

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Tuesday, 10 February 2015

(Extract from book 2)

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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The Hon. D. K. DRUM

Leader of the Greens:

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Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFP

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

ALP — Labor Party; ASP — Australian Sex Party;
DLP — Democratic Labour Party; Greens — Australian Greens;
LP — Liberal Party; Nats — The Nationals;
SFP — Shooters and Fishers Party; V1LJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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Tuesday, 10 February 2015

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 2.05 p.m. and read the prayer.

SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS

Ms Pulford

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is my pleasant duty to preside over the swearing in of Ms Pulford, who was not with us on 23 December. Ms Pulford will now take the affirmation and be sworn in as a member of the house for this 58th Parliament.

Ms Pulford took and subscribed the affirmation as required by law.

CONDOLENCES

Michael Andrew Leighton

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is my solemn duty to advise the house of the death on 8 November 2014 of Michael Andrew Leighton, member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Preston from 1988 to 2006.

In respect of Mr Leighton's passing I ask members to stand in their places for 1 minute as a mark of respect to his memory.

Honourable members stood in their places.

John Martin McQuilten

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 2 January 2015, of Mr John Martin McQuilten and places on record its acknowledgment of the valuable services rendered by him to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Council for the electoral province of Ballarat from 1999 to 2006.

In so doing, if I were to be in the spirit and manner of Mr McQuilten's contributions to this chamber, I would say, 'John McQuilten was a good bloke', and I would sit down. But I will not do that. Those of us who had the privilege to serve with Mr McQuilten in this chamber would know that on the public record Mr McQuilten was a man of very few words. When he did convey his views to the chamber he did so with great passion and great sincerity and in the spirit of goodwill.

Mr McQuilten made most of his contributions sitting behind and to the right of where I stand now. On many occasions Mr McQuilten was so mindful of finding goodwill in the chamber that when he commenced his contributions I was a little bit anxious, as a member of a government in a minority position, that his argument would take him to the other side of the chamber; such was his generosity of spirit as he tried to find a way for the Parliament to rise up to the community's expectations and find a commonality of view and intent and better outcomes for our community. That is not to say Mr McQuilten did not have very deeply held political views that indicated he was a Labor person. In his inaugural speech he made this absolutely clear:

In particular I wish to thank my party. I love my party. I have been in the party since I was a young man in 1967. It is not always right but it is at the moment, and it is always heading in the right direction. Because of that, I am a member.

He then went on to describe a bit of the history of the Labor Party and his connection to it. He was a man from a generation that was very much opposed to the Vietnam War, and through his political activities Mr McQuilten was determined to articulate his commitment to pacifism, his opposition to war and his reluctance to be drafted into participating in the war. This was one of his many strongly held convictions, and in his view it was in alignment with Labor values. As he indicated in his own words Mr McQuilten was not an ideologue in terms of assuming that Labor was always right, although he was extremely confident and comfortable as a member of the incoming Bracks government in 1999 and stayed with that government until 2006.

He was a man who was happy to take responsibility for a brief given to him by the then Premier, Steve Bracks, or Treasurer John Brumby in particular. He worked very collaboratively with his regional colleagues, in particular Jacinta Allan, the member for Bendigo East in the Assembly, and Bob Cameron, then a member of the other place. He was a very enthusiastic supporter of regional development in its various forms in terms of supporting agriculture and the rights of citizens in regional Victoria to have a higher expectation of the delivery of services, which in Labor's view at the time had been left to wither. He was very determined to participate in rebuilding those services across the community.

Whilst he may have given the impression of being a man who was quite set in his ways in terms of his old-world, traditional views about what regional development may have meant, in spirit he certainly was not. In terms of his expertise in winegrowing he was at the cutting edge of the techniques, methods and export

opportunities that could be opened up through the wine industry, and I have not met a more enthusiastic supporter of the Solar Systems proposal that unfortunately to this very day has not been delivered in the state of Victoria. I have come across nobody in public life who is a more enthusiastic supporter of solar energy in Victoria and the hope that it might open up opportunities for us to recalibrate our energy supply to make an adjustment in relation to the challenge of climate change and reduce our ecological footprint in the name of economic activity. Mr McQuilten was extremely enthusiastic about those matters.

Shortly we will be pausing in the chamber as a mark of respect to reflect on Mr McQuilten's contribution to the Parliament and the people of Victoria. Probably it would be more appropriate if we collectively got ourselves up out of the chamber and went to the back verandah where Mr McQuilten spent many hours. In fact if there had been a roster of members of Parliament who made their contribution to parliamentary life through the prism of networking on the back verandah, Mr McQuilten would have a set a very high benchmark that very few of us could surpass.

In terms of Mr McQuilten's other contributions to the Parliament of Victoria, I draw particular attention to his sacrifice and the sacrifice of a number of members of this Parliament who were elected in 1999 who chose to support constitutional reform which reduced the numbers in this chamber from 44 to 40 members. It is also worth noting that Mr McQuilten was a member of this Parliament who was elected by the people of Victoria for an eight-year term and that as a consequence of those changes, which he voted for, his term was reduced to four years.

I am not happy to report that Mr McQuilten and a number of other members who had a similar profile, in that they were elected to the Victorian Parliament and supported constitutional change, were not in my view, and certainly not in Mr McQuilten's view, adequately compensated for that act of generosity towards the Parliament and the people of Victoria. I believe that is an issue where probably as a Parliament and certainly as a government we may have to show our respect for the selfless act that Mr McQuilten and a number of others made on our collective behalf.

I know that Mr McQuilten was an enthusiastic supporter of the constitutional reforms. He believed that proportional representation should apply in this chamber and that it would enhance our democracy. I am certain that if he were here at this moment he would be a bit anxious on the government's behalf in relation to what the consequences may be in this Parliament, but

he was certainly unswerving in his commitment to constitutional reform in the name of better democracy in the state of Victoria. He was an active participant in that decision-making, and I am bitterly disappointed that in many ways he was the victim of it.

It did not stop him from engaging in a range of aspects of community life. On many occasions he demonstrated the breadth of his connections across Victoria and indeed across the nation. He was at various times on the boards of the Australian Conservation Council, Ambulance Victoria, the Victorian Regional Channels Authority, the University of Ballarat and the Maryborough Golf Club. Whilst he also served as an executive of the Victorian Soft Drink Association, that was by no means his particular expertise. Those who knew him are aware that it was in the wine industry where he excelled as an exponent of fine wines in this state — as a producer, as an advocate and as somebody who was seeking additional export opportunities for the Victorian wine industry. It was a passion that he pursued with great vigour.

In his inaugural speech Mr McQuilten referred to his very tolerant — his words — wife, Rosa, and thanked her for her generosity of spirit and unswerving support. He acknowledged that at some points in time that support came with challenges. Nonetheless, he was extremely proud of her, and I am certain that was reciprocated.

On behalf of the government and the Labor Party, to Rosa, to other members of the family and to those who loved Mr McQuilten in a variety of contexts, in the spirit in which he loved and expressed his love for a number of things, even including the Labor Party, I reciprocate and return it to Mr McQuilten.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — On behalf of the Liberal Party I support the condolence motion moved by the Leader of the Government for the late John McQuilten. As I look around the chamber, there are now only three of us left who were elected in 1999 at the election that saw the Bracks government come to office. At that time this chamber comprised 44 members, of which the government had only 14 and the opposition had 30. On the government benches was John McQuilten, a new member for Ballarat Province. Mr Jennings said Mr McQuilten was a proud member of the Labor Party, and I remember Mr McQuilten standing in this place and saying that the 1999 election was the third time he had stood for the Labor Party, having twice been unsuccessful, and that he was proud to have been elected as a Labor member for Ballarat Province.

Mr McQuilten had a strong commitment to regional Victoria and to regional development, and that theme carried through his contributions in this place, be they on regional development in an industry sense, water policy or agricultural policy. John McQuilten was committed to delivering improvements in regional Victoria through his membership of this place, and importantly he was proud of what he had achieved in regional development and in supporting the growth of regional communities in Victoria prior to coming to this place.

One thing that was evident from Mr McQuilten's contributions in this chamber, be they in the evening after he had been on the balcony — I was not going to refer to the balcony until the Leader of the Government did — or at other times, was that he was not a zealot. He was pragmatic and practical. He was able to see different points of view in debates and recognise the legitimacy of those different points of view, so you could always have an engaging debate in this chamber with Mr McQuilten. It was a genuine debate, which often now we do not see in Parliament, but I hope with the commencement of the 58th Parliament we will start to see it again. With John McQuilten you would always have an engaging debate in which he would recognise the viewpoints of his opponents in this chamber and the legitimacy of those viewpoints. While not necessarily agreeing with them, he would nonetheless recognise that they were valid. Mr McQuilten always made a valuable contribution to debate in this place, recognising the different points of view and different outcomes that all of us as members of the Legislative Council are committed to delivering.

As the Leader of the Government said, Mr McQuilten's contributions were typically short and pithy, and that was one of his great strengths. He was a big character in this place. On behalf of the Liberal Party I extend our condolences to his widow, Rosa, and reiterate what the Leader of the Government said at the start of his contribution: John McQuilten was a good bloke.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — The Greens support this motion, and in doing so we pass on our condolences to the friends, family and loved ones of Mr McQuilten. I never met Mr McQuilten, but in reading what others have said about him and also what he said about himself it is clear that he was a passionate individual. In fact at the end of my research I thought, 'I really wish we had him in this chamber with us now', because that kind of passion can be very valuable and would certainly cause all of us to rise to the same level of passion.

John McQuilten was passionate about political issues from quite a young age. As a teenager he was actively involved. He described marching against the Vietnam War in rallies that had 200 participants; later they had 20 000 participants. His brother — I believe it was his older brother — was a conscientious objector to the war and successfully challenged the authorities in relation to conscription. John McQuilten was passionate about the death penalty and fighting it. He was very passionate about regional Victoria; we have talked about that.

John was also passionate about making wine — he made it and put his own surname on the bottle, wanting everybody who enjoyed it to know who had made it — and clearly he was passionate about drinking it. He was passionate about politics enough to tell people that they should join a political party — not even necessarily his political party but any political party — whereby they could pursue the issues they felt passionate about. He reported that sometimes young people would say to him, 'We don't have the big issues you had in your day — Vietnam et cetera' and he would tell them, 'But you have global warming'.

In his final speech to the Parliament John McQuilten quoted a poem from ancient Persia. Just by way of hoping to finish a thought he might have been having, I thought I would read the next two stanzas:

But helpless pieces in the game He plays,
Upon this chequerboard of Nights and Days,
He hither and thither moves, and checks ... and slays,
Then one by one, back in the Closet lays.

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted — 'Open then the Door!
You know how little time we have to stay,
And once departed, may return no more.'

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I suppose John McQuilten is proof of the accuracy of the opinion I have stated a few times in this house that whilst it takes a while to get to know those on the other side, there really are some fine people on either side of this chamber. I used to muse on the funny bloke with the big moustache who sat over there on the other side of the chamber and who hardly used to say much. Every now and again you would get him involved in a bit of interjecting. That was not often, but whenever he was moved to get to his feet, he was generally quite animated, quite excited and, as has been mentioned, somewhat passionate.

I cannot remember when John and I broke through the opposition-government barrier. I was also not going to mention the balcony, but since the Leader of the Government has put it out there, I note it was probably

out there on the balcony one summer evening. The conversation would have been around either wine or golf, both of us having been tragics in relation to both of those weaknesses. It was not long before John had sold me a box of his Laanecoorie shiraz at a ridiculously overpriced \$20 a bottle. I do not know whether he was laughing behind my back, but he got me a few times with that one.

John McQuilten was always a man who saw the person first and the political persuasion a very distant second. As has already been mentioned, he had this ability to talk about the day's proceedings in an analytical manner. He would say, 'You blokes are having a dirty day today', or, 'We're having a dirty day today', or, 'You did really well then' — without all the normal politics that come with many of the conversations that occur in this place.

As many in this place, and certainly those from the Labor Party, would know, John lived on Bendigo-Maryborough Road. I tend to drive past his house often. It felt totally normal to ring on the off-chance that he would be at home. The kettle would always be on, and you could have a quick conversation before you kept going. He and Rosa were always open to people calling in to say g'day and shoot the breeze, without a care in the world about being on different political sides.

One day John invited me to his shack at Sorrento. He had golf the following day and wanted to know if I would spend the day with him. He met me at the Sorrento pub and took me to his shack. It was very modest but set up so that he could have about 20 people sleeping in their own beds in the little house and a big garage turned into a dormitory. It was set up for his mates, his family and his friends' families, because he loved to host people. We sat up all night. He talked about his career in soft drink businesses. He talked about his friendship with John Brumby. He was very proud of the fact that he had the ear of the then Treasurer. He was very proud of what he thought the Labor Party was doing in regional Victoria. He was up for a chat, and it was a very interesting night, which I am sure many members would understand. While John could be totally analytical and non-political, he had a very strong affection for the Labor Party.

I think many here today would share in the shock I felt when I found out that John had left us; I did not know he was that sick. It is another timely reminder of our mortality and how we have to make the most of every day that we are blessed to be on this earth.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — John McQuilten and I were like ships that pass in the night. Ballarat Province ceased to exist in 2006. It was one of the three provinces that came to be known as Western Victoria Region as part of the changes that occurred when proportional representation was introduced into this place. In the parts of my electorate that had been Ballarat Province, however, the influence and achievements of John McQuilten were to be seen everywhere.

John was a descendant of somebody who had sought their fortune in the gold rush. His family settled in Victoria in the 1850s, and it was indeed in the goldfields that he ultimately settled and spent much of his life. John was a great champion of regional development, as earlier speakers have indicated. In his inaugural speech he said:

In my new job I will concentrate on finding jobs because that is the most important role I can play in serving my electorate.

He went on to work tirelessly at these things. At his send-off on 14 January, the former Premier and Treasurer, and a very close friend of John McQuilten, John Brumby, regaled the large crowd with many stories of John's persistence and gave many examples of what an effective advocate John was for his community. There is probably no better example of his achievements than the Maryborough education precinct. John worked tirelessly on this project for many years, and it has been transformative for young people in Maryborough. John took a broad view of regional development and fought hard for the communities he represented.

One of the things I learnt about John at his farewell, and which Mr Drum alluded to, was the nature of the kitchen table at John and Rosa's place. Mr Drum talked about calling in for a cuppa when driving past. These were the kinds of stories that flowed and were a consistent theme in the contributions of those who spoke in Maryborough in mid-January.

It was a kitchen table around which I gather there were long arguments about the Vietnam War and politics and discussions about the issues of the day. Those discussions were held around that kitchen table with family, friends and anybody who cared to stop by to visit a house that was clearly full of love and where people were very welcomed.

John's championing of the local wine industry is legendary. The Pyrenees vigneronns have been well served by having such a strong advocate. I believe the work that John did in this regard has enabled small, medium and large winemakers to access international

markets, proving to smaller winemakers that it is not something for just the really big producers. The right policies and approach and enthusiasm enable new markets and new opportunities to be found for smaller producers.

It has been said by those who served with Mr McQuilten in the Parliament that he was a man of few words, who would speak quickly and occasionally. What I have also come to learn since his passing is that John McQuilten preferred to express himself in perhaps another way — that is, John McQuilten was a poet. I share with members two poems written by John.

Friends

That tail that wags non-stop
 When you come home.
 That boundless love
 That only a pat will satisfy.
 That smile when no other smile will do.
 Those eyes that speak
 And say 'I know'.
 The sunrise amongst the tall gums.
 The smell of wood and dust and wattle and belonging.
 Friends
 The shared joy,
 That touch of closeness.
 The heartfelt ecstasy of life.
 Oneness.
 Passion.
 Despair.
 Confusion.
 The solitary agony of beaches, sunsets.
 And the loneliness of love.
 The glass of wine.
 The banter of ideas.
 The sharing of life.
 Friends.
 Mothers, fathers, lovers.
 Gone.
 Those eyes that know.
 The hands that hold and feel the pain.
 The adulation that warms and comforts.
 The heart that understands.
 Friends.
 Hands that touch your heart.
 Share your oneness.

That was written by John McQuilten in 2000.

John was loved enormously. The accounts of his life by those who were closer to John than I was — his family and close friends — suggest that it was a life fully lived and thoroughly enjoyed. The work that the government will do in delivering on its election commitments in regional development, particularly in supporting our wine industry, will continue in John McQuilten's memory.

I will conclude with a second poem, which was written by John in 2004 during the drought:

The Dead Tree

The dead tree stands
 Silent
 Amongst the living
 A testament to a life
 That was
 A silent witness to the wind
 The rain
 The inevitability.

So long, Macca.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I will say a few words about the contribution John McQuilten made to education and his commitment to it and particularly to country education. In the part of Victoria that he loved he has left a lasting legacy in education in terms of opportunities for young people. He was a champion of a better education system, and he often referred to the need to look after country kids. It was a driving force of his.

I did not know John in this chamber, but I certainly knew him outside the chamber, as did many people, and members have alluded to that in speaking on this condolence motion today. He was a great bloke who assisted many people through his strong advocacy and determination to look after those who needed it. He was an engaging character with a great warm smile, and I think most people here will fondly remember him. They will certainly remember that he used to love to hold court on the balcony out the back of Parliament House, where he dominated conversation. In a place such as this where there are a lot of strong-willed characters with strong views, dominating a conversation is no easy task, but John did it with some gusto. In meetings — and I had many meetings with him — he was bold and forthright, and he was a natural leader for his community.

John McQuilten was a big man. He had big ideas, and they were no bigger than in education. A member for Western Victoria Region referred to the Maryborough Education Centre. Without John's influence and persistence as a member for Ballarat Province the Maryborough Education Centre would never have gotten off the ground. Decades ago John began talking about the need to develop an education hub in Maryborough, an area which traditionally had low school completion rates, very high youth unemployment and a large degree of youth disengagement. It was an area that needed something

special in terms of education to lift the aspirations of young people.

His vision was to bring new learning facilities together on one site to create a culture and enthusiasm for lifelong community learning, and he believed this would make a real difference for children in that area. In 2005, in relation to what was then known as the Maryborough community education precinct project, John told this house:

It is a lighthouse. I thought about it and I talked about it, but now there is a whole community of people who are putting into this and making it happen. I am so proud of a community — a country Victorian community — which has embraced the idea that education is a no. 1 priority.

Having convinced the Bracks government to make a multimillion-dollar investment in the project, John's vision for Maryborough was realised with purpose-built primary and secondary schools, an early childhood centre, a special school, a TAFE and numerous other educational facilities in one location. It was a lighthouse project. As I said, it did not happen by accident. I was Lynne Kosky's chief of staff in the Bracks Labor government's first term in office, and I can well remember just how relentless John was in pursuing this project and pursuing the funding for it. I have absolutely no doubt that without his vision, without his strength and without his determination that project would not have happened.

Today the Maryborough Education Centre has an enrolment of over 1000 students from prep to year 12, and it continues to provide a comprehensive curriculum and pathway for students, particularly for students with a disability. The school works with the community and the community works with the school. The Maryborough Education Centre is currently involved in a professional learning program with Melbourne University as it continues to strive to improve opportunities in that area — something that would have been unthinkable a couple of decades back. John McQuilten said the Maryborough Education Centre was a dream that could happen and would happen, and we all stand proudly in this chamber today knowing that because of his efforts it did happen and that the community he loved so much is benefiting from it.

