier for a start, if he talks about trust, to think about the final submission from former Minister Mikakos to the Coate inquiry, where she submitted to advise the Coate inquiry to treat the Premier’s evidence with caution—a very, very polite way of saying that the Premier did not actually tell the truth, that she felt she had been very hard done by by the Premier in his evidence. The Premier is of the view that everyone that is in Victoria is expendable if it means saving his skin, and obviously former Minister Mikakos feels that way as well.

Seven hundred and ninety-one lives have been tragically lost in Victoria because of the second wave of COVID. Seven hundred and ninety-one grieving families actually want answers as to why there was a second wave, why there was such a monumental failure of public policy and administration in the management of hotel quarantine and why there was such a monumental failure in contact tracing following the escape of COVID from the hotel quarantine. They deserve answers; those families deserve answers. They deserve better than a Premier who went to the Coate inquiry and said, ‘I don’t recall’. When he was asked the hard questions the Premier said, ‘I don’t recall’. The Premier actually said ‘I don’t recall’ 27 times during that particular evidence-giving episode. Those families, those 791 families, deserve better than a Premier who says ‘I don’t recall’ 27 times when he is being asked questions about the failure of hotel quarantine and the failure of contact tracing once COVID had escaped. The Premier has said constantly in this house that he takes responsibility for everything that happens on his watch. Having an answer of ‘I don’t recall’ is not taking responsibility for something that happens on your watch. That is not what this is about.

The Premier goes to his press conferences—and everyone is commenting on how many press conferences he has done now—but he goes there to lecture Victorians. He goes there to lecture Victorians about who has done something wrong that means there is more COVID out there. It is not about taking responsibility, it is not about admitting mistakes, it is not about being accountable. It is actually about blaming someone else as to why this is happening.

I think we can all give a vote of thanks to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his team for JobKeeper and JobSeeker. We can look at the hundreds of thousands of Victorians who have lost their jobs through the COVID crisis, the hundreds of thousands of people who have less income because they do not have as much work through the COVID crisis. If it was not for the Morrison government, we would have devastation out there, and I commend them for what they have done with JobKeeper and JobSeeker.

But when it comes to small business—small business, as we know, is the heartbeat of our communities and of our economy here in Victoria—the supposed support from the Andrews government has big headline figures but lots of fine print as to why people cannot qualify. If you do not actually have a number that matches up with the number for your ASIC registration, you do not qualify. It does not matter if you are in the same business category. I have got business operator after business operator out in my electorate who have written to me, who have contacted me—who run motels, who run cafes, who run restaurants—who have not qualified because a number does not match up with another number. They still have those businesses, they still do that work, but they cannot get the help. The Andrews government has been large in the big numbers but very, very mean and miserable in the fine print when it comes to the help that can actually go to those businesses. That is why regional Victorians have lost confidence in the Andrews government.

The Deputy Premier talked about politics in relation to this motion. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people across Victoria who have emailed right across the political spectrum. I see the emails. They come to both sides of politics, and they are saying, ‘Get rid of the Premier. Please get rid of the Premier’. So this motion is not about politics. This is about actually using the Parliament to be the voice for the people of Victoria who want to see the Premier gone. You talk about school students, and the Deputy Premier gave us a long lecture about what they had done for school students. The thing that sticks in my mind with the Deputy Premier is when he said, ‘I will not allow regional students to go back to school because I don’t want them to have an unfair advantage over city kids’. When I heard that, that really galled with me. It really galled with parents and with people right across regional
Victoria. Regional students actually find it harder for a whole range of reasons than city kids, and for once—for once—they actually might have got a bit of a leg up by being able to go to school when their city counterparts could not. And what did the Deputy Premier say? ‘No, they can’t go back to school’.

All the frontline health workers we have in this state—the health professionals, the nurses, the doctors, the hospital staff, the ambos, the police—all deserve answers from the Premier. They all deserve answers from this government as to why we have the second wave, why those people died, why there is such a high level of infection in our state here. They actually deserve answers from the Premier. They actually deserve answers from the COVID Eight—the eight ministers. In our normal system of democracy in Victoria we have a Parliament, we have an executive government, and the two work together and the Parliament holds the executive government to account. To have the COVID Eight making all those decisions without any Parliament is one of the reasons we are where we are. This whole bypassing of the normal conventions of government—

Ms Allan: That election was crazy, hey? How about that election that, you know, elected a government to do that job?

Mr O'Brien: Let’s have one!

Mr Walsh: Let us have one. The Leader of the House wants to talk about elections. Bring one on. Bring on an election. That is what this is all about. Actually bring on an election. All those people that are so unhappy—bring on an election. I dare you. I dare you to bring on an election. That is not a good audition to be the future Premier after the current Premier goes, but bring on an election. If you want to bring on an election, bring on an election. That would be absolutely fantastic.

With the motion that is before the house I would like to think that particularly those that sit on the other side of the chamber might look into their soul, look into the reason they are actually in the Parliament, and that is to represent the people of their electorate. They are not in the Parliament to be the Labor Party. They are in the Parliament to be a member of Parliament for the communities that voted for them to come to the Parliament. I would like to think that they would look into their soul and think, ‘Has the Premier actually done a good job for Victoria? Are the Premier and particularly the eight ministers that are in the COVID Eight the best to lead Victoria into the future?’ If they looked into their soul and they thought about what is happening in their communities at the moment, they would actually cross the floor. They would come across to our side of the chamber and they would actually say, ‘We need a fresh start. We need a change’. The way that this state is going to go forward—and it is a proud state and it will go forward—will be a lot quicker and a lot easier if there is a new person at the top, if there is not someone at the top that just wants to stand there day after day and lecture Victorians about what they have done wrong, that wants to lock down people so they cannot go out, that wants to keep businesses closed, that wants to keep people in fear all the time, that has different rules at different times for different reasons without necessarily the logic that backs it up.

An example of the people I talk about is one of the Woolworths managers in Swan Hill, who I regularly see of a weekend when I go shopping, who asked me last weekend, ‘When is the next state election in this state?’ I said, ‘Two years’, and she just shook her head and said, ‘We cannot wait that long. There will be no-one left in this state. We’ll all be broke if that’s the case’. That is the sort of example of the people that are out there in regional Victoria who are so, so disappointed—is the polite way of putting it—in the Premier and his team as to what they do in this state.

One of the rules that really galls people—and I feel for pubs—is that you can actually have more people in a pub in regional Victoria than you can have in a church. I think that says something about the values of the decision-makers in this state—that you cannot have enough people in a church to run a service. The Living Waters Church in Kyabram—that has a great congregation, that actually has their band and that actually broadcasts their service—cannot have enough people there to have the whole band there, so they broadcast their service at the moment. It says something about the values of those making decisions in this state when there are more people allowed into pubs than there are allowed into
churches. It is nothing against pubs, which I do like to go to occasionally, but it is important that we keep those moral values in this state into the future.

The Leader of the Opposition used a quote that we have all used a number of times, and it is from Peter Hartcher. I think it sums up very, very well everything that has gone on in this state in the last six months:

Everyone is sorry. No one is responsible. Ministers preside over catastrophic failure, illness and mass death.

And keep their jobs. And their powers. And their privileges. It doesn’t matter how glaring the failures of their departments, how many people die as a result. The dead go to their graves. The ministers go back to their jobs.

I think that sums it up very well. There are 791 people who have tragically lost their lives in this state because of the failures of COVID quarantine and the contact tracing. There are 791 families who are grieving—791 families that most likely could not actually go to the funerals for their loved ones. I have done a number of funerals for friends via Zoom—it is just not the same. For those loved ones of those people who have lost their lives because of COVID, who most likely could not have gone and seen them in the hospital and most definitely would not have been able to go to their funeral—I really, really feel for those.

In finishing off, as a local member of Parliament it has been a really tough time over the last six months, as it has been for the rest of the community. The number of people that have been on the phone, the number of people that have come into the office, who are losing their businesses—

A member: Angry.

Mr WALSH: Well, they are distraught. The number of people who are in absolute tears about what the Andrews government has done to them is just more than I have ever seen in my political career. Their life savings are gone. Their life investments are gone. Their life’s superannuation is gone. Their lives have been destroyed because of what has happened, particularly the small businesses in this state. There is no reason why regional Victorian businesses could not have been freed up sooner. A whole range of local government areas in regional Victoria have had no COVID through the whole pandemic. Why are those businesses suffering so much? Why are those people being put through so much torture? As we have said a number of times, lockdowns and restrictions based on postcodes or on local government areas would have been much more sensible, would have allowed parts of our economy to function, would have allowed those businesses to survive and would have allowed people to get on with their lives.

I would like to finish with a quote from former Premier Jeff Kennett, that person that this Premier was so disparaging of in one of his press releases. But in one of Jeff Kennett’s articles he made the comment that Premier Andrews’ legacy to this state will be ‘deaths, destruction and debt’. And that is why we have this motion of no confidence in the Andrews government: because we do not want to see any more deaths, we do not want to see any more debt and we most certainly do not want to see any more destruction of our economy, of jobs and of people’s lives.

Mr PALLAS (Werribee—Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Coordination of Treasury and Finance: COVID-19) (15:45): I stand to oppose this motion, and I stand to oppose it for every single Victorian who has worked so hard to get us through this crisis. I oppose it in recognition of the sacrifices made by Victorians toward the shared goal of beating this virus. I oppose the motion because it is an implied rebuttal to the commitment to and collective responsibility for each other we each share. I oppose the motion for every healthcare worker who has been on the front line to keep us safe and to protect the most vulnerable in our society. I oppose this motion for every essential worker, everyone who has worked to clean and to sanitise and to ensure that we get safe access to food and essential supplies, and I oppose this motion because it is a baseless attempt to put politics ahead of community safety.

Winston Churchill once famously said, ‘You will never reach your destination if you stop and you throw stones at every dog that barks’, and indeed it is clear that there has been a lot of dog barking
going on in this motion today. There has been a lot of effort to distract the people of Victoria from the unswerving and might I say unambiguous purpose that we must all share, because we cannot get through this without it, we cannot deny the situation that we confront and we cannot let down the people of Victoria. We cannot run a mathematical equation about the value of life. We cannot simply say that because you are sick, because you are old or because you are weak you are in some way of less value to this society. That is what we are fighting for, and that is what this motion seeks to distract us from. It is an effort really to undermine the single-natured purpose of what we are doing and what we must do because the science demands we do it to get to where we need to go.

Now, we have all played in competitive sport with people who would support a motion of the nature that is here today. You get to three-quarter time, maybe 10 minutes from the final quarter, you are four goals down and your so-called teammates want to conduct an inquiry into how on earth you got into this situation. Well, the truth is there is a time for accounting and for atonement, but that time is not in the heat of battle. It is about making sure that we as a community understand that coming together means so much more than simply tearing us apart, because it means protecting each and every Victorian with all of our effort and our endeavour. This is a motion that is brought into this Parliament by an opposition that has no patience, no principle and no respect for the sacrifices of Victorians.

Make no mistake, 2020 has been an incredibly tough year. We have had bushfires and a one-in-100-year pandemic the likes of which no-one in this house has seen before. Around the world 37 million people have caught COVID-19, with more than 1 million deaths worldwide because of this virus. So let us be clear: this is real and this is tangible. Look around the world: those who sought to enlist fear, trepidation and division have only enabled a second-rate response, a third-rate response, to a virus that has ultimately taken hold and imperilled even more and more of their population.

There is no choice; let us be clear. Those opposite want to make the point that there is a choice between fighting the pandemic and saving the economy. You cannot save this economy unless and until we make the unswerving and undivided effort to ensure that we get to a place that is COVID normal, where businesses can continue to operate and know that when they operate, when they open up, they will be able to do so with the certainty that victory has been assured because our commitment to each other has been the basis under which we have prospered.

Now we are confronted with devastating economic consequences the world has not faced since the Great Depression. Governments around the world have acted differently in response to this virus. Some jurisdictions, like Arizona in the United States—a state with a population and indeed a landmass comparable to Victoria’s—acted too slowly; we have seen their situation spiral out of control in that state. As of yesterday, Arizona has reported 225,000 cases of COVID and nearly 6000 deaths. Victoria, by contrast, has had just over 20,000 cases and, as of yesterday, 810 tragic deaths—something that the Leader of the Opposition decided to turn into a tasteless political stunt, putting his own political ambition ahead of grieving families.

The Leader of the Opposition is all rhetoric and recklessness. He would have us risk a third wave rather than stay the course to get to where we need to get for COVID normal. He has no clear policy position other than to undermine public confidence in the health response, and he steadfastly refuses to listen to health advice. Instead he spends his time talking to and taking advice from the ideologues in his party and the cheerleaders at Sky News after dark. This motion should be called out for what it is: a desperate attempt by a man trying to keep his job to seem like he is making a contribution. The only contribution the opposition leader is making in this place or beyond is politicising a public health crisis, and that of course will be his political epitaph: I sought to capitalise on the pain and suffering of my community.

The Leader of the Opposition, we know, has lost the confidence of his own party, and he has definitely lost the confidence of the broader public, because they see him for what he is: an opportunist who would prefer to distract and divide rather than being content to work cooperatively with a government dealing with one of the greatest challenges governments have faced in the last century. The Leader of
the Opposition could never have the courage and the resolve to lead in a time of crisis. He has got a track record of deception and mischief, and his legacy will be to highlight what not to do when people’s lives are on the line. This stunt, and that is what it is, is a desperate attempt to regain the spotlight from the member for Kew. What a sad indictment—grasping at straws to get more airtime than the member for Kew. When the history of this pandemic is written, they will be remembered as the people who politicised a crisis, who took the advice of the muckrakers, fearmongers and science deniers over experts. What a sad indictment of a political party the Leader of the Opposition leads: to succumb to opportunism and fear, to succumb to fake science in order to try and make political capital. Given he will likely have the big chair on that side of the house soon enough, I suppose the member for Kew must get some special mention for his particular shameful performance in these circumstances. Never before have I seen a show pony carry so little intellectual gravitas. Thank goodness he is not at the helm, because his approach to this pandemic would probably make Homer Simpson look competent.

We will never stoop to the childish antics displayed by the opposition, and we never have, because there are times when you need to recognise that issues that we confront are bigger than ourselves and our own ambitions. They are bigger than the issues that divide us, and that is why under the leadership of our Premier we have been able to demonstrate that we have a willingness to put hands across the water, to bridge the political divide, to work cooperatively with the federal government and to make sure that we keep all Australians safe, and that of course is necessary in these trying and concerning times.

The Andrews government, one that I am proud to be part of, has made the tough but right decisions—and believe me, there are no harder decisions. But think for just a moment what life would be like if we had let those opposite have control of the rudder of state at the moment. We have only heard one consistent theme: open up, let it rip. It is almost like the herd mentality has replaced herd immunity for those opposite, because they do not spend any time thinking about the consequences of the actions that they are proposing. We have followed the health advice, we have acted swiftly, even when it is not easy and even when, on occasion might I say, it is unpopular. And believe me, when you go into public life nobody wants to squander the ambitions or the expectations of people. Governments should be enablers. But the fundamental thing you have to recognise is that choices have to be made. Brave governments sometimes have to make hard choices, and our Premier has led us to make very hard choices but the right choices.

I would like to pay tribute to the Premier and the work that he has done. He has followed the expert advice. He has kept his eye on the ball despite all of the distractions and the hysteria from those opposite. He is working tirelessly to deliver a safer state. For 100 straight days and more he has fronted the media to answer every question and he has fought for every Victorian life and for every Victorian business.

There are some commentators in the usual media outlets, none of whom have degrees in medicine or data science, who have bleated non-stop about the actions this government has taken. There may be some in this chamber who helped them write it or who have picked up their lines—it is hard to know who is parroting who sometimes in this echo chamber of conservative reinforcement. These commentators are wrong, and it is irresponsible that such people in the comfort of their homes on a topic that they know nothing about write their bitter words condemning the experts—the chief health officer and all the public servants, data analysts and medical experts—that inform decisions during a pandemic. They do not have to look all that far to see governments that have not listened to expert advice. Look at Sweden, who have suffered a far greater number of COVID cases and deaths than Australia and who have not taken and are not taking the same strong measures that we have adopted. They are experiencing a greater collapse in economic activity.

So this idea that you have to make a choice between your community’s health and your economy’s performance has been demonstrated for the lie that it is. Look at the United Kingdom, with tens of thousands of people acquiring this virus every day and a 20 per cent drop in GDP. So this idea that we should distract ourselves from the virus and worry about the concerns and dealings of business is absolutely wrong. Why is it wrong? Because science and history tell us that. Very recent history tells
us that. You only have to look at the experience of Western Europe, of the United States. We cannot act in collective denial and believe that simply by imagining a thing away it will be gone. We have to deal with the reality that we confront, and that is exactly what this government is doing.

It is a harsh reality; it is a hard reality. This is a time of incredible sacrifice, and nobody enjoys it. Nobody wants it to be the way it is. But it is the way it is, and pretending it is not only makes it worse. You only have to look at those states around the world who have acted in collective denial to see exactly what pain and suffering they and their citizens have had to endure and the businesses that have effectively been rendered into an economic calamity that is of unprecedented proportions and, might I say, considerably worse than the economic downturn that we are confronting in this country. At the end of July Sweden had the seventh-highest per capita death rate in the world, 10 times larger than its Nordic neighbours, with 5872 Swedes having died from the virus and with over 97 000 cases, which is really an illustration of how bad things can get. Their GDP has slumped by 8.6 per cent.

This state has been the engine room of the nation, and we will return to that. We will return to it because of the collective effort and endeavour of this government—a government that deals with the reality of the situation. As harsh as it is, we confront it because we have to. And that is why I have confidence in this government and this Premier.

**Sitting suspended 4.00 pm until 4.34 pm.**

**Ms McLEISH** (Eildon) (16:34): I rise this afternoon to make a very important contribution on a very important motion—that of no confidence in the Andrews Labor government. We need to think why we are here at this point now, why we are having to have this vote and debate around no confidence. We have a government before us, a very arrogant Labor government, very typical, who is taking Victorians for granted, taking us as mugs and thinking that everybody will accept what they say without scrutiny, without question. And I think it is fairly obvious now that people are starting to say, ’Well, there needs to be a lot more scrutiny, there needs to be a lot more questioning, and it doesn’t just need to be of the Premier standing up with his hour or so of talk that he does every day’.

Now, in Victoria at the moment we have 191 active cases. We have had a lot of people who have had the virus and recovered. We have only got 21 people in hospital, and we have no cases in intensive care. When this pandemic hit—this novel virus that we had no experience of—all government departments were in theory prepared because they all had their influenza pandemic plans. Most of them left them in the bottom drawer, because if you look at the influenza pandemic plans—

**Ms Allan** interjected.

**Ms McLEISH**: I think the Leader of the House at the table actually does not know what is in those, because if you look at them it talks about a novel virus—a strain that we have not dealt with before. The detail in those exactly describes the coronavirus, and I think that dusting those off early on would have perhaps helped. Now Victoria is out of step with the rest of the country. The rest of the country actually did what was asked: flattened the curve. We did a really good job. And then in Victoria—Victoria alone—that curve took off rapidly and we saw spikes of incredible numbers. We have seen over 800 deaths now, which is pretty tragic, I think, and most people really look at that as a blight on the government.

We see this government as having failed on every level. These failures come on top of lots of dodgy practices and things that we saw last term. You know, we saw the red shirts rorts and we have also seen this year the loss of three ministers before we really got into the nitty-gritty here. So in June we lost three ministers and now we have lost a fourth minister. Usually for a government to lose one minister, that is fairly bad. Two, you know, is almost unheard of. But three and now four ministers out of this Andrews government is a pretty sad tale for the Premier and his government, and I think if you look at that loss of confidence in the ministers and their loss of confidence, it goes downhill from there. We have had failures in governance. We have had failures of memory from ministers and the public sector—highly paid public servants. We have had failures to provide medical evidence when called
on. We have had failures of the hotel quarantine—failures of enormous quantities where we have seen that virtually all of the second wave is attributable to the hotel quarantine failures.

The government made a decision—somebody, somewhere, somehow; we do not quite know all the answers yet—that led to inexperienced, poorly trained staff who had previously been working at nightclubs and in various roles with security taking on hotel quarantine without the appropriate training, without the appropriate skills, and these questionable decisions are now being challenged. The High Court will be looking at the validity of the lockdown, and we know already that the curfew case is being heard.

There have been failures for those living in regional Victoria on so many levels, failures for families with schoolchildren, failures for small business owners and operators. We have seen the wedding industry decimated, and as I have said, in regional Victoria, with no cases except in the Mitchell shire, we remain locked down. Now I am going to go back to the top of the list: the failures in governance and the appropriateness and the thought behind a restructure of the governance arrangements at that highest level.

Do not look only at what we are saying. You only have to look at the former minister—the ex-buddy I suppose of the Premier—Jenny Mikakos, who absolutely challenged the Premier’s evidence to the hotel quarantine inquiry, urging the board to treat his claims with caution. If that is not a big vote of no confidence in the Premier, I do not know what is. And in closing her submission to the inquiry her legal team submitted that his decision to ‘subvert’—very strategic use of that term—the usual cabinet processes may have contributed to errors made in the fatally flawed hotel quarantine program. In question time today you may recall that at the hotel quarantine inquiry the Premier sought to blame Minister Mikakos, the former minister, for that scandal by claiming the Department of Health and Human Services was in charge of the program. But we know on 3 April the Premier wrote to the secretary of DHHS appointing her as lead secretary for the COVID health emergency, a role in which he stated she would be accountable ‘to me’—directly to the Premier—bypassing other systems and structures.

We saw very quickly he removed the majority of the cabinet from important decision-making and just deferred to the little gang of eight, his COVID crisis council. We have seen him bypass the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee processes with the Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (State of Emergency Extension and Other Matters) Bill 2020 and the COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Bill 2020. SARC is that longstanding committee we all know about that enjoys cross-party support. They do important work in analysing the common law and charter rights engaged by legislation introduced to Parliament and then they prepare a report. The government bypassed that.

You have only got to look at the big omnibus bus that is going around at the moment, driving around the city—it is really indicating a greater loss of confidence. But what about the impact on everyday people and the confidence they have in the government? At schools, kids have missed so much—the best part of six months compared to New South Wales, where it was 29 days—all because of the hotel quarantine stuff-ups that this government is accountable for. The kids in years 8 to 10 are still off school, and they are really not sure when they will be going back. There is a maybe time frame of a week or two, but just recently when the Premier spoke it was, ‘We might be revising some of these time frames about when we’re coming out and easing restrictions’.

We have had senior kids, year 11s and 12s, and the senior kids at the primary campuses, those kids in grade 6, who have missed out on leadership roles—not the formal roles but the role of being the senior kids on campus, whether you are in that primary school or that secondary school, and what goes with it: the camps, the end-of-year celebrations and the graduation ceremonies at all levels. These kids feel that they have missed out on so much this year. We have had the regional students held back even though we have had in some areas zero cases. Regional kids have been held back to level the playing field. This comes on top of the minister’s report that was just handed down—the ink was not even dry—talking about the challenges that we have in country Victoria with kids and school. The Minister for
Education saw fit to convene a gathering of minds to work out how best to address this gap, and then the minute he could have addressed this gap by keeping these kids at school he backflipped and said, ‘No, no, they have to stay off because we want to keep them and the city kids on an even playing field’.