I would like to extend my condolences to John's wife, Rosa, and his sons, their extended family and John's close friends. He made a great contribution to this chamber, to this Parliament and to the world he loved.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise to pay tribute to a former colleague, John McQuilten, known to everyone here as Macca.

Like Mr Rich-Phillips and Mr Jennings, I was elected in 1999 and was a colleague of Mr McQuilten's during the time he served from 1999 to 2006. In fact the last time I saw Mr McQuilten was here at Parliament for a dinner organised for the Labor members of the class of 1999. It was with great shock and sadness that I learnt of his recent passing.

As Mr Jennings alluded to, Mr McQuilten was a man of few words. In a *Herald Sun* article of 23 December 2004 he described himself as a doer, not a talker. In his inaugural speech to the Parliament on 9 November 1999 Mr McQuilten said:

One of the reasons I am here is that there were many long speeches and no action.

It is fitting for all of us to be brief and laconic today, in the spirit of Mr McQuilten. He was well known to all of us for making poignant remarks, which were straight to the point and made people sit up and take a great deal of notice, while still being succinct in his contribution.

We know Mr McQuilten was passionate about his love for the Labor Party. I recall his speaking on a number of occasions about being a conscientious objector to the Vietnam War, and it is my understanding that it was that issue that drove him to join the Labor Party in 1967.

In his inaugural speech he spoke about his passion for regional development, and I recall that on many occasions he invited the then Treasurer, John Brumby, to visit regional Victoria with him or to take up an issue in relation to creating jobs and business opportunities for regional Victoria. In that same speech he referred to the issue of employment as something he was extremely passionate about. He spoke of the 'cancer of unemployment' that was devastating country Victoria and about the need for employment. He worked tirelessly to ensure that his electorate of Ballarat Province would benefit from the job opportunities then being created by the government.

John McQuilten was passionate about wine. He loved the wine industry, and I am pretty certain it was at his insistence that Victorian wines got put on the parliamentary dining room menu — and that is something worth noting. He wanted to showcase Victorian wines to visitors coming to the Parliament. Mr Drum complained earlier about how much he had to pay Mr McQuilten for wine. He may complain about the price he paid, but I can tell Mr Drum that I am a teetotaler, and yet I still bought Mr McQuilten's wines. Many of us were also customers of Mr McQuilten. He was a very smooth salesman. He certainly knew how to

promote his product and support the wine industry in Victoria.

John McQuilten was passionate about everything he did. He was greatly respected and admired by his colleagues — I certainly respected and admired him. I will miss Macca, and I convey my sincere condolences to his wife, Rosa, and to the members of his family.

The PRESIDENT — In his remarks Mr Jennings referred to Mr McQuilten as one of a number of then government members who actually voted themselves out of office by supporting the reform of the Legislative Council and the introduction of proportional representation.

It is interesting to reflect on what might have happened had they not voted in that manner, because from my perspective Mr McQuilten was one of a group of Labor members of Parliament who at the time were not necessarily known to sing off a song sheet provided by government advisers. In other words, Mr Pullen, Mr Hilton, Ms Buckingham in particular, Ms Carbines and certainly Mr McQuilten were people who had their own views. They brought to this place great experience and, in Mr McQuilten's case in particular, had great respect for this place as an institution. They showed great respect for the members of this place, as a number of members have reflected, in terms of the way they deferred to others during debate — contesting ideas but not criticising the people who brought those ideas forward. I think each of those members might well have made a sizeable contribution to the state had they been given the opportunity to continue their service in this place.

Mr McQuilten was missed at the time that he left this place, and he is certainly missed now by those who love him — his family and friends in particular but more broadly the community to which he gave so much.

It is interesting that Ms Mikakos said Mr McQuilten had referred to himself as a doer rather than a speaker. That was said in response to chastisement by the *Herald Sun*, as I understand it — maybe also the *Age* but certainly the *Herald Sun* — in respect of the low number of contributions made by certain members of Parliament. I am not sure that Mr McQuilten made the least number of contributions, but he was certainly at the lower end of that list of members in this place. But there is no doubt that when he made those contributions he was erudite. He was concise, as people have indicated, but in some of his contributions he showed he was also very learned.

As I have indicated, Mr McQuilten gave his own views. He did not simply sing from an adviser's song sheet. I particularly remember a speech he gave here one night on the water industry. It probably gave the minister at the time heartburn, but it was a speech that really addressed the issue for his community and the people of regional Victoria, for whom the management of water is such an important issue. His contribution on that occasion was significant.

At all times Mr McQuilten made thoughtful contributions in this place, and he certainly had a regional perspective. It is important for us, meeting in the capital city of this great state, to be mindful of the people of the state as a whole, including regional Victoria. John McQuilten was very respectful, and he loved the contest of ideas and debate. His contribution to this place was significant, albeit that some people might have tried to measure it in words. That would not be an appropriate measurement of this man's contribution.

It is likely the sitting will be suspended for a period as a mark of respect for both Mr McQuilten and Ms Kosky, as a former minister, but at this time as a separate exercise I ask members, as a mark of respect, to recognise Mr McQuilten's passing by rising in their places for 1 minute.

Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

Hon. Lynne Janice Kosky

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I move:

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 4 December 2014, of the Honourable Lynne Janice Kosky, MP, and places on record its acknowledgement of the valuable services rendered by her to the Parliament and the people of Victoria as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Altona from 1996 to 2010 and as Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment from 1999 to 2002, Minister for Finance from 2000 to 2002, Minister for Education and Training from 2002 to 2006 and Minister for Public Transport and Minister for the Arts from 2006 to 2010.

In moving this motion today, which is based upon the house expressing its sincere sorrow, I volunteer to the chamber that it is with profound sadness that I make my contribution on behalf of the government and reflect on a personal connection and regard for Lynne Kosky through her public life, for her dedication to the people of her community, to the Labor Party and to the Parliament of Victoria, and through the various roles and responsibilities that she assumed on behalf of the

Parliament and the people of Victoria to change outcomes for Victorian citizens.

Lynne was an ardent advocate for better outcomes for Victorian people. Through her political life she demonstrated an extraordinary ability to deliver results for people, to act with vigour and determination to represent her local community, to change programs — the force of government activity — and to try to align them with the political views she formed as a young woman. Throughout her political life she demonstrated an unyielding energy to maintain her connection to community and not only develop her political acumen but — in her later years of life in particular — strive for a personal journey in terms of creativity and knowledge of life in its broadest dimensions. That was reflected in the various contributions at her memorial service in Williamstown late last year.

Because I travelled much of my political life in parallel with Lynne, I could talk in many ways of my personal experience. But I have chosen, in the spirit of her commitment to lifelong learning, her commitment to education, her commitment to referencing aspects of her political commentary and her connection to community, to keep some of the vignettes from the contributions at her memorial service. She played a very active role in creating an event, which we experienced with her family and her loved ones, which was based upon vignettes and stories of her pathway and her journey in life and political life. I will try to replicate that in some way through my contribution by using her words and the words of others in some very telling vignettes that telegraph through our political life. In retrospect it is quite extraordinary to come back and assess those in light of her experience.

I will give this to the Parliament as an example.

An article written by Martin Flanagan about Lynne Kosky commences:

Perhaps Lynne Kosky's political career began one day at Melbourne University when a tutor quoted research that purported to show that the working class is of inferior intelligence.

She stood up and said it was nonsense.

The article concludes:

Lynne Kosky has spent her life proving that she is larger than the stereotypes beamed onto her and some people in the west believe she has the potential to become a major political figure. Initially, she was upset by the cynicism that automatically greeted her as a 'politician', but now she meets it with resolve. 'You convince people through your actions', she says.

I draw to the attention of the house that that article was written in 1990, when Lynne Kosky was a councillor for the then City of Footscray, well before she was elected to the Victorian Parliament.

The memorial service in Williamstown was attended by what must have been close to 1000 members of our community. Peter Gordon, a well-known figure of the west, drew attention to a number of aspects of Lynne Kosky's life he believed had a beautiful symmetry to them. One of those was that he met Lynne Kosky when she was playing tennis at the Victorian Railways Institute tennis club. He thought it was extraordinary that this then young woman rose through the ranks of political life to ultimately become the Minister for Public Transport in the state of Victoria.

Peter Gordon reflected on Lynne's employment as a social worker and then a community education officer at Sunshine High School, as it then was, supporting communities in the western suburbs. The importance of that is that Lynne Kosky met her husband, Jim Williamson, at Sunshine High School and that there is symmetry in this woman rising to become the education minister in the state of Victoria.

Peter Gordon also reflected on an incident where Lynne Kosky was part of a political movement to try to save Footscray Football Club from going out of existence. As part of the delegation to the then Victorian Football League (VFL), Lynne was subjected to senior office-holders within the VFL blowing her kisses during the course of that meeting. If members have read a number of articles about Lynne Kosky in preparation for their contributions today or to reflect on her life, as I have, they will know reports differ as to which VFL figure or figures were involved in that story, so I am not necessarily going to slander anyone unless there were kisses being blown all over the place. There were articles that appeared to indicate that one of the alleged kiss blowers ended up being on a board that Lynne Kosky was responsible for as minister. On some level there might be a sense of political justice in that, which all of us in different walks of public life may have some regard for.

In terms of the spirit that underpinned Lynne Kosky's political life and her commitment to education, there are any number of commentaries that indicate she was a woman whose drive and determination came from those early years. An article that appeared in the *Herald Sun* as far back as 2000 referred to Lynne as follows:

As a teenager growing up in the western suburbs, she was conscious of the stigma attached to her home turf.

‘There was an assumption your future was decided according to postcode.

I had the view we were just as capable as other areas of Victoria but hadn’t been given the same opportunities’.

Later commentary associated with Lynne Kosky might make her seem to be a class warrior, given her passion and commitment, but as Peter Gordon was reported as saying on the day she became Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment, he believed that whilst she was clearly a political force, it did not prevent her from, in his words, associating with the class enemy. He in fact reflected that he was a bit immature at the time.

In an article in the *Age* Joan Kirner gave some sense of the political style and acumen of Lynne Kosky. The article said:

Kirner says Kosky is cool, precise, politically aware and no-one’s lackey. She masters her brief and picks her battlegrounds. She networks ... She believes in equity and is a strong feminist who is ‘not captured by the system as some women feel they have to be’.

Whilst Lynne had the hallmarks of a stereotypical class warrior — certainly a battler — for the west and a feminist who was trying to lead the charge for greater involvement of women in political life, she did not adopt a simplistic approach in terms of how she acquitted those responsibilities.

In the commentary about Lynne’s political life and her ascension to the ministry in 1999 and beyond in relation to her responsibilities or involvement in the Parliament, from the very early times there are references time and again to her unswerving determination to maintain a balance between her family life and responsibilities and her parliamentary duties. The clippings are riddled with a succession of stories that feature Lynne, her daughter, Hana, and her son, Jackson; they were very prominent throughout and after her political career. There are not so many pictures of Jim Williamson, her husband, who was less assuming in terms of his public engagement with political life, and I will reflect on that in a few moments.

There is an indication of how difficult it is for politicians of all persuasions to achieve balance and to acquit their obligations to the community and their families. There are a couple of extracts from a diary entry that Lynne wrote for the *Sunday Herald Sun* during the course of the 2002 election campaign. Throughout the campaign Lynne documented the activities she was involved in to give the community some sense of the range of tasks that a campaign may

involve. On 17 November 2002 Lynne’s first contribution says for the Monday of that week:

Into the hospital early for son Jack’s day surgery. He comes through it really well, which is a great relief.

Jim takes him home at about 11 while I head off in the opposite direction — another week on the campaign trail.

Two weeks later, at the beginning of December, there is an entry for the Thursday of that week. This was the last week of the campaign.

Pager goes off at 6.00 a.m. — early morning radio. My husband, Jim, is off to Sydney early too, so, between radio interviews, make school lunches and pack kids’ bags. Get them to school just on time and set off for Ballarat. Arrive with time for a coffee. Meet Ballarat MPs Geoff Howard and Karen Overington to inspect demolition of a building at the site of the new Ballarat Learning Exchange and release concept plans.

Back to Glen Waverley to visit several schools with candidate Maxine Morand. A juggling act collecting kids from school and getting them to and from gymnastics. Bring them to my evening meeting at ALP headquarters. Arrive home longing for Saturday night to come.

Saturday night was election night, and in a sense she was rewarded on that night. But these snapshots are pretty telling about the challenges members of Parliament, particularly those who undertake ministerial life, face in acquitting their public and private obligations. Lynne was absolutely determined to try to get that balance right. That balance is very difficult to maintain but it was something she was devoted to doing.

Lynne made major reforms in education. I am sure a number of people in their contributions to this debate will talk about her reforms, particularly as they relate to the Victorian certificate of applied learning system. Those reforms were designed to make sure that at the end of secondary school young people have pathways into tertiary education or the workplace and that there are ample opportunities for school retention built into the education system in Victoria. These reforms provide opportunities for young Victorian people to complete their educations.

It was an extraordinary set of reforms. It was consistent with her reform which established the Victorian Institute of Teaching, which led to greater capability within the education system and ensured that Victoria maintains its high standards of education at a time when it continues to be both a major opportunity and a major challenge for Victoria to place itself as a leader in educational opportunity and attainment for its citizens and to assist in developing a highly skilled and adaptable workforce.

Lynne Kosky had many great successes, and history demonstrated a kindness to her in her time as the education minister — a kindness that was not necessarily maintained throughout the remainder of her political career. But I am pleased to say it was a kindness that has returned to the public an understanding and appreciation of her after her political career. From my vantage point, for those who loved Lynne there is a sadness about the concluding period of her political life in terms of her ministerial career. Sometimes there is perhaps a lack of recognition of the structure and circumstance of political fortune, which can be most unkind. Indeed the coincidence of a number of the projects that Lynne inherited, such as the myki project, and the time delay in relation to investments in rolling stock was unfortunate.

The extraordinary thing that I volunteer is that not only did Lynne suffer because of a time lag in rolling stock being available to meet public transport pressures but the investments that she contributed to and made did not necessarily assist the next Minister for Public Transport, Mr Mulder, in being seen to acquit his obligations in relation to public transport, such is the delay in rolling stock being provided to our system. Certainly the weather was particularly cruel in its impact on the safe functioning of the transport system at the time Lynne resigned from Parliament.

Whilst the circumstances I have outlined, only some of which were her direct responsibility, did lead to many unkind commentaries in the Victorian community about her time as the public transport minister, these were not the issues that drove her decision to leave the Parliament. Her decision to leave the Parliament was based on her commitments to her family and her need to deal with issues in her family at the time which were most pressing, urgent and required her full attention. She dedicated herself to that.

For anybody who may continue to be unkind about her leaving the Parliament of Victoria and public administration, I encourage them to reflect on the matters I have raised and to be absolutely certain that her determination was to give life to her family. Indeed that was something that was commented upon at the time. She did not go into great detail about it, but nonetheless she went out doing her best to smile, to hold back her tears and to restate her commitment not only to the political process but to her family.

An article that appeared at the time in the *Age* admirably reflects the fact that Lynne's departure was because of her decisions about her family circumstances and not because of pressures in relation to her portfolio.

'You cop the criticisms', she said. 'And the bouquets, occasionally, in public life and that's part of the job'.

The *Age* also reported that 'Ms Kosky denied that the marriage of family and politics was inevitably difficult'. Even at this most difficult time, she encouraged other women and other political activists to actually pursue a political life.

She also said:

I would encourage any woman who's interested in public life to put their hand up for it.

She had a very stoic resolve and determination. She gave encouragement to others as she left the ministry to dedicate herself to her family life.

The next time Lynne Kosky was drawn attention to in media commentary was in the tragic circumstances of the diagnosis and treatment that was associated with the cancer that ultimately led to her death. In fact this was not the first moment of kindness given to Lynne. I reflect on a moment of kindness that was demonstrated by her political opponents. One of the projects Lynne was associated with was the redevelopment of the Victorian Arts Centre. That project was incomplete by the time the Brumby government left office. The incoming Baillieu government, which inherited, completed and opened that project, had the kindness and good grace to make sure that Lynne's contribution to the project was recognised in the opening. That was perhaps the start of the re-establishment and equalisation of the kindness that our community demonstrated towards Lynne Kosky. I thank then Premier Baillieu in particular for demonstrating that degree of kindness.

Ultimately, that kindness was also shared by the *Sunday Herald Sun*, although perhaps a little late, in its commentary in 2012 when Lynne shared her experiences with the Victorian community in an article dated 5 February. The *Sunday Herald Sun* editorialised this way:

Today, Ms Kosky tells about her battle with breast cancer, the infection that almost killed her, and her refusal to let cancer compromise her future.

As a former public transport minister, Ms Kosky knows about stress.

And while she'd prefer to keep her cancer battle private, she's bravely decided to speak out to encourage other women to undergo health checks.

...

And by talking about her determination to look to the future, find employment and continue spending time with her family, despite the discovery of secondary tumours in her vertebra

and liver, Ms Kosky is sending another powerful message too: that of hope.

The *Sunday Herald Sun*, on behalf of its readers, wishes Ms Kosky, and the thousands of other brave women who are fighting cancer, the very best.

Indeed the tone that was set in the *Herald Sun* and that has permeated through public commentary since involves the kindness that I would hope for all public figures in the stresses and challenges they confront. Within that kindness, which has been demonstrated on any number of occasions, it is impossible not to say that the circumstances of Lynne Kosky dying at age 56 are cruel. They are profoundly unkind, but if within our hearts we can look to the inspiration that she has created for any number of people from the west, for women, for people within the labour movement, for citizens of our state, that is an optimism, an enthusiasm and a spirit that we are all the better for experiencing and reflecting on. We are inspired to commit to a quality of civic engagement in our community that is very supportive. Certainly, that was the spirit of the event that occurred following Lynne Kosky's death.

In the later weeks of November Lynne Kosky showed extraordinary resilience when she hung on in terms of her spirit and her resolve to ensure that she was there when her daughter, Hana, turned 21, which occurred the week prior to the state election. I know when I was in the company of the now Premier, Daniel Andrews, on the Saturday night of the election, he was so proud to receive a text message of goodwill and generosity from Lynne Kosky. In fact I spent a number of hours in the company of the Premier, and he showed me two text messages of which he was most proud — one from Paul Keating and one from Lynne Kosky. I think the one from Lynne Kosky was the one of which he was most proud, because when we were sworn in at Government House the very day that Lynne had passed, the incoming Premier, at his first doorstep interview after being sworn in, gave due credit to the outstanding contribution of Lynne Kosky. On behalf of all members of the Labor Party, I join him in that regard.

The event in Williamstown brought hundreds of people together — the best part of 1000 people — to celebrate Lynne's life. Two former premiers spoke at that event and premiers from three generations of Victorian political life were there. The spirit of journey, learning, creativity and passion was indicated by the passage that was read by Premier Daniel Andrews in relation to the journey to Ithaca and the experiences that enrich the people who may travel there. The journey is not so important as the experience and the enriching nature of getting there. We were encouraged, all of us, to learn from that experience and to reflect on it.

The last thing I want to particularly note is that outstanding contributions were made at that ceremony by three people. The first was by Hana, Lynne's daughter, who was so strong, so loving and so rich in the way she stated her commitment to her mother. She is the embodiment of a powerful young woman who has achieved great things already in life and is determined to achieve more great things; that is essentially a great measure of what occurred in the later years of Lynne Kosky's life.

Lynne's son, Jackson, fought back tears but ultimately concluded an outstanding contribution that was read in part by his sister. There was also the extraordinary contribution, not marked by any words at all, of Jim Williamson, who demonstrated that he had been a pillar of support to Lynne throughout her personal and political life. The calm way he ensured safe passage for his family and Lynne's loved ones during the event was an extraordinary testament to a man whom I am certain was always calm in a storm, a sheet anchor for the good and the bad — particularly the bad — times. He was extremely powerful, although he did not say one word and he probably would not like his presence and his strength to even be recognised. He is a very unassuming man who was a loving partner to Lynne.

The strength of those contributions demonstrates that the latter years of Lynne's life, while people focused on her deteriorating health, were a shining example of the strength of her character and her engagement with her family. It was a testament, putting all of her political achievements aside, to a great life.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to support this condolence motion today. It is with sadness that I extend my condolences on behalf of the parliamentary Liberal Party to the Kosky family — to Jim, Hana and Jackson — and Lynne's many friends, colleagues and the communities she represented so well prior to her passing on 4 December 2014.

I think it is fair to say that this is a case of a good woman who has been taken too soon. Lynne was taken by cancer, and it is appropriate that today we acknowledge the contributions she made in so many different ways and the difference she made to so many. She served in the other place for 14 years, and I think there are only a couple of us in this house who had the honour of serving with her in that chamber. I had that honour for one term.

A lot has been said about Lynne's contribution, the difference she made and the fact that she was clearly a high achiever in so many ways. She was very committed to her community and dedicated to making

Victoria and the west a better place for all who live here. It is fair to say that that was a difference she achieved. She will be judged by her actions, as she said and as the Leader of the Government mentioned, and it is clear that those actions have made a difference to many.

Lynne Kosky was also a woman who forged paths, and the paths she forged are now paths that women travel perhaps a little more easily as a result of some of her leadership. As a member of Parliament for 14 years and a minister for a decade there is no doubt she made a very substantial contribution. As we have heard, she was very much a product of the western suburbs and a very passionate advocate for them, having grown up, gone to school and lived there all of her life. There have been numerous acknowledgements of the different roles she played in the west, including as a councillor in the then City of Footscray and as its mayor for a couple of years.

There are a lot of very good descriptions of the role she played, as mentioned by the Leader of the Government, in the community campaign to save the Footscray Football Club, as a board member, as an advocate, as the no. 1 ticketholder and, importantly, as the first woman on the board of Footscray Football Club. In fact she was one of the first women to serve on the board of any AFL club. There was no premiership for Footscray while Lynne was alive, and I am sure she would have regarded that as unfinished business, but the fact that the Footscray Football Club is the vibrant club it is today is in part a result of the considerable efforts she made at that time.

Lynne also had a lifelong passion for education and worked in a number of roles that demonstrated that passion. She worked as a social worker and as a community education officer. She was also a community liaison officer for the Melbourne Olympic Committee and served on the Immigration Review Panel. She had a variety of roles and at all times was very connected to the people and the community and as an advocate for their needs.

Lynne was elected as the member for Altona in the other place in 1996. That she was immediately promoted to the shadow front bench is an indication of the respect in which she was held by her colleagues. She proceeded to serve on the front bench for her entire career in Parliament. As the Leader of the Government mentioned, there have been a number of mentions of how all the way through, but particularly in the early days, her parliamentary career she managed with a young family and the dynamics and challenges of doing that. She talked about the ways she managed that, the

ways she kept connected and how important her family was to her.

There is a little bit of irony in that this week in this chamber and certainly in the other place members will be debating the issue of family-friendly hours. Some of the issues that Lynne Kosky talked about 15 years ago have been progressively improved, but there is still a long way to go. She put these issues forward vocally and strongly, perhaps sometimes a little to her detriment. As a woman, as a mother and as a member of Parliament she talked about the challenges we all face in managing those dynamics.

When the Bracks government was elected Lynne was appointed Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment. She also served as the Minister for Finance. As has been mentioned, she held a number of ministries, including the portfolios of education, public transport and the arts. As has been acknowledged, there were a lot of achievements in that time, particularly with her work around the Victorian certificate of applied learning, and I am sure we will hear more on that. Its establishment has been acknowledged and I think she also acknowledged that it was one of her proudest achievements in that time.

What characterised Lynne for me was that she had a real can-do attitude. She was passionate in her work, she was ambitious about what outcomes were achievable, she was energetic and she was full of ideas about how to make our community better.

There are a number of quotes in a number of articles, but a wonderful quote that particularly stuck in my mind and resonated with me was reported in the *Age* of 10 January 1990:

I'd rather be an optimist who turns out to be wrong than a pessimist who's right.

That very much characterises the can-do attitude that Lynne Kosky had in her approach to many things and certainly in her roles in this Parliament and in government. The fact that she stayed a minister on the front bench for such an extended period of time was clear recognition and acknowledgement of her talents, of the esteem in which her colleagues held her and of her capacity to successfully fulfil those challenging and difficult roles.

She was a great advocate for what she believed in across a whole range of areas, and she made a significant positive difference for many in her community and across the state. She served this Parliament and the people of Victoria with honour and distinction. On behalf of the Victorian Liberal Party I

offer my sincerest condolences to her family and acknowledge the significant contribution and difference Lynne Kosky made to the lives of many in this state.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — The Greens also wish to associate themselves with this condolence motion. I thank the previous two speakers, who summed up a great deal of what Lynne was. I especially thank Mr Jennings, with whom I attended the funeral service. It was a most amazing event where we were able to celebrate this life that achieved so much.

I have a few personal remarks to make. Over the weekend I was trying to think when I first met Lynne, and I realised it was in 1998 when she doorknocked me in the lead-up to the Footscray council election. I was in her ward. I did what I tell all my doorknockers not to do; I invited her in for a cup of tea. We chatted for about 40 minutes about all the things I saw wrong with the Footscray council, and at the end of that time she had convinced me that she understood the problems and also knew the solutions, and one of them was about getting younger people, especially women with her kind of intellect, on the council. I am quite happy to have voted for her back then.

The thing about Lynne is that she treated people equally no matter where they came from, what they did or what their status in life was, and I know about this because when I dealt with Lynne in the 1980s and 1990s I was usually working in quite low-paid manual jobs such as cooking, cleaning and home care. It was even the case in Parliament House that when I used to serve Lynne cups of tea and make her sandwiches, she treated me with respect, and she treated the community with respect.

One of the great challenges Lynne and I faced was the Coode Island fire, which had a profound effect on our community, so much so that I still remember exactly what time it started and the date. I was working in the kitchens here, and Lynne came and got me to go and speak to Neil Pope about what had happened and what the implications for the community were. During that time she gave her heart and soul to trying to resolve what happened that day. When I look back now, I see that Lynne and I did not always agree during that time — we were two very strong-willed, hot-headed women who had some real ding-dongs over that time — but she worked hard during the Coode Island review panel period to make sure the reports reflected what actually happened that day and how we could fix it and make sure those kinds of incidents were not repeated.

When I was first elected Lynne invited me to her office in Altona to welcome me to my new job. That is the kind of person she was. Mr Jennings mentioned the word ‘kind’ several times, and I have that word in my speech several times too because she was kind to people. You could have a really good ding-dong fight with her, but then she was kind to you and always very helpful.

I have another connection to Lynne because for a long time my husband, Victor Moore, was an organiser with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, and he was an organiser in that union when Lynne was the Minister for Public Transport. Occasionally we would run into each other at functions and there would be little conversations about what was happening, how it was going to be fixed and all those kinds of things.

What was clear to me at Lynne’s funeral was how much she was loved by her husband, Jim, and by her children, Jackson and Hana, and how much she loved them. The turnout also showed me that she was respected and loved by the community. Lynne was a true child of Footscray. She was tough, stubborn and kind. She stood up for the people of the west and made sure we got what we deserved. Lynne died far too early — she was only 56 — which says to us that we should live every day as fully as we can to make sure we have the kind of life that Lynne lived.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — On behalf of The Nationals I support the condolence motion for Lynne Kosky. When I arrived here in 2002 she was the Minister for Education and Training in the Bracks government and a member of the other house, and when you first come into this place the contact you have with ministers in the other house is somewhat sparse. However, even from a distance I found her to be pleasant, courteous and respectful, and she always wanted to at least understand the issues you were bringing from regional Victoria to her table to try to find some sort of answer.

Looking through the research records on her time in Parliament, I note that in the four-year period she was education minister there were seemingly no real complications or inconsistencies; her competency in that area was certainly well reflected in the records. In 2006 a range of issues hounded her in some respects. It was really interesting to hear Mr Jennings talk about many of those issues. She took over from other public transport ministers in dealing with issues such as myki, the lack of rolling stock and the existence of a system that maybe had not had the maintenance investment it should have had. All of a sudden a lady, a minister, was coping the flak but refusing to duckshove that

responsibility. That shows another character within the minister that was a very admirable trait.

When you add that to the trailblazing work Ms Wooldridge spoke about in relation to Lynne Kosky's leadership at the Footscray Football Club when she took it through possibly its darkest years when many wanted to see that club fold — and she was at a young age and she had already been mayor of the western suburbs' major precinct — it all starts to meld together to form a view and an image of a person who was obviously very intelligent, very capable and very hardworking, who was a high achiever and who had these other traits which are probably more important. She treated people around her very well and at the same time refused to call out for a fair break even though many of the issues she was getting blamed for had nothing to do with her whatsoever.

To talk too long on these issues when you do not have the knowledge that others in the chamber have may not be the right thing to do. As I said, I always found Lynne Kosky to be incredibly courteous and pleasant and very professional. It is incredibly sad when people are taken away from their colleagues. I also think it is worth acknowledging today that another one of our members has had an enormous loss over the summer — I am referring to Jaala Pulford losing Sinead. It just gives us another kick up the pants.

There are three elements today. One point is that we are getting the opportunity to acknowledge what a great job various politicians have done in their lives. We should do that with John McQuilten, we should do it with Lynne Kosky, and we should do it every time we get the opportunity to do so in a condolence debate. We should also use this as a bit of a kick up the pants for ourselves. Are we making the most of every day? Are we getting out of bed trying to live up to the opportunity we have been given? Are we doing as much as we can for the people we represent when we have been gifted this great opportunity to do so? What Jaala and her family have gone through and the stories of love around Lynne Kosky and her family bring forward a third issue: I hope we are getting the balance right in our own lives and spending enough time with our own families and our own loved ones so that we do not repeat the mistakes that many of us make on a daily basis in getting too caught up in our own lives.

With those three lessons, I dip my lid to the Leader of the Government, who has given us an incredible insight into Lynne Kosky's life and has acknowledged her loved ones. It must be a very painful time for them at this moment.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — It is with a huge sense of sadness but a great deal of pride that I stand here as the Minister for Training and Skills speaking on this condolence motion for Lynne Kosky. Lynne was a great friend and a great mentor to me. As the new Minister for Training and Skills — this ministerial portfolio being one she held with enormous pride — I intend to use a lot of the lessons I had from her in terms of how she behaved and how she handled herself as a minister and to put them to good use in the way I address my role as a minister in this government.

People have spoken about their first meetings with Lynne, whether it had been doorknocking or whatever. I was a fairly young adviser between 1990 and 1992, and I think it was about 1991 when I first met Lynne. We were attending a meeting of ministers across portfolios and, as these meetings go, we were discussing high issues of policy. Members who remember those days will remember they were pretty tough days for the Labor government.

The year 1991 was really tough for Victoria and a really tough year in which to be a government adviser. We were sitting there, as advisers often do, at the back of the room while our ministers were talking up the front. I think Lynne Kosky has been described as hot-headed; in fact she was an absolute fireball. Suddenly at this mumble-mumble-type meeting this young woman jumped up and gave an absolutely over-the-top speech about the need to have vigorous policy debate, to do the best we could to really look after the people, particularly those in the western suburbs, to never let the day-to-day life of politics grind us down and to get on and do our best and lift our heads high and move on. I tell you what: it was like a whirlwind had gone through that meeting. No-one knew what to say after that, but we all walked away a little bit more determined to do our best.

Back then I never thought that quite a few years later I would have the privilege of serving Lynne as her chief of staff as she held the same portfolio I hold now, a portfolio which deals with training, higher education, skills and reform of the Victorian certificate of education. This is a portfolio Lynne had in the first Bracks government and is an incredibly important portfolio in terms of education. The years 1999 to 2002 were heady days when it came to education reform in this state. I have no doubt that Lynne can be claimed as having been one of the best education ministers Victoria has seen — and we have had some pretty good education ministers from all sides of the political divide. She was passionate, she was committed to public education and training, she inspired others and

she made people working with her feel proud that they were part of a journey of advancement.

Her views on the importance of education are summed up in a second-reading speech she delivered in 2006, in which she said:

Of all the factors that have the potential to increase an individual's opportunities, education and training is the most enabling. It allows individuals to equip themselves to live fulfilling, productive and satisfying lives. It provides the opportunity for them to consider their place in our democratic Australian communities and to acknowledge their cultural and linguistic heritage. Not only does education provide the grounding for the development of skills and judgement, it supports people to be innovative and creative. Education and training enables individuals to contribute to Australian society by adding to our national prosperity, participating in our democratic processes and strengthening the cohesive and egalitarian nature of our communities. It is a private good that has immense public value.

...

It is a fundamental community and social glue, while being a bridge to a more prosperous and harmonious future.

That was Lynne's belief and her passion. I did not write that speech; I could not write it. She wrote that one herself. It sums up everything she believed when it came to education.

Lynne had a commitment to all young people, no matter what their background, their interests or where they were from. She believed in having equal opportunity to make a contribution to our society. She believed in all people having the same opportunities in life, no matter what their background or beliefs. With these views at the forefront, she raised the minimum school leaving age to 17. She recognised that the time of kids leaving school early was well past and that unless you had a good education you could not have a strong, prosperous life, and she acted upon it.

Amongst a whole range of reforms that Lynne made she was probably most proud of her changes to the Victorian certificate of education and the introduction of the Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL). At the time Steve Bracks became Premier this state had very academic senior years. Undoubtedly there is debate about this, but we saw retention rates declining; we saw a lot of young people leaving school because they were not academic and did not want to do an academic course. Lynne recognised the need for an alternative stream of education at the senior years so that those who were not particularly good at English, geography or history but who wanted to stay at school to learn skills and gain a broader, more rounded education had that opportunity. She fought hard to devise, develop and introduce what was at the time a

controversial but innovative second stream of education, which has served this state and many of the people in it very well.

I am sure, remembering the many debates we had at the time, that Lynne was immensely proud to see her own son, Jack, become VCAL captain at Williamstown High School some 10 years after the program was introduced. It gives me great pleasure today to know that the Premier has announced a VCAL scholarship in honour of Lynne and the contribution she made to education. For many people education is expensive and difficult to access. Vocational education and training and VCAL are pretty expensive in Victoria nowadays. These scholarships will provide two outstanding year 10 students with \$5000 per annum for five years so that they can continue their education. They will be for young people who are in financial need but who are also making a contribution to their local community. It will not only be a great legacy for Lynne but will also help to cement the value of VCAL in the minds of generations of young people to come.

Lynne Kosky's significant reforms in education paved the way for generations of children and young people, opening up opportunity for students across this state. On top of the innovations I have mentioned, she brought in the Education and Training Reform Bill 2006, which sought to overturn what she saw as an archaic school system unsuited to the needs of the 21st century. She wanted a system that was seamless, flexible and responsive to the needs of this state, with high standards but also multiple pathways and lifelong learning opportunities.

Lynne lived her life the way she championed education. She was also a champion of design, a great seamstress, a great painter, a great jewellery-maker and a great craftsperson. People would comment on her clothing — you would think they were pretty expensive, top of Collins Street outfits — and she was well known for her fashion sense, but on weekends she would be at home designing and making those outfits herself. I did not know that until I took a brief around to her house one Saturday afternoon — something desperate chiefs of staff do — eager to talk to her about the latest problem we had, and there she was at her sewing machine making an outfit for the training awards, which were in the next week or so. She was a great lover of the arts and all that that entails.

There are many anecdotes that I and others could tell about our times with Lynne. She was a great friend, a great confidant and a great employer. But for me, there is one anecdote that sums it up best. We were in China at the time, promoting education and the government,

and it had been a pretty long day of meetings. Meetings with the Chinese can be pretty difficult; a lot of interpreting goes on, and there are a lot of formalities. That night the Beijing tax bureau took us out for dinner. It was a very big night. The next day Lynne had to speak at a large conference of about 1000 people. I was a bit worse for wear and sat at the back nursing a coffee, but Lynne sat up the front, and she was incredible. She chatted to everybody and engaged all those around her. She got up after about the fifth or sixth speaker — and the Chinese are not known for their brevity — and made a fantastic speech, engaging all around her and really uplifting the audience. For me it was a great illustration of the fact that no matter what her circumstances, no matter how she felt personally, she always strove to do a tremendous job, to impress those around her and to really push the government's and Victoria's agendas.

I have talked about education, but I was reminded that Lynne was also the Minister for Finance at the time of the collapse of HIH Insurance. Those who were around here then will know that HIH was one of the biggest personal liability insurers in the state. Through a range of circumstances, some of which it should have disclosed to the stock exchange much earlier, the company collapsed. That created a crisis for many clubs, including sporting clubs, as well as community groups, members of school working bees and fetes, and volunteers right around the state. People running those clubs and groups could not get insurance and so could not hold their events.

It was a massive issue. Members of the insurance industry were pushing hard for really strong limits on payouts, and others were saying that the state government should step in and provide the insurance. What did Lynne do? She listened to all and decided to do her own market research. She flew to London, organised meetings virtually overnight with Lloyds and some of the biggest captains of the insurance industry, got their advice, came back to cabinet and gave a measured response to the question of how we should respond to the issue. It was the right response because pretty quickly we got the insurance happening again so all those community and other volunteer groups could continue to do the great work they do.

Lynne was a fighter. She fought for a fair and just education system in this state, she fought to expand public transport, she fought to save the Footscray Football Club, which she loved dearly, and she fought for a higher education presence in the west and she won all those battles.

I last saw Lynne a few weeks before her death, at a jewellery exhibition she had put on. Like most people who were there, I was a bit shocked at how she looked, I have to tell you. I bought a pair of earrings for my daughter, and I am as proud as anything to be reminded of Lynne every time my daughter wears those earrings. She was a great jeweller but, as I say, she was a person with great tenacity. At that time she had three wishes. The first was to have her final jewellery exhibition and showcase her art. The second was to celebrate her daughter's 21st birthday. The third was to see the election of an Andrews government. I have to say that I did not think she would succeed in those ambitions no matter how strong-willed she was, but she did. With the tenacity that she showed all her life, she saw those three achievements.

She has left a great legacy that I know her husband, Jim, her lifelong love — they were lovers since their teen years, really, since university — and their children, Hana and Jackson, whom she adored, are immensely proud of. They will miss her, sadly, as will all her friends. Vale Lynne Kosky.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — Lynne Kosky was a friend and a role model to many. I stand today proud to say that she was both for me. I was saddened, like many in this Parliament, by her death. Like many women who fight breast cancer, she died way too young.