At the moment, with the restrictions, we have got failures around the school photographers. There is an enormous number of schoolkids—over 400,000 school students—that are yet to be photographed. This is distressing for the schools, the families and certainly the photographers who own the businesses. I have had so many school photographers speak to me about this, and they are concerned. It is safe for kids to be back at school—very safe. We can see all the primary kids there—we know that for the year 8s and 10s it is safe too but the government is holding off—and photography is something that can be done at a distance. The photographers themselves can wear masks. If we have a look at what has been going on in the world for the school photographers for most of this year, a lot of them have other jobs as well. They might photograph weddings, and the wedding industry has been decimated, so these people are without income at all.

Music lessons: I am hearing from people who conduct the music lessons, from school principals, from school music teachers, from music teachers themselves and from heads of performing arts at some schools, because they know that there are kids out there in their schools who play woodwind instruments, who do brass instruments, and they think that this can be done safely. With no consultation with them, these have been withdrawn.

Some of these businesses are out on their own, and it is tough. If they rent a space in a shopping strip or a studio, they have to invest in gear. I have constituents in the Mansfield shire who are unable to resume. They are not even sure if they are ever going to be able to get back and reopen, because of the money that they have lost with so much of their savings. One of them said they have got a friend who can run a music therapy session but they cannot teach that same kid piano. They know that they can teach piano or guitar in a studio following social distance guidelines whilst wearing a mask. They have been absolutely screwed.

We have got a lot of small business owners and operators. We have people who own shops, rental properties and holiday properties that are empty. At shopping strips and centres in High Street in Northcote, Glenferrie Road in Hawthorn, Nepean Highway in Chelsea, the Pacific shopping centre in Werribee and Stockland in Point Cook, we know what is going on. These people—small business owners who put their own money on the line—are struggling. I take great offence at the Deputy Premier saying before, ‘These small business owners have put their dreams on hold’. Well, I have got news for him: for a lot of people their dreams are gone. Their dreams have been shattered. Sole traders make up some 300,000 jobs—landscapers, gymnasium operators, window cleaners, dog groomers. We all know this because we have been getting emails that are cc’ed to every member of the Labor government. We know that they know the pain, but have they responded? No, they have not.

I speak to tourism groups regularly. They are worried about their futures. I have spoken to individuals and groups. Just recently my colleagues and I met with Yarra Valley businesses. These businesses include hot air balloons and planes in the aviation space, vineyards, restaurants, galleries, cafes, conference centres, bed and breakfasts. We know that weddings have been cancelled. There is not one booked in the Yarra Valley before March next year. Business owners have lost equity in the businesses that they have built up, and what do they get from the government? A deferral of payroll tax. Well, what does a deferral mean—‘We’re going to hit you with a double whammy when it becomes due’? They have got no income coming in. How are they going to pay these enormous payroll taxes?

They are outraged at the density requirements. The Chocolaterie in the Yarra Valley was capped at 20 people when in an enormous space with 4 square metres per person they could have had 66. I urge the government to revisit the density requirements. One size does not fit all. If you put a cap of 20 in a small area, you should not be putting that cap on areas that are eight times that size. You need to look at each individually.
The access to the grants program was totally inadequate. We have had emails pleading for the government to extend the Business Support Fund grant of $10 000 to those who are sole traders and self-employed—the so-called ‘non-employing businesses’. One business said they operate at 25 per cent of capacity at the moment and they cannot get access because they do not have a WorkCover number. They do not need to, because their insurance policy tells them that it is unlikely that their employee payments are going to exceed $7500. That is the threshold. They do not need to have that WorkCover payment cover. They can through their own insurance know that they are covered. But this was a hurdle that was put before these small businesses, and it is too high. It needs to be opened up more broadly. The small business operators that have spoken to me time and time again are struggling and will go out of business.

Ms ALLAN (Bendigo East—Leader of the House, Minister for Transport Infrastructure, Minister for the Suburban Rail Loop, Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19) (16:49): The Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues today have framed this motion around leadership. Let us go back to the end of 2018 when Victorians, at the November 2018 election, voted for the return of the Andrews Labor government and voted so overwhelmingly. It is probably fair to say they were not going to the ballot boxes at the end of 2018 voting for who was best to fight a global pandemic. But the qualities they saw in the Premier and the efforts they saw of this government, particularly, as I said, around the Premier—the leadership, integrity and empathy that they voted for—are the qualities that have served our state so well in the past six months.

The Premier has shown all the qualities you would ever want to see in a leader at these times. Victorians know that throughout this global pandemic his entire focus has been on the health and wellbeing of all of us. They have seen it for themselves. Every day Victorians have tuned in to see him calmly, rationally and exhaustively deal with every single issue raised. We have seen the Premier be strong, resilient and compassionate on the issues raised. He is also seen stressing at every opportunity the immense threat of this pandemic, the importance of the restrictions, the importance of getting on top of the health crisis and also a confidence that we would get through it. At the same time we have also seen every single day how the Premier has invited scrutiny on every single one of our government’s decisions and every single issue and challenge that has emerged, big or small, every day for months. It has been one of the most open, accountable and transparent displays we have ever seen.

We also see here in Victoria a Premier leading a government that Victorians trust will be presented with the information, presented with the facts and—heaven forbid—presented with the evidence and the health advice to make the right call. I know this is the view of Victorians, because people have told me: parents at the school gate, parents at my kids’ school, the butcher when you pop in to get your sausages for the weekend, the woman who works in the bakery, local cafe owners. The right to speak for Victorians does not just sit on that side of the chamber. All of us represent communities. All of us speak to Victorians every single day. And it is that voice, the majority voice, that those of us on this side of the chamber can also speak for and stand up for during this no-confidence motion.

Victorians have seen the Premier for an hour every day, but that is just a small fraction of the work he has been doing. He has given every issue—every single issue—maximum consideration, but also importantly, in the face of a pandemic, in the face of a crisis, he has acted decisively. It has been leadership bringing everyone together, and I do mean everyone—ministers, members of Parliament, departments, external advisers, including health experts—considering all the advice but also importantly making the call when the call needed to be made. When that call has been made and as issues have been considered, the Premier has carefully explained the decisions the government has made and spoken honestly and openly of that process. We have seen that Victorians have recognised this empathy. We have seen how the Premier is described as a husband, as a father—and particularly as a father of school-aged kids, with one doing year 12. He has shared his own experiences, not for media grabs but to demonstrate the lived experience of this pandemic that we are all living through.

That is what leadership means: not being reactionary but adjusting the approach based on the best available evidence and treating comments and views with respect, no matter how ill-informed or
designed to create division or animosity. We have seen attacks on his family, on his deceased father. He handled them with patience and dignity. It was remarkable, the patience and dignity he displayed. But he did not let them distract him from what he knew Victorians wanted—a focus on the pandemic.

We have also seen the Premier work with politicians around the country—no matter who they were—at every stage of this crisis, because the cause was bigger than day-to-day politics. That is what this motion, this no-confidence motion, is about: it is about the opposition wanting to play day-to-day petty politics with a one-in-100-year crisis. There have been hard decisions. There have been decisions that no Premier or government would ever want to make. Indeed, no Premier or government has had to make these sorts of decisions, if you believe the history books, in over 100 years. There are decisions that, no matter how long you had to consider them, would still prove to be difficult to make, but of course in a crisis you have to make decisions quickly; you have to weigh up the evidence and you have to make the call.

That is why the Premier, having worked through that process, has taken the time every day to explain each and every decision, because this is absolutely an unprecedented global pandemic. As Victorians saw this virus march towards Australia and Victoria from China, from Europe, from northern Italy and Spain and from the US earlier this year, we knew action had to be taken, and the Victorian Premier has led from the front and helped shape the national response that has served this country so well.

We heard the Leader of the Opposition talk earlier today about his road map. We also heard about a few other road maps from those opposite over the journey as well, but every idea that the opposition have had to fight this pandemic have had to fight this pandemic has been in hindsight. They have had the benefit of looking in the rear-view mirror at what should have been done. Now, we are not going to be lectured by an opposition who in April were complaining that our restrictions were too harsh and our enforcement too severe and then subsequently started bleating that they should have been harsher or more strongly enforced. We are not going to be lectured about a health crisis by an opposition who when they were in government struggled to keep ambulances on the road and decided to wage war with paramedics—the very people who keep us safe. We are not going to be lectured by the Liberal Party, who tried to close hospitals like the Austin Hospital, which has played such a key role in supporting our community during this pandemic. And we are certainly not going to be lectured by the Leader of the National Party about the impact on education outcomes for country kids—especially by the member for Murray Plains—who allowed, when he was in government and a local member of Parliament, schools in his electorate to literally rot as a consequence of flooding across his electorate in 2011.

Victorians have seen the Premier every day. When the likes of the member for Malvern—sometimes it is the member for Kew or the member for Bulleen—pop up, they get a glimpse of the alternative. The majority of Victorians who voted for the Premier nearly two years ago are now even more convinced, when they see that alternative, that they made the right call. The opposition have seen this an opportunity for them to play politics. They have been falling over each other to do just that. Meanwhile, the Premier and the government have got on and are dealing with this crisis that is before us, rejecting the base political opportunism from those opposite.

I want to also talk briefly about the issues that we are facing in regional Victoria. We have heard many observations from those opposite about how regional Victoria has very low cases. They toss around today’s case numbers like, ‘There are so many cases in Melbourne and so many active cases, and there are no cases in regional Victoria—oh, except for that one in Kilmore’. You cannot just forget that one case in Kilmore, because we have seen how just one case can seed so many others. We have seen how quickly one case got into a community like Orbost, a small country town, and seeded other cases. You cannot just ignore that one case for political convenience, to suit your own narrative that is speaking to a small portion of the community. And that is why we reject the approach of those opposite.

We also have seen how in regional Victoria this approach is working—the approach of the road map, the pre-eminence on putting health protections in place, is working—how it has driven the case numbers down in regional Victoria. And those of us who live in regional Victoria, yes, are lucky
enough to have had our kids return to school last week and to be able to go out to a cafe and to be able
to do more active things in our community. That is because we stuck to the plan in regional Victoria
and it has worked, and we are seeing similar approaches being made in metropolitan Melbourne as the
case numbers come down. And that is why we need to stick with this approach of getting on top of
this health crisis. We cannot let it get into our small, rural communities, particularly those small
country towns where the largest health provider and the largest job provider is actually the
government-run aged-care service. We have seen how rampant this disease has been in federally
funded and regulated aged-care centres in and around Melbourne. We cannot have that in regional and
rural communities, which is why we have worked so hard to protect those communities and will
continue to do so.

In conclusion, I just want to concur with where the Deputy Premier left his contribution earlier today—
that this no-confidence motion is actually all about the leadership, or the lack thereof, in the Leader of
the Opposition, and we saw that in spades yesterday. Yesterday’s stunt demonstrated that the Leader of
the Opposition cannot work out if he wants to be a leader or a pale imitation of the member for Kew.
The Leader of the Opposition’s crescendo today as he was concluding his contribution on this motion
was to call for everything to open up—everything. Open up everything and do it now! That is not
leadership. Victorians know that is not leadership, and they know that this is not what you should do
in the face of a crisis when so much hard work has been undertaken, so much of that based on the
evidence of expert advice, and so much has been sacrificed to get to this point. That is why I, along
with my colleagues in the government, emphatically reject this no-confidence motion and all of the
petty politics that drive those who stand to support this motion.

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (17:00): It is a pleasure to rise and make a contribution on this
motion, which I support. The goings-on of the past couple of months really beggar belief. No level-
headed person within the Victorian community could honestly believe the magnificent memory loss
of so many people. We have seen the Minister for Health gone in recent weeks and the head of the
Department of Premier and Cabinet gone. The head of Premier and Cabinet said in his evidence that
he could not recall calling Mr Ashton in the so-called missing 6 minutes, but we now know that he
did. The phone records have revealed that. This is the man who was joined at the hip to the Premier.
The former health minister, on her way out the door, said to treat the Premier’s evidence with great
caution. But this is just the tip of it. We have also had the emergency services commissioner, Mr Crisp,
say that he briefed the minister on a number of occasions about hotel quarantine and then weeks later
withdraw his comment. The Victorian community has every right to ask what the heck is going on.

But the Premier keeps telling us that the buck stops with him. He said in a media conference—I think
it was in the gardens here—when this was unfolding that he was very pleased to receive the offer of
ADF personnel to assist with hotel quarantine. He said later that he was not even sure that the offer of
ADF personnel was made. Those words came out of his mouth. They were also in his media release.
It is an oxymoron to say thank you for the offer and then turn around and say, ‘But I’m not sure the
offer was even made’. Another oxymoron that the Premier came up with was to say in one breath,
‘The buck stops with me’, but then immediately follow that by saying, ‘I’m not responsible for the
decisions that were made on hotel quarantine’. You cannot say both of those things in one sentence.

The get-out-of-jail term that has been used here by a number of people is the term ‘creeping
assumption’—this came about by creeping assumption. I do not think the people of Victoria believe
for one minute that this decision was arrived at by creeping assumption. This is a decision that has cost
several hundred lives, has wreaked havoc with our business community and cost jobs, and we are led
to believe that this critically important and vital decision was made by creeping assumption. I certainly
do not believe this for one minute, and I am sure the good people of Victoria do not either.

But let us for a second pretend that it is correct. Let us take the Premier at his word, and the other
ministers, that this was made by creeping assumption. Even if this decision was made by creeping
assumption, that level of incompetence alone is enough for all of them to go. This was a decision that
had massive, massive ramifications. Other speakers have spoken about the lives lost, the businesses destroyed, the people out of business—a drive down the Esplanade at Lakes Entrance will show the vacant shops. It has put so many people out of work. It has also had very personal implications for so many people. At least two families in my electorate that I know of were stopped from travelling interstate to see loved ones with terminal illness and were not able to be by their side when they passed. All of this comes back to the decision that was made, and yet we are told to believe and accept that no-one actually made it—it was by creeping assumption.

There was fanfare last week on social media about 100 press conferences in a row. It is interesting that we can remember how many press conferences have been held but we cannot remember any of the tough questions and discussions that took place around the appointment of security guards to look after hotel quarantine. Those press conferences from the Premier, you could nearly play word bingo with them—‘We’re staying the course’, ‘This virus doesn’t discriminate’, ‘We’re all in this together’. Another one that is commonly heard is ‘All of these decisions are based on health advice’. That is what we are told—‘All of these decisions are based on health advice’. Well, that came crashing down when our chief health officer came out and said the curfew was not based on health advice. The Chief Commissioner of Police at the same time also said that it was not requested by police. But we are told all these decisions are based on health advice. That is where it gets confusing for our constituents and our wider Victorian community.

We have had many backflips on decisions that were meant to be made solely on health advice. The ability to visit close partners was ruled out based on health advice, and then within a day it was allowed. Well, was it based on health advice or was the backflip based on political pressure? It either was or was not made on health advice. The ability to go boating and fishing was changed. The ability to play golf was changed. We had backflips on farmers markets within, I think, 45 minutes—or close to it—of the announcement being made. We had changes to visits to maternity wards after public outrage. We had changes to childcare arrangements after people expressed their concern and disappointment. Now, these are not areas that needed clarification; these are areas that were originally dealt with specifically and then due to public outcry were changed. Yet we are led to believe that all of the decisions are based on health advice. If they are based on health advice, we should be sticking to them.

Contact tracing—what a disaster that has been. Let me walk through what happened at Orbost, when we are talking about contact tracing. Now, the leader of government business mentioned before that one case came to Orbost and that resulted in the seeding of other cases. That is not correct. That did not occur. There were no other cases that came about from that person’s visit, but I will tell you what happened. A couple came to Orbost to attend a wake. Now, they should not have come. They were tested on the Friday and travelled up Friday afternoon. The girl in question got her result back on the following Monday and she had tested positive. On Monday afternoon she contacted the COVID tracing team and she told them where she had been—the pubs, the restaurants, all the locations she had been to, the businesses she had gone into. Well, Monday evening passed and Tuesday passed, so there was the 24 hours gone that those businesses were meant to have been gotten in touch with. Wednesday passed with no contact. Thursday passed with no contact, and the contact-tracing team had all that data given to them on Monday. The Friday business day passed, and then at 7.30 on Friday night the contact-tracing team rang the Marlo pub and said, ‘You’ve had someone who has tested positive in your pub’—four and a half days ago—and you’d better do a deep clean’, the publican was told. He said, ‘I did my deep clean three days ago’. Then he proceeded to tell the contact-tracing team that they had the dates of the person visiting wrong. At 7.30 pm on a Friday he was lucky to be there because his business was closed down because of COVID restrictions.

Orbost Regional Health and that community came together and dealt with that before the contact-tracing team made one phone call into that community, yet we are meant to have confidence and faith in the tracing team. Then we found out that we have got half the personnel doing it that they have got in New South Wales. It has been an absolute disgrace.
We have inadequacies in getting information to our business sector. We had one business that inquired through our office as to whether they could open or not. In fairness, it was a complex matter. It was a business that did not really fall into any category. We were told to contact the COVID directions team to get feedback, which we did. My electorate officer contacted them the same day asking for details for this business—two very specific questions that would have answered it. Seven weeks later to the day—49 days later—we got the answer that the business could open. What a ripping system that is to support business. These people were financially crippled, stressed and needing help, and we could not get them a basic answer.

Now there are still many questions that need to be answered, and I will go back just to the hotel quarantine. We have had a whole lot of questioning in the inquiry but no answers being put forth. Was it by the Premier’s own hand or by a creeping assumption that we ended up with security guards untrained in what was at that stage possibly the most important job in all of Victoria? How were these private security companies selected if it did not go to tender? There may be a valid explanation for that, but tell us—tell the Victorian community—how that happened.

Even with the decision to put security guards into these motels, why were ADF personnel not utilised over the top of that to provide oversight, to keep Victorian safe? It was free. Other states and territories, other jurisdictions, took up that offer. If we were going to have security guards—okay, a mistake—why not back the offer of free expertise for that higher level of oversight? Why were the private security guards not even given basic training in infection control? Everyone knew that we were going to put international arrivals in hotel quarantine. You would think the people that would be standing in the corridors to provide oversight would be given at least the very basic training in infection control, but it did not occur.

Why did the Premier go against the advice of the national cabinet? Apparently hotel quarantine, some have claimed, was his idea. Why then go against the advice of the national cabinet to use the Australian Defence Force for oversight? How on earth could it be a good idea to engage security guards that can serve at multiple hotels and be in one hotel corridor one day and another one the next? Clearly in anyone’s language that is going to be a great way to spread infection. Ultimately, when it gets into security guard oversight it just makes no sense.

We need to do more to support businesses. The latest round for businesses did not look after those sole traders that are working from home or have mobile offices. It is almost like the budget team, the finance team, sat down and thought, ‘What criteria can we put in place to reach the dollar figure we are happy with?’ rather than looking at the business supports that are required by that sector.

On top of that we have got a whole range of areas that still do not make sense. And we know this is a complex area—we are not for one minute suggesting that we will get everything right from the very first step—but we ask: how can 25 kids sit in a classroom this week but then they cannot go to a dance class after school in a hall twice the size with half the number of students? It just makes no sense. Gyms are the same. School photographers are not allowed to turn up and take school photos this year. Ten people can sit in a cafe but we cannot have one photographer taking a one-on-one photo. We need to look after these businesses better than what we have done and better than we are.

There are a whole range of issues that need addressing when it comes to COVID. We have also got in my electorate massive challenges with bushfire recovery—parks not rebuilt when the Premier said he was going to walk with us. These reasons and all those previously mentioned are why we have no confidence in this government.

Mr PAKULA (Keysborough—Minister for Industry Support and Recovery, Minister for Trade, Minister for Business Precincts, Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Racing, Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions: COVID-19) (17:16): I rise to oppose the motion of the Leader of the Opposition. It is very unusual that we are having this debate at this time, while we remain in the middle of a global pandemic, while we are still fighting this virus, while the
efforts of so many are being applied to dealing with that problem. It is particularly unusual given the 
opposition only gets one opportunity to move a motion of this nature during the term of a government. 
It does beg the question of why they are doing it now. One wonders what kind of internal pressure 
must have been applied to the Leader of the Opposition for him to decide to move a motion of this 
nature when all of the efforts of government and opposition, of all members of this Parliament, ought 
to be directed at the fighting of this virus.

Too often debates in this place lack nuance and lack perspective. Governments come into this place 
and say that everything that has been done has been handled absolutely flawlessly. Oppositions come 
into this place and say that everything that has been done has been utterly diabolical. I would suggest 
that global pandemics are the wrong vehicle for that kind of discussion in the Parliament. They are the 
wrong vehicle for that kind of debate because it is not what the community expects of us and it is not 
the type of debate that our attentions ought to be focused on.

Nobody on this side of the house is claiming or has claimed for a moment that the execution of the 
response to COVID-19 has been flawless. It is certainly not the case here and it has not been the case 
around the country. It has not been the case at commonwealth level and it has not been the case in 
jurisdictions across the globe. Indeed if it is correct, and it seems to be, that the index case for the 
second wave came out of one of the hotels in the quarantine program, of course that should not have 
occurred. Once it did get out obviously nobody wanted to see it spread as widely or as quickly as it 
did. And of course once we emerged from lockdown 1.0 nobody on this side of the house, nobody on 
that side of the house and nobody out in the community wanted to see us go back in. We would all 
like to see shops and pubs and restaurants and all sorts of businesses across the state open as we speak, 
but that is not the situation that we find ourselves in.

I think it is important in that context for us to take stock of the situation, not just the situation that 
Victoria finds itself in but the situation that the planet find itself in because as of this morning there 
had been 38 million cases of COVID-19 globally—38 million. There have been almost 1.1 million 
deaths across the world. Yesterday alone there were 288 000 new infections recorded across the 
globe—almost 42 000 in the USA, almost 70 000 in India, more than 10 000 in Argentina and France 
and the United Kingdom.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr PAKULA: And I hear the member for Warrandyte say, ‘New South Wales’. Well, there were 
12 in Victoria and there were 13 in New South Wales—against tens of thousands in jurisdictions 
across the planet. This is not a problem which is confined to the great state of Victoria. This is 
something that has been exercising the considerable efforts and resources of governments right across 
the planet. The federal government, this state government, other state governments, governments right 
across the world are grappling with how to deal with this incredible challenge, this global pandemic 
the likes of which has not been seen for over a century.