Lynne was a Footscray High School student who went on to Melbourne University through sheer determination, and she devoted her life to public service. There is much in her life that I can relate to personally, and I think there is much that many can relate to and see as a source of inspiration. Lynne was a strong and accomplished woman and a strong and accomplished minister. In an article published in the *Age* of 16 February 2002 former Premier Joan Kirner was reported as having described Lynne Kosky as:

... cool, precise, politically aware and no-one's lackey. She masters her brief and picks her battlegrounds. She networks. A senior member of the Socialist Left faction and aware of the need for a power base, she nevertheless maintains an independent view. She believes in equity and is a strong feminist ...

The many contributions that have already been made to this motion are testament to the very significant contribution Lynne Kosky made to public life and the fact that she was a remarkable woman, a reformer and someone whose life experience and wisdom allowed her to create opportunities for people. She was a strong civic leader and a local advocate always, but she demonstrated that she could carry the heart and hopes

of her community in Melbourne's west and upon that frame build opportunities for people and communities everywhere in our state.

The admiration and respect people had for Lynne were apparent at her funeral, which the Leader of the Government referred to. It was an amazing service. It was a true celebration of her life and her contribution as a mother, spouse, friend and politician. Other aspects of Lynne's life were touched upon at her funeral, aspects that many of us perhaps did not know so much about, such as her love for travel and the arts. Mr Herbert has already referred to the fact that Lynne used to sew her own clothes. As a new member of Parliament I discovered that she was a minister and she was managing to sew her own clothes. I truly was amazed, and I still am, by that.

Mr Herbert — Her shoes were Italian.

Ms MIKAKOS — Mr Herbert added, 'Her shoes were Italian'. I was truly amazed by the fact that she was clearly such a well-organised person that she managed to get that balance in her life. As I understand it, she found the design and making of clothes a quite calming and relaxing experience.

It was fortunate for this state that Lynne was inspired to enter public life, starting with her council career in the late 1980s and continuing right up until she left political life prematurely in early 2010. Lynne was a trusted community leader when she was appointed to the Coode Island Review Panel, whose members were charged with making recommendations in the wake of the fire at the Coode Island storage facility. It was her advocacy on behalf of the community of the west that instilled a greater sensitivity to the health risk identification, reporting and monitoring capabilities specified in the final recommendations.

In everything Lynne did she saw the greatest opportunity and the highest point of achievement — for others. As education minister, Lynne advocated reforms to our education system that were not just about the structures and administration of education — that was the policy of governments a century earlier. Lynne Kosky was a reformer who sought to create opportunity. Young people who previously would have been thought unable to fit into our formal education system were given new pathways in their education through the introduction of the Victorian certificate of applied learning.

Education gives people choices and opportunities to succeed in life, and Lynne understood that. It certainly gave her opportunities and opened many doors for her.

Changing a part of an education system requires energy and stamina and few people in this country have achieved it. Reforming an entire state education system can only be achieved by someone who has a big vision and an understanding of what education really delivers in the lives of people.

In all aspects of public life Lynne saw opportunities to help people to realise their potential: as mayor in the then City of Footscray, with the lives of young people in our education system and also in the hard edges of public infrastructure reform, public transport and planning. She was committed to people, and she was committed to communities. Public life magnifies the character of a person. We may all take from the example of Lynne Kosky's life some lessons on courage, selflessness and leadership. She is one of those great people who have installed greater respect for and professionalism in public life.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to her partner, Jim Williamson, their children, Hana and Jackson, and her friends and family.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the motion. Whilst I did not have the opportunity to work closely with Lynne, I know a fair bit about the former member for Altona, who was a great advocate for the western suburbs; previous speakers alluded to that in their contributions.

Lynne's commitment to education, particularly in the west, was second to none. Mr Jennings talked about when Lynne, along with Peter Gordon, went to Melbourne University and how they were picked on because they came from the western suburbs. One of the drivers for Lynne was to work hard and continue her advocacy for the improvement of the lives of people in the western suburbs. I could go on about her contribution in the area of health. She advocated, along with other people, for the building of the Sunshine Hospital.

Public transport was another area Lynne worked tirelessly on developing. The *Victorian Transport Plan* was developed under the Bracks and Brumby governments and Lynne had a major stake in putting that plan together. The regional rail project has since been delivered, and Lynne made sure the western suburbs of Melbourne would get some benefit out of that investment in public transport. That project was commissioned to go ahead by the former Labor government and was implemented by the former coalition government. A lot of credit for that project goes to Lynne.

Another area Lynne was very passionate about was her football club, the Western Bulldogs. When I was listening to Peter Gordon at her state funeral service in Williamstown, I related to his remarks about Lynne and her club because I am a Western Bulldogs member. I remember the days in 1989 when the western suburbs was about to lose its only true football club, the Footscray Football Club, in a forced merger with the Fitzroy Football Club. Lynne, along with Peter Gordon, led the fight and saved the club. I am grateful for her hard work because we still have a successful football club in the western suburbs. Mind you, we have only had one premiership, but we are working on the second one, which will hopefully happen in the next few years.

Lynne was the first woman to be on the board of the Footscray Football Club, now the Western Bulldogs, and that opened the way for many women to be on various AFL club boards. That is a credit to the way Lynne went about things. She did not just do the talk — she talked about issues and was a great advocate — but she was a doer as well, and she led by example. All women in Victoria and Australia should be proud of Lynne Kosky and what she achieved. She is a role model. With those few words, I extend my condolences to Jim, Hana and Jack, Lynne's extended family and her many friends. May her soul rest in peace.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the motion. As a new member of this Parliament, it is with great pride that I have the opportunity to pay tribute to and honour the achievements of the Honourable Lynne Kosky. Lynne was an inspiring MP and minister who led from the heart and for whom compassion and community sat at the heart of her politics. Her background in social work and her extensive community experience prior to her election to this place meant that she brought with her a true understanding of how to effectively represent community interests and needs amidst the political fray of the parliamentary theatre.

During 14 years of dedicated service to Victorians she served in the portfolios of housing and youth affairs and made a tremendous contribution as a minister across the portfolios of post-compulsory education, training and employment, finance, education and training, public transport and the arts. It was in the final term of the Bracks government when Lynne held the public transport and arts portfolios that on occasion I had the pleasure of meeting with her.

Many members have commented today on Lynne's kindness, and I too recall her kindness. She always made an effort to acknowledge advisers in the room and to question us on our passions or, when she met us

in the parliamentary dining room, on our reason for being at Parliament House. I remember that she completely rocked a suit! It was her genuine interest in people that made her an effective minister, and this is evidenced in the high regard in which she was held by her staff and the fondness with which she is remembered by her constituents and her colleagues. We have heard today from some of her colleagues who served with her in the Parliament.

Lynne was passionate about education and giving Victorian students the very best quality teachers, the right schooling environment and the most effective of resources. We have heard about her passion for education and opportunity, particularly in the western suburbs of Melbourne. I have an appreciation of what drives these types of people. My husband spent his teaching career in schools in Melton and Sunshine, and I thank Lynne for her contribution in this space.

Lynne remained resolute and committed to making Victoria renowned for its education system, and this ambitious and worthy goal is now at the heart of the Andrews Labor government's commitment to make Victoria the education state. Labor's win on 29 November, days before her passing, would have been an immense source of pride for Lynne, knowing how integral Labor's commitment to build a world-class education system was to that victory.

As a hardworking mum and wife, Lynne juggled the demands of parenting her young family whilst fulfilling the constant demands of her political career. She was a trailblazer who showed us it could be done. She showed us how to make it work and how to do it well. In this Parliament there are now many mums, myself included, for whom her example of combining these two enormous life challenges provides both an inspiration and a road map. She was committed to encouraging more women into politics, and I know she is personally responsible for inspiring a number of our current parliamentarians to enter the fray.

Lynne was as passionate about her family as she was about her politics, and ultimately her dedication to her family triggered her departure from politics after 14 years of remarkable service. Her diagnosis of breast cancer, her subsequent fight and the numerous complications that beset her during her illness did not stop her from raising awareness of the disease and of the need to continue to seek new fronts upon which to fight it through research. She fought a good fight against cancer, just as she had fought many a good fight on behalf of her community and her constituents during her distinguished career both before and after entering the Victorian Parliament.

She will be remembered as a trailblazer who never shied away from a challenge and who took on the tough battles with warmth, intelligence, compassion and steely determination. She is a great loss to our Labor family. To Jim, Jackson and Hana, thank you for sharing so much of your wonderful wife and mum with us over the years. We will be forever grateful that we got to benefit from her talent and intelligence. Vale Lynne Kosky.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this condolence motion. I acknowledge the appreciation and the kindness shown by Ms Wooldridge, Ms Hartland and Mr Drum in their contributions to this condolence motion for someone who I thought was an absolutely wonderful person, a great minister and a great human being.

I start by giving my condolences to the people who were most important to her — her husband, her children and her close friends. It was a privilege to attend the memorial service for Lynne Kosky in Williamstown and a privilege to hear the contributions, particularly from her children. It must have been very hard for them, considering that their mother passed away so young. However, the circumstances that led Lynne to leave her very public and busy life of serving the people of Victoria allowed her the opportunity to spend nearly all of her remaining time with her family, and considering that Lynne and her family could not have foreseen her contracting this terrible cancer which ended her life way too early we all felt a bit happier when we heard that.

The contribution from one of Lynne's close friends showed how Lynne always put others first. She shared a story about how Lynne responded when close friends first spoke to her about her diagnosis of cancer. Lynne's reaction was, 'Cancer — big deal! I had transport', which showed that she did not want people to be too sad about her unfortunate diagnosis.

I found it amazing to note when reading condolence motions from previous parliaments how often the person making the contribution talked more about themselves than the person they were grieving for, but in fairness what we really know about a person as an individual comes from our interactions with them.

I found upon entering Parliament in 2006 that I did not know my colleagues in the caucus particularly well. They may have not known me well either, particularly a lot of the ministers. As members know, when you become a member of Parliament the first caucus meeting you have with your party is a bit unreal. You sit in a room sharing lame jokes and stories with, in my

case, people like John Brumby, Rob Hulls and Lynne Kosky — people who you do not really know but who are heroes to your party. I think a lot of members will agree with that. It is a strange system you enter when you are a new member of Parliament.

I found Lynne Kosky in particular to be very approachable. As a representative of a lot of people in a certain part of Melbourne I advocated public transport issues and found Lynne Kosky more than approachable and more than helpful. She would always make time to at least hear my pitch. I was not always successful, but at least my pitch was heard.

I remember one occasion when I was led to approach Lynne. The Road Safety Committee, of which I was a member at the time, was undertaking a two-day regional trip for its inquiry into improving safety at level crossings. It is a funny thing that we politicians become experts very quickly when we are on these sorts of committees! There were seven of us on the committee and we were jumping out and looking at level crossings, saying, 'Maybe there should be a stop sign here instead of a give way sign' and all sorts of stuff that we did not know anything about.

But I was fortunate enough to be sitting on the minibus next to one of the high-ranking people in Lynne's department. We had a conversation about an early driver education facility out in North Bayswater with which I had had some dealings. On this particular trip we had a conversation that maybe this facility, where year 10 students from schools all over the eastern suburbs get training, should incorporate a level crossing on the track to help educate students and make them more aware of level crossings. We hatched a plan between us that perhaps the department could rustle up some second-hand poles, some bells and some flashing lights, and we thought that so long as the school was prepared to run the power to it and keep it running, it would be a good thing to have a level crossing there.

The departmental officer and I hatched this plan between us. He said to me, 'I think we have come up with a great idea, but you are the one who has to go and sell it to the minister', and he was a bit nervous about it. When I spoke to Lynne about this particular idea she said, 'I think that is a good thing', and she made it happen. To me that epitomised completely the person Lynne Kosky was. If she believed something was good and it was something she could have some influence over, she would make it happen.

I know our state is only small, but what would our state be like without the Western Bulldogs? Education is more than sport. What would our state be like without

the Victorian certificate of applied learning? Lynne Kosky's achievements remind us of the sorts of things that we should all aspire to one day, things that will be talked about in the same breath, leaving a legacy as she did. We should all look at and appreciate what Lynne Kosky did and send all our care and concern to the people she has left behind.

The PRESIDENT — Lynne Kosky was, as members have indicated, taken much too young. But it is interesting to note that, given her too few years on earth, she has put all our individual personal efforts in perspective because of her outstanding achievements. She was a lady who had extraordinary leadership qualities, who was a very determined and tenacious person, who did not shy away from big challenges and who understood the big picture, and yet she was able to devote herself to the more detailed and intricate aspects of life, as was epitomised by her work as a seamstress and as a jewellery maker. I have seen some of her work and I agree with Mr Herbert that it is sensational.

I also had the opportunity of attending, along with many members of this place, the celebration of her life at Williamstown town hall. It is customary to talk about a person's funeral as a celebration of their life; it is something done to try to cheer people up. But I have to say that this was one of those events that really was a celebration of life, was uplifting and was inspiring, in keeping with a person who was a very inspirational woman.

Lynne's contributions at a municipal level and, as has been indicated, in religion, as it were, with the Western Bulldogs — which is so much a religion of the western suburbs and further afield — and then her contribution here in the state Parliament on behalf of the people of Victoria stand as testaments to a woman with great leadership qualities and will stand the test of time by any person's measurement. She was engaging and enthusiastic. She was always quick with a smile and prepared to engage in a conversation. On many occasions I saw her in Parliament House — this is going back to the 1990s — with her young family and her husband, Jim. It was great to see her making that time to be with her family, sharing what was a very public life with them and achieving that sort of balance which has been spoken about in some of the contributions today.

What is really interesting is that this was a lady who lived her life totally in the public glare. From the time she chose to become a municipal councillor at Footscray right through to her untimely death she lived her life entirely in the public glare, even sharing some of her greatest struggles, and particularly those at the

end with illness. She was inspirational to many people, and I am sure that she will be a flag-bearer for many young women in the future. I hope they take up the challenge that she has presented us all with, which is to see the big picture, to tackle the big challenges and to apply ourselves to achieving a better society for our children and grandchildren. I think that was very much her aspiration.

Since the funeral, the celebration of life that we had at Williamstown, I have thought of Lynne Kosky almost every day. The reason is that at that celebration of her life some music was played which she had chosen; it was obviously by one of her favourite artists, Sara Bareilles. I regard myself as pretty good at keeping up with some of the artists — not that I think there are many of much value today — but Sara Bareilles is one who had gone under my radar. I had never heard of her. Here I was at this great event at Williamstown listening to somebody who was very special to Lynne Kosky. I tell you that I left that event and within a few days I had picked up some CDs of Sara Bareilles and they have sat in the car ever since. I listen to them almost on a daily basis, alternating between those and music by Leonard Cohen.

In putting the motion moved by the Leader of the Government, I ask members to signify their assent by rising in their places for 1 minute.

Motion agreed to in silence, honourable members showing unanimous agreement by standing in their places.

The PRESIDENT — Order! As a further mark of respect to Mr McQuilten and the Honourable Lynne Kosky I propose that the house be suspended until 5.30 p.m.

Sitting suspended 4.26 p.m. until 5.34 p.m.

ACTING PRESIDENTS

The PRESIDENT laid on table warrant nominating Ms Patten, Mr Finn, Mr Ramsay, Mr Morris, Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh and Mr Elasmar to preside as acting presidents when requested to do so by the President or Deputy President.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I extend my thanks to each of those members for being prepared to take on the role of acting president. I am sure that each of them will be given the due respect and support of the chamber that Gayle Tierney and I enjoy as Deputy President and President.

BLACK SATURDAY

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) (*By leave*) — All members of this chamber, all members of the Parliament and all members of the Victorian community who endured Black Saturday in February 2009, six years ago, will recall the horrendous experience shared by our community in responding to the horrors of the bushfires that took 173 lives in our community and wreaked havoc across the landscape, destroying not only lives but property and livelihood. It had a devastating effect on our community in any number of ways, but through that experience, as has been commented on in Parliament previously, we saw the great resolve and resilience of the Victorian community and the great capacity of its members to support one another in times of crisis. Whilst this has been described as the worst of times, it also brought out the best in our community, the best in our humanity, the best of our resolve and the best of our determination to recover and rebuild communities.

It is in that spirit that I, on behalf of the government, comment on the extraordinary effort that was made at that time by our firefighters, both career and volunteer firefighters across our community; officers of various agencies who worked across the public service in a number of government departments; the police; the paramedics who were on call in responding to the needs of our community; people from the Red Cross and St John Ambulance; representatives from local government across Victoria; and members of the State Emergency Service. They all came together to support that effort both in terms of responding to the emergency and assisting with the recovery and the extraordinary rebuilding that we have seen across Victorian communities. The community embraced the things that brought them together to respond to that devastation and felt stronger as a result.

Whilst we will not be defined by the ruin and the devastation of that event, we can certainly be defined — we hope — in the future by our combined efforts, our resilience and our determination to rise up in the spirit of cooperation and support for one another that is the hallmark of what is best about the Victorian community. It is something that we, on the anniversary of that event, wish to mark. We thank the Parliament for the opportunity to do so.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) (*By leave*) — While six years is a long time, it feels like just yesterday that the horrendous Black Saturday bushfires devastated the Victorian community on Saturday, 7 February, 2009. There is no doubt that the events of Black Saturday are etched in the memories of all

Victorians. We remember the stories of loss and grief and the stories of the destruction of homes and community facilities, but importantly we also remember the stories of inspiring community spirit that came as a result. One hundred and seventy-three lives were lost; about 400 people suffered serious injury, and many of them are still dealing with those injuries today; 2000 homes were destroyed; and 7000 people were displaced.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant efforts made by successive governments since that time to address the issues raised with and the recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, whether it be in regard to fuel reduction burning, planning changes, voluntary buyback schemes or issues like the register for vulnerable people in communities, which I know about from my role as a former minister with responsibility in this area, so that they can be identified on dangerous days, as well as the availability of the mental health workforce and access to mental health services that were so needed by so many.

Victorians and the Victorian Parliament will not forget Black Saturday. We will not forget the men, women and children who lost their lives. We will not forget those who are still affected. We will not forget the firefighters of the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the State Emergency Service, the then Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria — firefighters across the board — who battled the infernos. Many of the volunteers have been recognised for their heroic efforts by being awarded national service medals.

We will not forget the police, the Department of Human Services workers, the mental health workers, the Salvos, St John Ambulance Australia and so many other community workers who gave their all for those who were affected by the bushfires. To this day those workers and the volunteers have our thanks. To this day the affected families and communities have our support for and admiration of the strength and resilience they showed at the time and continue to show. The magnitude of loss was the worst that our nation has ever seen, and as the sixth anniversary of Black Saturday is acknowledged this house acknowledges all those who were affected. They are in our thoughts and in our hearts still today and will be in the years to come.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) (*By leave*) — I join with other party leaders in supporting the motion to commemorate this unspeakable tragedy. For those who were in any way connected to it, it is still one of the most haunting events of our lives. As other

speakers have noted, the repercussions of it continue to affect our communities and put additional responsibilities on us as members of Parliament.