It is an effort which is partly about minimising infections, but it is also about how to prevent thousands 
and thousands of deaths. It is about how you work on a vaccine. It is about how you ensure that your 
hospital system does not get overwhelmed. It is about how you deal with exhausted healthcare workers. 
To take up some of the contribution of the member for Gippsland East, it is also about how you deal 
with exhausted contact tracers—and they have done an absolutely sterling job in incredibly difficult 
situations. When you have got hundreds of infections a day, contact tracing them is not an easy thing. 
It is easy to say that it ought to be done on the turn of a dime, but it is an incredibly difficult process as 
soon as you get past a couple of dozen a day, and those people have been overwhelmed as well. It is 
about trying to find a balance between allowing the economy to operate and slowing down the spread 
of the virus. Guess what? All of that is incredibly bloody difficult for governments everywhere.

If you look just around this country, yes, mistakes have been made. They have been made in New 
South Wales with the Ruby Princess. They have been made at a commonwealth level. If it had not
been for the work of Premier Andrews and Premier Berejiklian, a number of the measures that were taken to slow down the spread of the virus would not have occurred at all. If you look at the situation, as the Deputy Premier alluded to, in aged care, I am sure the commonwealth, if it had its druthers, would have been far better prepared for a pandemic in an aged-care setting than they were. If you look at the COVIDSafe app, I am sure that the federal Minister for Health would say that that app has not worked as well as he would have liked. But these are incredibly difficult situations.

This is unprecedented and unpredictable, and governments around the world are grappling with it in those incredibly complex terms, because it is not just about trying to contain the virus. That is obviously effort A, trying to contain the virus, but it is also about trying to procure personal protective equipment and ventilators. It is also about putting together packages to support our business community while they have to remain closed, and the government has done that to the tune of many billions of dollars. It is about trying to ensure that the right legal powers are in place so that we can enforce the wearing of masks or ensure that people are isolating when they are meant to. It is about Victoria Police being able to enforce roadblocks so that our regional communities can be kept safe. It is about ongoing engagement with the commonwealth, which the Premier has been doing weekly, sometimes daily. It is about ongoing engagement with hundreds of stakeholders.

This is a multi-agency, multifaceted, multigovernment approach to a pandemic which we have not seen the likes of for over a century. It is akin to a wartime situation. In that situation that is akin to wartime, what assistance has the government of Victoria had from Her Majesty’s loyal opposition in what is a global pandemic of unprecedented scale and scope? None.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr PAKULA: I say to the member for Warrandyte the answer to the question is none, nada, zilch, no support whatsoever. In fact at every step of the way the opposition has sought to undermine the government’s capability to deal with this pandemic. What is even worse is they have sought to undermine public confidence in the public health professionals that are managing this pandemic, and they did that almost from day one. Unfortunately that undermining has been a product of and absolutely impacted by their own dysfunction and their own division, because they cannot even agree on how they want to undermine the public health message. They cannot agree on what their lines are.

We had very early on the member for Kew, or the member for QAnon, going on about bats and golf and calling the Premier every name under the sun, using all sorts of inflammatory language and calling for a deputy chief health officer to be sacked because of a tweet. When the Leader of the Opposition asked him to tone it down, the member for Kew absolutely overrode him, ignored him and within 24 hours he had doubled down and done a profile piece in the Herald Sun.

We had a situation where the member for Kew wanted to loosen the rules in regard to masks and the Shadow Minister for Health wanted to tighten the rules in regard to masks. We had the Leader of The Nationals wanting to ease restrictions on meatworks and the member for Polwarth wanting to tighten restrictions on meatworks. On fines, sometimes the opposition have called for stricter enforcement of fines and sometimes they have called them heavy-handed. They cannot agree on which line they want to use to try and undermine the public health effort.

We have had the Leader of the Opposition calling for the serious enforcement of isolation rules, using words like ‘mandatory detention’ and ‘electronic monitoring’ as part of his attempts to suggest that the government ought to go further. Then you have had the member for Brighton tweeting that we are becoming a police state. They cannot get their lines settled. It is very simple from our perspective what the opposition’s game plan is here. Basically whatever the government does the Leader of the Opposition says we ought to do the opposite, and then whatever the Leader of the Opposition says we ought to do he gets contradicted by the member for Brighton or the member for Kew or Mrs McArthur in the other place or the member for Bulleen. So the public health message and the public health effort is constantly undermined by opposition parlour games and opposition stunts which are all about
themselves, which are all about their own personal ambitions and which have no regard for the interests of the state of Victoria or indeed for its citizens.

This no-confidence motion should be seen in the context of all of those ridiculous parlour games, all of that ridiculous internal division. It bears no relationship to what the people of Victoria want to see from this Parliament or indeed from this government. The government continues to work on getting these numbers down, the government continues to work on getting our businesses and our economy open, and we will do so as soon as we possibly can. This motion ought to be rejected in the same way that all of the other stunts that have been a feature of the opposition’s performance ought to be rejected as well.

Mr WELLS (Rowville) (17:27): I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition and the no-confidence motion in this dangerously incompetent and dishonest Andrews government. There can be no other way of putting it but that the Andrews government would be the most dishonest government in the history of this state. They have been so dishonest, and the Premier has led the way with his dishonesty. I wish that the Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions: COVID-19 had stayed because I could not believe it. I have listened to all the speakers from the government, and isn’t it interesting that they want to blame every single person and organisation. The minister for jobs started criticising and attacking the opposition, saying that we are undermining the public health message.

Well, let me give you an example. Who else said, after the Prime Minister and the Premier came out and said that it should be the ADF running hotel quarantine, that it should be the role of the ADF? The Leader of the Opposition went out and said very clearly that it should be the ADF— and then what happened? A ‘creeping assumption’. I have to say that I had never heard that term before, but when it comes to spin the Andrews government can be relied upon to put forward another spin. My staff pointed out to me that the Premier had done 100 press conferences in a row. They put up on Facebook ‘100 press conferences in a row’ and ‘Well done Victoria. We are with you’. Isn’t it amazing how the mushrooms on the back bench of the Labor government can remember to count to 100? They can count to 100, but not one person in the government, not one person in the public service, can remember at any time who made the decision to employ private security guards at hotel quarantine. So they congratulate and say, ‘We are with you’. No they are not—they are not. The Labor government is not with the good people of Rowville. That is clearly not the case.

Every day we hear the chief health officer and the Premier at their press conference saying that we have got to get to a 14-day rolling average of five, and I agree. There needs to be a rolling average of five resignations for us to be able to get out of lockdown. There needs to be a rolling average of five resignations per day for us to be able to get out of lockdown. We have had two so far: we have had the health minister, Jenny Mikakos, and we have had Chris Eccles, head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. How can you have a situation where the head of DPC, the most senior public servant in this state, cannot remember? You know why he could not remember? You know why Sir Humphrey from Yes Minister would have been so proud? Because he was protecting someone. He was protecting someone. And of all the people in this state who should have told the truth, it should have been Chris Eccles. But no. He was thrown under the bus and it was to protect the Premier. It was to protect the Premier, and isn’t it strange that we have had that resignation?

And with Jenny Mikakos, she tells the hotel quarantine inquiry to treat the Premier’s evidence with caution—treat with caution. Jenny Mikakos was thrown under the bus to protect the Premier. If she had been in charge, if she had been responsible, why didn’t the Premier pick the phone up and tell his minister, ‘You’re responsible for hotel quarantine’? Why did he keep it a secret and then take it to the inquiry? I cannot remember a more disastrous public policy cock-up ever in this state. And this is embarrassing. It is absolutely embarrassing the way that the Premier has behaved, and I would say to
Ms HENNESSY (Altona—Attorney-General, Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety: COVID-19) (17:32): I am delighted to have the opportunity to stand today and to speak in very passionate opposition to the motion before the house, and I do so because I think it is nothing more than a great act of political indulgence at a time when a great expectation is placed upon all political leaders of all political colours.

Pandemics change history, and I believe that when the history of this pandemic is written the inability for some—particularly I think as exhibited in some of the contributions made from the other side today—to focus on what the demands of our time are, what they need to be and what they should be is going to be exhibited writ large. And whether or not you want to look across at what is unfolding in the United States or whether or not you want to look at what is happening in some parts of Europe and some parts of Asia, the failures of leadership are the failures of those who choose to politic rather than to promote science and wellbeing. And that I think is one of the great lessons that will come out of these very, very challenging times.

Now of course also when people are experiencing very, very challenging times, what we do see is a mirror really held up to humanity. We can see the best of humanity and we can see the worst of humanity, and I think in the best of humanity we see people rising to unpredictable challenges, we see them working through the demands of science and we see them understanding that all of the very, very challenging issues of facing a once-in-a-century pandemic also need to be seen in a context. And I would make the very, very passionate argument that the leadership shown by the Victorian government with the support of the health sector, the justice sector and the Victorian community—all those who have played such an incredibly important role—has been I think something that we should be so deeply and incredibly proud of.

And all of the naysayers, all those that choose to use this time and this opportunity to make political attacks, whether it is on the Premier or the government or those in the scientific and public health communities, they are the ones that will need to be able to read the history of this time and to be able to take full responsibility for the fact that they chose politics over public health. I think that that is a matter of great and very, very deep shame.

One of the things that I think has been so incredibly important in the leadership that the Premier and so many others right across the public sector have shown has been understanding that not only do we have to try and fight the pandemic, to reduce community transmission, but we have got to do that in a way that recognises some of the darker and more challenging issues about our economy and our society. Whether that is around the structural inequality for those in particularly insecure work, whether that is around the precarious nature of those that might be victims of family violence, all of the response and all of the leadership that has been shown has not only been about responding to a global pandemic, it has also been about responding to the vulnerability of human beings in whatever circumstances they find themselves. And that can be demonstrated in the universality of health. We look across to the United States, where we see 24 million people that are uninsured, that cannot even go and get a free COVID test. We see it in the support for jobs. We see it in the approach that our Premier has taken to intergovernmental relationships with the federal government as people have fought hard and worked hard to save every job and to save every business but, most importantly, to save every life.

And when you want to use that as an opportunity to go around and privilege rank, cheap politics over public health, the community will sniff you out. They will know exactly what you are doing, and there is a very, very I think compelling reason as to why the Victorian community, as frustrated as everyone very naturally is with the limitations and restrictions on life, as frustrated as they are, absolutely understands and backs a government and a Premier that are absolutely saying, ‘We will put people’s lives first’. And thank goodness for that, because we all look at what occurs in other states, we all look
at what occurs in other countries and other parts of the world where ‘Let ’em rip, let ’em go’ is their attitude and their approach. And look what happens.

So let us privilege science and public health and those responses, and let us not be deluded by those that choose to go and place the challenges of our time and kick them about like they are some form of predictable political grievance. Let us keep focused on what counts, and that is human beings, that is rising to the challenge of our generation and our times, and that is being prepared to sign up for the recovery and the reconstruction, both economic and social, that will need to come after this. And let me assure you, Victorians know that that is the nature and the make-up of our Premier and our government, and that is exactly what they will support. So I again say that this motion before the house is an act of very, very vainglorious self-indulgence. It is revealed for what it inherently is, and that is cheap, rank politics, and it will not work.

Mr GUY (Bulleen) (17:39): I was waiting for the spirited defence that the Attorney-General said that she was going to deliver with the minister, the member for Keysborough—I do not know what portfolios they have nowadays. I mean, they are both the pretenders to the Premier’s crown, and if that is the spirited defence, then no wonder the government do not even believe the rhetoric they are coming out with. It was hardly a defence to what the government has done at all. My Ukrainian grandmother would have said, ‘ты мокрий курсь’—they are just wet chooks—because they are hardly defending anything. What they are coming in to do here is just spout off some lines that the rest of us know are complete rubbish.

A month ago I came into this chamber and said that the government’s response was all about the Premier. It was all about his ego. It was all about what he thought he would do. It was not science-based. It was not based on any evidence that the gang of eight, whatever they are, sat down and went through. It was his opinion. It was his opinion and his opinion alone. That is what I said last month, and lo and behold, let us see what has transpired in that month. The curfew was no-one else’s idea but the Premier’s. Who said it was a good idea? Did the chief health officer say it was a good idea? Did the gang of eight say it was a good idea? Who invented this idea? Who invented the idea to lock down one in four Australians in their homes?

A member: Maybe the chief health officer.

Mr GUY: Oh, do you do children’s parties, mate? You know what? My eight-year-old has more guts than you after the tweet you put out the other night. If I were you I would be keeping very quiet. You are the suck of the century, brother. You have made the biggest fool of yourself.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUY: Out comes the member for Oakleigh! Do you do children’s parties, brother? Where did you find those insults—off a blog? What we found out is that the Premier invented the curfew himself. No-one had any evidence for it. The chief health officer denied it. The Premier said, ‘Nope, we’re all going to have this curfew’. And then you have these nutters on the left saying, ‘But what are you doing at night? How dare you want to go out after 8 o’clock?’ I am sorry, we are not all at home like the Labor backbench surfing the internet late at night. Some of us want to go out and do things. We might want to exercise. We might want to walk. We might want to do things which do involve going outside of our own block of land, but no, the left in this country know best, and they said, ‘You shouldn’t be going out after 8 o’clock’. Maybe we will ask the children’s party comic if he would like to intervene later on.

The 5-kilometre rule—who came up with that one? It has been a month since. Well, it clearly does not prevent anything. The government just may as well give us a long tape measure. What we found out is—from their own selves, not us, their own selves—it prevents nothing.

A member: Nothing!
Mr GUY: Nothing! It was just a method of control by an idiot who went crazy who is at the top. It prevents nothing.

The private security: have you noticed not a single one of these turkeys has come in here today and said ‘Oh, it was me’, ‘It was him’, ‘It was her’ or ‘It was a group of us’—because they are all worried, as they should be, about industrial manslaughter. Not a single one of them has walked in here and admitted that, ‘Yes, it was us who made the decision to hire private security guards’. And you would not believe it if I told you, but they still use them. They still use them! Not content with causing a second wave, the Labor Party still use them.

You have to ask yourself: where does the arrogance end, where does the self-congratulation end, and these people finally realise they stuffed up? That decision is why they stuffed up, because the evidence base does not exist. All these turkeys get up there and say, ‘It’s evidence, it’s evidence, it’s evidence’—there is no evidence. The only person who is providing evidence is the Premier, and all these people—these folk who are keen to please the dictator and who, like the member for Oakleigh, embarrass themselves on social media—we find have no explanation for why these methods have been put in place. But of course there is not any evidence, and what we find is just one thing from Labor, and that is to gloat—to gloat on social media that you would not believe it, the dictator has done 100 press conferences in a row. Whoa! A hundred press conferences—and 800 people have died.

Mr Fowles: On a point of order, Acting Speaker—

Mr GUY: You can take your mask off, mate.

Mr Fowles: I thank the member for Bulleen for the gratuitous advice.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward): I appreciate the passion with which people are speaking, but can we please be respectful?

Mr Fowles: Can I just ask, Acting Speaker, that you offer the chamber some guidance about the use of masks? I notice that the member for Kew keeps on lowering his mask, putting it under his nose, taking it off in order to interject. Is it the new practice of this house that only those who have the call can lower their masks, or is it simply a matter of personal discretion? If you would care to advise us, that would be great.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward): I thank the member for the point he has raised. I understand that the Speaker has already made a ruling on this, which is that masks may be lowered when someone has the call. When they do not have the call masks must be across the face and nose.

Mr GUY: As I was saying before, there is no evidence to any of these points. It is a one-man show for one-quarter of the nation. That is how it was from the start and that is how it is now, and that is what the evidence has shown. It is a one-man band—a vile, egotistical, self-centred, arrogant, out-of-touch one-man band.

This gang of eight that has behaved in a lying, deceptive, criminally incompetent way has only one way forward, and that is that when this pandemic is over the industrial manslaughter laws must be used to track down who is responsible for the deaths of 800 Victorians and that person or persons—whether it is the current Premier or any of his ministers—must be charged with the deaths of those 800 Victorians under industrial manslaughter laws, because those people will leave a legacy in this state that is not about just economic value but the deaths of hundreds of Victorians for which they are criminally responsible.

Mr DONELLAN (Narre Warren North—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (17:46): Having sat here from the start of this exercise to watch the Leader of the Opposition’s motion of no confidence, there certainly does not appear to be a high level of enthusiasm on the other side of the house. Having watched it, it was a bit like a silent movie. There was just nothing much happening. People were just walking round. There was no great passion.
We already know the outcome of this motion. It is going to be a by-line in *Hansard*, literally that and nothing more. So it is a bit of a feel-good exercise for the opposition leader because he is not feeling particularly good. There is not a lot of excitement for his leadership, as we know. An ad for toilet paper might actually produce more excitement on that side than anything else. Let us be very clear: this is more about his leadership than it is anything else. Let us be very clear: the motion could have been written by anyone else on that side of the house and it could have related to the confidence they have in their leadership, because he simply does not have a lot of support.

We have only got to look at the member for Bulleen’s speech a couple of weeks ago. There was a high level of hyper-excitement from others on that side of the house. They were getting terribly excited about a two-bob speech, a bit like the rantings and ravings we just saw then, real rantings and ravings, delusional sort of little Rumpole-like exercises—’These people will be sued, because I know!’ I mean, what a demented individual he is. He never studied the law but he is Rumpole of the Parliament now, ranting and raving. But they like a bit of that excitement. They love a bit of ranting and raving. We know they like the conspiracy theories and the drivel like that, and here we have, you know, the member for Bulleen doing a bit of boogie, and they are all getting excited again because they have forgotten. He is back. We know he is back. He is not back at Black Rock down at the Lobster Cave this time around.

A member interjected.

Mr DONNELLAN: No, he is not back, but he is doing boogie and it excites them, and it is good to see that a little bit of boogie excites them. But it was more about a sort of look-at-me moment than anything else. I got that feeling. It was all, ‘Look at me, I could be your future leader. Do you remember the last time around I went? Law and order—law and order everywhere’. It is a pity it was all down at the Lobster Cave where the law and order really needed to be, but at the end of the day these are the rantings and ravings that are occurring on that side of the house.

It could have been written by the member for Kew. We know the member for Kew loves a bit of night tweeting and things like that, but I know he has been told to turn that tweeter off for the sake of the great leader, because the great leader does not want to be embarrassed that he is not actually having any impact anywhere. That is what this is about. This is about no confidence in the Leader of the Opposition, and we are here wasting our time tonight listening to the rantings and ravings of the Liberal Party about our strong leader, our leader who puts himself up before the cameras every time to answer the questions and sits there until every question that needs to be is answered. That is so different from that other lot when they were in government.

They were absolutely hopeless. We remember they were growing at about 0.8 of a per cent by the time they left the Treasury benches—0.8 of a per cent. They could not even get a full per cent.

Mr R Smith interjected.

Mr DONNELLAN: Wally the Wombat from Warrandyte wants to get up and tell us something. We had better let him go.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I would say that the minister has strayed far from the motion. The motion is not about the 2010–14 government. The motion is about the lack of confidence that this house has and the lack, frankly, of confidence that Victorians have in the current government. So perhaps the minister could contain his rant to the parameters set out by the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Ward): I thank the member for his point of order. I go back to my earlier point about asking people to continue to use respectful language. I do uphold this point of order, that we are speaking about the current government and current circumstances, and I ask the minister to come back to the motion before us.

Mr DONNELLAN: Thank you. That motion put forward by the opposition leader was about as limp as the leader’s passion—you know, about as useful as a broken leg in the Stawell Gift; a waste of
time; as flat as a French crepe. Seriously, absolutely hopeless. I watched it without sound and you could just see no-one was doing anything; they were all just sitting behind him, because they did not have the passion. You know, it is really more a cry for help: ‘Come and support me. I need the support because things aren’t going too well over here’. That is what this is really about. You have only got to look.

But what I want to do today is also express my incredible thanks for the work that people have done in the aged-care sector, whether they be cooks, cleaners, whatever the case may be—or whether they be nurses. They have reached out, and many of these people have done extra shifts to assist during this period of time with the private and not-for-profit sectors. I know that has been gratefully received. They have worked together and actually provided that protection and care and support that they need across the aged-care sector. I also want to thank the child protection workers for working during this incredibly difficult time in terms of their line of sight, in terms of the children they care for. I also want to thank those who work in the disability sector for the marvellous work they do. Because this has been a difficult period and it has required strong leadership, which is what we have seen from the Premier—incredibly strong leadership.

You have only got to look at what we have done in aged care, the amount of investment we have put in in terms of $81 million for the member for Bayswater, down inWantirna, for a great new 120 aged-care places facility—not selling it off like the last lot were going to do. The Leader of the Opposition was going to sell it off, you know—privatise the care and let them rot. But we did not; we put the money back in—like in the St Georges Hospital in Kew, in the member for Kew’s seat—a great hospital, with great beds. Fifty per cent of them were for people with dementia, and we know we need those public sector aged-care beds.

And we have only had 15 positive cases in that period of time in all our aged-care beds—and that is 10 per cent across the state. We are actually the largest provider of aged-care beds in the state. We provide 80 per cent of the aged-care beds in country Victoria. If it was not for us, or if it was for the opposition leader, there would not be that provision of aged-care beds in country Victoria. I do not know what the National Party would have done—gone silent, watched while they were sold off? Sold off? Cost too much? Good care costs too much? That is what the Liberal Party were going to do. We know that because that was your policy. No use pretending it was not a policy. There it was in black and white: off we go, privatise the care of those most vulnerable members of the community.

Whereas the Premier said, ‘No, we’ll invest again; we’ll put money back in. We’ll put in the quality nurses. We’ll have nurse-to-patient ratios: one-to-seven, one-to-eight, one-to-15’. That is why we give the care and the quality of care people deserve, the links to the community health and the links to the health services locally, to clinical care. That is the leadership that the Premier has provided.

And it is in stark contrast to those on the opposite side of the house who put up this ridiculous motion. It is really more about a cry for help: ‘I need the numbers on my side. Things aren’t going well. Others are out there getting higher profiles. I need to work harder, but I’m not getting there, so I’m going to put up this two-bob stunt’.

Really, it is going to add up to not much. What do you do with the cameras tomorrow morning? ‘I did this two-bob stunt. Jeez, that went well—got voted down. Ha-ha—I feel great’. What a joker—obviously a joker. It must be comedy week. You know, really, what an utter and thorough waste of time—a waste of time of the house that adds up to nothing. We know where the numbers lie. We know he is worried about his numbers, and that is what this is about.

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (17:55): I mourn for the 789 people who died from COVID-19 in the second wave in Victoria—the second wave caused by the failures of this Premier and this government with hotel quarantine. I support this motion of no confidence because if 789 deaths at the feet of government actions are not the greatest Victorian failure of public policy, what is? I grieve for the millions of Victorians locked down for months on end. The toll in terms of family violence, mental illness, educational outcomes and civil society groups and activities is enormous. This lockdown has been
prolonged past expert evidence of its efficacy and with particularly harsh effects for the disadvantaged, all because this Premier and this government cannot fix contact tracing and so are left with movement restrictions as their only weapon against the virus. I support this motion of no confidence because if the lockdowns of this length and this magnitude are not the greatest Victorian failure of public policy, what is? And I lament the hundreds of thousands of Victorians out of work. The unemployment lines in Victoria continue to grow as retail, hospitality, fitness and so many other businesses remain shuttered because this Premier and this government cannot fix contact tracing. So I support this motion of no confidence because if the deepest and likely most prolonged recession since the Great Depression is not the greatest Victorian failure of public policy, what is?

A motion of no confidence can only be moved once a term. A motion of no confidence is serious. A motion of no confidence is a constitutional action as it is a precondition for an early election. Moving this motion of no confidence is not taken on a whim. Moving this motion is not, like those in the government attempt to assert, a stunt. No other Australian state government is facing a motion of no confidence, and why would that be? Because 811 of the 899 COVID deaths have been here in Victoria. No other state government caused a second wave by its actions. No other state government has failed not only with hotel quarantine but with contact tracing. And here is one way to show the difference between the gold standard of New South Wales contact tracing and that of Victoria: in the first wave in New South Wales 33 per cent of their cases were mystery cases but now that is only 4 per cent. Here it was 22 per cent and it is still 22 per cent. They have got a lot better. We have not.

As we come to vote on this motion I will vote yes. My Liberal and National colleagues will vote yes. But the reality is we do not have the numbers alone. To carry this motion we will need some government members to join us. In my part of the world, in western Victoria, we have the member for Buninyong, the member for Melton and the member for Wendouree. These members have a choice here today. Will they stand up for their constituents in the way I am standing up for mine in Ripon? These MPs for Buninyong, Wendouree and Melton have already supported a 12-month extension to the state of emergency that I opposed. These MPs have already supported the COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Bill 2020 with unlimited detention powers that I opposed.

Today these MPs, like other MPs in this Parliament, get to choose. Will they vote for no confidence or will they vote for their discredited and mendacious Premier? Will the member for Buninyong, the member for Melton and the member for Wendouree show some spine and support their communities or not? I commend the motion to the house.

Mr PEARSON (Essendon—Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Regulatory Reform, Minister for Government Services, Minister for Creative Industries) (18:00): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Now, the Leader of the Opposition may well have moved this motion, but it was clearly written by the member for Kew. This is nothing more than a stunt. This is just designed to try and get additional talking points for the member for Kew when he is next on 2GB or when he is next on Sky News, because we know that the member for Kew measures his progress in this place in terms of media mentions. It is not about policy, it is not about the great contest of ideas and it is not about a thoughtful, measured contribution. It is just about the sugar hit. It is just the sugar hit of Twitter, of getting on Sky and of getting on a radio station that does not even broadcast into his own community. That is his sole focus.

I was in the chamber earlier and I listened to the member for Bulleen’s contribution. And I, like the member for Oakleigh and the member for Bayswater, was so pleased that the member for Bulleen has accepted the verdict of the people of 2018, that he has got over it, he has moved on and he is at peace with himself. All of us are so pleased that the member for Bulleen has got over the fact that he led his party to certainly one of the greatest defeats of the Liberal Party. In my community it was their worst result in a primary vote since 1952. It might have been its worst since 1982 or it could be 2002, but it is right up there. It is in the top three worst accomplishments for the Liberal Party.
Look, this is a serious time, and the government is focused on making sure that we work extremely hard to combat and defeat this insidious disease. The reality is that those opposite have been confused in terms of what the appropriate response has been. We have not gone in hard enough, we have gone too hard, lock it down, open it up—it has just been a confused contribution.

Like the Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers, I watched the Leader of the Opposition’s contribution. I was in my office and the sound was turned down because I was having meetings. It was a lengthy contribution—I know that he spoke for probably an hour—but you could just see that his heart was not in it. If you look in his eyes, he is more worried about his own position. This is more about his job than anyone else’s job.

Now, the member for Ripon actually made an interesting observation: you can only move a no-confidence motion once in each parliamentary term. Why now? I could argue that this is an opportunity to deny the member for Kew the opportunity of moving a no-confidence motion were he to become the Leader of the Opposition before the next election, because that is where the member for Kew sees himself. The member for Kew has always been focusing on the next job rather than the one he has got at the time. He was appointed the Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Population Policy and Housing Affordability. He was given that appointment immediately prior to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings in 2015 and not once did he ask a question of the 22 ministers about population. He was not interested in being a member of the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee. His sole focus—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I raise a point of order I raised with the previous Acting Speaker. The parameters of the motion are very narrow. They are about the current government, and the minister at the table needs to confine himself to the motion rather than an attack on members of the opposition and their actions in the previous term. He needs to focus on the fact that this side of the Parliament, and indeed many, many Victorians, have no confidence in this government.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Thank you. I ask the minister to come back to the motion.

Mr PEARSON: Thank you, Acting Speaker. Well, I am delighted to talk about the actions in this term because the member for Kew is the Shadow Minister for Planning and Heritage, and Shadow Minister for Local Government. Rarely does he talk about his policy areas. He has no interest in that. His sole focus is taking the role of the Leader of the Opposition. He wants to roll the member for Malvern.

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, again the parameters of the motion are about the lack of confidence that Victorians have in this government, and pointing the finger at various shadow ministers on this side of the house seems bizarre to say the least. You would think that the minister would want to take this opportunity to defend the government of which he is a part. You would think that was what he would want to be doing—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Thank you.

Mr R Smith: You would think he would want to be talking about contact-tracing failures—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Thank you, you can take a seat now.

Mr R Smith: or hotel quarantine failures, but instead he is talking about shadow ministers on this side. Please bring him back to the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Member for Warrandyte, take your seat. Thank you. The minister to come back to the motion.

Mr Guy interjected.
Mr PEARSON: Well, why don’t you name all the seats that were lost under your leadership at the last state election? Why don’t you do that while you are at it?

Look, this is just a churlish, childish stunt. It was moved by the Leader of the Opposition. He has done it because he has been compelled to do it because the member for Kew is circling. If the Liberal Party choose the member for Kew to lead that party, that is a matter entirely for them. But it will just be, for the rest of this term, more stunts, more circuses from the member for Kew because that is all he is capable of. We are solely focused on the job at hand. We are committed to defeating this insidious disease. We will not be distracted, we will not be diverted, we will not listen to these stunts from those opposite. I oppose the motion.

Mr T SMITH (Kew) (18:06): I rise to support this motion of no confidence because the people entrusted to navigate Victoria through this pandemic steered it onto the rocks of the second wave and now they obfuscate, buck-pass, dissemble and, as we have seen, even lie under oath. It is a conga line of incompetence, insincerity and insensitivity, and it is a gross insult to the families who have lost loved ones because of them. There is no honour in these people and the person who leads them. They have no interest in easing the pain of Victorians. They have no interest in giving grieving families answers or devastated business owners the truth about why a lifetime’s work has been sacrificed. They are just out to save themselves. That none of them is accepting responsibility for the greatest policy failure in living memory means everybody must, starting from the top.

Mr Pearson: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, I remind the member for Kew that we are not allowed to read our speeches. If he is referring to notes, that is perfectly acceptable. But he appears to me to be reading his speech. I would have thought a member who has been here long enough would know better.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Is the member reading from notes?

Mr T SMITH: The minister has gone a little bit troppo. I am reading from notes, Acting Speaker. Can I continue without being interrupted?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Are you referring to notes?

Mr T SMITH: I am referring to notes.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): The member may continue.

Mr T SMITH: Thank you, Acting Speaker. I will continue if I can. They are just out to save themselves. That none of them is accepting responsibility for the greatest public policy failure in living memory means everybody must, starting from the top. The Premier has said time and time again that he is responsible for his government, so he must go. The deaths have been too many, the destruction too great and his culpability too deep for any other course of action. The Premier has extended the state of disaster because literally he has turned Victoria into a disaster and 791 of his fellow Victorians have died because of the hotel quarantine fiasco that started the second wave, resulting in such death and such destruction. Genomic sequencing does not lie. The Premier caused the disaster, the Premier is responsible for the disaster and Victorians are paying for it. Not only has he caused the disaster but this Premier has done so while presiding over the single greatest period of diminished government scrutiny in the history of our state.

Under this Premier, cabinet government—gone. Under this Premier, Parliament can be suspended by a mid-ranking public servant. Under this Premier, scrutiny is okay, but only if the committee charged with doing it is controlled by the Labor Party. People’s rights and freedoms—gone. A curfew was introduced, so was the 5-kilometre rule, which is still imposed upon us. For the first time in our history millions of Victorians could not leave their homes in the evening because, we were told, it was necessary to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, only for us to find out that the Chief Commissioner of Police did not ask for it.
Ms Green: On a point of order, Acting Speaker, the member for Kew is quite clearly reading his speech. He is not referring to notes. Mr Magoo could see that he is reading it, and it is even bound in a nice little booklet form. I ask you to ask him to come back to delivering his heartfelt speech from his heart rather than reading it.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Thank you, member for Yan Yean. Is the member referring to notes?

Mr T SMITH: On the point of order, the member for Yan Yean is one of the more challenged members of this chamber. I am not going to accept her ridiculous points of order. Once again, I am reading from copious notes, Acting Speaker. Would you shut up these people so I can continue?

Ms Green: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, I take offence at the reference that the member for Kew just made to me, and I ask him to withdraw. He is also being very disrespectful to the Chair, and I think he is showing he has a distinct problem with the women in this chamber.

Mr R Smith: On the point of order, Acting Speaker, let the record show that the member for Yan Yean is far more concerned about the method in which the member for Kew is delivering his speech than the 800 people that have died as a result—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Order! There is no point of order. Will the member withdraw his statement?

Mr T SMITH: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms Kilkenny): Thank you. The member will continue.

Mr T SMITH: The economy has been smashed, and yet we get gratuitous, ridiculous interruptions from the member for Yan Yean. Businesses have been destroyed because of the incompetence of your party. Do you understand that? Do you understand? Has it seeped into your skull yet, member for Yan Yean, that your party is responsible for the deaths of 791 people in the second wave of coronavirus, hundreds of thousands of jobs lost—literally hundreds of thousands of jobs lost—and a mental health crisis? Do you understand that, whilst you are taking your ridiculous points of order about the notes that I am reading from? You are a disgrace, and you are an embarrassment to the people that sent you here.

I also fear for the mental health impacts of what has gone on in Victoria over the past few months. I think the consequences will live with us for years. What we need from the Premier is a recovery plan, and what we got was a media plan. If we were to take the Premier at his word, everything is under control. Contact tracing—all under control, yet we got a second wave. Enforcement—well, that was meant to be done terrifically, yet a pregnant mother was arrested in front of her children and a riot squad was sent to a fruit and vegetables market. The government’s response—well, according to you lot, you have said it all afternoon—has been terrific. You have done a great job. Except your health minister resigned in the middle of a pandemic and then told the Coate inquiry that the Premier’s evidence should be observed with caution—with caution. She called the Premier a liar. Then, yesterday, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet resigned. Why? Because he lied to the Coate inquiry—he lied under oath. That is the sort of calibre of person that we are dealing with in this rotten Andrews Labor government. So if everything is under control, what does the Premier consider out of control?
Labor members have a very important decision to make in the next few hours. Victorians should rightly judge Labor members on how they vote today. But Labor members of Parliament and ministers will not just be judged today or next week or next year or next month or at the next election—those Labor members will be judged by history itself. And one thing is clear: on this question, on this motion, there is only one right side of history, and you know it. The Liberal Party is on the right side of history. The National Party is on the right side of history. Because we stand with workers, we stand with businesses, we stand with families and we stand for responsible government. Most importantly of all, we stand with and for the people of Victoria in this terrible time of trial.

Mr CARBINES (Ivanhoe) (18:14): I just wanted to start if I could in opposing the opposition motion by also quoting from a recent post from Austin Health where they said that:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a once in a lifetime challenge for our staff. COVID-19 has not only impacted their work lives, but also their personal lives. Our staff have shown resilience, courage and an unwavering dedication to our patients and each other.

We are so proud of our amazing people who go above and beyond for our community.

We’re also very grateful for the support of our community, to those who’ve sent us messages and well wishes, donated to our COVID-19 appeal and are doing their bit to help stop the spread of COVID-19. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Can I say to those staff at Austin Health, to those patients at Austin Health, to those families who have supported not only the staff but those who they care so deeply for, to those across the road at Warringal Private Hospital and the team there who have been working so closely with Austin Health in relation to dealing with this worldwide pandemic, to the team down at the veterans centre at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, to those across the many other services at Heidelberg Mercy Hospital for Women and to all the significant health services in my electorate—the people who use those services and the people who work there, whether they provide a range of health services as clinicians or whether they provide the back-of-house work to make sure the place functions and operates: we understand the strains and the stresses that so many of you have endured.

What they look for is leadership from their government and from their Parliament. They look for support to back them in the work that they are required to do and to give them confidence when they go home in their uniforms on public transport or walking. When they are asked by people in communities big and small right across our state, ‘How are we going? What’s happening? Do you feel that you have the supports that you need?’ we need to make sure that these people are working 24/7 across our communities.

I have had the opportunity to hear from not only the very significant aged-care service for the Italian community at Assisi Aged Care but also the very many private aged-care facilities across the Ivanhoe electorate. I am very thankful to them. Some of them have been demonised, I would say, throughout the pandemic. There is no doubt, through the federal royal commission’s work, that there are significant issues in aged care, but can I also say that there are very many people who work so very hard to support and care for people in our community in aged-care services. Can I say to those aged-care services in my electorate and to the people who work there, to the people who provide the food and cleaning services, to the nurses and to the personal care attendants: everyone values the work that you do—not necessarily perhaps some of the proprietors, who need to be held to greater account by federal regulation, but certainly the institutions in my electorate and the people who work there and the families who support them to do that work 24/7. You have the support of our government. You have the support, I hope, of our Parliament.

Can I say also that I have had the opportunity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health to meet and speak—in most recent times online, as we do—with regional health services across Gippsland, across the Loddon Mallee, across the Grampians, across Barwon and the south-west and right across Victoria and directly with the CEOs and leading workers and managers in our health services to understand the significant teamwork and the efforts that they have gone to. I know also the member for Gippsland
East made the point in this place that his community in particular has endured states of disaster more than once through 2020. We also recall not only them but the staff in those health services in particular, who have not drawn breath this year. They have worked tirelessly and at the same time have worked to provide for and support their families. The pressures and the strains that they have been under, the economic circumstances that they have had to face and the children that they have had to educate at home as well through the pandemic have put enormous stresses and strains on people.

But we have also seen great opportunities for collaboration and great opportunities through telehealth and other services, like some of the innovations from Ambulance Victoria that I have seen and heard about in regional Victoria and the stepping up of community health services right across our state. In particular the Banyule Community Health service in West Heidelberg is now providing preoperative COVID testing in the community, freeing up services and resources at Austin Health.

This is the teamwork that is happening right across our community. The primary health networks, the bush nursing services, clinicians right across the state—so many people are finding ways to make contributions that we have never made before. People are finding ways to use technology where perhaps it might have taken years to find the benefits of how we can apply our technologies in our workplaces for the betterment of our patients. And we have leaned very heavily on a range of services that perhaps in the long term are not sustainable to operate in the way that we have had to lean on them, but we do know that this has presented to us great opportunities for how we will provide health services into the future.

I want to say also that the people who in my community have worked so very hard, as in many communities, have also been our teachers, who have found ways time and time again, online and also back at school this week, to provide continuity of service to our students. They have a willingness to go above and beyond, not only putting their health at risk at different times despite all the precautions that we take but being prepared to put their commitment, their lifelong working commitment to our students, first and to support families in so many ways in the roles that our teaching staff play.

I know also that there are some other elements that I think we need to touch on that are so critical to the work that our government and our Parliament are required to do. In particular I wanted to touch on a couple of aspects. One of those I suppose draws back to the tie I am wearing today. It was given to me by the now director-general of the World Health Organization, Tedros Ghebreyesus, a former foreign minister and health minister in Ethiopia who a number of us in this Parliament had the opportunity to meet in Ethiopia several years ago. He is someone who of course not only has dealt with the Ebola virus epidemic in his time as minister for health and also foreign minister and in his role in the African Union but has been demonised by individuals, others opposite and those federally in the Morrison government, demonised as part of his organisation for his role, the leadership and the work that he is providing right across the world.

I think that then brings us back again here to Victoria as we saw the demonising of African gangs and crime from those opposite at the last election. It is a comfort—it is a sad comfort, but it is a comfort—in a way to be reminded at times of the damage that has been done by those sorts of campaigns and to be reminded that many of those who seek in their shrill way to make commentary either to me or to others who are working in our community to support people through this worldwide pandemic are familiar. They are familiar, many of them—familiar in their shrill cries, familiar in their tawdry efforts to demonise governments, to demonise public servants, to demonise clinicians and to demonise people in the community who work so very hard to support people in their time of trial and need. So what I would say is also to take heart and understand that those campaigns and efforts are not ones that I think will stand the test of time, because it has been made very clear in the past that people are not fooled and people are not going to be drawn into those arguments.

Members interjecting.
Mr CARBINES: So I would finally say to those opposite, who are very keen to contribute to the debate on this matter, that I will conclude my remarks given those opposite are very keen to pick up the opportunities to debate these matters. Despite their interjections I again reject those comments made by those opposite in relation to their no-confidence motion in our government. We will continue to serve the people of Victoria and put their interests first.

Mr R SMITH (Warrandyte) (18:24): In the office of Premier and Cabinet the Victorian coat of arms sits prominently on the wall, and on the banner unfurled below the women who represent those words is written ‘Peace and prosperity’. I wonder if just one minister sees those words and has any understanding that the oath they took when they were commissioned by the Governor of this state was to deliver on those two objectives for the people of Victoria—peace and prosperity—because all I see and all Victorians see is that the ministers in this government have done all they can to diminish families’ peace of mind and the prosperity that is the legacy of so many hardworking Victorians. It is a government who are happy to take the trappings of office—the cars, the staff, the extra money—but in doing so have refused to take any of the responsibility with which they have been charged.

As events of this year have unfolded we have seen the ineptitude of the government on display time and time again. It is not just the public policy failures; it is the refusal to take any sort of responsibility for what this government has done. In Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings and at the Coate inquiry Victorians have seen a procession of ministers and bureaucrats who demonstrated no sense of responsibility or accountability and asked us as Victorians to believe they have a collective amnesia. Well, if they think we are going to believe that, they must be collectively delusional.

Who did not know about hotel quarantine according to this government? Well, the Minister for the Coordination of Jobs, Precincts and Regions: COVID-19 did not have a clue. The Minister for the Coordination of Environment, Land, Water and Planning: COVID-19—she did not know. The chief health officer, for goodness sake—he did not know. In fact the chief health officer of this state apparently only knew about issues in hotel quarantine when he read it in the paper. Departmental secretaries Peake, Eccles, Phemister—no idea what was going on apparently. State controllers Helps and Spiteri did not know what was going on. Former Chief Commissioner of Police Graham Ashton did not know. Current Chief Commissioner of Police Patton did not know. The emergency management commissioner did not know either. In fact he said to the inquiry—my goodness, can you believe this?—that:

… I wrote “private security” in my logbook. There was something there about private security.

‘I don’t know what it was for. I don’t remember’. Can you believe that? And over the top of all these people is the Premier himself. This guy who micromanages every little thing, who does not let anything happen without him knowing what is happening. What did he say at the inquiry when asked what went wrong?

… I don’t have a view.

Do you know who made the decision to use security guards?

No, I don’t.

Why did you mention police and security in your press conference?

I’m not certain why I mentioned police, private security … I can’t clarify for you …

Did you know about the email about the offer of ADF troops? ‘The first time I have seen this email is preparing for this presentation’. I mean, you would think that this government would own its actions, but no. Not one of them has taken responsibility. Not one of them has shown Victorians why we should have any further confidence in them. I tell you what, if you are going to continue to take us through the future months when dealing with this pandemic, can you write something down so people can refer to something? Can you stick up your hand and say, ‘I’ve got responsibility for this’? Just one—one bureaucrat, one minister, one member of the government. Could just one of you write it down and say, ‘I made this decision’? Because I do not have any confidence going forward that you are even going
to remember what you did 5 minutes ago, let alone something that is as important as looking after the health and wellbeing of Victorians.

I have no confidence in this government. So many Victorians have no confidence in this government. Let me tell you why: 800 deaths, the most community transmission in the country in this state alone, jobs lost, businesses closed down, a 33 per cent rise in self-harm by teenagers presenting at accident and emergency, social disconnection, depression which will take years to realise and present. I have no confidence in this government like so many Victorians who also do not have confidence in this government. This government has only demonstrated that they will let this community down, that they will treat them as fools and that they will refuse to take any responsibility for any of their actions. I support this motion.

Mr DIMOPOULOS (Oakleigh) (18:29): I rise to speak against this motion and I do so because, as others have said, this is purely a political stunt by a Leader of the Opposition who is fast losing support amongst his team and amongst the Victorian people—if he ever had that support. I know this is hard. This is extraordinarily hard for all of us, and we have to distinguish what is hard about this. It is not our treatment of it; it is the pandemic in itself. It is the pandemic in itself that is hard.

It is hard for a whole range of people in the Victorian community. We, some of us in this room, are amongst the most privileged ones. I consider myself privileged. I have a secure job, my health is fine, my family’s health is fine. I am okay. Of course I would love the freedoms we had COVID, but I am fine. There are a lot of people who are not fine, and we understand that. That is what happens when you make a decision, a value-based decision, to preference the health and the welfare of Victorians. If the last seven months was to demonstrate anything about politics in this state, it is that this Labor government puts people first. It puts the health of Victorians first. If that is not the primary responsibility of a government, I do not know what is.

Of course we recognise the enormous and devastating impacts that preferencing a health response has on a whole range of areas of life—on our economic life, on our cultural life, on our social life. I get that. Specifically I get it for business as well. I get the late nights, the early mornings. I get that in a small business particularly the owner is the finance director, the HR director, the marketing consultant, the customer service manager and the bookkeeper. The owner or the family does all those functions in a business. I get that you build up a client base and a customer base and you care for them so much that you want to retain them as your good customers over time. You really cultivate that business, and to see it all evaporate over the last seven months is gut-wrenching. I get it on a couple of fronts. I get it because I have heard it from my local businesses. I get it because I was a small business owner. I had a small business. I had a cafe, and I get the pain and the suffering that comes with small business.

But I go back to the Treasurer’s comments. The Treasurer said and the Premier has said many times that you cannot have an economy if you do not have people. You cannot have people if you do not defeat this virus. This is what this government is offering. I say to the small business community of my electorate and of Victoria more broadly: please, please disregard the false prophets on the other side of this Parliament. Disregard them because they have proven themselves unfit not just to be in government but unfit to even be in opposition. Their stance has been flipping and flopping from one place to the other in terms of restrictions. They have no plan.

This government understands the suffering, understands the commitment and the sacrifice. That is why it has invested $6.5 billion in business in Victoria and over $13 billion more broadly in supporting Victorians through this awful, awful last seven or eight months. That is what this government offers: a plan that we are close to achieving. We are literally weeks away on the current data from achieving that plan. And that plan is not just a plan for Victorians and for families; it is a plan for business.