I fear that Ms Wooldridge is correct in saying that we will not forget this event, because events like it will continue to occur with increasing frequency and severity. Every summer now we face the possibility of another tragedy. It is not simply a matter for those who respond to the event, it is a matter for those who have to work particularly diligently to prevent the impacts of fires and other natural disasters. I fear that here in the Parliament we still have a lot of work to do in order to ensure that events like this cannot ever occur again.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) (*By leave*) — On behalf of The Nationals I too join in this commemoration of what happened six years ago on Black Saturday. I have a list of towns and communities that were affected, but I will not read it out. The memory of the extreme heat experienced for many days on end is still clear. On that Saturday the extreme winds brought conditions together into a cocktail that had the Premier of the day warn Victorians that we were possibly facing the most extreme conditions imaginable.

It has been mentioned that the losses were horrendous — 173 lives and many people seriously injured. It was not just the lives, the properties or the houses lost; it was the sense of loss within the individuals who survived. If you looked into their eyes, you could see they were affected years later because of what they experienced. It is hard to quantify the deep trauma that many of these people and many communities have had to deal with over the years. It is interesting to think that we are now probably much safer after that tragedy. We used to live with the model, ‘If you want to stay, stay with a plan, and you will be right. If you want to go, go. The choice is yours’. We now live in an era when we say, ‘If you want to live, leave’. We have learnt that lesson. We have learnt lessons in relation to community safer places. We have learnt lessons in relation to the fact that we have to increase our fuel reduction burns.

Irrespective of opposition to this policy, it has been proved by the royal commission that we have to go down this path. We have to put our powerlines underground. We are moving in this direction to try to make this state safer for everybody, and we have to keep pushing down this path. We need to learn the lessons from that horrendous experience and keep making this state safer for our people.

Last year we made a much bigger deal of the five-year anniversary. The reason we are backing away from doing that again is that it is what the people who have survived this ordeal want. They want to honour the people they lost and honour the people who lost property, and they want to move on and get on with their lives. That is why this small contribution is the best effort in this regard. Provided we do learn the lessons of Black Saturday and look for a safer Victoria, it is now time to keep moving forward.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank all speakers. I commend the Leader of the Government for his statement and for giving an opportunity to other members to make a contribution. Interestingly enough, I was in Kinglake on Sunday, and it is great to see the resurgence of that community. It is also a place where you do reflect on that tragedy. On some of the roads into Kinglake you recognise the extraordinary danger people were in and the efforts of our emergency service workers in their commitment to the people of Victoria.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Move-on laws

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. I note the government’s announcement today that it will repeal the move-on laws that gave protection against unruly demonstrators. Therefore my question for the minister is: did he consult the small business sector, including construction, and did it support Labor’s weakening of these crucial protections against intimidation and thuggery?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — It was a policy that we had going into the election. This is a matter for the Attorney-General. I will take this on notice and pass it through to the Attorney-General.

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, it is a matter for the minister as to whether he consulted with small businesses that are part of his sector.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I did not hear all of the member’s question, so I am at a bit of a loss on the original question.

Mr Davis — My question for the minister is: with whom did he consult in the small business sector, including construction, and did it support Labor’s weakening of these critical protections against intimidation and thuggery?

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question does ask the minister specifically about his consultation with companies and not the Attorney-General's consultations. I invite the minister to respond to that question.

Mr SOMYUREK — My response is no.

Supplementary question

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer, and I indicate my disappointment that he has not consulted about this matter. I ask him now: will he consult with small businesses to see the impact of this change? Will he consult with small businesses and seek their input into the impact of this decision?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will call the minister to answer the supplementary question. However, I make the point at the outset of this Parliament that making comments about somebody's disappointment with a minister's action or suchlike is editorialising and is not to be part of the question itself. We want to go to matters of fact and substance, context if you like for a question, but not our opinions in terms of what a minister may or may not have done.

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I guess Mr Davis has given me licence to comment on how disappointed I am in him, but I will not take up that invitation.

This was an election commitment of the Andrews government, and it sticks to its election commitments. All sections of the Victorian community had a chance to have an input. I have to say that we stick to our election commitments.

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, it is a very simple, clear question: will the minister now consult? He did not answer this, and he should have.

Mr Melhem — On the point of order, President, the member may not like the answer to his question, but the minister has given his answer and that is the answer.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On the point of order, I concur with Mr Melhem. I am not in a position to direct the minister to answer specifically to the satisfaction of the member, but given the question and answer that I heard, I would have thought he had an answer.

Government achievements

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to direct my first question to the Special Minister of State. Can the minister update the house on the actions taken by the government over the last 10 weeks to help Victorian families get our state back to work?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I thank Mr Dalidakis for his first question, which may well be his last because it is the intention of the government to, as we discussed last sitting week, introduce sessional orders to allow for ministers statements. That is an issue we will be dealing with during the course of this week.

What we have been dealing with are the consequences of the legacy of the outgoing government and the efforts we have made, in a very dramatic and determined way, over the last 60 days to get Victoria back to work. This includes the introduction of a piece of legislation that is specifically designed to do that — to support 100 000 jobs being created in our community.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — Members of the opposition are determined to speak now, but they were silent in relation to job creation for the four years of the Baillieu and Napthine governments. There was a net loss of 68 000 jobs across Victoria during their period on watch. They took a situation where unemployment was 4.9 per cent and made it 6.8 per cent, or they did their best to contribute to the rise in unemployment during that four-year period. The Labor government will not accept those settings. The Labor government will act decisively to turn that situation around.

What are some of the other measures we have taken in 60 days that the previous government did not do in 1460 days? That is the hallmark of a government that is complacent — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have a little advice to members. As Mr Leane found in the last Parliament, sitting in the seat to my left is a very difficult spot in which to sit. Can I suggest by way of extension that the next two spots along are also difficult spots in which to sit. I hear everything, and it is particularly amplified when I hear it from those three seats. Enough said.

Mr JENNINGS — The last question was asked by Mr Davis who, in terms of consultation, in four years

did not have one day of effective communication and consultation with paramedics.

Mr Drum — On a point of order, President, what the previous government did in 1460 days is not relevant to government business.

Mr Leane interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! My eyesight is good in the direction of Mr Leane. Hearing here; eyesight there. I have some sympathy with Mr Drum's position in that members will know from the previous Parliament — and the new members have no doubt been briefed — that we do not want ministers in their answers, albeit that there might not be many more, to be reflecting on other parties, policies and so forth. Nonetheless, the minister is entitled to put some context to the answer he is providing, and provided he does not extend that line of argument too far, there is a context factor that I will accept.

Mr JENNINGS — The war on paramedics is over. Labor has decided to stop the war on paramedics. We also decided to reinvest in TAFE. Within the first 60 days we reinvested a specific package to restore confidence in our community about the TAFE sector and to rebuild TAFE, which was decimated under previous administrations. We took decisive action, in keeping with our promises, to commence the Royal Commission into Family Violence. We gave an undertaking to make sure that we have an ice task force which makes recommendations within 100 days. A mere four weeks from now there will be a whole series of recommendations about actions to deal with ice.

After four years of lethargy from the former government, we have also commissioned a process which will lead to the legalisation of medical cannabis in Victoria and the establishment of protocols that will enable it to be used to support Victorian families. We have also decided to release the tender arrangements in relation to the West Gate distributor — a very important project to take trucks off the West Gate Bridge to improve congestion and traffic flow across the city.

We have also released the business case relating to the east–west tunnel. That outrageous project was embarked upon embedded with deficit funding — a \$2 billion hole from the outgoing government — that would have been only made up with 50 years of tolls applying to every other freeway across Victoria. That business case was absolutely devastating in relation to the administration and the contractual arrangements that this government inherited.

We have decided that beyond the West Gate distributor we will move in a timely and appropriate way to get on with what we committed to do, which was to remove the most dangerous level crossings. We have already introduced Back to Work legislation in the Parliament.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I make the observation that the minister's role in this place is a new role in terms of what it covers. I must say that I was, from the Chair, rather interested in the fact that the minister spoke on so many matters that were from a range of portfolios. I suggest that if that is to be part of the coverage of the minister's portfolio responsibilities, then he is inviting questions, for so long as we have them, on matters that refer to other people's portfolios because the minister has actually touched on a number of issues. I caution ministers about the matters they take on in respect of answers to questions, notwithstanding that the Leader of the Government is quite competent to answer these questions, with his experience.

Mr JENNINGS — On that point, President, can I say that I am the Leader of the Government representing the Premier in this place, and I fully anticipate being asked questions by members on the other side of the chamber over the full gamut of responsibilities of public administration in Victoria. I have every expectation that that will be my burden for four years.

The PRESIDENT — That is fine.

Public holidays

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. With regard to the grand final eve public holiday, can the minister advise what is the cost to regional Victoria of this additional public holiday?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I have had this question before. Introducing a grand final public holiday is an election commitment of the Andrews government, and the government sticks to its election commitments. I know that is a foreign notion to those opposite. As I said, it is an election commitment, and grand final Friday will be a public holiday in Victoria in 2015.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I note that the government has made commitments to providing fulsome answers in response to questions, and I do not think that answer was apposite to the question. Could the minister either indicate that that figure is not available at this time or make some answer that is apposite to the question.

Mr SOMYUREK — If the member bothers to look it up, he will see there are figures. He should get onto Google and put his question in and he will see Labor's financial statements. He will find the set of figures there.

Supplementary question

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — Can the minister explain whether if there is a drawn grand final, we will see an additional public holiday the following Friday?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — Being a North Melbourne supporter, I remember 1977 — North Melbourne versus Collingwood. It was a good day for North Melbourne the second time around. No, there will not be.

Gas exploration

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Ms Pulford. The minister's government has come to office with no particular policy on unconventional gas drilling except for the holding of an inquiry. Can the minister tell the chamber how within her portfolio and departmental responsibilities she has sought to influence the terms of reference of that inquiry, or any other regulatory measures that her government may be working on?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Barber for his question. The question of unconventional gas exploration is a matter for Ms D'Ambrosio as the Minister for Energy and Resources, and he should refer his question to her for a detailed response.

What I can indicate is that prior to the election the Labor Party committed to continuing the moratorium until a parliamentary committee has had an opportunity to consider the information. We remain unconvinced about the science and are committed to taking a very cautious approach to protecting our watertable and ensuring that our agricultural producers and their interests and our desire to grow agricultural productivity in Victoria are maintained. These matters will all be able to be aired in great detail if the Parliament supports the establishment of a parliamentary inquiry. But as I indicated, I will refer the substantive question to the Minister for Energy and Resources for a detailed response.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I am sure that neither the minister nor her department will be writing a submission to that inquiry. It is a public process involving members of the public. Is there no cross-departmental committee? Is there no submission or other process whereby the minister and her department can act as champions for agriculture against the threat proposed by onshore gas drilling?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for the supplementary question. I will be a champion for agricultural production and productivity in Victoria, and I will be ably assisted by the people in the department to do that.

In terms of how this issue will be progressed, as I indicated earlier it is the government's intention that there will be a parliamentary committee. While this is a matter for the Parliament, we would certainly hope all members support the establishment of such an inquiry and that it will be the place where these issues can be aired in detail and considered. But we are committed to maintaining a moratorium until the science is much clearer.

Public holidays

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade as the minister responsible for the Public Holidays Act 1993. A 2011 report conducted by Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre found that on the day before the AFL Grand Final there were elevated levels of intoxication and cases of assault, and on grand final day increased incidents of family violence, and I ask: what advice has the government received into the impact the additional public holiday will have on increased levels of violence towards vulnerable women and children?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I cannot recall receiving any such advice.

Supplementary question

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — It is concerning that the government has not taken that advice, but before the minister gazettes the public holiday I ask: what additional resources will be provided by the government to ensure that Labor's new public holiday does not result in harm to the Victorian community?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I take on board the member's concerns, and I will consult with my colleague the Minister for Police. I will pass on her concerns to him.

TAFE funding

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. Can the minister update the house on investments and initiatives that the Andrews government has made in vocational education as part of its commitment to rebuild our broken TAFE and training system and make Victoria the education state?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I thank the member for her question. I am absolutely delighted to be here as the Minister for Training and Skills and international education, areas which are of critical relevance to the prosperity of our state. I am also delighted to say that the Andrews government will deliver on every single one of its election commitments, and that includes rebuilding TAFEs in this state. That is a crucial commitment necessary for communities right across Victoria.

When we came to office we inherited a Victorian training system that was in total disrepair, a system that had been devastated by \$1.2 billion of funding cuts. It was a system where our TAFE colleges were on their knees. Just to highlight the debacle we inherited from the previous government, what we found at the end of last year was that 8 of the 12 stand-alone TAFEs in this state had a combined operating deficit of \$71.8 million. That was a \$71.8 million record debt after all the cutbacks that had been made. That is a 166 per cent deterioration in their balance books since 2011.

Worse than that, TAFE's share of the training market has plummeted to 25 per cent. Some 3000 fewer Victorians now get training in TAFE in this state than when those opposite came to office. Members opposite sat through four years of inaction, indecision and ineptitude that ruined TAFE in this state.

It is not just TAFE that is in disarray in this state. Those who pay attention to this topic will have seen the recent Productivity Commission report into government services, which shows that in 2011 the average funding for TAFE was \$11.36 per student contact hour. It dropped to \$9.36 — —

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order, President, the minister seems to be reading from some booklet. Maybe he could table that document for the Parliament.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In some circumstances there might be a point of order, but the minister is certainly entitled to refer to notes. If I take out the conjecture, I have found this answer to be apposite to the question that was asked. The minister is providing the house with some information that might well be useful in future debate.

Mr Drum — On a further point of order, President, if the minister is referring to copious notes, there was one aspect of his answer in which he stated that the previous government reduced funding to the training sector by \$1.2 billion.

Mr Herbert — No, TAFE.

Mr Drum — No, you said the training sector. I want to know whether the notes say 'training sector' and the minister changed it to 'TAFE' or whether the notes say 'TAFE'.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Drum and I both know that that is not a point of order.

Mr Drum — It is a point of clarification, President.

The PRESIDENT — A point of clarification it may well be, but it is not a point of order, and there is no provision for a point of clarification in this respect. Good try.

Mr Drum interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Mr Drum can have the debate at another time. The minister to continue, without assistance.

Mr HERBERT — A \$1.2 billion cut from TAFE and subsidy cuts has seen a decline in subsidised training in this state of 13 per cent since 2012. When it comes to apprenticeship and traineeship commencements — that is, the number of young people starting an apprenticeship or traineeship — what we have seen since 2012 is a decline of over 50 per cent in commencements. These are dreadful statistics for training, dreadful statistics for Victoria and dreadful statistics for young people hoping to get a trade and get on in life.

We are proud that we have come to government with a firm commitment to rebuild TAFE and to repair the damage that has been done. My very first act was to write to the Treasurer and apply for a \$20 million advance as part of our \$320 million TAFE rescue package so TAFE institutes could start this year on a firm footing. I am delighted to tell the member who asked the question and the chamber that from that

\$20 million we gave \$4 million to Melbourne Polytechnic, an institute on its knees because of the previous government's policies. We gave \$4 million to South West TAFE in the previous Premier's electorate, which was on its knees and would have been unable to pay its payroll if it did not get extra money. We gave \$4 million to SuniTAFE, a great northern Victoria TAFE which was on its knees. We gave \$2 million to William Angliss, one of the best hospitality TAFEs in this country, which was on its knees. We gave \$2.2 million to Bendigo Kangan, \$1.3 million to GOTAFE and \$2.5 million to the disaster of a merger —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Minister.

Ordered that answer be considered next day on motion of Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan).

Cage fighting

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. I ask: can the minister outline the risks to Victorian families and children from the Andrews Labor government's decision to legalise cage fighting?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question. It is a rather odd question to direct to me as the Minister for Families and Children. The issue of cage fighting, as the member would well know, is actually the responsibility of the Minister for Sport, so I suggest that she direct her question to the relevant minister.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — As I said in my substantive question, I am asking for an outlining of the risks. I thank the minister for her answer, but I ask that she, in her capacity as Minister for Families and Children, outline to the house whether she has been briefed on and signed off on the risk cage fighting poses to Victorian families and children. I also ask whether, if that is the case, she will now release that advice.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — The member's question, as I said earlier, is relevant to the Minister for Sport. I do not know whether the member is suggesting that children will be participating in cage fighting. It is a very odd question for the member to be asking.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, President, I asked the Minister for Families and Children of the risks to Victorian families and children.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The point of order was just a restatement of the question. I think the minister heard the question; I certainly heard the question. I must say the question is drawing a fairly long bow to the matter raised. I have some empathy with the mixed messages, but it is still a long bow to put this minister under the griller on that particular issue when the jurisdiction of and decision on the sport itself is another minister's responsibility. The minister ought to be allowed to respond in silence to the question.

Ms MIKAKOS — To conclude my answer, I find it extraordinary that, given all the matters I do have responsibility for, the crisis I have inherited in the child protection system and the many questions that the shadow Minister for Families and Children could ask me about, this question — the first issue she wishes to raise with me — is a question that does not even relate to my portfolio. It is a rather odd question time strategy.

Mr Jennings — On a point of order, President, I encourage you to consider the construction of questions. We on the government side appreciate it when you give us guidance on the appropriateness of our answers. There has been a recurring theme in question time today with members of the Liberal Party and the Greens asking a minister questions not about what is in their ministerial portfolio in terms of their legislative and statutory responsibility or about proposed legislation, but about what role a minister would play in the determination of the final position of the government as distinct from taking responsibility for it. By way of an example I point to the very first question that was asked today. If there is an impact on the government legislation that is being brought into the Victorian Parliament by the Attorney-General, ultimately it is the Attorney-General's responsibility to account for the implications of that policy and to report on it.

My ministerial colleague Ms D'Ambrosio, the Minister for Energy and Resources, will be responsible for the references that will go to the parliamentary committee in relation to non-conventional gas exploration, yet my ministerial colleague Ms Pulford, the Minister for Agriculture, was asked to report on the nature of internal departmental or governmental considerations of these matters. These issues may be of interest to the Parliament, they may be of interest to the community and in fact political mileage may be made from the answers. However, in terms of whether they fall within the scope of ministerial responsibility which obliges a

minister to respond, if this is to be a theme that will recur in one question time after another for four years, we will see a lack of appreciation in the chamber and in the community about what ministerial responsibility to this chamber is.

In terms of any internal decision-making process, any coordination process within government — which should occur — it is not the obligation of a minister to report on that to the Parliament.

Mr Rich-Phillips — With regard to the point of order raised by Mr Jennings, I draw the house's attention to the standing orders which provide that ministers should respond to questions on matters 'relating to public affairs for which the minister is directly connected'. That does not say the minister must have parliamentary responsibility for the legislation or must have carriage of an act or a bill in this place in relation to a matter; it refers to the minister being connected to the affair. That means it is a far broader concept than simply having direct legislative responsibility, which was the interpretation Mr Jennings sought to make of standing orders. I would therefore ask you, President, in considering this matter, to consider that a number of ministers may be directly connected to a matter without necessarily being the minister that carries legislation through the house, and that it is appropriate, where those ministers have connection to a matter and where it impacts upon their portfolios, that they be responsible for the way in which they handle that matter as it relates to their portfolios.