You cannot recover economically if you do not defeat this virus. We have seen examples in the UK, in France and in the US—not in June and July but this month, October, where the data and the figures are far higher than they have ever been in this entire pandemic and where hospital admissions are far
higher. We are not in that position. We should be thankful that the Victorian community has made the sacrifices it has made, led by a good government that cares, and that we have got to a position where we have almost defeated the second wave.

In concluding my brief remarks on this ridiculous motion—this ridiculous stunt—I just want to respond very briefly to the Leader of the Opposition’s calls in his contribution for me to look at my conscience in supporting or not supporting this motion. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: I have looked to my conscience. And I would ask him to look at his, because all he has done and all his team have done is create fear and anxiety in the Victorian community. When people ask them in years to come ‘What did you do during the pandemic the destroyed so many lives? What did you do?’, their only answer will be ‘We played politics’. That will be their answer: ‘We played politics’. I ask the opposition leader where his conscience was in this period and in his entire political life in things that he has proposed and things that he has fought against in terms of the good things we have done for the Victorian community. I strongly vote against this motion because it is a political stunt and it serves no purpose.

Mr HODGETT (Croydon) (18:35): I rise to speak on the no-confidence motion: that the Premier and the other ministers for the state of Victoria no longer possess the confidence of this house. As has been said by a number of people today, the motion moved today is as serious as any that can be debated in this chamber. We have got limited time, but I just want to use the time that I have to express why I believe this motion should be supported, why I believe that all members should give full consideration to what has occurred under this government—entrenched, pernicious maladministration, abrogation of responsibility and creeping authoritarianism—and why members should give full consideration to supporting this no-confidence motion on the basis of sending a message to Victorians that the kind of government we have experienced is one that should not be tolerated by any Victorian. It is a motion that Victorians know they deserve better, it is a motion that Victorians know they are being treated with contempt by the current government and it is a motion that reflects their anger and frustrations. I must say, every one of us in this place has been inundated with contact—messages, phone calls and emails—so this is certainly a motion that has stirred normally deeply apolitical community leaders to voice their concern and dismay at what has gone on under this government.

The first point I wanted to turn to was the hotel quarantine. The first basic responsibility of any government is to keep the public safe, and by any measure the Andrews government has failed on that, which brings me to the hotel quarantine disaster where the Andrews government alone confused quarantine with incubation. People tell us this all the time: all the Premier had to do was come out and take some sort of responsibility. People have said that if he said, ‘Look, we’ve mucked up, we’ve got this wrong, we’ll learn from it, it’s not good enough, we’ll get to the bottom of this, heads will roll where people need to take responsibility, this can never happen again, it cannot be allowed to happen again’—that is all the Premier had to do and all people were expecting of him—people would have cut him some slack. But instead all we have seen is a cover-up and lies or mistruths or amnesia.

I ask the Premier to look north to Peter Beattie, who made an art form out of apologising, saying sorry and moving on. If the Premier had just taken some sort of responsibility and said, ‘This is not good enough, we’ll learn from this, we’ll get better at it’, I think he would have faced a lot less questioning around the whole thing. We would have cut him a bit of slack and we could have got on with it. But all he has done with his handling of the hotel quarantine debacle is just dig a bigger and bigger hole for himself and his government and add to that proof that our current crop of state ministers are masters in the field of avoiding responsibility and accountability. Either they have never bothered to understand the fundamentals of the Westminster system or they have allowed themselves to be bullied and are jettisoning any pretence of owing the public explanations for their actions. How else can one explain the collective amnesia we have witnessed during the hotel quarantine inquiry? Are we to believe that when addressing the greatest public health challenge in decades no-one, not one senior minister, kept notes, could remember key conversations or even asked pertinent questions? If so, that lapse alone should mark them as unfit to hold office. It is indisputable that Victorians are in a second wave that has been caused by the Premier and his government’s incompetence. It is sad in many ways. The
Premier is a proud man. He wanted to be remembered as the infrastructure Premier, but sadly he will be remembered forever as the Premier that botched, covered up, lied and perjured himself about the whole hotel quarantine catastrophe.

That brings me to the contact tracing. It is not rocket science. I think we all agree on that. If we can get the testing done, the results back quickly and the contact tracing done with a minimal amount of time between all those, we have got a chance of jumping on outbreaks. But we are still hearing cases of people in the community that get tested and are waiting weeks for their results. We are hearing of people that go along to get tested, wait hours and give up and go home, and then get results when they were never tested. We hear about husbands and wives that go along because they have been asked to be tested, and the husband gets tested but the wife has not got enough symptoms so she does not. It is just not good enough. We heard today the Minister for Health boasting in question time that the contact tracing is cutting edge, but clearly it is not. That the cleaner at Chadstone was able to spread the virus when infectious suggests that contact tracing and keeping cases at home is not working.

We are seeing New South Wales using a QR system—QR being quick response—to track restaurant and shop patronage. Why isn’t Victoria? The Premier sent a team up there to learn about what New South Wales are doing, so why aren’t QR code systems being used in restaurants and shops here in Victoria? Today is 13 October. We heard ads this morning on 3AW saying:

**If you visited the Chadstone Shopping Centre between September 23 and 27 you should get tested…**

**Today is 13 October. Is this the cutting-edge technology that the Minister for Health has been talking about? Then it added:**

Anyone who visited the Oddfellows Café in Kilmore … between 30 September and 3 October … please call the Goulburn Valley Health hotline …

Between 23 September and 3 October—today is the 13th and we are still trying to work out contact tracing. So if that is cutting edge, what hope have we got to ever get on top of this virus, to live with it and to manage it?

There is no doubt that the Premier botched the handling of hotel quarantine, coupled with an out-of-date contact-tracing system and a poor public health policy. He should do the right thing. He says he accepts ultimate responsibility and everything rests with him. Well, the time has come for the one person at the heart of this entire mess to do the honourable thing and start Victoria on the path to healing. The Premier has to accept that he has lost the confidence of this house, and he should resign.

Ms THEOPHANOUS (Northcote) (18:41): This is a snapshot of the last 14 days in districts around the world that have comparable populations to Victoria: the city of Berlin, 3716 new cases of coronavirus; Wales, 7070 new cases; the state of Massachusetts, 8290 new cases; the city of Madrid, over 48 000 new cases. Now look at the state of Victoria: 146 new cases over the last 14 days. We have been through a devastatingly difficult time, but we have achieved an extraordinary thing here in Victoria to drive our numbers down. These figures from overseas show just how virulent, just how serious, just how far-reaching this novel virus is. Around the world governments are grappling with its challenges. France is on the cusp of new lockdowns as Paris moves into emergency mode. Italy is planning nationwide bans on gatherings and stricter mask controls. All bars and cafes in Belgium’s capital are closing. The UK has today announced yet another effort at lockdown amid its rising cases.

To his shame, the Leader of the Opposition has not once acknowledged that this government has acted decisively to steer Victoria out of an incredibly difficult, dangerous and unprecedented situation—a situation that is ongoing. This government first and foremost recognises that we are facing a new, deadly virus with no vaccine. Victorians stand in strength and courage and solidarity, despite the tactics of those opposite, to bring the numbers down and safely reopen. They do not want your transparent grab at relevance. They want to see a safe road out of this crisis. From upwards of 700 cases a day in early August, we have brought our curve down to just 12 cases today. Every time the numbers come
down you can see the despair in the opposition. They can barely disguise their disappointment. Instead of words of encouragement, all Victorians get are risky calls to ease restrictions now.

Members interjecting.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: Own up to it. Together as Victorians we have chosen—

Mr R Smith: On a point of order, Speaker, I take personal offence that the member would possibly say that I—and indeed any member, but I am saying this for myself—would love the idea that transmission numbers are going up. I take personal offence, and I ask you to have her withdraw. What a ridiculous comment. It is so offensive.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Warrandyte has made his point of order.

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gembrook will come to order, and the member for Bayswater. I ask the member for Northcote to withdraw.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: I withdraw.

The SPEAKER: The member for Northcote to continue.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: We have chosen to take an evidence-based, not a populist, approach to this pandemic. We have taken considered, articulated and, yes, difficult steps in response to the many, many challenges that this crisis has thrown up. In my community businesses and families have felt the pressure of this year, and I will keep working to support every one of them. But overwhelmingly what I have seen is a community that has banded together. We have seen local organisations mobilised to provide meals and emergency relief, businesses innovate to keep their customers and staff safe and people performing acts of kindness big and small for friends, families and neighbours.

I cannot adequately express my gratitude to the workers keeping us safe, supplied and cared for. Nurses and doctors, teachers and childcare workers, cleaners and carers, supermarket workers, charity volunteers—too many to name: thank you. And I do pause here to give special mention to our childcare workers. Just a few weeks ago I was able to send my two girls back to their welcoming arms.

They were so excited they could barely contain themselves. And I will be honest, I had hoped that the pandemic would inspire a moment of clarity in our Prime Minister to finally acknowledge the value of childcare workers and affordable child care to our lives and to our economy. Alas, judging by last week’s budget it was too much to hope for.

We know that a motion of no confidence is an attempt to remove someone from their position because you think you could do a better job. Well, God help Victorians if their safety were left in the hands of those opposite, an opposition devoid of ideas, peddling fear and pushing an ‘open everything’ strategy that rivals their ideological mentor, Donald Trump.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Warrandyte to wear his mask properly in the house.

Ms THEOPHANOUS: And you can tell not all of them are totally comfortable with it. Not too many of them have dashed out to buy one of the member for Malvern’s ‘Make America Great Again’-style red Trump hats that he was promoting over the weekend. They are not even trying to hide it now. They have no plan—no plan for Victorians, whose main priority is the health and security of Victorians. We will get through this, no thanks to them. I reject this indulgent, self-serving motion.

Mr ROWSWELL (Sandringham) (18:47): It is the responsibility of our elected government to govern for the peace, order and prosperity of every Victorian. But in its handling of the COVID crisis the Andrews Labor government has given us nothing but chaos, disorder and adversity. Worse than that, they have divided our state and instilled in its people hopelessness. Our confidence has been undermined. Our people feel defeated. How can the people of Victoria have confidence in this government? A Labor government that has sought to restrict our freedom and undermine our
democracy, imposing measures upon us that are beyond the health advice, including for the first time in our state’s history a curfew. A Labor government that has seriously mishandled the public policy response and still months on does not have a comprehensive contact-tracing system in place akin to that in New South Wales. A Labor government that through what they have done and what they have failed to do has presided over an economic disaster where private sector winners and losers are arbitrarily picked based on ideological bent. A Labor government that has presided over 800 deaths linked to Victoria’s second COVID wave, hundreds of thousands out of work, thousands of businesses closed, suicides increasing and Victoria locked down because Labor’s infection control failed. A Labor government that does not have the humility to simply say, ‘We got it wrong. We take responsibility. We are sorry’.

How can members of this Labor government comfortably sleep at night knowing that decisions that their government took presided over the killing of our fellow Victorians, the deaths of our fellow Victorians? The Victorian people do not want you to grieve for these deaths; they want you to make amends. How can they sleep at night amid the deafening cries of the thousands of residents who reached out to their offices for hope and help, which in some cases have simply been ignored? Under this government because of this COVID response the poor will get poorer, those behind in their education will fall further behind and those who were once at the start of a queue for a job will be pushed to the back of that queue.

And all of this is on the shoulders of every government member, not just its leadership. Every government member needs to take responsibility, every single one of them, for either enabling bad decisions to be made or not stopping bad decisions from being made. So many members of the Sandringham district community have been left by this government with no help and no hope, and it is for these reasons that I have no confidence in this government. I support this motion because thousands of Sandringham district residents have with one unified voice declared their lack of confidence in this government’s response, and this is to say nothing of the hundreds of businesses who have contacted my office on the brink of losing their life’s work and their livelihoods. In light of this it is particularly disappointing to note that 16 local traders are still waiting on responses from the Minister for Small Business so that they can get on with doing what they do best. Their silence speaks volumes to the fundamental lack of understanding and the disrespect that some members of this government have for those who put everything on the line to build our economy and to employ our fellow Victorians.

But there is a better way. There is an alternative, and that is the opportunity of this no-confidence motion. That is the opportunity that this no-confidence motion presents to every member of this place today. Today this Parliament and its members have an opportunity to do what is right. They have got an opportunity to do what is right for the Victorians that put them there to serve them and not to do what is apparently right for some political master or political overlord. Today every MP has an opportunity to say to those people who have contacted their office, who have contacted us in desperation, uncertain about their future, that we have listened to you, that we have heard you. Today is our opportunity to restore hope in our once-great state, to rekindle optimism, to press reset. And that is why I support this motion of no confidence.

Mr EDBROOKE (Frankston) (18:52): I cannot convey in words how disappointing it is to have to rise this afternoon to speak on a motion that, when we are in the midst of a one-in-100-year event, is speaking literally to the Leader of the Opposition’s ego. To hear the opposition leader earlier today put his political position above public health outcomes and this emergency we are in to try and resuscitate his leadership shows exactly where their focus is. But this motion is not just a motion of no confidence in very, very good leadership. It is a motion of no confidence in science, in medicine, in the professionals and in every worker on the front line that have got us to this point where we can say that we have seen a drop from 1040 active cases on 15 September to 191 active cases yesterday. The plan is clearly working.

Our Premier has had a single vision, and he has not swayed from it. He has led a response that has always followed the health advice to keep Victorians as safe as possible, to save as many lives as
possible and to support businesses along the way where possible. It is not easy. It is never going to be full of popular decision-making, but that is leadership. You cannot buy it; you cannot sell it. You have got to bite down. You have got to make tough decisions with courage that will not be universally adored by people. We have made those tough decisions—the right calls to keep this virus down—not only to repair but also to lead this state into the future, and I have 100 per cent confidence that our Premier will be leading us into that future.

Let us reflect on where this is coming from, though. Put yourselves in the shoes of an opposition MP, look back through the last couple of months and try and figure out where the opposition leader or even the shadow cabinet stand. In April we had ‘Kill the bats’. In May we had ‘Lift the restrictions. It’s too hard. We give up. Lift restrictions’. In June we had ‘There may never be a vaccine. Learn to live with COVID-19. Let’s just let it rip’. In July it was ‘Let’s get tough’. In August it was ‘Woah, woah, that’s too tough. It’s a power grab’. In October we saw ‘catch and kill’ cards for members of the cabinet. There is no semblance of vision or a goal or even control of his caucus, and there is no sign that his caucus actually have any kind of respect for him or confidence in his leadership. And this is what happens when you try and win the popularity war and not the war against COVID-19.

Victorians know it could be much worse if the opposition were in charge and they did do what they said they would do—like in May lift the restrictions and again in June, whether we had to learn to live with COVID-19 or there may never be a vaccine—because consistently they have acted against professional health advice. They would have let this virus kill indiscriminately—men, women, children, the elderly. Our hospitals would be packed to the rafters. Doctors would be performing triage every day to choose who lives and who dies, who gets a ventilator and who does not. How many of us would still be here? How many of us would be in trouble? How many family members of ours would have died? Thousands of Victorians would have died.

I think this no-confidence motion is just so disrespectful to everyone at the front line. It is an affront to everyone at the front line who is working with this government, advising this government to save Victoria from the mass grief that we have seen internationally. I want to say thank you to everyone, every single person who is helping, whether it be first responders, nurses, ambos, fireys, police, cooks, teachers—everyone who is helping, keeping us safe, especially the Peninsula Health workforce down at Frankston Hospital who have had to deal with some incredibly complex outbreaks in our area. I would also like to say thank you to the researchers who diligently search for the vaccine that the opposition leader says may never come. So thank you to all those people. Thanks to the amazing Victorians who have tried to do the right thing. The selflessness is amazing. The generosity and sacrifice are amazing.

I would also say when we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel whilst our numbers drop and we hear that sweet, sweet sound of kids getting back to school—which I know you love too, Speaker—we know that in the UK, France, Argentina, Israel, India, Mexico, Portugal, the US and Spain they are all in dire straits. So thanks to the Premier and his cabinet and the crisis cabinet for actually making decisions based on science and not Twitter or something like that.

This motion is not even near to being something that hides behind a veneer of no confidence in the Premier. This is transparent for everyone to see. Opposition MPs know their leader is not up to it. He has had to do this. Anyone who has been through a crisis before, anyone who has worked in emergency services knows that with a crisis if you think that it is not going to be fluid, complex, stressful, you are dreaming. If you think everything is going right, you are dreaming. I think what today has shown is that there is a virus that the Leader of the Opposition is fighting but it is not the virus that we are all fighting. The contagion he is fighting is one that was there before COVID and is still spreading like wildfire amongst his caucus as every day another opposition backbencher starts scratching their head thinking, ‘Should this guy really be leading us?’ This is his last play.

I put my faith in the steadfast and focused leadership that is the Premier and I put my faith in the good people of my community that have done the right thing. This motion is nothing but a sad action from
an opposition leader trying to save his skin. It does nothing to stop this virus and get restrictions ending sooner. I condemn it because this is time I could have spent in my community, helping my community.

**Mr BATTIN** (Gembrook) (18:58): I find it very interesting following the member for Frankston who spoke about people in emergency services, who understand the responsibilities and the pressures that you have to face and the decisions you have to make. I would encourage the Premier to read the book *Extreme Ownership* on extreme leadership when you talk about people who are going to make those decisions. They own the decisions they make and they live by the consequences, but the first thing they must do is admit that they have made an error—and that is the biggest failure of this government so far.

What I will say is that whilst I am here to vote on the motion of no confidence in this government and this Premier, I am here to vote on behalf of my electorate. I thought the best thing to do today was to speak on behalf of people in my electorate. If anyone wants an understanding of the emotional impact on businesses throughout Victoria, take the time to go and watch the Channel 7 news from last night.

I will declare my conflict because Harry Hutchinson, who was on there last night, was my first employer when I came out of McDonald’s, when I went into the workforce as a full-time employee. Those from Berwick know Harry is a community person and genuinely has thrown everything into his business. To see him nearly crying on TV last night was breathtaking. It nearly stole everything in me to see a man who is so passionate about what he has done. He is 68 years old. He has thrown everything—superannuation, he has put the lot into it. He does not want a handout, he does not want money—he wants to open safely. And he can. We have gone to the industry and said, ‘Give us a plan’. He gave it to us, and then the government said, ‘No, we don’t trust you. We don’t trust you, with your plan, to open safely’. I went through it last time, all those industries that put COVID-safe plans in.

**Business interrupted under sessional orders.**

**Ms SPENCE:** I move:

That the sitting be continued.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr BATTIN:** And I will continue. After Harry Hutchinson we have got Tina Copland of Jax Wax down in Beaconsfield, and Tina said she is sick of this government not just for what has happened but for cancelling contracts, the red shirts rorting and the illegality of the Lawyer X scandal that will certainly see the most dangerous criminals back on the street—and now we see the coronavirus security fiasco. She is disappointed in what has happened because it is affecting and impacting her business. While her competitors in New South Wales and Queensland can continue to operate, those customers that she was servicing are now going up there with her international clients, and it has the potential to destroy her business.

But it also comes down to things of the personal nature. Dylan from Officer is a schoolteacher in the local area. Dylan is to become a new father, which we all know is a magnificent stage in life, when you are going to become a parent. At the moment with the COVID virus they have lost their family network because they are all more than 5 kilometres out, so they have not got contact with their family. His wife is struggling through a dangerous and high-risk pregnancy where she has to have continual testing to make sure that everything is going okay with the pregnancy that they have got. Imagine the feeling of going in by yourself because you cannot take your husband in with you because of the restrictions that are put in place. How can anyone stand there and say that is okay? Because that is not okay. There is already enough fear in her life at the moment with what is going on with that pregnancy, and to take away her husband whilst they are going in for that testing is horrible and it is not fair, and that is why Dylan has lost confidence in the Premier.

Peter Lee of Fern Gardens has come out and said he lost confidence in the Andrews government when they misled all Victorians around the hotel quarantine cover-ups. And then he has come out and stated some of the issues around what is happening with the payments, the welfare payments through to
businesses. In his words at that time, what he said was, ‘Again, stop trying to give us support; let us open. Let us get back to what we do best, and that is run a business, employ people, keep people employed and keep the economy turning over, and we can do it safely’.

Frank from Beaconsfield—everyone in Beaconsfield would know Frank, I do not even need to put a surname out for Frank. But Frank could not go to his own brother’s funeral because of the restrictions that are in place. Frank had to watch his own brother’s funeral on Zoom, and that is not fair. That is why Frank has lost confidence in this government, because he knows that he should have been entitled to go to the funeral of his brother no matter what. If he wanted to put himself at risk for that, he should have been able to, because at the end of the day saying goodbye to your brother you can only do once at a funeral. You cannot have that moment again.

Patty and Francis from the Central Hotel and the Cardinia Park Hotel—I have been down and interviewed them. I have put it all online with those interviews. They are not about money. They want to open up again. It is very important for the economy, but they are actually about getting people back into work. But more importantly it is for the social isolation of many of their customers.

John from Cockatoo has said it has been difficult to live on JobKeeper and get by with a limited income, but he cannot get back to work.

In closing, because of all this I will say: I have never had confidence in this government myself, so this is actually on behalf of my electorate and their community views. On behalf of Harry, Tina, Dylan, Peter, John, Patty and Francis and the reflections in the emails coming to my email at the moment from people in my community and the businesses that are struggling—on behalf of all of them—we have no confidence in this Premier, and we will support this motion.

Ms HALL (Footscray) (19:04): As the famous Syrus quote goes, ‘Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm’. To be a leader during a deadly global pandemic you have to be brave and make difficult decisions. You have to be accountable; you need to front up every day. You need to look for solutions and bring people together. You need to get the job done. You cannot wish a pandemic away.

It is difficult to think of a more unhelpful group of people than those opposite. No belief in science, just carrying on in the sidelines calling on us to open up. They do not have a plan—although hilariously, the member for Gembrook has released his own plan. The member for Kew has an entirely useless plan about bats and golf. He is serving his time for his community talking to people in Sydney on radio. All they have is division, disunity and chaos.

The members for Brighton, Kew, Gembrook and Bulleen have been so focused on themselves and attention seeking that there has been no coherent position from the opposition. The contrast in leadership could not be starker. I am grateful for the commitment and leadership of the Premier and other leaders from communities all across Victoria, the sacrifices that people have made, our health workforce, the parents at home working on helping their children to learn and the everyday acts of kindness and support.

I would like to focus on the incredible leadership that has been provided by our educators in this most challenging of years. I would like to share with you an email I received last week from the grade 6 school captain at Footscray City Primary School.

My name is Taihan. I am a Year 6 student from Footscray City Primary School. I’m writing regarding the recommendation of one of my teachers. His name is Mr Anthony Curnow and he is the teacher for 5/6A. He has been such an amazing role model to me and I want to express the difference he has made in my school and personal life.

I wanted to mention his contagious passion to work with his students. He puts his heart and soul into his job, giving the best quality learning possible. He is someone I admire, his hard work is shown by the incredible growth in learning in his students. We need teachers who have this incredible level of dedication to giving a better future to their students. Being a teacher is an extraordinary responsibility, one that must not be taken
lightly. We need more devoted and committed teachers like my teacher, because they are the ones who will help to build the future.

I want to acknowledge his astounding work during the remote learning experience. It is difficult during a pandemic, but my teacher tried his absolute best to make the transition as smooth as possible. Every live morning check-in, his smile and his funny jokes made me forget all my worries and provide the motivation I needed for the day. He was a source of hope and inspiration, showing that no matter the circumstances, you can persist and stay positive. He put all his passion, all his energy into making the best possible experience in the strangest of times.

His affect on my personal life has made me a better and more reflective person. Everyday, we discussed what we were grateful for, and this made me reflect on how lucky I was. Not only did I look up to him as a teacher but as a reflective role model. His contagious compassion for others made me feel more positive about the world around me. The life lessons he taught will stay in my heart with me forever and I will never forget the emotional support he has given me.

So on behalf of myself and my classmates, could you please give my teacher some recognition? Our teachers are the unsung heroes in our community …

So to Mr Curnow and to all the teachers, thank you for your leadership in this time of uncertainty. I look forward to voting against this motion and returning to government business, getting things done for the people of Victoria.

Mr Southwick (Caulfield) (19:08): I rise to support the motion of no confidence in the Andrews Labor government. To sit here in this chamber today and hear the members of the government talk up what a wonderful job this Premier has done is an absolute disgrace, a disgrace and shame on each and every one of them for doing this.

Seven hundred and ninety-one lives have been lost. The second wave was caused by a botched hotel quarantine program by this government, and we have members of the government turning up and saying, ‘What a wonderful job. Let’s pat one another on the back’. What a disgrace. Shame on each and every one of you, that you would think this.

You only have to look around each and every state to see what has happened. Members of the government are searching far and wide to give examples and are comparing us to other countries. Let us look in our own backyards. Look at New South Wales, Queensland and the other states that are all back to the game now compared to where we are, still in lockdown. Why? Because of the failure of this government, the Andrews government, who put in private security guards to manage a hotel quarantine program.

On 18 March we had national cabinet, where all of the premiers came together to try and work in a cohesive manner to ensure we could contain this virus. That was probably the first and last time when we saw any type of unity among this government, particularly with this Premier. The Premier has decided to go it alone. He went alone when it came to using private security instead of the ADF and police like the other states did. He has chosen to do his own thing, and that is where the failure has unfortunately unfolded. We have seen that with the way this hotel quarantine has been botched.

And what has the response been? The Premier has said the buck stops with him. Well, has the Premier fessed up? Has the Premier or any of his ministers taken responsibility for the 791 lives lost since? No. All we have had is selective amnesia. All we have had is ministers and the Premier failing to take responsibility for lives that have been lost and livelihoods that have been lost thanks to this government. It is not a chance for a pat on the back. Each and every person that stood up today should be ashamed of themselves for supporting a Premier that has led by fear, not by hope. There has been no hope from this Premier. Not one Victorian can say that in his daily press conferences—we have had 100 of them—this Premier has actually stood up and given any hope of a way forward. He has just led by fear and scared each and every Victorian going forward, and that is what we have seen.

Well, can I say not only have we had a botched hotel quarantine program but we have had contact tracing that has failed, and that is why we are locked up. Let us be real here. The reason why Victorians are locked up is that we do not trust a contact-tracing system that has been put in place by this
government. This government will lead you to believe that they have been good at running health and it has been previous Liberal governments that have caused the failure of health. Well, let us remind the people of Victoria what has happened. In 17 of 21 years we have had Labor governments here in Victoria. The Premier has been in them for 18 years as a member of Parliament here. The Premier has had a leadership role for 14 of those years, three of them as the health minister. And what do we have from that? The worst contact-tracing system in the country, where we have used fax machines, pens and paper to finally try and do things. And what has happened? It took until 9 September to finally go and check out what New South Wales has done and try and learn from them. What a debacle. With all of these lives lost, why didn’t the Premier pick up the phone, talk at national cabinet, learn from New South Wales and implement something here?

He has failed Victorians. He has cost lives, he has cost livelihoods and he has cost jobs. He has absolutely no ability to lead Victorians, and I think on that basis we cannot continue to have this Premier in control of this state any longer. We need hope; we need a plan. We have neither of those from this Premier. He has failed, and I urge each and every member of this chamber, including those people that have spoken to the Herald Sun already and said they have no faith—Labor members that have no faith in this Premier, now is your chance—to stand up with the opposition. Stand up with us and join us in supporting this motion of no confidence in the Andrews Labor government.

Mr J BULL (Sunbury) (19:13): I am not sure the hope is over there. I rise to oppose this motion of no confidence brought to this place by those opposite. The only question of confidence in this place should be about the confidence that those opposite have in the Leader of the Opposition. I have listened very closely today and this evening to the views put forward by those opposite during debate on this motion and certainly those that have been put forward over these past six months. These views are like shifting sands. They vary from member to member, from week to week, from press cycle to press cycle, from Twitter post to Facebook post, and they have culminated or resulted in today’s stunt. They oscillate between total condemnation of the health response to ‘We’re all in this together’. They vary between ‘Axe the bats’ and calling the Premier a ‘control freak wowser’.

This is not what the people of Victoria need in a global pandemic. Speaker, as you know, there has never been a more important time for stable, sound leadership in this state than through this very, very, very difficult time. It is not a time where we need to see stunts like the one that has been before the house today. It is not a time where we need to see this posturing, oscillation of policy position and outrageous posts online. This is a time where Victorians need safe, steady decision-making that relies on science, on evidence and on fact.

Victorians need a government that, despite the unquestionable and unprecedented challenges that this one-in-100-year global pandemic has brought, holds the line and stays the course. No-one on this side of the house, and I would imagine nobody in this chamber, enjoys the restrictions that have been put in place since March. There is not a single member in this house who would enjoy the restrictions that Victorians have been living under since March. We do need to put on the record though—and I know that a number of other members have done this today—our thanks and our appreciation for our nurses, our paramedics, our doctors and the entire health workforce supported well by all of the other emergency services agencies that have each and every day literally put their lives on the line to keep Victorians safe. The year 2020 is not a year that anyone on this side of the house could have liked, but what we need is steady, safe decision-making that is based on science and fact. This government will always stand for the health and the protection and the safety of all Victorians.

I know that members of this team are certainly well aware of the economic damage and the mental health issues that have been raised with them as local members, and I do not think that there is any denying that. But this is what a global pandemic brings. I want to acknowledge the members on this side of the house that have reflected I think very well on other jurisdictions right throughout the world that have had absolutely massive outbreaks over a very quick period of time, and I would urge those
opposite to have a bit of a look at some of these scenarios and take the time to reflect on many of the statements that are made in this house and that have been made in this house throughout this debate.

We are a government that stands with Victorians. We are not about doing what is popular on the day; we are about doing what is right. No member on this side of the house enjoys these restrictions, no member on this side of the house wants to see people struggle and suffer, and anyone who suggests so, including those opposite, are absolutely kidding themselves. Since day one this team, this government, has worked hard each and every day to create a record amount of jobs and to restore the damage done by those opposite and deliver in fact the biggest infrastructure agenda that this state has ever seen. We have worked incredibly hard to make a fairer, safer, stronger Victoria. That is our goal, that is our mission, and we are not going to be distracted by those opposite or stunts like today.

This global pandemic is unlike anything we have ever seen, but we on this side of the house remain focused and committed to Victorians today, tomorrow and every day going forward. We reject and oppose this motion and ask those opposite to reflect on what true leadership really is.

Mr NEWBURY (Brighton) (19:18): Daniel Andrews is the worst Premier that Victoria has ever had—the worst Premier that Victoria has ever had—and this no-confidence motion is an opportunity to fix that, to hold the Premier to account. This Parliament must sack Dan. They must give him the boot. This motion is a test of the character of every member. Members who deny this motion will be green lighting the government’s open-door quarantine program. They will be accepting the Third World-grade contact-tracing regime and they will be turning their backs on the families of the 800 Victorians who have tragically died in the second wave.

Victorians are demanding that the Premier be held accountable. They know who is at fault: Premier Andrews. Victorians are sick of the cover-ups. They have seen their Premier field questions at 100 consecutive press conferences but turn up at the open-door quarantine inquiry and recall nothing. In fact when giving evidence he claimed to not recall almost 30 times. His evidence was shameful. This inquiry is a $6 million public service whitewash. We know the decision to use private security came from the top, just as we know the Premier’s strategy for managing the pandemic has failed. It has failed because the Premier is an ideological fanatic. He adopted a rogue strategy to manage the virus. His own former health minister admitted it, claiming that the Premier is chasing an elimination strategy. And his approach has been backed by his chief health officer. Brett Sutton is a zealot. We have known that from day one.

In March, when the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee supported proportional, scalable, sustainable social distancing measures, the Victorian chief health officer had a dissenting view. Together Daniel Andrews and Brett Sutton have gone rogue. Do not just take my word for it—

Members interjecting.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order! I just remind the member that a number of times he has referred to a member in this place by their first name and second name rather than their correct title.

Mr NEWBURY: Thank you, Speaker. Five hundred doctors petitioned the Premier, saying his response will cause more deaths and result in far more negative health effects than the virus itself. This strategy has fallen apart and their supposed road map has collapsed. We only need to look over the border to see it. Victorians are like convicts looking over the jail yard fence into New South Wales to see an open economy where there are more cases recorded there today than in our locked-down state. Is it any wonder the former Minister for Health resigned? What an unprecedented resignation—a health minister walking out in the middle of a pandemic, and we know she is not the only one to turn her back on the Premier. No-one should forget the Premier’s parliamentary fixer, Gavin Jennings, who also walked out, or the Premier’s former public service enforcer, Chris Eccles, who pulled the pin, a man who will be remembered for his forgetfulness—what a dishonourable display—and as the tsar known for stacking the politicised public service executive with his cronies.
The Premier has lost his health fixer, his parliamentary fixer and now his public service fixer. The Premier is an isolated man—an isolated man who is a danger to Victorians. In the name of public health this government have caused a mental health crisis, which has swept over our community like a tidal wave, and admitted today that their lockdown has led to one in five children being left behind. It has swung a sledgehammer at Victorian businesses, jobs and livelihoods and turned Victoria into a police state, sneering at our rights and our freedoms. Shame on this Parliament for passing the state of emergency bill, laws that allowed the Premier to require Victorians to wear face masks even if there are no active cases, locking people up within 5 kilometres of their homes and introducing unlawful nightly curfews that had no health basis. Now the Parliament is considering the outrageous omnibus bill, which will give public servants disturbing power. This government strategy has failed, absolutely failed. Every member in this place must now stand up for our children, our livelihoods and the economy but most of all for those who have wrongly and tragically died. Premier Andrews is the worst Premier in Victoria’s history. This Parliament must sack Dan.

Ms RICHARDS (Cranbourne) (19:23): I rise to oppose this motion because I have full confidence in the team on this side of the house and the work that has been undertaken to support this community during this extraordinary global pandemic. Amid the greatest global health crisis of our time we find ourselves in the middle of the grubbies political game playing of our time. At a time when this side of the house supports science, those on the other side of the house support stoushes and stunts because those opposite decided to play politics with a global pandemic.

Now, the people I represent are the people who are on the front line and are not watching Parliament tonight. Do you know what else? They do not want us to play politics with a global pandemic. The nurses who are on the front line tonight have spoken to me; they have called and they have said to me that as they have watched this pandemic, as it made a pathway across the world, they were grateful that Premier Andrews had taken the scientific steps, the ones that were supported by epidemiologists, by our medical profession and by the top advisers—by our clinicians and by the Doherty Institute. They were grateful and relieved because they were anxious at what they had seen. And while those opposite play a Trump’s America style of political game playing and are putting the health of this community at risk—just like President Trump is putting the health of his own community at risk—those opposite are playing politics, and it is incredibly disappointing.

I am grateful for the teachers and educators in my community, but I can say that they also are not watching Parliament tonight. Do you know what else? They do not want us to play politics with a global pandemic. They have implored us to stay focused, because do you know what they are doing tonight? They are focused on our children. They are focused on the children in their care, because as educators they are preparing classes for tomorrow, and they are singing with the joy of hearing the voices of children back in classrooms and back in playgrounds. I am so extraordinarily proud of our schools—Catholic, independent and government schools all working together with one focus.

Do you know who else is not watching Parliament tonight? Cleaners are not watching Parliament tonight. They do not want us to play politics with a global pandemic. They do not want us to play politics with an unprecedented crisis. Our cleaners this evening and tomorrow morning and every other day are working hard to keep us safe. They are making sure that our public spaces are sterilised. They are making sure that our public transport system is cleaned so that people who are required to go to work can be safe. Our cleaners are asking us not to play politics with a global pandemic.

Do you know who else is not watching Parliament tonight? Our police. Our police are not watching Parliament tonight because they are busy. They are busy preparing for community policing. They are going and visiting people who are at risk of family violence because we are aware that this is the greatest law and order challenge of our time—and this government, this side of the house, has adopted all the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and has committed and invested $46 million into this crisis. So the police as part of Operation Ribbon are going to visit to make sure that women and children are safe, and they have asked us not to play politics with a global pandemic.
Our paramedics have asked us not to play politics with this global pandemic. They are also not watching Parliament tonight. The reason they are not watching Parliament tonight is that they are with people during their darkest hours, during times of crisis. They are imploring us to get on with protecting the community, and they are grateful that this government has taken those steps.

I look across to the member for Frankston, and I am reminded that the other people who do not want us to play politics with this global pandemic, who have been victims of politics often enough, are our firefighters, and the reason that our firefighters are not watching Parliament tonight is that they also are working hard on behalf of their community.

In the last seconds I have left I will say how grateful I am to the community of Cranbourne, people like Andrew Gai, who is part of the South Sudanese-Australian Academic Society; people like Dr Bol Juolthor, who has provided information in Arabic and Nuer; and people like Selba Luka and Archangelo Madut. I am absolutely grateful to Reverend Tut Yoa, to Gatluak Puoch and to Deng Kur, because people like those I have mentioned are the ones who are actually doing the heavy lifting of supporting community. I oppose this motion, and I implore people: it is not too late; you can turn it around. Stop playing politics.

The SPEAKER: Members, now is an appropriate time for us to break very briefly for the chamber to be cleaned. The bells will ring again when that has concluded, at approximately 7.45 pm—the bells will ring. Can I ask members to take any belongings with them when they leave the chamber for the cleaners to come in.

Sitting suspended 7.28 pm until 7.46 pm.

Mr Fowles: On a point of order, Speaker, I know that there were some administrative matters attended to by you and your office over the course of the preparations for this week, but I wonder if you could give the house some guidance about the use of political slogans on masks? I think it would be helpful if we had some guidance formally from the Chair in relation to that. I note that the member for Kew earlier, in a perhaps typical display of attention seeking, was wearing a mask that had a political slogan on it, and I just query whether that is an appropriate course of action.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for raising that point of order. I did not see the mask that the member has mentioned, but I would reiterate in the house now the earlier advice that I had given to members that masks should be worn in the chamber unless they have the call and those masks should be masks that do not contain messages or logos. They should be plain or otherwise similar to clothing that members might wear in the chamber that is of an appropriate standard.

Mr ANGUS (Forest Hill) (19:47): I rise this evening to strongly support the motion of no confidence in the Premier as moved by the member for Malvern. The Andrews government, through its dishonesty, corrupt behaviour, gross incompetence, mismanagement and appalling leadership has proven itself to be unworthy of the confidence of Victorians. The only two things the Andrews government is interested in are being in power and self-preservation. Any other matters are irrelevant, with the needs of the Victorian community coming a distant last. In my very brief contribution today I will outline just some of the numerous examples that clearly show why Victorians can no longer have confidence in the Premier and this government, and I will go into those in just a moment. In the limited time I have it will not be possible for me to outline all the examples, so I will select just a few.

The fundamental question all members in the house tonight and all Victorians need to consider is: what do the following issues all have in common? Let me go through the list: covering up and manipulating hospital waiting list data, as reported in the Age newspaper, by the then Victorian health minister in 2009; the red shirts rort before the 2014 state election, whereby almost $400 000 was stolen by Labor MPs from Victorian taxpayers; the public promise to cooperate with authorities in their investigations into this rort and then their refusal to do so or allow MPs to do so; the repeated attempted obstruction of the investigations undertaken by the Victorian Ombudsman into the red shirts rort, including fighting them through the court system to the High Court at the taxpayer’s expense;
cancelling of the east–west link at a cost to Victorians of around $1.3 billion, despite saying it would not cost one cent; misuse of ministerial resources, misuse of electorate office resources and other illegal and improper behaviour; the destruction of the CFA; ongoing budget blowouts and financial mismanagement on virtually all infrastructure projects; wholesale Labor Party branch stacking; the resignations of then ministers the members for Kororoit and Preston; the sacking of then minister Adem Somyurek; catastrophic failures in the hotel quarantine systems and totally inadequate contact-tracing systems that have resulted in the deaths of over 791 Victorians; the resignation of health minister Jenny Mikakos; the resignation of Department of Premier and Cabinet secretary Chris Eccles; countless business failures, including innumerable small business closures; destruction of the Victorian economy; hundreds of thousands of Victorians now being unemployed; unknown numbers of Victorians now living in despair and feeling hopeless; an unknown number of Victorians self-harming and in some cases tragically taking their own lives; school students experiencing the most disrupted year of their education; and a range of other matters that I have not got time to go into.

What all these items have in common is none other than the Premier. They are some of the very many reasons why Victorians can no longer have any confidence in the Premier or the Victorian Labor government. It is time for the Premier to stand down, and if he will not do so, his colleagues need to step up and do what they need to do and remove him.

Here in Victoria we are living in a dictatorship. A dictatorship is defined as a country, government or form of a government in which absolute power is exercised by a dictator. A dictator is defined as a person exercising absolute power, especially a ruler who has absolute, unrestricted control in a government without hereditary succession. When I read these definitions I could not help but think that here in Victoria these are the circumstances that we are currently living in. I also note that a totalitarian government is defined as a centralised government that does not tolerate parties of differing opinion and that exercises dictatorial control over many aspects of life.

The 16 June 2020 Herald Sun front-page headline referred to the Victorian Labor government as ‘Rotten to the core’. These four words in my view perfectly sum up the Labor government here in Victoria. Similarly, the 10 October 2020 Herald Sun front-page headline which said, and I quote, ‘Don’t trust Dan’ is another good summary of where we are up to here in Victoria.

I call on those opposite to have the courage and integrity today to do the right thing by all Victorians and support the opposition’s motion of no confidence in the Premier. Labor MPs need to put their constituents and the people of Victoria first, ahead of their own party and their self-interest, and support this motion of no confidence in the Premier.

Mr FOLEY (Albert Park—Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, Minister for Equality, Minister for the Coordination of Health and Human Services: COVID-19) (19:52): I rise to oppose the motion that the honourable member for Malvern has moved, and I do so more out of a sense of sorrow than anger, more out of a sense of not quite pity but sympathy and sadness for the manner in which the member for Malvern and the political party he represents have presented this matter. Because there are times when politics as usual needs to be set aside. There are times of global crisis, like a once-in-a-century global pandemic that has killed over 1 million people worldwide, that has seen untold economic damage and has seen untold efforts of communities to deal with this pandemic count for very little in the face of a perfect storm of a respiratory, airborne, contact-borne, close-contact illness that kills people—and for those it does not kill it quite substantially harms them. And increasingly, as we see with COVID, there is an ongoing impact of this disease.

It is a health problem, as we know, but we all know that as a result of responding to the health problem globally we have seen unprecedented economic challenges right around the world. We have also seen social, cultural and wellbeing threats all around the world, including here in Victoria. We should be looking to how our collective actions and efforts can advance the cause of recovery rather than to partisan activities. I am not naive enough to think that a parliamentary system based on institutional management of conflict, such as what we have in the Westminster system, will suddenly put down
more than a century of party interests and the fundamental divide between the Liberal and National parties and the Labor Party in this Parliament and in this country.

But I do note that there have been times when leadership requires a notion of the common good to be at the heart of how we respond to crises—that notion, in democracies like ours, of coming together in times of crisis for an idea of wider benefits and shared values leading to better outcomes for people in the face of this crisis, the social crisis, the economic crisis, the health crisis. But there are times when the notion of the common good should override the opportunities of, sadly, partisan politics. There are times when the institutions that hold our society together come under great stress in these crises. Wars and pandemics, historically, have led to those institutions being under great threat. History is replete with pandemics seeing entire societies, not just governments, ripped asunder and put through the mill of huge trauma. So it is incumbent on all of us to have regard to the message that we send to the people who send us here.

There are times when business as usual in party politics needs to be at least tempered. But what we have here in this instance is party politics in normal times being ratcheted up—the complete opposite of that. I can understand the need for the opposition to take a position of scrutiny, of challenge and of accountability and to use the institutional processes of the Parliament and the system we have to make sure that the system works in the interests of the Victorian people. But I would say to the honourable member for Malvern and those who support this frolic of a resolution that they know is going to not land where they want it to: there are times when you need to pause on these matters. There are times when that notion of the common good, of underpinning the progress that Western societies in particular—but not just Western societies, global societies—have made in the last 100 years, despite world wars, despite institutional conflicts, despite the pandemic of 100 years ago, is more important.

And I would say with the greatest respect to the member for Malvern that there are challenges when the people who send us here expect us every now and then under great stress and great, great emphasis of crisis to put certain things aside—not all elements of activity, not all elements of holding people to account. I would say that in this instance the member for Malvern is somewhat tone-deaf to the views of the Victorian community around the needs of how we respond as a parliamentary institution and as a community to this.

Australia, for all of our challenges—and Victoria, for all of our particular challenges as we successfully bring down the second spike of infections—has been amongst the most successful countries in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. Yes, the second wave, particularly as it has played out in private sector residential aged care in Victoria, has seen terrible death rates and has seen the awful outcomes of people’s suffering and families put through tragedy. I hope that the recent interim report by the national aged-care royal commission, which deals with many of these issues, is rapidly implemented. Victoria stands ready to assist in the areas where the federal government has responsibility for that. We, after all, are all not just Victorians; as the Prime Minister puts it, we are all Victorians but we are also all Australians.

My point is that the motion before the house is not just tone-deaf to the views of the Victorian community as to how they want this to play out but it is also blind to the matter of how the people of Victoria want us to appreciate and contribute to the role in which this Parliament, the role of a loyal opposition, can play out its responsibilities in such a situation and the way in which that is necessarily combative given the institutions of this Parliament. But it is not really about the one shot in the locker that you have every term for a no-confidence resolution, which really is a futile effort and a misreading of the way in which Parliament should be going around this issue.