Mr Davis — On the point of order, President, a number of the questions — picking up the Leader of the Government's points — asked directly about actions of ministers. Whether ministers had consulted and whether they had advocated are questions about specific actions —

Mr Leane — On areas outside their portfolio.

Mr Davis — If they are taking actions as a minister, including actions relating to community level activities, that is relevant, and those actions or indeed non-actions of ministers are matters that are directly connected with their portfolio and are thereby entirely appropriate as the subject of questions.

Mrs Peulich — On the point of order, President, clearly the interests of families and children are impacted upon by a range of portfolios, and the minister with responsibility for families and children should be prepared to answer questions on issues that impact on families and children. These are not little silos; they are influenced by the whole range of

ministerial portfolios represented here and in the other chamber.

Mr Barber — On the point of order, President, we therefore ought to be able to at least ask questions to explore how directly connected the various ministers are to public affairs in each other's portfolios.

Ms MIKAKOS — On the point of order, President, in response to Mrs Peulich's point, the illustration I would give is that children attend schools; is Mrs Peulich therefore suggesting the opposition would be directing questions to me about school curriculum? I suggest that members opposite have a look at the general order and get a better understanding of the various portfolio responsibilities of ministers. It is a very long bow to draw to direct to me questions about school curriculum or any remote issue that might have some impact on children when those matters are the responsibility of other ministers. It is a very long bow to draw to direct to me questions about school curriculum or any remote issue that might have some impact on children when those matters are the responsibility of other ministers.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Somyurek has the choice of being a minister or a commentator. I take up the various aspects that were raised in the points of order. To some extent I fall between the various positions that have been advanced. I believe some of the questions asked tonight were fair questions, particularly the one about energy and its impact on agriculture. That was very much a fair question. Indeed in terms of the issue of energy exploration, the lobby against it is very much an agricultural lobby. Mr Barber's attempt to find out if there was a process that involved agricultural interests having an opportunity to put their case — particularly if there was interdepartmental dialogue — was a question that was very much in order. The question about small business and the impact of a public holiday on small business is fair game. That is an appropriate question because the minister who was asked the question is responsible for the holiday. That question is not disputed.

On the other hand I indicate — and I would not normally do this — that I think cage fighting is horrendous. I personally am outraged by it.

Mr Purcell interjected.

The PRESIDENT — It is my personal opinion. The member is entitled to a different opinion, but he is not entitled to have a debate with me right now. I think it is an extraordinary decision to make, but even given that

it is government policy, Ms Crozier's question to the minister was a long bow to draw. I do not think that question was able to bring this minister to account on that matter despite the fact that I understand the concern implicit in the question was about the mixed message that on the one hand we are concerned about domestic violence and on the other hand we are promoting what is a very violent sport. I understand the mixed message, but I do not think that the minister in that case should have been brought to account, and that therefore gave rise to the point of order that was taken. Whilst Mr Rich-Phillips points out that the point is directly connected — and I think that is the relevant test of the question put to Ms Mikakos — I do not think that it was directly connected. I think it fails that test.

However, with regard to the substantive point of order that was brought by the Leader of the Government, I agree that questions ought to be relevant to a minister's responsibilities, and that includes both direct connection as well as jurisdiction, and they are fair tests. I agree that that ought to be the basis of questions. Going forward I will assess questions as to whether they meet those tests, just as I will assess answers to make sure they are apposite to the questions.

Lake Toolondo

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, who is also the Minister for Regional Development. Can the minister inform the house of recent steps the Andrews Labor government has taken to protect recreational fishing and boost tourism in the regional community of Toolondo?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank my good friend and colleague Ms Tierney, with whom I have shared representation of Western Victoria Region for eight years, for her question about Lake Toolondo. Something I am very proud of is that within six weeks of the election the Andrews Labor government was able to deliver on its commitment to restore Lake Toolondo to its place as the premier trout fishery. The Andrews Labor government is committed to delivering on each and every one of its election commitments, and it strongly supports recreational fishing in Victoria. There are around 700 000 people who currently like to wet a line from time to time, and we have a range of plans and strategies to increase this to 1 million people by 2020.

Being able to deliver additional water to Lake Toolondo is one of these commitments. I note that this is something the former government was opposed to. This was able to be done, and to be done so quickly,

due to the good work and assistance of a number of people. Special mention needs to be made of Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, which has assisted us to deliver on this election commitment, and also of Iluka Resources, which made the additional 5000 megalitres of water available.

I also pay tribute to a number of people. I make special mention of Dave Kramer from Futurefish Foundation, Dallas D'Silva from VRFish and locals Geoff Stock, Tash Allen, Chris Spence and Trevor Holmes, who have not given up on this fight over many years. I note that in the *Weekly Times* of 21 January, under the heading 'Toolondo trout rescued by politicians who care', Chris McLennan wrote:

One reason given for the downfall of the Napthine government was that it failed to listen ...

We have listened to recreational fishers. We have listened to those who like to chase trout at Lake Toolondo. This has wonderful benefits for local communities from Horsham to Hamilton, in Ms Tierney's and my electorate of Western Victoria Region, but people travel from all over Victoria to Lake Toolondo. Indeed Mr Young travelled to Lake Toolondo on the day of the announcement.

We will establish an advisory committee that will assist with the ongoing sustainability of this important trout fishery, and we will continue to deliver on all our election commitments. We will deliver on all those commitments that are part of our plans to increase recreational fishing. It is a wonderful pastime — great for families and children — and we want more people to be participating. This is one important step on that journey.

Murray Basin rail project

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Regional Development, Jaala Pulford. I ask: will the \$220 million Murray Basin rail project proceed under her ministry and her government to the same scale, funding and time line that was committed to under the previous government?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — I see the theme continues. I thank Mr Drum for his question. I note that The Nationals privatised Rural Finance and then also proceeded to make a commitment without a business case in relation to the project that Mr Drum refers to. The allocation of the proceeds of the privatisation by The Nationals of Rural Finance, which I think came out of the blue for most rural communities, is a matter for the Treasurer, and I would refer that question to the Treasurer for a

detailed response. But in doing so, I note that we have not seen this business case and that this — —

Mr Jennings — It doesn't exist.

Ms PULFORD — I think Mr Jennings is right. I suspect all the work that the former government did on this project was write a press release.

Supplementary question

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I am a bit shocked by the response I have received — a bit shocked because the \$220 million is in the budget and it is allocated to this particular project. I just assumed the government was going to answer, 'Yes, we are going to leave that money in that project'. My supplementary question is: as the Minister for Regional Development has rightly raised the issue around the sale of Rural Finance and the fact that the previous government had hypothecated the net profits of the Rural Finance sale to regional Victoria, I am wondering whether she would be able to guarantee that her government will also hypothecate the net proceeds of the Rural Finance sale to regional Victorian projects.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — The Andrews Labor government will be governing for all of Victoria, and I urge the member to reflect on the budget that his colleague the former Treasurer, Mr O'Brien, brought down in May last year, where for 25 per cent of the population only 4 per cent of the budget infrastructure funding was committed for regional Victorian communities. As I indicated, the question of the proceeds of the privatisation by the then National Party of the Rural Finance Corporation is a matter for the Treasurer. As I have indicated on many occasions, the government will respond to this when it has seen the business case.

Commercial netting fishing licences

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Ms Pulford. The minister's government went to the election with a policy of getting rid of all of the commercial netting fishing licences in Port Phillip Bay. Can the minister tell me whether it is the advice of her department that that commercial fishery is in fact currently environmentally sustainable?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — It is good to be back. I am enjoying receiving another question from Mr Barber, and I thank him for the opportunity to again talk about — and in responding to reaffirm — the Andrews Labor government's

commitment to our Target One Million policy, which is about boosting recreational fishing in Victoria.

One important aspect of this is to invest \$20 million over eight years to halt commercial netting in Port Phillip and Corio bays. We will work with licence-holders in a way that is fair and that is cognisant of the change that this will mean for those people. Commercial netting in Port Phillip and Corio bays is authorised for 43 licence-holders. We will proceed to promote recreational fishing in a way that is absolutely consistent with supporting sustainable fishing. We want to have a million people involved in recreational fishing, and to do that we need sustainable fisheries.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Just to recap, my question was specifically whether it was the advice of the minister's department that that commercial fishery is environmentally sustainable, but I will point the minister to a study that is currently underway. It is funded by the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. It is about both the social drivers and the ecological risk assessment of both recreational and commercial fishing in Port Phillip Bay. It is a study involving not only a large number of researchers but also including some scientists from the minister's own department. My question for the minister is: is she willing to delay this process until the results of this particular piece of science are in?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Barber for his supplementary question. The policy to end commercial netting in Port Phillip and Corio bays will be delivered by this government. We will be delivering on each and every one of our election commitments. This is envisaged to occur over an eight-year period, and I look forward to meeting soon with the commercial netters who have an interest in the way in which we will proceed to deliver on this commitment. I certainly invite the Greens to join us in building recreational fishing participation in a number of ways across Victoria. This is a great pastime that we want to encourage more people to be involved in. We are confident that our policy settings are right, and we look forward to all members of the house, even those opposed to trout fishing in Lake Toolondo, working with us to increase recreational fishing.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I am very happy to report to the house that this is a high watermark day. There are 18 questions on notice on the notice paper, and I have answers to the following questions on notice: 1–18. As I have leafed through them, I can report that they are answers, so I am very happy to table them.

Sitting suspended 6.41 p.m. until 8.14 p.m.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Acting Clerk:

Calder Regional Waste Management Group — Minister's report of failure to submit report for 2013–14 to the Minister within the prescribed period and the reasons therefor.

Crimes (Controlled Operations) Act 2004 — Controlled Operations Report by the Victorian Inspectorate for 2013–2014.

Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 —

Minister's Order of 1 October 2014 giving approval to the granting of lease at Edinburgh Gardens Reserve.

Minister's Order of 17 July 2014 giving approval to the granting of licence at King's Domain Reserve.

Gambling Regulation Act 2003 — Amendment of the Category 1 Public Lottery Licence, 31 October 2014.

Planning and Environment Act 1987 — Notices of Approval of the following amendments to planning schemes —

Boroondara Planning Scheme — Amendments C188 and C210.

Brimbank Planning Scheme — Amendment C167.

Corangamite Planning Scheme — Amendment C38.

Greater Shepparton Planning Scheme — Amendment C172.

Hindmarsh Planning Scheme — Amendment C16.

Hume Planning Scheme — Amendment C184.

Melbourne Planning Scheme — Amendments C225 and C260.

Moonee Valley Planning Scheme — Amendment C140.

Moreland Planning Scheme — Amendment C152.

Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme — Amendment C185.

Port Phillip Planning Scheme — Amendment C116.

Southern Grampians Planning Scheme — Amendment C15.

Wellington Planning Scheme — Amendment C83.

Wyndham Planning Scheme — Amendments C195 and C207.

Professional Standards Act 2003 — Professional Standards Scheme Amendment, 24 December 2014.

South Australia–Victoria Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee — Report, 2013–14.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

County Court Act 1958 — No. 7.

County Court Act 1958 — Vexatious Proceedings Act 2014 — No. 210/2014.

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — Nos. 3 and 4.

Road Safety Act 1986 — No. 1.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — No. 2.

Treasury Corporation of Victoria Act 1992 — No. 5.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998 — No. 6.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule Nos. 187/2014, 210/2014, 1 to 4, 6 and 7.

Legislative Instruments and related documents under section 16B in respect of —

Amendments to the Alcohol Interlock Guidelines, 23 January 2015 under the Road Safety Act 1994.

Southern Metropolitan Cemetery Trust Scale of Fees and Charges, 27 October 2014 under the Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003.

Variation to the Environment Protection Authority Victoria Protocol for Environmental Management — Domestic Ballast Water Management in Victorian State Waters (Publication 949), 16 January 2015.

Wrongs Act 1958 — Scale of Fees and Costs for Referrals of Medical Questions to Medical Panels, 24 October 2014.

Proclamation of the Governor in Council fixing operative dates in respect of the following act:

Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014 — Part 6 and Part 7 (except Division 3 and section 151) — 21 January 2015 (*Gazette No. S10, 20 January 2015*).

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS**Notices****Mr Davis having given notice:**

The PRESIDENT — Order! When was the report tabled?

Mr Davis — It was tabled in the previous Parliament.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That report cannot be revisited, so it will not be considered.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**General business**

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — By leave, I move:

That precedence be given to the following general business on Wednesday, 11 February 2015:

- (1) the notice of motion given this day by Mr Rich-Phillips in relation to the production of documents on the east–west link;
- (2) notice of motion 3 standing in the name of Mr Barber in relation to the production of documents on the privatisation of the port of Melbourne;
- (3) the notice of motion given this day by Ms Wooldridge in relation to the production of documents on the West Gate distributor;
- (4) the notice of motion given this day by Ms Pennicuik in relation to the production of documents on the grand prix;
- (5) notice of motion 2 standing in the name of Mr Rich-Phillips taking note of the decision not to proceed with the east–west link;
- (6) notice of motion 9 standing in the name of Mr O'Brien in relation to the Sale Specialist School;
- (7) notice of motion 4 standing in the name of Ms Crozier in relation to funding cuts for family violence; and
- (8) notice of motion 24 standing in the name of Mr Rich-Phillips taking note of the former government's infrastructure program.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS**Jacque Phillips**

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I am thrilled to congratulate Jacque Phillips, chief executive officer

at Numurkah District Health Service, on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia. Following the 2012 floods that destroyed the Numurkah hospital, Jacque has led the health service through a challenging time, operating from temporary facilities while the new hospital is under construction.

Jacque, who has had a 32-year nursing and community health career, was awarded the high honour for her many years of dedicated service to the health industry, and I cannot think of anyone who deserves this honour more. Congratulations to Jacque and all recipients of Australia Day honours across Victoria.

Margaret Court Arena

Ms LOVELL — The Australian Open this year saw the opening of the refurbished and fully enclosed Margaret Court Arena, complete with a retractable roof. I would like to congratulate a company in my electorate, Ortech Industries of Bendigo, which developed and installed the acoustic roof system that accompanies the pleated roof design. The Bendigo-made Durra roof system provides an acoustic envelope to contain noise within the wall arena and to keep rain noise out. The Durra roof system allows for safe ground-based assembly of the panels and steel sections into 100-metre-square modules which are then installed using Ortech's unique Durra lifting frame, also developed and manufactured in Bendigo. This unique system reduces the working-at-height risk by 90 per cent, providing a safer worksite for all. Since 1999 the Bendigo-manufactured Durra roof system has been specified for use in all new major tennis stadiums around Australia.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Each year in February Ovarian Cancer Australia runs a national Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month campaign to highlight the symptoms of ovarian cancer, to honour those women who have died from the disease and to raise funds for its programs. Throughout the month Ovarian Cancer Australia hosts a range of activities and events to raise awareness and funds for its support, awareness, advocacy and research programs.

Some of the awareness resources that Ovarian Cancer Australia promotes are brochures and posters. It has a very good innovation in the form of an iPhone app which can be downloaded. It allows women to track the symptoms that are most frequently reported by women who are diagnosed with ovarian cancer. It also has a print diary with which women can track symptoms over a four-week period. It also produces DVDs, and it

promotes this month particularly through the teal ribbon. Teal is the international colour of ovarian cancer, and it is great to see so many members of the chamber supporting the campaign today.

Western Metropolitan Region election result

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to be back for the 58th Parliament and for the first time to have been elected without a long drawn-out count process or a recount. I want to thank my staff in both my electorate office and in our campaign office. I especially want to thank volunteers, but there are so many of them that I cannot thank them all individually. Without them I would not have been re-elected. Importantly, I want to thank the people of the west who voted for me. There is one person in particular I want to single out for my thanks — that is my husband, Victor Moore, who over 35 years has managed to maintain his sense of humour and his support of me. In the next four years I will continue to campaign for a fair deal for the west. I will strive to make sure that we receive the same services as the rest of the state even though we do not have marginal lower house seats.

Another important area of focus for me will be ensuring that the government delivers presumptive legislation for firefighters. I will fight any attempt to overturn any part of our abortion laws, and I will work to ensure that women are free from harassment at clinics. Women are smart: they can make these difficult decisions for themselves without politicians or churches telling them what they can and cannot do. Another important issue for me will be making sure that we finally have a reasonable debate around dying with dignity law. Being a politician is a great privilege, and I will continue to stand up for the west.

South Gippsland roads

Mr O'BRIEN (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to bring to the attention of the Council the state of roads in South Gippsland and the need for Labor to back its opposition rhetoric with government action. The coalition government increased funding for road repairs by \$130 million in last year's budget, and thanks to the former member for Gippsland South in the Assembly over \$100 million was invested on South Gippsland roads during our term. This included an additional \$1.3 million for works on the South Gippsland Highway as recently as late October.

The Nationals delivered the \$160 million Country Roads and Bridges program, which provided \$1 million every year to rural councils, easing pressure on rates

and actually fixing local roads and bridges. Disastrously, Labor has axed this program.

Over summer South Gippslanders saw works funded by the previous coalition government underway, but we need more to support our local industries and tourism. I drive the South Gippsland roads every day and I listen to my constituents, so I know this is one of their biggest concerns.

The now Minister for Roads and Road Safety made some big statements in opposition — he said the state of the roads in South Gippsland will 'kill the local economy'. Now he has control, and he needs to deliver on his rhetoric. Now when you go to Labor's website fixourroads.com.au, you simply get a message that says, 'Sorry'. Sorry will not cut it — it is time for Labor to put its money where its mouth was.

Fixing the roads will help boost tourism, but there are two further projects that would also assist. The Labor government needs to commit to keeping the \$5 million allocated by the previous government to the Port Welshpool long jetty development, and it should also fund the dredging of the Toora boat ramp channel to allow better access for fishermen and boaters visiting Corner Inlet.

Ambulance services

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — Thank you, Deputy President, and congratulations on your elevation and on chairing the session tonight. I rise to congratulate the new Labor government on fulfilling its election promise to end the war on our paramedics that was started by the previous Liberal government. On our first day in office Premier Andrews referred the paramedics case to the Fair Work Commission and got to work on repairing an ambulance system that the previous government left in turmoil.

The Productivity Commission's recent *Report on Government Services* has confirmed that our ambulance response times are dangerously high, with one in ten ambulances taking longer than 22 minutes to arrive at code 1 emergency scenes. In the city of Melton in my electorate only 55 per cent of ambulances were arriving within their 15-minute target. These statistics make Victoria the worst state on the mainland for ambulance response times.

And it gets worse. Every year that the coalition was in power the survival rate for out-of-hospital cardiac arrests got lower, falling to a dismal 29.4 per cent last year. This report confirms that the former government was not only willing to go to war over paramedics pay

and working conditions but also willing to recklessly ignore a system that was failing to provide Victorians with the care that they deserve.

On top of committing \$60 million to a response time rescue fund and \$40 million to help upgrade our ambulance stations, vehicles and equipment, we have also replaced the board of Ambulance Victoria and established the Ambulance Performance and Policy Consultative Committee, which will work together to provide the government with professional knowledge — —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Time!

Australia Day

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I wish to pass on my congratulations to all those across Victoria who received Order of Australia honours on Australia Day. I do, however, wish to make particular mention of some western Victorians who were recognised with honours.