So what is this really about? Others have speculated that it is much less about a lack of confidence in the Victorian government than perhaps a crisis of relevance in others in this Parliament. I will leave it to those others to judge, because to reflect on that is really not going to get us very much further. But if we are to use the inevitable iron logic of where this resolution will end—that is, it will be defeated—it is incumbent on us to address the matters of substance relating to the notion of why this resolution is before us here. In that regard I want to briefly touch on the issues around particularly the health
response that the Victorian government has put in place in dealing with this enormous existential health, economic and community challenge, for there is no way in which recovery happens unless it is built on a health recovery. There is no pathway out, really until such time as we deal with COVID through either a vaccine or an enduring treatment, without a sustainable solution that allows us to live and coexist with this virus in a safe and sustainable manner. Until then our recovery under the national strategy of suppression is about how we live with the virus at levels that are safe and how it is possible to be able to open and stay open whilst at the same time equipping our society in a very different way to how the role of government has played out really over the last generation, really since the 1980s, in which the role of the state was wound back in so many ways.

It will only be by equipping our society with the tools that the government in particular has to deliver in such a crisis that we will be able to deliver the collective benefit on behalf of that notion of the common good that we are all seeking to achieve. Building on the health platform, we can sustain the demands of how we deal with infection control through government’s efforts. There is such a long way to still go in that effort globally, let alone in Australia and Victoria, but with more than 1 million deaths globally, and that being in many estimates a conservative figure, this challenge is rising in intensity. Our health system in Victoria has been exceptional in the way in which it has responded to this pandemic, and it has done so because our health system at its heart reflects that notion of what the common good is about. It is a public health system in which the best notions of the public and the common good are played out. That is why I want to take this opportunity to thank the entire ecology of our health system, which now also includes our private health system, who have been partners in coming together with the public health response. Whether it is our security guards, whether it is the pathologists, whether it is the orderlies, whether it is the cleaners, whether it is the enrolled nurses, whether it is the community nurses, whether it is the ambulance paramedics, whether it is the surgeons or whether it is the personal care assistants in private aged care facing enormous challenges in substandard working conditions, right across the rich diversity of our healthcare workforce we have seen enormous contributions to this idea of rallying together around the idea of the common good.

We have seen it across so many other areas of our health service activities as well. But what we also know is that this comes at a substantial contribution by the Victorian people through government. We have seen somewhere close to $2 billion of initial funding being pumped into the system to be able to allow it to respond, and I want to thank the federal government for their partnering in the national partnership COVID response to make sure that some of the partnership money is put into that response.

I want to also thank the people of Victoria, who, despite the processes that they have been subjected to, know that the reality of where we are now in October 2020 is only through that shared effort, that building from a set of shared community values that place health and the wellbeing of people at the heart of what we do. All the traumas and the setbacks that we have seen, setbacks which in a global sense—as awful as they have been locally—pale into relative insignificance, stand out as really important elements where we know reform has to happen in Victoria.

In that regard I would close by really just reiterating that idea that at some point the notion it all comes back to in this debate is that what we do here today, particularly in this Parliament in the context of a global pandemic, has to reflect that idea of the common good of Victorians.

I think, with the greatest respect to the member for Malvern, this resolution fails that test. This resolution is not about promoting the common good of Victorians. This resolution I think needs to fail here on the floor of the Parliament, and I urge the house to vote the resolution down.

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) (20:07): The question before the Chair is whether the Premier and the other ministers of state possess the confidence of this house. A motion such as this is an extreme step, but these are extreme circumstances. If this motion succeeds, it has the potential to send all of us back to the voters, and frankly that is an outcome that I would welcome.
So it is not a step we have taken lightly, but as the House of Representatives practice reminds us, one of the essential tenets—or the essential tenet—of the Westminster system is that the government must possess the confidence of the lower house. This government does not have the confidence of opposition members, and it is clear that it does not have the confidence of a growing number of government members. The question is: do those members have the stomach to support this motion? Do those members have the stomach to stand up for what they know is right or are they going to bow cravenly to the dictates of the Premier? Because that is what the Premier has become—a dictator in all but name. It is clear that he views his cabinet, his party room and, most of all, this Parliament as mere rubber stamps, not institutions to be consulted and not groups to be consulted but simply bodies to be directed and then expected to carry out the direction without question.

So Victoria at the moment is not operating as a democracy. I would say that unless the house asserts its rights, proves itself capable of tempering the actions of this Premier, makes it clear that it must be consulted, requires the immediate restoration of genuine cabinet government and demands accountability from its ministers and from the public service, then the long-held freedoms that we on this side of the house and I am sure many on the government side hold dear will genuinely be at risk. I have no time this evening for an extensive examination of what is now a very lengthy list of the failings of this government, but what is already very clear from what we have heard from the Coate inquiry is that this is a government that has no concept of responsibility, no concept of accountability. It is a government where decisions become the stuff of legend—no-one knows who took them, no-one knows who is responsible for carrying them out. Under those circumstances it is hardly surprising that there is no accountability.

I have no time this evening for an extensive examination of what is now a very lengthy list of the failings of this government, but what is already very clear from what we have heard from the Coate inquiry is that this is a government that has no concept of responsibility, no concept of accountability. It is a government where decisions become the stuff of legend—no-one knows who took them, no-one knows who is responsible for carrying them out. Under those circumstances it is hardly surprising that there is no accountability.

The then Secretary of Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services have all admitted that their ministers had not been briefed in a manner commensurate with public expectations, let alone parliamentary expectations. We have a Premier who, if the evidence that has been given is to be believed, lets his secretary decide what he is allowed to know; a health minister, or now a former health minister, who for months at a time did not think to ask about infection controls at the quarantine program; and a jobs minister who did not ask to be briefed about the contractual arrangements for the most critical logistical exercise in the history of this state. Why? If they were not briefed, if they were not making decisions, then what the hell were they doing? Why was this travesty allowed to occur? There are only two possible answers to why these ministers and this Premier have conducted themselves in this way: either they are lazy or they are incompetent. Whichever it is, they are unfit to conduct the business of government on behalf of the Victorian community and it is time for them to go.

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (20:12): I do rise to respond to the motion of no confidence as moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I certainly want to make my contribution in conveying the sentiment that is coming from my community in regard to the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly can I say, look, I know that decisions made by the government in response to COVID-19 are not easy decisions. I do note that mistakes have been made, but also at the same time one cannot deny that many people have worked extraordinarily hard during this crisis, and whether it is ministers of the government, their staff, departmental persons, healthcare workers, police or those in the private sector, many have gone well beyond the call of duty in their dedication and commitment and they ought to be acknowledged for that.

But in terms of the motion before us and in the context of the feedback that I have received, people in my community are generally upset. They are angry and they are frustrated over many aspects of the government’s decision-making and in particular the impact that this has had on children, students, individuals, parents, families and businesses more generally. People have observed the politicising of the issues at hand, the various inquiries that are happening, legal challenges being considered, ministers resigning or being sacked and senior public servants being stood down, and that obviously from a confidence perspective has ensured that many communities are feeling let down. Also I must say that many have conveyed to me that they believe basic mistakes have been made and that this has
culminated in the further spread of the virus, which has caused deaths, economic and financial distress and health, mental health and wellbeing challenges across a range of sectors and communities.

There is a general sentiment that basic principles have been handled poorly, and that is at all levels of government. The prohibition of persons returning from overseas who have the virus still seems to be an issue. Adequate quarantine settings, appropriate surveillance and monitoring of persons with COVID, best-practice contact tracing and protecting the vulnerable, including those in aged care settings, have probably failed at various levels, and those basic principles are vitally important.

And it is all right to sit over here and say hindsight is wonderful, but the reality is people instill their faith and trust in our governments to make sure they get important decisions right. And unfortunately those failures—and many have been conceded—ultimately led to significant lockdown measures being imposed and the subsequent impacts being felt. And again from a regional perspective, a regional Victorian perspective, I really feel for those who are living in Melbourne with even stronger restrictions. People are saying to me there seems to be an ongoing reactive approach to the basics, that it should have been dealt with months ago. The overwhelming feedback from my community is that the restrictions and thresholds are arbitrary and too high. They are not balanced in terms of on one hand tackling the virus but on the other hand not understanding the economic, health and mental health and wellbeing of people and the impact that that is having upon people across our communities.

It is fair to say that governments have stepped up to provide support to businesses and workers and organisations, and it has hit the mark for many. And that is terrific. But it is not the case for everybody, and there are many gaps and holes within some of those supports—sole traders, partnership arrangements for those businesses who do not employ someone directly. There are many businesses in my community who are still waiting for reviews on the first round of the Business Support Fund. This is months down the track. Cash flow is king at the moment, so to not even have their applications reviewed or finalised at this point in time is incredibly disappointing. Employees are impacted as well.

But I am also worried about the emotional toll that some of the restrictions are having. Many members have spoken today about weddings, funerals and religious services that are taking an emotional toll on many communities. In regional Victoria at the moment I think there is a perception that we are open for business, but that is not the case. Many businesses are open in a limited capacity and some not at all. For example, indoor sport and recreation activities are not open, so whether that is ballet, dance, karate, gymnastics, gymnasium, basketball or learn to swim, all those activities, particularly for children, are not open at the moment. We are not open for business in that regard.

People are worn out. They are tired, they are upset, and I guess there is little end in sight from the perspective of many people, particularly with the current thresholds and targets that are in place. My strong view is that they need to change and we need to get the balance right. Again I do not underestimate the challenge for the government in the decision-making, but there is confusion in Victoria around whether they are actually seeking eradication or trying to minimise the spread. I know that the Premier has been quoted many times saying we are not going down the eradication path, but when you look at the thresholds that exist under the road map it really does suggest otherwise to me.

It is hard sitting here amongst people who live in Melbourne, but regional Victoria is really handcuffed at the moment. We cannot move to the next step until there have been 14 days of no new cases across the whole of Victoria. In my immediate community and the whole of the Gippsland region we have had no new cases for longer than 14 days currently. It is making people get very frustrated obviously with those current rules. We have heard the World Health Organization just in the past few days saying that circumstances such as this are making poor people poorer and pleading with governments and leaders to really reconsider putting people and businesses into extended and hard lockdowns. Businesses have been so greatly affected that any consideration of getting hardworking business owners and their staff back to some kind of normal is absolutely critical in this time. I do not think businesses in many cases are asking for handouts; they are asking to at least be open in some capacity.
so they can get people back to work, have some form of business and ensure that they are servicing their clients.

What I will say in closing is that I do believe there is a lack of confidence in the state government in the handling of the pandemic, because that is the constant feedback that I receive in my community, particularly when people observe the almost daily calamity of the goings-on surrounding the hotel quarantine inquiry, memory lapses from senior personnel within government and the public sector, the reshuffle of ministers in cabinet and resignations of key personnel.

In addition, people observe reactive responses to the issues at hand, and they should have been dealt with months earlier. The many rules and restrictions just do not seem to be consistent or to actually apply any common sense, and those are the factors why, at this point in time, I do think there is a general lack of confidence in the government, certainly in my community, about how the pandemic has been handled. Of course that is a different proposition to the one in a parliamentary sense whereby this motion seeks the removal of the government, which is a consideration this chamber will obviously have to make.

Ms SANDELL (Melbourne) (20:20): I will resist the urge to take my full 60 minutes; I am sure people will appreciate that. There is no doubt that right now Victoria, and especially Melbourne, is really, really suffering. It has been more than six months of very significant restrictions to our daily lives, limits on our freedoms that frankly none of us would ever have thought would happen in our entire lives outside of a world war. In Melbourne we have now been in tough stage 4 restrictions for, in my case, almost four months. It is quite extraordinary, and I have to say the impression of it feels quite visceral, especially when we see that our friends in other states are able to visit their family and their friends and go to the pub, go to the beach, go to their jobs and businesses and just get on with their lives, and they have been able to do so since June.

It is hard not to feel, when you see that, that it is a bit of a kick in the guts, especially as we see in Melbourne the numbers are stubbornly refusing to go down and we might be looking at the prospect of even longer restrictions. I do not begrudge the people across Victoria now who just want someone to blame. Many people want to know who was responsible for the mess and why things went so badly wrong in Victoria when every other state seems to have been able to head off or significantly suppress the virus. Why weren’t we able to do the same? I also want these answers. My constituents want these answers. The Melbourne CBD in my electorate is now virtually a ghost town. It is the hardest hit part of the entire country.

But right now I believe that Victorians, more than they want someone to blame, just want this to be over. We want our sacrifice to have counted for something and we actually just want to get through to the end of the crisis. We want more than anything to actually see our family and friends—something we never thought we would be prevented from doing. So I get it. None of my family lives in Melbourne. We are all suffering for it. I want my kids to see their grandparents for the first time in nearly a year. I want to be able to hug my godchildren or my kids to be able to play with their friends. I want to be able to see the ocean, I want to be able to go for a walk in the bush, I want to feel free again. I want some relief. We all do.

But the Greens will not be supporting this no-confidence motion put forward by the Liberal and National parties, and that is because right now we think that we actually should be working together to get us through this crisis, not playing political games. I think that is what the Victorian people want as well. Right now in this unprecedented pandemic we just need our government to succeed, and the Liberal Party, in putting forward this motion, are doing so for one reason: they want to score political points, they want to turf out the Premier, they want to take his place. The Liberals have been trying their hardest to play these Trump-style politics here in Victoria, but Trump-style politics are exactly what we do not need right now.
There is no doubt that mistakes have been made and there have been failures by this government. There have been failures in the way that hotel quarantine was set up that allowed the virus to escape in the first place. Even now it is still really unclear who was responsible and what went wrong. But the Liberals and the Murdoch media want us to focus on hotel quarantine and the question of who hired private security as a way to claim a political scalp. They have already claimed a couple. But actually that question around private security is probably not the main failure that we experienced in Victoria and might not even be the main question we need answers to. Arguably more important was the failure in our contact-tracing system—that once the virus got out of hotel quarantine, how was it allowed to spread unchecked in the community?

Back in June, even when numbers were really low, close contacts of positive cases were not called by the Department of Health and Human Services for weeks. In fact this happened to me personally when there was a case at my childcare centre. We waited 12 days before we were contacted by the department of health, and it was only because our childcare centre took swift action on their own that they prevented further spread. For some reason—I do not know what it is—our contact-tracing and outbreak teams have not been as successful as we would like, as is necessary, and we would all like to know why so we can fix it.

We have also seen other failures. We have seen high rates of healthcare worker infections even though many other countries that have had severe community transmission have been able to avoid these healthcare worker infections. Here in Victoria healthcare workers and doctors have been calling for stronger action—for N95 masks, for fit testing, for re-usable respirator masks and for other technologies that are available to be used—and for some reason this has not happened as early as we needed in Victoria, and in some cases it still has not happened yet. We would like to know why so that we can fix it.

Another failure we have seen was during the public housing lockdown where people were literally blocked by police from getting food and life-saving medicines. I worked with an elderly person left without food for days, a mum forced to re-use insulin needles for her diabetic six-year-old child, a woman prevented from getting breastmilk to her premature baby in hospital—all while the Premier stood up at press conferences and assured the public that people were being looked after. Well, I was on the ground during those public housing lockdowns, on those estates, and I can tell you now people were not being looked after, and I would like to know why so that we can fix it.

The Greens have always supported a health-led and evidence-based response to the pandemic. We have supported the government. But we have not been afraid to call out the problems either, because we want them to be fixed. We fought to keep Parliament sitting even when the government would have preferred to shut it down to avoid scrutiny, because we felt that democracy should not be a casualty of the pandemic. We fought for government support for those doing it toughest, particularly those who did not get support in the restrictions, like people struggling to pay their rent, sole traders, artists, live music venues—all groups of people hardest hit by the restrictions but who were not given adequate government support in the beginning. We fought for public housing residents when the Premier stood up at press conferences and told everyone, ‘Nothing to see here’. We have campaigned against police overreach, where people with mental illness, black and brown people and other marginalised communities have been disproportionately targeted and fined by Victoria Police during these restrictions—and we cannot pretend that that did not happen.

It is clear that this pandemic has brought to light many problems that already existed in our society—exposed the cracks—including problems inside this Andrews Labor government, problems that have been longstanding. The pandemic highlighted significant shortcomings in our health department. It has shown the dangerous end result of privatising public services and of casualised work. It has brought to the surface underlying racism, prejudice and heavy-handedness in our police force. It has highlighted a lack of responsibility taken by decision-makers in our government, confusion, a lack of accountability, problems with concentrating power with the Premier and a small group of ministers, and a lack of willingness to take on feedback or consult with other MPs and experts or even cabinet,
even when we know that in a pandemic we need all hands on deck. It has highlighted inequalities in society, the inadequate investment in public housing, and it has shown that governments are often more interested—unfortunately even in a crisis—in spin than substance. None of this is okay.

Of course there is a place for criticism and scrutiny of government even—and perhaps even more so—during a time when we have unprecedented curbs on our personal freedoms. So, yes, let us take note of what has gone wrong and why. We all want to know why. We all want to fix it. The Andrews government has made plenty of mistakes, but much of what has gone wrong in the last six months has been years and decades in the making. Let us not forget the Liberal-National federal government is not blameless here, especially when it comes to the incredible tragedies and failures in aged care, which were things that could have been prevented.

But right now all of us just really want Victoria to succeed. We want to see our families by Christmas. In 2020, during a pandemic, we need all of us to come together, to work together, to get through this together. We only need to look at the US to see what happens when partisanship and polarisation and Trump-style politics takes over, and none of us in Victoria want that here.

There is a place for proper constructive learning, but I do not believe that is what the Liberal-National parties are trying to do here. The behaviour of the Liberals throughout this challenging time has been to deliberately stoke fear and division in our society for their political gain. A key question is, do we think the Liberals would have done better—the party of privatisation; the party that has called for Victoria to open up, which would have led to more spread of the virus; the party that has called for schools to be opened and then for schools to be closed, depending on whatever suited their political aims at the time; the party that has stoked and fuelled right-wing misinformation campaigns to muddy the waters.

I understand it is difficult for the Leader of the Liberal Party right now. I know he is looking for something to do that will keep him relevant, and I know he is under a lot of pressure from the extreme right wing in his party to be more strident, to be more extreme, to be more Trump-like. But the Greens have no interest in playing that political game. We want the Victorian government to succeed in beating this virus. We want the Victorian people to succeed in beating this virus. We want to get through it. We want to get back to rebuilding our lives. And we want to do everything we can so that we can have the summer that we damn well deserve after this dumpster fire of a year. So we will not be voting for this no-confidence motion, but we will be working every day to do whatever we can to help us get through the crisis, to help us get back to our lives and to figure out how we can make sure this does not happen again.

Ms SHEED (Shepparton) (20:31): I rise to make a contribution on this no-confidence motion brought by the Leader of the Opposition. I would like to say that I am very pleased that we are back in Parliament and in a somewhat normal sense in that we are here for three days and that we seem to be resuming a timetable that was upset during the course of the year. It is so important that we sit safely and that we obey a whole lot of rules, but it is a hallmark of our democracy that our Parliament should sit and should do so regularly. Another hallmark of our democracy is the fact that we have elections every four years, and at those elections the people of Victoria decide who will be the government. Just less than two years ago we had a state election, and the government today was overwhelmingly elected to govern this state. I see no reason at this time to support any motion that would upset that.

We are in the middle of the worst disaster, the worst emergency, in over 100 years, and this is not a time for upset or disruption; this is a time for standing together as Victorians and trying to get the results that the member for Melbourne has so well put: we all want to get back to some sort of normal. This is not a time that you would wish on any government, whether it be a state, territory or federal government, and it has been very pleasing to see the way that governments generally have stood up to what they have been faced with during this year. But they do have to be accountable, and there are a couple of things I would like to point out that I feel pretty disappointed in in relation to the government.
The first goes back to late March, early April, when many offers were made for a joint parliamentary COVID committee—to come together, to work together in a sense of cooperation so that we could advise, we could assist, we could help the state work together and bring more information to the government about what was happening. I think the denigration of that idea and the fact that it was not taken up has partly contributed to what has been and what has become a very hostile political environment. The federal government allowed the Senate to do it, New Zealand have such a committee. Other governments instigated those sorts of committees where Parliament was not going to sit for some time, as a safety measure. So I think that was a mistake.

Here in Victoria our crossbenchers and Independents were very loud in calling for that to happen. In the early weeks and months that followed the pandemic many extraordinary things happened, things that we never thought we would see—the closing of international borders, the lockdowns, the quarantines—nothing that we had really contemplated in our lifetimes. We were surprised that even these powers actually existed, and in those early months there was a lot of praise for the way leaders stood up and took to the helm and instigated at very short notice a whole lot of processes that made people feel to some extent confident that they were in good hands. In my community there were many people who in the same breath were lauding the Prime Minister and our Premier. It was extraordinary in a fairly conservative electorate that that might have been taking place, but people had a level of confidence that I had not seen before and that was very much needed at that time.

So the months have marched on, and through April, May and June the hotel quarantine system was set up and failed. We have seen the results of that. It has brought about a whole lot more community illness. It has brought about many deaths that we may have avoided had that not happened. One of the other mistakes that I think was made very early on, and this came out during the hotel quarantine inquiry, is that the chief health officer was sidelined. He, under the Victorian emergency health plan, should have been the state controller. He should have been in charge. It should have been a health response, not a logistics response. I think we are still seeing the consequences of that, and it is very disappointing. I do wonder even now why the chief health officer is not in charge, because this is a health pandemic. There are social and economic consequences for sure, but I think that the Department of Health and Human Services really made a mistake in putting those things first rather than the health consequences.

Out there in that evidence that we have heard over recent times there is an acknowledgement that within our department of health there is a serious lack of qualified people to deal with infection control, to deal with pandemics—to deal with these sorts of health issues. It was admitted in the evidence that the department is short on those sorts of skills. Now, that must in itself have contributed to the lack of skill and capacity when it came to contact tracing—again a very serious consequence and one we are still hearing instances of as we go forward. I have little doubt that if a full health response had been in place early on, the situation in hotel quarantine may have been different because the chief health officer would have been looking at infection control, not logistics. And it probably would not have mattered whether there were security guards or police or ADF members at that time, because infection control and the health issues would have been paramount and that would in itself have taken care of so many of the problems that then took place.

There are many learnings that we will take away this year from what has happened, and some of those are very much about this place: about how Parliament should be able to meet in times of crisis, about attending Parliament remotely and about being allowed to vote even if you cannot come in. For many of us regional members this is the first sitting of Parliament that many of us have come to since June, and that is very disenfranchising not only for the members but for our communities.

There are those people who feel that maybe herd immunity is the way to go, that it is just survival of the fittest, but I have to say that I am very grateful that we live in a country where every government in the country has taken the view that everyone should be protected and that the goal has been to look after our community and protect them. Even though by far the majority of the deaths we have seen from this virus in Sydney and Melbourne and across the country have been in our more vulnerable communities,
their lives do matter; their lives have mattered. I would like to take this opportunity just to extend my condolences to every family who has been affected by the loss of someone from coronavirus, and I extend that to members of my extended family who in aged care have suffered that result.

This crisis has exposed some very deep and serious vulnerabilities within our community, and I believe that it is time to bring on a review of our health department and our aged-care services. And it is very disappointing, I have to say, that in the federal government’s budget just passed the opportunity was not taken to do something about aged care. During the early stage of the pandemic, during July and August when cases of coronavirus were ramping up in Shepparton, I rang every aged-care facility in my city. They were anxious. They were short-staffed. They had people calling in, with insufficient staff to even meet the day’s requirements. There was no plan for backup staff at a federal level should the numbers escalate in aged care, and there were many, many of those institutions that had workers working across two or three places, including the local hospital. We know that these are the really fundamental problems in aged care. And what has been done to address them?

I think that that is an opportunity in a budget where it is argued that women have been left out. There is no doubt that when it comes to the care of children and the aged women are the predominant carers in our communities. They are quick to do it and they do an incredible job, and to all of those carers out there I just say thank you so much for the work that you do in all those areas in our community. It falls to women to do those jobs, and women need to be sufficiently paid. They need to have job security. They need to have full-time work when they need it and not be forced to work across multiple institutions.

I have been gutted tonight to have had a briefing from the Minister for Health to say that in Shepparton we have just had two active cases. We had a big run of cases in July. We got on top of it, suppressed it, and we have been clear for many weeks. To find out that just tonight there are two active cases, possibly with many contacts for our community, is extremely upsetting. It comes at a time when for all of us—in regional Victoria but especially here in Melbourne; I just see it driving in—life has been sucked out of this place, and it is a truly tragic thing to see. I am not here to blame people for that, because it is the virus that is doing it. It is absolutely running rampant across the world, as we know. But we had a moment of hope, I think, that in regional Victoria we might have been able to have a much better result—to be able to be more isolated and to be able to free up even more. I am obviously grateful that we are in a better position than Melbourne, but news like that can just really be so devastating in our communities where we feel like we were really getting on top of it.

I think to bring a no-confidence motion is a very serious thing, and to do it at a time like this is disingenuous, really. People in my community are not calling on me to vote no confidence in the government. Of all the emails that have landed in my email in the last three or four days, five of them are from my constituents. The rest are from God knows who. They do not put their name and address on them, most of them. I do not know where they are even generated from, quite frankly, and I am very suspicious of it. There will be people in my community who have lost confidence in the government, but I am put here as an Independent. People have to rely on me to make a decision on this—me alone. I do not get told how to vote, and I feel quite confident in voting against this motion of no confidence that people really are looking for something different at the moment. They are not looking for this sort of extraordinary ill will, this building up of a feeling of divisiveness. They want us to get out of this. They want to find solutions. They want us to be the ones to lead them through it, and that is a great responsibility.

People who are vulnerable in our community in particular deserve to be looked after, and we must do everything that we can to do that. I have to say, and this is on a gloomy note, I do not consider that we are in a second wave. We are just in a second lockdown. We only have to look at what is happening in the rest of the world to see that the second wave is yet to come, and that will come next March and April as we go into winter. Now, as far as I can see, on this side there is no road map for that. On that side there is a bit of a road map. There is a road map that we can look forward to, there is a bit of experience and there are some learnings from mistakes. But here—what are we doing? The road map that the
Leader of the Opposition has asked for is: ‘Let’s lift the 5-kilometre rule’. Well, how good is that? We have had that lifted. We are lucky in regional Victoria because we have had some of that happen. But we need a road map because we have got a lot more coming. I am not seeing a road map on this side of the house, and that is something that needs to be addressed. We need to be together on this.

I think I have said enough really. I think it is pretty clear that I will not be voting for this because in this time we need to be working together, not dividing communities the way that this motion of no confidence does.

House divided on motion:

**Ayes, 23**

Angus, Mr  
Battin, Mr  
Blackwood, Mr  
Britnell, Ms  
Bull, Mr T  
Guy, Mr  
Hodgett, Mr  
McCurdy, Mr  
McLeish, Ms  
Morris, Mr  
Newbury, Mr  
O’Brien, Mr  
O’Brien, Mr D  
Riordan, Mr  
Rowswell, Mr  
Smith, Mr T  
Southwick, Mr  
Staley, Ms  
Valence, Ms  
Wakeling, Mr  
Walsh, Mr  
Wells, Mr

**Noes, 44**

Allan, Ms  
Blandthorn, Ms  
Brayne, Mr  
Bull, Mr J  
Carbines, Mr  
Carroll, Mr  
Connolly, Ms  
D’Ambrosio, Ms  
Dimopoulos, Mr  
Donnellan, Mr  
Edbrooke, Mr  
Foley, Mr  
Fowles, Mr  
Fregon, Mr  
Green, Ms  
Halfpenny, Ms  
Hall, Ms  
Halse, Mr  
Hamer, Mr  
Hennessy, Ms  
Horne, Ms  
Hutchins, Ms  
Kairouz, Ms  
Kennedy, Mr  
Kilkenny, Ms  
Maas, Mr  
McGuire, Mr  
Merlino, Mr  
Pakula, Mr  
Pallas, Mr  
Pearson, Mr  
Read, Dr  
Richards, Ms  
Richardson, Mr  
Sandell, Ms  
Scott, Mr  
Sheed, Ms  
Spence, Ms  
Suleyman, Ms  
Tak, Mr  
Taylor, Mr  
Theophanous, Ms  
Ward, Ms  
Williams, Ms

Motion defeated.

Register of opinion on motion

**Noes**

Ms Addison, Mr Andrews, Mr Cheeseman, Ms Couzens, Ms Cragnale, Ms Edwards, Mr Eren, Mr Hibbins, Mr McGhie, Ms Neville, Ms Settle, Mr Staikos, Ms Thomas, Mr Wynne

Committees

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE**

Membership

The SPEAKER (21:00): I just wish to advise the house that I have received the resignation of Ms Stitt, MLC, from the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee effective today.
Business of the house

POSTPONEMENT

Mr DONNELLAN (Narre Warren North—Minister for Child Protection, Minister for Disability, Ageing and Carers) (21:00): I move:

That the consideration of remaining business be postponed.

Motion agreed to.

Adjournment

The SPEAKER: The question is:

That the house now adjourns.

EILDON ELECTORATE ROADS

Ms McLEISH (Eildon) (21:00): (4547) My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Roads across Victoria are suffering from neglect and a lack of maintenance, and the Melba Highway is no exception. The action I seek is for the minister to immediately provide funding and resources to fix the problems on the Melba. The Melba Highway runs 65 kilometres between Yea and Coldstream, and it is really hard to tell exactly where the worst spots are because there are so many. Is it at Ewing Wynd, not far from Yea? Perhaps it is just near Perts reserve or Devlins Bridge at Glenburn. There are several spots in Castella. Dixons Creek at Hunts Lane is particularly bad. Or is it north and south of Yarra Glen, or everywhere else in between? There are just so many areas that need attention because this government has forgotten this highway and certainly Victorian roads.

The potholes grow by the day, both in size and in number. The rain is not helping. There are broken surfaces everywhere. The government thought nothing a few years ago of popping in 900 metres of centre wire rope barriers at a cost of $555 000. It is a pity they do not see fit to invest similarly in road repairs to the surface, to the potholes and to the shoulders. On top of that we need more overtaking lanes and slip lanes, which will allow traffic to slow safely and to turn left. In some areas we have had paint markings on the ground for a considerable time. What we do not need is more ‘Rough surface’ signs or reductions in speed limits at dodgy patches.

The minister cannot deny that Victoria’s regional road network has never been in poorer condition, with the potholes, the ruts, the broken surfaces and the poor drainage which plague the road network. The independent analysis tells us this. The Victorian Auditor-General tells us this. But according to the Andrews Labor government in their most recent spin, regional roads in Victoria have never been better. What hogwash! We know as far back as 2017 the Auditor-General found VicRoads has no effective strategy when it comes to roads maintenance and has an inability to prioritise the most important projects, which leads to an over-reliance on expensive works.

The Melba Highway is a key highway for north–south traffic. Many people use it to go from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne to pick up the Hume Highway through Benalla. It is busy with local roads, tourist traffic, trucks, delivery and freight. It is extremely busy. It needs to be invested in, and the government has overlooked this particularly.

LATHAMS ROAD UPGRADE

Ms KILKENNY (Carrum) (21:03): (4548) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and the action I seek is an update on the significant project to upgrade Lathams Road in my electorate. It feeds the significant and important business and manufacturing and industrial area of Carrum Downs, and I know that my community will be very much looking forward to the update from the minister.
COVID-19

Mr T BULL (Gippsland East) (21:04): (4549) My adjournment tonight is to the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to release a geographic list of COVID cases in Victoria. What we have at the current time is other jurisdictions like the Northern Territory this week announcing that they will open their borders to rural and regional Victoria, but they initially excluded East Gippsland. The reason for that was we had one live case listed for our region, but the situation was that that person, whilst their home address was East Gippsland, was in Melbourne and they were doing their quarantining in Melbourne. So whilst we are recording these cases against home address, it will also be very beneficial to our rural and regional communities to have these cases recorded against geographic location, one, because it will assist our communities to be far better informed and, two, because it will also inform other jurisdictions as they set their restriction levels around travel. Too many people in rural and regional Victoria have been denied seeing loved ones who are terminally ill in some cases, and as we get other states and territories looking at revisiting this level of restriction we need them to have accurate information based on geographical location.

KANGAN INSTITUTE BROADMEADOWS CAMPUS

Mr McGUIRE (Broadmeadows) (21:05): (4550) My adjournment request is to the Minister for Training and Skills. The action I seek is for the minister to open the new Sustainable Plumbing Centre at Kangan Institute’s Broadmeadows campus with me next year. Work on this centre is expected to commence in May and be finalised towards the end of term 3. The government will invest $5.5 million for the project through the TAFE Asset Maintenance Fund, amounting to a total of $55 million. This fund is investing in TAFEs across Victoria to create jobs and to help drive Victoria’s economic revival. The centre will allow all of Kangan’s plumbing courses to be co-located at Broadmeadows and will better position the TAFE to meet trade-training demand in Melbourne’s growing north.

This is really significant in the way that we are wanting as a nation to build the recovery and bring back the jobs, and my catchcry has been, ‘Bring back Broadmeadows’, because we are all on a unity ticket now for advanced manufacturing. There it is—$1.5 billion in the federal budget. The need is now obvious, and why do we have to do that? Because we lost scale. Why did we lose scale in manufacturing? Because the automotive industry was lost. That is the really interesting proposition. But I am looking forward with solutions to how we actually drive the change that counts for the new industries and the new jobs. I do make the point of how this is really important. If we could get one of the new technical schools in Broadmeadows on this Kangan campus, that would be fantastic as well, to invest in the STEM pathways for students. I do want to acknowledge that CSL have made a wonderful announcement that they are going to connect up with 150 different students in Broadmeadows to make that connection also. I think that is important because if we do find a vaccine against COVID-19 it will be manufactured in Broadmeadows at CSL. So here we have one of the leading advanced manufacturers exporting life-saving blood products from this plant already.

This is how we are trying to put together how you have the big industries that will drive our future, advance niche manufacturing, connect down into the community and get local jobs for local people, and that is why I am so supportive of what is being done by the minister and looking forward to the Victorian budget as well. As the Premier said, it is going to be an unprecedented investment in our future. It is what we need, and the new industries and jobs where we need them most are vital for my constituents.

LICENSED HOSPITALITY VENUE FUND

Ms STALEY (Ripon) (21:08): (4551) My adjournment is to the Premier, and the action I seek is that producer liquor licences be added to the list of licences allowed to access the Licensed Hospitality Venue Fund. On 13 September the Premier announced and included in a media release that there would be a Licensed Hospitality Venue Fund, and people with a couple of licence categories can apply for and receive up to $30 000 of funding. However, one of the categories that is not included is what is known as a producer liquor licence. The trouble with that is that microbreweries, cellar doors and
venues that are effectively running restaurants or event venues that have a production side as well have this kind of licence and yet they cannot access this support, despite the fact that the structure of their business is the same as somebody with either a general licence or a limited licence.

I was contacted by Quoin Hill Winery, which is in my electorate, and they tell me that this licence, the producer licence, came about in 2018 and replaced their limited liquor licence. So there really is not a reason that they should not be able to access this. There has just been an administrative decision made that they cannot, despite the fact that the structure of their business is the same as those who can access this, and they have had the same reduction in their sales as those who can access it. So I ask the Premier to reassess the criteria and add producer liquor licences to the available list.

PATIENT CARE

Ms GREEN (Yan Yean) (21:10): (4552) My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is that he ask his department to examine the practices of public hospitals in how they treat inpatients with disability and their families. I would especially like them to compare the practices of the Royal Children’s Hospital to see which of these practices could be adopted by other hospitals, especially the standard practice of a parent or guardian rooming with and sleeping over with their child. Many adults with disability, especially those with reduced cognitive function, have similar reliance on their parents to what children do. They can also suffer much greater levels of anxiety at being an inpatient than other adults.

My request is in the memory of a dear family friend, Ashlea Meaghan Grose. Ashlea was born on 6 June 1992 with a profound disability. She was legally blind, never spoke or walked and lived her life in a reclining wheelchair. People who did not know Ashlea may have thought she had little quality of life. How wrong they were. Ashlea loved and was loved. She was cheeky and funny. I knew Ashlea for more than half of her short life. Her mum Christine, father David and brothers Regan and Daniel would frequently come to visit me at festivals and other community events. I would tie her favourite coloured purple or pink balloon to her chair and we would have a laugh together. I loved that she always knew me, and I treasured the times I got to lift her from her chair and buckle her up safely in the car. I especially remember Ashlea, Christine and Daniel coming to visit the Mernda ambulance open day last year to check out the brand-new station and to thank paramedics who frequently took Ashlea to hospital during her many health challenges. I am so glad that Brooke from my office brought her camera on that day and so caught some of the photos of Ashlea. She is in the group photos with dozens of others. She is giggling in the middle of a group of firefighters, and there is one with me and my young friend Radhvi in a photo that I will treasure always.

Over the years my staff and I grew fond of Ashlea and close to her mum, her father, her brothers, grandparents Noel and Joan Morse, her late aunty Jenny and cousins Jackie and Alex. Ashlea was frequently in hospital suffering from inhalation pneumonia, so my staff and I frequently and willingly helped out the family in having Ashlea’s wishes respected and adhered to. Her carers were not merely paid carers; they were an integral part of the Grose and Morse families. Her brother Daniel trained as a disability worker. Living with a sister with disability has gifted him with great compassion for all people with disability but also showed his love and devotion to her. Through his training he learned how better to support her.

I briefly saw Daniel and Christine on Saturday. Daniel is especially grief-stricken and bereft at the loss of Ashlea, which leaves a huge hole in his life. I hope that he draws comfort through his work with others and dedicates this work to Ashlea’s memory. Christine had recently been in touch to seek my assistance during another of Ashlea’s hospitalisations. None of us knew this would be her last. We all thought she would come home like always. I was devastated to receive Christine’s call last Thursday to say that Ashlea had passed away. I was grateful to get that call. I am shattered not to be able to attend Ashlea’s funeral tomorrow but unspeakably honoured to be asked to say a few words.
COVID-19

Mr NORTHE (Morwell) (21:13): (4553) My adjournment matter is directed to the Premier. The action I seek is for the Premier to urgently review and amend the threshold and parameters for regional Victorians that sit within the last step of the government’s COVID-19 regional road map. Regional Victoria is currently operating under the third step rules and restrictions as set out by the government. However, the leap to the next step is a monumental one and it is seemingly far, far away, much to the chagrin of regional communities.

Under the next step, which has been titled the ‘last step’—which ironically is not the last step within the government’s road map—the threshold states that there can be no new COVID cases for 14 days across the whole of Victoria to reach this arbitrary milestone. So I rhetorically ask: what if Victoria gets to 13 days without a new case and then one is recorded, or even worse, it is a reclassification of a case or some admin error? Should our entire state be bound to this threshold? To continue to mandate no new cases across the entire state for this period of time before enacting the last step is absolutely crazy. I know the commentary has been that the government is not seeking to eradicate the virus, but the thresholds under their road map seem to suggest otherwise.

I have been contacted by many concerned constituents, families, businesses and individuals who are frustrated and angry about these arbitrary thresholds for regional Victoria, which on current statistics could well be weeks and weeks away or even months away from meeting the target. I feel terrible for those residing in metropolitan Melbourne, who are enduring even worse restrictions, but the reality is that in the Latrobe Valley, in the Gippsland region, there have been to my understanding no new COVID-19 cases for more than 14 days, yet under the government’s rules we remain stagnant.

The impacts of the restrictions are well known, and whilst there is a perception in some quarters that regional Victorians and regional Victorian businesses are doing well, it is simply not accurate. Many businesses are still operating at very limited capacity and some still have their doors closed under the current rules. For example, indoor recreation activities, even for children, are closed. Activities like karate, judo, dance, ballet, learn to swim, gymnastics, gymnasium, basketball and more are prohibited. Despite children being able to mingle together at school for the majority of the day, even a handful of those same students are unable to attend an indoor activity together for any of the abovementioned activities for 1 hour of the day. It makes no logical sense.

Businesses have proven they can and will operate in a COVID-safe manner and have adopted measures to ensure their workers and customers can work and shop safely. Limitations on attendees at church services, funerals and weddings have done untold damage emotionally, and do not get me started on some of the interstate border restrictions with respect to palliative care and funerals of a loved one. We need to consider the economic, physical and mental health and wellbeing in conjunction with the response to the pandemic health measures. At the moment the balance is well and truly out of kilter. In closing I again call upon the Premier to urgently review and amend the last step threshold so that regional Victorians can finally move forward.

COVID-19

Mr D O’BRIEN (Gippsland South) (21:16): (4554) My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, who fortuitously is at the table tonight, and the action I seek from her is for her and her government to support community clubs throughout Victoria through this COVID-19 pandemic via relief on some fees and charges. The reason I am raising this tonight is especially in relation to Intralot, which as members will know is the designated monitor of gaming machines. A member for Eastern Victoria Region, Melina Bath, in the other place and I met last week with Leongatha RSL, who showed us a monthly bill still coming through from Intralot of around about $1200 a month. This is in a situation where their gaming machines have effectively been switched off since about March, so there has been no monitoring going on other than having them turned on I think once a week or a couple of times a month just to test them, yet they are still getting this significant bill.
This is an impost on community clubs and particularly RSLs, and it is on top of the fact that most of them have virtually been unable to open for the last few months and even in regional areas now are restricted to 10 in each area. As people will understand, most community clubs and most RSLs have big venues and often have many different rooms and could accommodate quite a few more people in their dining facilities and in their bars, and yet they are restricted to a maximum of 10 in two areas, so 20 at any given time. For RSLs in particular this makes it more difficult. It makes it difficult for them to provide the services that they like to provide to the veterans community, on top of the fact that those veterans are unable to get some of the social engagement that they normally get through the RSLs. I appreciate the government has given some relief on liquor licensing fees to pubs and clubs and the like, but I am seeking for the government to provide more support for fees from Intralot.

Following matters incorporated in accordance with resolution of house today:

**BUNINYONG ELECTORATE SOCIAL HOUSING**

Ms SETTLE (Buninyong) (4555)

My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Housing.

The action I seek is that the Minister for Housing in developing any new social housing plans considers regional Victoria and Ballarat in particular.

Everyone deserves safe and secure accommodation.

And this year it has become even more critical that everyone has a home.

I commend the Victorian government for its investment of $209 million over three years to build 1000 new homes for about 1800 people in Ballarat.

And for investing $10 million to begin the planning process for the Delacombe Estate renewal.

These investments will make a real and significant difference to the people of Ballarat and create new jobs.

I’m calling on the Minister for Housing to consider additional investments into Ballarat’s social housing to help more people maintain stable housing and to create jobs for our community.

**BALLARAT EARLY PARENTING CENTRE**

Ms ADDISON (Wendouree) (4556)

I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Health. The action I seek is for him to provide me with a detailed update on the status and timeline for the Ballarat early parenting centre and how this important investment will assist local families with intensive sleep settling support for babies and children under three.

For many parents, sleep and settling a baby is one of the biggest challenges they face. This new service will be welcomed by families across the electorate of Wendouree and will mean that parents will get the specialised support they deserve close to home.

I look forward to the minister’s response and reporting back to my community about how the Andrews Labor government is delivering for Ballarat mums and dads with world-class health care on our doorstep.

**RESPONSES**

Ms HORNE (Williamstown—Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Fishing and Boating) (21:19): I thank the member for Gippsland South for his question because the issue of Intralot has certainly been raised with me a number of times. Unfortunately what we are dealing with here in the fees and charges that are being charged is that they have got a long-term contract. It was signed, actually, by the Leader of the Opposition in 2012 and runs until 2027. What Intralot are doing is they are charging 80 per cent of their licence fee. This is a fundamentally flawed contract and allows the government very little room to actually negotiate with them. I have raised it with Intralot on behalf of clubs and RSLs. I have spoken to RSLs about this, and I will continue to advocate for this. All I can do is really advise Intralot that the government is particularly dissatisfied with the service that they are providing, and I will continue to advocate on behalf of all clubs and RSLs.
In relation to the member for Eildon, she raised something for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I will refer the matter the member for Carrum raised, again to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

In relation to the member for Gippsland East having raised something for the Premier, I will forward that on.

The member for Broadmeadows raised a matter for the Minister for Training and Skills, and I will refer that.

The member for Ripon raised a matter for the Premier, and I will refer that.

The member for Yan Yean raised a matter for the Minister for Health, and I will refer that.

The member for Morwell raised a matter for the Premier, and I will refer that.

I understand that the members for Buninyong and Wendouree are incorporating their issues into Hansard, and I will raise them with the appropriate ministers.

The SPEAKER: The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 9.22 pm.
Members of both houses met in Assembly chamber at 1.31 pm.

The Clerk: Order! Before proceeding with the business of this joint sitting it will be necessary to appoint a Chair. I call the Premier.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier): I move:

That the Honourable Nazih Elasmar, President of the Legislative Council, be appointed Chair of this joint sitting.

He is willing to accept the nomination.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition): I second the motion.

The Clerk: Are there any other proposals? There being no other proposal, the Honourable Nazih Elasmar, President of the Legislative Council, will take the chair.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR (Hon. N Elasmar): Under the Constitution Act 1975 this joint sitting must be conducted in accordance with rules adopted by members present at the sitting. The first procedure therefore will be the adoption of rules.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier): I move:

That joint rule of practice 2 be the rules for this joint sitting

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition): I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR: I now invite proposals from members for a person to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

Mr ANDREWS (Mulgrave—Premier): I propose:

That Ms Sheena Watt be chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

She is willing to accept the appointment if chosen. In order to satisfy the joint sitting as to the requirements of section 27A(4) of the Constitution Act 1975, I also advise that the President has received advice from the state secretary of the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party that Ms Watt is the selection of the Australian Labor Party, the party previously represented in the Legislative Council by the Honourable Jenny Mikakos.

Mr M O'BRIEN (Malvern—Leader of the Opposition): I second the proposal.

The CHAIR: Are there any further proposals? As there are no further nominations, I declare that nominations are closed. The question is:

That Ms Sheena Watt be chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

Question agreed to.

The CHAIR: I declare that Ms Sheena Watt has been chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council. I will advise the Governor accordingly.

I now declare the joint sitting closed, and I ask Council members to leave the chamber of the Assembly.

Proceedings terminated 1.34 pm.