Mr Paul Jenkins, OAM, was recognised for service to the community of Ballarat. As well as being a member for Ballarat West from 1992 to 1999, Mr Jenkins served as a councillor for the Borough of Sebastopol for many years, also serving as mayor. Mr Jenkins has also volunteered in the Country Fire Authority, including as a board member, and has been a member of both the Ballarat Cemeteries Trust and the Arch of Victory/Avenue of Honour Committee. Mr Jenkins is the kind of man all communities are indeed fortunate to have: a dedicated, energetic, community-minded person who has made Ballarat and Victoria a better place.

Dr Peter Casey, AM, was recognised for significant service to secondary education as an administrator and teacher to professional organisations and to the community of Ballarat. St Patrick's College in Ballarat describes itself as Ballarat's best for boys. Dr Casey had been, until December last year, headmaster of St Pat's for 13 years, and in that time he oversaw the transformation of St Pat's from a school of 845 students to a school of 1432, educating a generation of young men to serve the community. Dr Casey's commitment to education and to St Patrick's College has been rightly recognised by this award.

I also make mention of Garry Snowden, OAM, who has been recognised for his service to the conservation of historic sites of Australian military significance, and Carole Oliver, OAM, who has been recognised for her service to the performing arts through dance education.

Laurie Gleeson

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — I rise today to pay tribute to Mr Laurie Gleeson, formerly of Shepparton, who passed away on 15 January after a long illness. The late Mr Gleeson was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the Goulburn Valley community, particularly for his significant contribution to the water industry over 28 years. Industry peers and community members have acknowledged Mr Gleeson's leadership, particularly the reforms and initiatives he instigated as managing director of Goulburn Valley Water that led to the development of water and sewerage supply systems throughout the Goulburn Valley. This brought many small towns within the region up to World Health Organisation water standards for the first time.

When he was diagnosed with prostate cancer Mr Gleeson became a tireless campaigner to get the prostate cancer drug Zytiga on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme, which occurred in 2013. Mr Gleeson was also a founding committee member of Shepparton's Biggest Ever Blokes Lunch that each year raises thousands of dollars for prostate cancer research. I extend my deepest condolences to his family and friends. He was held in high regard and will be greatly missed in the Goulburn Valley community.

Jade Kirk

Ms SYMES — I would also like to congratulate Ms Jade Kirk, who was awarded the Tatong Achievement Award on Australia Day. I had the pleasure of attending Benalla High School with Jade. She has been the area manager for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal for 18 years, which is a magnificent achievement. In 2014 the Tatong Tavern appeal raised \$33 000, placing Tatong in the top 10 pubs and leading to a live presentation on Channel 7.

Jade is also a life member of the Tatong Football Netball Club, has been an active member of the Tatong Country Fire Authority for 12 years and has volunteered for countless fundraisers and community events. It is a pleasure to know Jade.

Annemarie Sandilands

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I put on the record my thanks to the constituents of Eastern Metropolitan Region for the faith they have shown in electing me for another term. It was on that reflection that I was thinking about my supporters, in particular Annemarie Therese Sandilands. Annemarie Sandilands was my electorate officer. She joined me in 2002,

having come from working with Jeff Kennett, Lorraine Elliott and Mark Birrell. She obviously saw the light and went to a more significant person: she joined me. I say that with tongue in cheek — it is important to put that in *Hansard*!

Having been through that process, I am very pleased that Annemarie worked with me through a whole range of periods, in opposition and in government, and through a whole raft of experiences that we shared during that time. Thankfully, I have now seen Annemarie go to an even better place — she has gone to assist the member for Kew in the lower house in his electorate office. I am sure he will benefit greatly.

Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I take this opportunity to congratulate the former government, the Victorian Major Events Company, the City of Greater Geelong and Cadel Evans for bringing the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race to the Geelong region. Despite attempts to brand it a Melbourne sporting event, it is in fact a Geelong event which showcases the beautiful topography of the beaches, the hinterland and of course the Great Ocean Road. Geelong played host to this new international two-day cycling event, with a course designed by retired professional cyclist Scott Sunderland in consultation with Tour de France winner Cadel Evans.

The race builds on the success of the 2010 UCI Road World Championships, also held in Geelong. This year's race brought the world's best cyclists to the region and showcased regional Victoria as a major tourist destination. With over 150 000 visitors and accommodation within 60 kilometres of the Geelong CBD at full occupancy, the race provided significant economic value to the Barwon region. Four thousand cyclists, including the Prime Minister and the federal member for Corangamite, Sarah Henderson, participated in the people's race on Saturday, 31 January, but it was the women's elite race, won by South Australian Rachel Neylan, and the men's elite race on the Sunday, won by Belgian Gianna Meersman, that stole the show.

Cadel Evans hit the finish line in fifth place and has now retired from professional racing, leaving a wonderful legacy of not only outstanding achievements in professional cycling but also a now guaranteed three-year international cycling event. My hope is that the Andrews government continues the good work of the coalition in supporting major events in the Geelong region by extending the three-year contract for the race and branding these events as Geelong events.

East–west link

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Yesterday the West Gate Freeway was blocked. As a result thousands of motorists were sitting in their cars all wondering the same thing. Today traffic throughout the rest of Melbourne was a total mess. Traffic on the West Gate and Princes freeways was banked back almost to Geelong. The Western Freeway was at a standstill. Traffic on the Tullamarine Freeway was crawling bumper to bumper. Many thousand more motorists were thinking the same things as those stuck in traffic the day before: one, why will this wretched government not give us another river crossing; and two, is this wretched government totally loopy in throwing away \$1.2 billion in compensation for the cancellation of the east–west link and getting absolutely nothing in return? Three, why did the Premier lie to us before the election when he said that the east–west link contract is not worth the paper it is written on? All damn good questions — exceptionally good questions. I have to say to the house that the people of Melbourne's west deserve answers to those questions. They also deserve the east–west link.

Dr Rosemary Lester

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to a great public servant and acknowledge the work of Dr Rosemary Lester, our chief medical officer in Victoria. She will be retiring in February but has contributed over many governments — —

Mr Jennings — She has retired.

Mr DAVIS — I understand that she formally concludes in February. She is a great public servant who has contributed to the work of public health across many governments, having been in the Victorian public sector since 1989 and having worked on many challenging public health programs. She is a fellow of the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine. As I say, she has worked in the health department since 1989. She has provided enormous support to ministers of many political colours, and I pay tribute to her for that work.

The Australian Medical Association Victoria described her as providing 'steadfast dedication to public health'. In a statement Dr Tony Bartone, president of the Australian Medical Association Victoria, said:

Dr Lester has been an exemplary public health leader in a challenging role which demands analysing a plethora of public health issues to ensure that Victorians are protected from outbreaks and health risks.

Her remarkable contribution was made not just in the period when I was health minister but during the time of many health ministers. We are well served by fearless and professional public servants, and Dr Lester is a fine example.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

Address-in-reply

Debate resumed from 23 December 2014; motion of Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) for adoption of address-in-reply.

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation on whose land we stand here today, just as I would like to acknowledge the Bunurong people, traditional owners of the region I was elected to represent. I acknowledge and pay enduring respect to the spiritual, physical and cultural connection to the land of their elders, past and present, for countless generations to come.

I understand that the Boonwurrung language called land extending from the south-eastern shores of Port Phillip east to Wilsons Promontory 'marr ne bek', meaning 'excellent country', for the abundance to be found there. Since the time of the first people the Bunurong have lived there. They understood the land and took care of it in perfect balance with their environment. I pledge to them, to all my constituents and to the people of Victoria as a whole that everything I do is and will be done with respect for the land, the creatures and the people on it. This always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

It is such a great privilege to be standing here in this place as the first ever Greens representative for South Eastern Metropolitan Region. My background is perhaps not what many would consider to be typically green, although I suggest that in reality there is no typical green. We come from all backgrounds and persuasions, unified by a shared sense of purpose and commitment to the four key tenets of green politics — ecological sustainability, social and economic justice, grassroots democracy and peace and non-violence. We come from all walks of life seeking a change for the better. Today Green politics has matured well beyond protest culture or any social movement. We Greens are here to play an important role in evolving new models of leadership and governance that will sustain us in this new millennium. We represent a new way of doing politics, one that truly works for all of us.

Without a doubt these egalitarian principles have been foundational in the formation of my identity and who I am today. On both sides, I am from working-class stock. My maternal grandparents, Elsie and Arthur, were survivors of the Great Depression. They met and married late, settling to raise their daughter in the inner north of Melbourne. Elsie was born in Walhalla and left school to care for her sick mother and siblings when she was just 12 years old. They were very poor. Once her mother had recovered, the only job Elsie could get was in a hosiery factory where she later developed nerve deafness from the noise of the machinery. It was an affliction that hampered her for the rest of her life.

My grandfather, Arthur, was an avid footballer who played for the Coburg seconds and worked for General Motors as a storeman. My childhood was filled with quintessentially Australian stories of the larrikin escapades of Arthur and his mates, and the backyard politics of Elsie and her sisters. These are stories of solidarity and conviviality that unify people who have lifted themselves out of hardship and poverty to make a better life for themselves and their children.

My connection to the south-east of Melbourne, however, lies with the story of my paternal grandparents, Marie and William, who migrated from Europe after the Second World War. Like so many other migrants to Australia then and since, theirs was a story of trauma and displacement. A Czech Pole, my grandfather had been taken from his family by force to work on the farms of the German aristocracy when he was barely a teenager. There he met my grandmother, a French Pole. The end of the war could not have come soon enough, as they waited under the foreboding shadow of eventual transfer to the concentration camps. In 1949 they migrated to Australia under the auspice of the United Nations, where they spent the first seven years in the migrant hostel in Somers. When they had saved enough money, they bought land in Noble Park and eventually built the house that I live in today.

While no-one openly spoke of the war, the scars remained — physically, emotionally, and spiritually — issuing repercussions that ripple through the generations. It is within this space the seed for my lifelong passion for women's rights took hold, defining my personal politics and my professional direction. The strong influence of my grandmothers and the constraints that had inherently been placed upon them through lack of education and religious and ethnic discrimination, ultimately bound by oppressively patriarchal and class-based societal structures, was embedded in my DNA. Their struggle was my struggle, and their defiance was mine also.

After finishing a bachelor degree in humanities, life took me to the great continent of Africa, where I lived and worked for five years. It was here my appreciation of social injustice on an international scale became real, and after marrying into an African-Arab family these issues became personal. During this time I began postgraduate studies in international and community development and had the profound realisation that the plight of women is universal. Incidents of family violence, limited access to adequate health care, education and employment that I had watched women in my own country endure, and had at times endured myself, are endured by women the world over — tenfold. These realities strengthened my resolve, and I returned to Australia to begin my career as a community development worker and social advocate. This was the defining point in my history, when my life purpose became the quest for equality for all, regardless of gender, race, religion or sexuality.

With these personal stories in mind, I feel greatly honoured to be named as the Greens spokesperson for children and families, women, family violence prevention and multicultural affairs.

I commend the Andrews government on forming the forthcoming Royal Commission into Family Violence and hold high hopes for this as a vehicle to begin to deconstruct the pervasive and toxic culture that is deeply embedded in the psyche of our nation, a culture that finds its root cause in the continuing power imbalance between men and women. Until we have the courage to confront the brutality of intimate partner and family violence in a real and meaningful way, until we shine a light on the private, taboo spaces that facilitate this dysfunction, we will not make genuine progress. Let this not be yet another case of all talk and no action. Let us tackle head on the most significant justice issue of our time.

One in four Victorian women has had an abortion. I am one such woman. This is not just an issue of reproductive rights but one of self-determination. A woman's power to make decisions affecting her own body is fundamental to her identity and to her freedom. I live in hope that one day acknowledgment of these rights will not be seen as controversial or divisive, and that we can agree that women and men alike have the right to bodily integrity, a right I will passionately defend.

It was not that long ago that as a single parent I struggled to buy milk for my children at the end of the fortnight. With ongoing funding cuts to vital support, this is a devastating reality that progressively deteriorates year after year. I know what it is like to live

hand to mouth, to take food stamps to get through to the next Centrelink payment and to not know how you will pay the next month's rent. These are not abstract concepts to me, but experiences permanently imprinted in my memory. None of us is immune, and all of us suffer if we do not work together to ensure that no-one has to live like this. It is for this reason that as a member of this Parliament I make a solemn commitment to work every day towards making this happen.

We Greens are fervent defenders of social justice. We recognise the enormous challenges facing the community sector, government and each of us in ensuring that Victoria remains a safe and nurturing home for all of us.

For many years now I have worked with Victorian communities. I know firsthand the complexities facing community and support workers of all sorts who are striving to improve the lives of so many Victorians. I would like to use this opportunity today to thank them for their dedication and to commit to working with them, alongside them. I hope we can work as colleagues together on behalf of the most vulnerable. Importantly, the community sector workforce is comprised of women in overwhelming numbers. As the spokesperson for women, I say to you that the Greens will never undervalue the contribution you make to Victoria. Your work is vital to the wellbeing of our communities, and you carry the burden of our shared social responsibility to help care for those in times of need.

The problems facing our most vulnerable Victorians are entrenched, complex and multifaceted. Every night thousands of children are under the protection of the state. Every day thousands of families rely on community service organisations to help them thrive together, and every year we see substandard outcomes for many of our most vulnerable children and young people — mental health concerns, exclusion from education, chronic health problems, substance abuse, homelessness, self-harm. Our systems simply do not provide adequate interventions for many of those who we seek to help. More than ever, research points the way to improved outcomes for vulnerable children and families. I am privileged to have the opportunity to advocate on their behalf in this place, and I am committed to working towards solutions to the complex issues that confront them. Victoria should be a great, safe, nurturing place to live for each and every Victorian.

I believe that we Greens can help achieve this vision. I acknowledge our many members, in particular the

Greens of South Eastern Metropolitan Region and every member and supporter who travelled far and wide to lend a hand on this campaign. I offer my deepest thanks. Reflecting back, I see with clarity that never before have I been involved in a campaign in which each and every contribution played such a vital role in the end result. Every door knocked, every call made, every cent spared was paramount to our overall success. So many people gave so much to see today become a reality, and I hope to honour their commitment each time I set foot in this place.

There are two people in particular I must acknowledge as having played a pivotal role in the success of our campaign, without whose faith in me and our collective vision for the south-east I would most assuredly not be standing here today. In late 2013 I met a young man by the name of Matthew Thomas. He was looking for a challenge, and I asked him to consider organising a campaign in one of the most unlikely parts of the state for a Greens victory. Much to my surprise and delight, he agreed and went on to lead a campaign the likes of which the region had never seen before. This is your success, Matt, just as much as mine. Without your tenacity, patience and smarts, none of this would have been possible. Words cannot adequately express my gratitude. And to the infamous Jess McColl I extend my most heartfelt thanks. You saw in us something that no-one else did. Through your advocacy and facilitation we achieved something no-one else thought possible. I will not forget.

I also offer special thanks to Alex, Jeanette, James, Josh, John, Tim, Karen, Susan, Henry, Raj and Lynette, whose lower house campaigns were instrumental to our success. To Josh Fergeus, Les Mallet, Rose Ljubcic, Freja Leonard, Michael Schilling and Cr Matthew Kirwan, you have made the last four years rich, rewarding and life-changing. You have sustained me with your support, care and commitment. You have kept me sane, made me laugh, challenged and motivated me and consistently kept me on my toes. You have made me a better person, and for that I am forever grateful.

Of course nothing in politics — or in life, for that matter — happens without the enduring and unshakable support of countless people behind the scenes, some of whose influence shapes events and character long before outcomes materialise. In this spirit I would like to acknowledge my mother, Virginia, for her love and support. It was during visits to her house over the years of my childhood that my interest in politics and social justice was sparked. To Hafidh Al Gheithy for the last 10 years of unconditional friendship and to my siblings, Cassandra, Ryan and Joel, may our journey continue

together onward. And of course to my beautiful children, Azahn and Rukaya, who bring more joy, pride and love to my world than anyone, you are multiculturalism personified, with your Anglo-European and African-Arab heritage. I look to you and see the past and the future of this great country, a country of inclusiveness, tolerance and celebration in diversity. It is for you I stand here today, to ensure that these values remain integral to the fabric of our society.

To my colleagues and fellow state and federal Greens MPs, I am so proud to stand alongside you representing Victorians as we embark on this new chapter. Now we are 10, and what a tremendous opportunity this brings. This milestone is the culmination of more than two decades of hard work and the determination of thousands of people. We are trusted with their vision, and I am humbled to be part of this groundbreaking period in Greens history.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this address to my late father, Robert Miroslaw Springle. He was for me a font of wisdom, strength, resilience and love. He was a leader, a healer and a teacher. He taught me the value of humanity, the importance of compassion and the responsibility of freedom. May he forever rest in peace.

Thank you.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and to pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

It is a profound honour, a privilege and, if I am honest, a rather humbling thing to rise to speak for the first time in this place as a representative of Eastern Victoria Region. I am honoured to stand here and grateful for the opportunity to be heard at least once in silence — honoured and committed to making the very best contribution that I can. In this sense, perspective is everything. These nerves of mine are dwarfed by the vast and wonderful region that I am proud to represent. With its islands, mountains, rolling valleys and farmland that is almost impossibly green for much of the year, it is productive; it is responsible for a significant and unique contribution to Victoria's economy and prosperity across a range of industries; and it is intensely creative, proud and self-sufficient.

Through public service I hope to honour the strength, stamina, colour and history of communities in this region that deserve proper access to their elected members of Parliament. They deserve the pragmatic ear of their politicians and to have their views diligently

and articulately represented. They deserve to have their resilience recognised, and they deserve government that strikes the right balance between empowerment and support.

I have known and loved the region for as long as I can remember. I grew up in the foothills of Mount Dandenong in a house surrounded by dense bushland. I was the middle child of five and the first daughter of a GP and a social worker. With a dictionary the size of a toolbox permanently stationed in the centre of the table, dinnertime was more often than not a calamitous and opinionated affair. Surliness, non sequiturs or the absence of logic in making a point were all seized upon as signs of weakness. It was a rough and bruising way to sharpen the brain, but I survived the years of verbal slings and arrows from my siblings and managed to dispatch a few of my own.

At school I read everything I could get my hands on, and I daydreamed about music, languages, science, art and the world at large. A succession of school librarians indulged me by removing the borrowing limit and encouraged me to believe that what I did not know about the world I could almost always find out if I persisted, asked questions and kept reading. A few rare teachers gently channelled my voiceless curiosity into considered ways of thinking. They were generous and patient with their time, and to this day I remain intensely grateful to the invaluable role models and educators I had, such as Sue and Brian Taylor, for helping me to find and keep my voice.

At about the age of 16 it was a local performance of Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* at a tiny theatre tucked away in The Basin that changed everything. I remember my breath catching when the fading, jaded salesman protagonist, Willy, is asked by his son, Ben, 'What are you building? Lay your hand on it. Where is it?' Two small questions in a play about the great American dream, and just like that I understood how important it was for me to know what I wanted to build over the course of my life, to take responsibility for it and to come back to it again and again, to find it amidst the diversions and white noise of the day-to-day. Those two small questions have stayed with me since, and even now I cannot imagine a day when they do not come to mind as I continue to learn and grow.

To that end, my education was the greatest gift that my parents could have given me. The sacrifices involved for them in providing the best possible opportunities for me to learn were enormous. My life has been incredibly influenced by what they gave and by what they gave up. However, I am also extremely lucky. I was born in

a demographic with a golden ticket, a comparatively healthy body and mind, a good education, two parents with jobs, the ability to find and retain secure employment of my own and the opportunity to speak my mind.

I went on to study at Monash University, to practise as a lawyer and to work as an associate at the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, as it was then known. I worked in private practice in the Victorian public sector, and I was prompted to learn new things every day, to test my skills and to challenge my embedded ways of thinking. For many years I volunteered at the community legal service, and I also mentored a young woman who taught me just as much about myself as I taught her about how to stick up for herself. I felt myself contributing and it occurred to me that I was building something.

Along with thousands of others, I railed against the slick strategies of WorkChoices and its insidious, shiny and simplistic yellow booklets, and I worked on cases to challenge the worst aspects of a system that dismantled minimum conditions and encouraged the wholesale abandonment of dignity in employment. I poured my dismay at such fundamental inequity into using the law to protect the terms and conditions that were under threat and challenging the dismissals that had somehow managed to become fair simply by the stroke of a coalition pen. I learnt from some of the finest legal minds in Australia, and I was grateful for every opportunity that came my way to be better and to do better by those who often did not have the voice, the tools or the means to understand and enforce their legal rights.

In the midst of such an energetic endeavour a sense of obligation rested in me as resolutely as the dictionary in the centre of my childhood dinner table, a sense of obligation to build something that I can be proud to lay my hand on, to come back to again and again, to ground me.

What am I building? I am determined to add my own little spark to the light on the hill; to work towards achieving educational outcomes that do not require a golden ticket or the luck that I happened upon. I am determined to respect and honour the progressive work of the many innovative Labor thinkers who have made their marks and contributions before me. In turn, I hope to pave the way for future generations to represent eastern Victoria and the state more broadly as part of a system that has benefited from my own efforts.

I am determined to do my bit to help workers in regional Victoria to find and keep jobs they value and

that in turn are valued, jobs that enable as many people as possible to participate and positively contribute to their communities and to the economic and social productivity of Victoria. I am determined to play an assertive part in identifying inequity, naming unfairness and calling out the increasingly common practice of dumbing down public language and resorting to generalisations and lowest common denominators at the expense of accuracy.

I am determined to do the right thing by the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community — my community — and to contribute to removing discriminatory laws from Victoria's statute book, laws which have affected me personally and which, until they are improved, make the lives of LGBTI Victorians unnecessarily and unjustifiably hard. I am proud to be a Labor parliamentarian who supports marriage equality and who supports and will fight for a legal and regulatory system in Victoria that protects, includes and recognises families and partnerships of all kinds.

In laying my hands upon what I am building, I know and am proud of how I have contributed in my own small way to the lives of others. To that end I do not accept that the words 'unionist' and 'thug' are interchangeable. I am proud to be one of the many who have worked for and alongside unions that operate tirelessly, compassionately and with integrity in advocating for fair pay, terms and conditions, local jobs, increased compulsory contributions to superannuation, workplace safety standards, pay equity and the best possible combinations of productivity and dignity in work.

I am also determined to keep pushing back against the idea that it is fair or reasonable that women should expect less in our opportunities to be educated, in the balance of our retirement incomes, in our job security or in our access to the most senior positions in our boardrooms, job sites and offices. I do not accept that disadvantage simply comes with the territory of my gender, that a minister for women should ever be a man or that abuse of women in any form whatsoever is excusable. In this regard I hope to do my late grandmother Mary Whyte proud. She was a woman of incredible integrity and resourcefulness, and she was one of the best and strongest people I have ever known.

I am proud to be a member of the Andrews Labor government, to be part of such a progressive, compassionate, considered and ambitious government that is already achieving significant public good and that encapsulates the best, the very best, of those essential Labor values that I love.

In my journey to this point there are many people who deserve my thanks and have my gratitude. My dad, David Shing, has loved, encouraged and supported me unconditionally and with brilliant wit and humility, and my brothers, Patrick, Tim and Christopher, and my sister, Genevieve, have all inspired me in their own ways. Terry and Sarah Sanders are a source of enormous love and humour and remain firmly wedged into a corner of my heart. Emily Sanders has shown me wisdom, love and kindness in spades. My patient, generous and wise friends and mentors include Jennie McKenzie, Jim Betts, Stephen Moynihan, Brian and Louise Parkinson, Bruce Hartnett, Ken Ives, Johan Scheffer, Wendy Phillips, Lisa Darmanin, Tim, Matt, Andrea, Anne, Bernadette, Betty and Reuben. The last two are my dogs. And last but most definitely not least, Labor candidates, members and supporters throughout Eastern Victoria Region and most particularly in Gippsland have included me, welcomed me and inspired me to do the very best I can.

I am here to make something good and enduring that I can find and lay my hands on now and in all the years to come and know it to have been created and strengthened with all of the care, commitment, authenticity and integrity that I have. I know what I am building.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — My daughter, Carina, is 10 months old. She has already been expelled for unruly behaviour. If things had gone to plan, she would only be eight months old today, but Carina had other ideas. She would not wait nine months to meet us and came early, spending the first six weeks of her life in the Royal Women's Hospital. Friends have suggested that caring for a screaming, implacable, at times irrational infant is the best possible training for question time. That may be true, but becoming a parent has other advantages. Carina brought home to me the importance of universal government services. Without a world-class health service Carina would not be here today. It is that simple and that stark.

Family does that for all of us. It draws our attention to the importance of the community we are part of, protected by and beholden to. The anchor and generational interplay of a family — within which a person might be not only a parent but a sibling, a son or a daughter, or an aunt or an uncle — expand perspectives. Family encourages us to do more than seize the day; it spurs us to build a better tomorrow as well.

My family, many of whom are here with me today, also remind me of the importance of government. My wife has worked in the Victorian public service on

multicultural policy, industry policy and the national disability insurance scheme rollout. My sister is a decorated police officer who has often put herself in harm's way. My mum was a teacher — one of those teachers who stayed back to coach the debating team or organise the school play. My dad was a psychiatric nurse, having moved to Australia in his late 20s from Italy and put himself through night school while working multiple day jobs. And my stepfather worked on Indigenous policy in the Prime Minister's department.

Government is important, but it is only part of the bigger picture — the bigger picture of a modern pluralist society like ours. There is the community — families in all of their increasingly varied forms and sizes, which remain the bedrock of our life. There is also the need for a competitive private sector and for a vibrant and diverse not-for-profit sector — all of which begs the question: what is the appropriate role for government? How should we add value, not just today but tomorrow, to the lives of the diverse community that is Victoria?

A key challenge facing this Parliament is the pace and unpredictability of change in the modern world, so it is useful to remember that this is not the first time that Victoria has faced transformational change. In 1851 Victoria commenced a revolutionary decade that transformed its economy and society. In the two years following the discovery of gold Victoria's population increased more than sevenfold. In the 1850s Victoria accounted for over a third of global gold production. The legacy of those heady days is still with us today: this remarkable chamber; the beautiful Victorian era architecture spread across Melbourne and our regional cities; and a rich social and multicultural history, including the western world's oldest continuous Chinatown.

Victoria is entering another transformative period, one that will differ from the gold rush in three important respects: firstly, it will not affect one commodity but will directly affect every single aspect of our economy and society; secondly, it will last many decades, not one; and finally, and perhaps most importantly, unlike in 1851 we have advance notice of the changes ahead.

In framing a vision for our society's future we should consider how we want Victoria to look in 2051, two centuries after the gold rush. This chamber will need to deal with three tectonic forces that will shape Victoria's future no matter who wins the intervening elections. The first irreversible force is that by 2051 there will be billions more middle and high-income consumers around the globe. Forget newspaper headlines about

short-term fluctuations in the price of iron ore; over coming decades large swathes of the developing world will experience urbanisation, industrialisation and eventually a transition to a services economy. Billions will escape poverty.

Our response to this must be nuanced. Firstly, we must develop industry specific strategies. Some Victorian industries will be well suited to satisfy the growing demand of large middle-income markets; other industries will have comparative advantages dealing with high-income consumers rather than focusing on ultra-competitive low-margin mass-product markets. The Gippsland dairy industry, selling premium milk, cheese and yoghurt into the best Shanghai supermarkets, has the right approach.

Secondly, we need to broaden our focus beyond Asia. While numerically Asia's rise will be unparalleled, to move up the value chain we need a global approach. We can trade high-quality beef, wine and seafood, tertiary education and funds management services to people anywhere in the globe. To succeed in high value-add markets, we must target traditional markets such as the US, Japan and Europe, as well as developing regions such as East Asia, South America and the Middle East. Government can assist by freely providing exporters with detailed data on foreign markets that individual firms cannot easily access. Government can promote innovation and retrain workers transitioning between sectors and can promote a pro-growth environment by building productive infrastructure and implementing best practice regulation.

A second safe prediction is that by 2051 Australia will be an older society. The federal government predicts that by 2051 the number of workers per retiree will have roughly halved compared to today, placing significantly greater strain on government finances. Over the same period the number of people aged over 85 will more than quadruple. That is better than the alternative, but this will put significant upward pressure on healthcare costs.

I wrote my dissertation on the macro-economic impact of an ageing society. I believe the core conclusion still holds: the best approach is to adopt a range of strategies. This includes gradually increasing the average retirement age where possible by removing barriers for the many older Victorians who would prefer to remain connected with the workforce for longer. Immigration can also play a role, particularly if working-age migrants address specific skills shortages. The Victorian government can reduce ageing pressures by promoting productivity growth. More productive

education and training services will boost the capacity of a smaller workforce to support a just welfare state. More productive health services will ensure that retirees receive the care they deserve even as the tax base shrinks. Service delivery will benefit from greater flexibility. Just as Google, Amazon and Facebook now provide services tailored to each individual person, so should our health and education systems.

Finally, there is a third prediction: by 2051 Victoria will have a considerably higher population than today. Victoria is already more populous than 10 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development nations and 12 of the 27 member nations of the European Union. In addition Victoria's population is growing more rapidly than those of all major advanced economies. Indeed it is growing faster than those of all the BRICs — Brazil, Russia, India and China — the engine rooms of the modern global economy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics predicts that by 2061 Victoria will have a population of over 12 million and Melbourne a population of 8.6 million, making it Australia's largest city. Forget about Melbourne's CBD becoming a mini Manhattan; if we were to build a full-size Manhattan immediately adjacent to the current CBD, it would barely accommodate a third of the projected population increase.

Victoria will require additional infrastructure of all types. This will require innovative funding and financing arrangements. Some projects will require government funding and delivery. For these projects careful planning and transparent, rigorous project evaluations must be mandatory. For many projects, governments can most usefully play a planning and coordination role, creating the right environment for long-term investments. Victoria is one of the most attractive places in the world to invest in long-term projects, with its high and growing per capita income, rapid population growth and stability.

While I have made three bold predictions there are also, of course, many unknowns. Will the private sector take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves? What unexpected social pressures will our community experience? Will Carlton win another premiership before 2051? And most importantly for us, how will successive governments of either stripe respond to these three foreseeable trends? When our grandchildren look back in 2051 at what we did, we will have no excuse not to have acted with foresight and vision.

Eastern Victoria Region, which I represent, reflects the best of this great state and encompasses these future challenges and opportunities. It incorporates much of Melbourne's rapidly growing urban fringe, where I

experienced the difficulties of providing public services firsthand as a deputy mayor. It includes a significant part of the green wedge, a symbol of Melbourne's livability, given its proximity to such a large and bustling city. It contains a series of beautiful coastal townships along the Mornington Peninsula that are close to Melbourne yet in danger of dislocation from transport infrastructure and service delivery. It encompasses the Latrobe Valley, a region that employs thousands in the power sector and provides energy for industries and consumers across the nation, and the broader Gippsland region, with its sprawling high value-add agricultural industries. We are already making significant inroads into building Victoria's dynamic future, and eastern Victoria is there at every step.

Before concluding I would like to thank some of the people who have so generously helped me on my journey to this place. First, I thank my high school friends Dave and Stuart, who I was active with in Young Labor over 20 years ago, and Julian and Adrian, who have always encouraged me — albeit from across the aisle. I also thank the federal and state ministers that I have worked for. I will try to emulate the rigour of Jacinta Collins, particularly in relation to education and employment policy, and her commitment to Labor's social justice ideals.

In Bill Shorten's office I worked on flood insurance reform, the national disability insurance scheme and asbestos reform. I hope in the near future we will be negotiating for increased funding from a Shorten-led federal government. It was a privilege to work for Steve Bracks, the exceptional leader of a government that balanced sustainable economic growth with innovative, inclusive service delivery, and Treasurer John Lenders, who led this house. He taught me a great deal about implementing sound economic policy.

I have also benefited greatly from the friendship, advice and mentoring of many people within the party and friends beyond it, including Michael Donovan, Luke Donnellan, Raff Ciccone, Lizzie Blandthorn, Richard Scheelings, James Merlino, John McLindon, Marlene Kairouz, Adem Somyurek, Vicki Setches, Dimity Paul, Helen Lennon and Elena Douglas. I have benefited from the efforts of Labor people from across eastern Victoria, including the 11 lower house candidates and 4 other upper house candidates, who all invested so much in their campaigns, as well as the many hardworking campaign managers, branch members and party supporters.

I acknowledge the significant contribution of the members of Eastern Victoria Region whom Harriet and

I follow — Johan Scheffer and Matt Viney. The only downside of being introduced to so many worthwhile community groups by Johan is how often they now remind me of the large shoes that I have to fill.

I thank my family. Sarah's dad, Geoff, has been extremely generous in letting us base our campaign out of his previously orderly house. Mum, Dad, Nadia and John have been an unwavering source of support throughout my life. They have supported my political endeavours even as they have struggled to comprehend Young Labor factions, arcane preselection processes, the Kilsyth primary and, most recently, the Victorian upper house counting odyssey.

Finally, I come to the bedrock of everything in my life — Sarah and Carina. Sarah has the wonderful capacity to view my political dilemmas with the strident outrage of a loving spouse. Despite being unfailingly partisan toward my case, she also manages to offer wise, dispassionate counsel to extricate me from whatever embarrassing situation I have landed in. Sarah and I met during the 2010 state election at the Boronia shops — a location that I contend has to date been underestimated for its romantic potential. Our first experience together was to tie propaganda-covered helium balloons to unsuspecting children. Ironically, I would not dare anyone of any political persuasion to do the same to Carina with Sarah nearby today. I believe that it makes for a more balanced, more principled and more activist politician to know that whatever you achieve through your office will pale in comparison to what you achieve at home, and that no matter what errors you make or humiliations you suffer in public life, you can eventually safely return to your private domain.

Responding to the three long-term trends that I outlined earlier will not be an easy task in an extremely competitive global market. It will not be easy when government balance sheets are stretched. It will not be easy when our society seems to be struggling to agree on a shared vision for our future. But if we have the courage to make decisions that both benefit today's generations and also stand the test of time, we will have vindicated the electors who bestowed on us the privilege of serving in this place.

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — I commence as I always commence my public statements — by paying my respects to all those who have fought and died in wars throughout the world to defend Australia, our way of life and our freedom. It is a great honour to be elected, but my inaugural speech will not be about me. I will concentrate on Victoria and, more directly, western Victoria, in particular what I see as good and

what I see as needing attention during the next four years.

Before that I must thank the many loyal supporters, volunteers and voters and more than 850 members who have contributed to the election of Vote 1 Local Jobs. Without their support it would not be possible for me to be here today. I also thank my family — my wife, Robyn, my children Nathan, Aaron and Sasha and their families — for their unending support. I also appreciate the great support of my deputy, Tanya Waterson, and her commitment and effort to get me elected. Words cannot truly explain her efforts. In addition, I thank my mother and father, Bonnie and Bernie Purcell, for their never-ending support.

I would also like to thank a former member for Western Victoria Region, David O'Brien, for his focused representation of the region during the last four years and wish him every success in the future. It is also timely to congratulate the former Premier, Denis Napthine, the member for South-West Coast in the Assembly and my local lower house member, for his tireless dedication to our seat and his hard work during his time as Premier.

Vote 1 Local Jobs is a new party. It was established after I stood as an Independent at the last state election. I was approached to consider standing in the upper house at this election as the people of my home town of Port Fairy and the surrounding towns of Portland, Hamilton and Warrnambool were faced with the prospect of no representation closer than Geelong or Ballarat. As a long-term resident of this area, I was extremely concerned about this likely outcome.

We knew we wanted job security, economic prosperity and a positive way of life for western Victoria and believed jobs to be at the heart of the strong framework and foundation needed for our area to flourish. We passionately believe jobs are about more than just putting food on the table. They support social networks, help reduce crime rates and facilitate positive community self-esteem. And so Vote 1 Local Jobs was born. We became officially registered a few weeks before the November election and in just over three weeks we were elected — a true reflection of the south-west's desire for local representation.

The feedback from my electorate is that Victorians are looking for more from their elected representatives. They want their concerns to be heard and acted upon, they want an end to political grandstanding and they want outcome-driven leadership. We need to take action and work together to build a strong future for Victoria. We must create jobs, educate for jobs and

provide on-the-job training. Unemployment of the fit and able is simply not acceptable, intergenerational welfare is the greatest risk to this country and uncontrolled population growth is not the answer. Victoria has grown more quickly than its supporting infrastructure. Our roads are stressed, our schools and hospitals are under pressure and there are insufficient jobs.

Western Victoria is facing many of these problems in extreme proportions. Our roads, according to VicRoads reports, are the worst in the state; our year 12 attainment levels are some of the lowest in the state; and we have pockets of youth unemployment approaching 20 per cent, with our overall unemployment growing faster than the national average. The TAFE system needs strong support. I must say that I was very pleased to hear last week's rescue funding announcement by the government for the Warrnambool TAFE. Our hospital network needs continued assistance.

Agriculture is a shining light in western Victoria and must be protected. I see two major challenges to agriculture during the next four years and beyond. Firstly, coal seam gas exploration and extraction has the potential to destroy the underground water supply for stock and human consumption. I will be doing everything possible to stop this happening in western Victoria. Secondly, foreign ownership of our rich agricultural land has the potential to turn our rural communities into poorly paid, subservient, poverty-stricken communities. Our ancestors fought in wars to protect our country and now we see some people wanting to sell off what our ancestors fought for to the highest bidder. I cannot see any long-term benefit from allowing our country's greatest assets to be sold overseas. The next generations will not forgive us for allowing across-the-board foreign ownership of our prime agricultural land, and I will be doing all I can to stop this happening.

We need to support industry to grow, as without industry the problems I have previously mentioned will increase tenfold. Industry creates economic security and economic security creates jobs. We need to support renewable energy, support industry, put a blanket stop to the foreign buy up of our agricultural land and value add to our agricultural sector by being smarter about using what we have in Australia for Australia's economic gain and to create jobs.

Vote 1 Local Jobs' policies revolve around exactly that: jobs generation, economic security and a better way of life for western Victoria and the rest of Victoria. If I had a magic wand, I would immediately put a stop to the

foreign buy up of our rich agricultural land; emphatically oppose unconventional gas exploration and extraction; make it easier for country students to attend university by providing subsidies and discounting higher education contribution scheme fees; reduce payroll tax obligations for country businesses to help the decentralisation of business; cut the \$50 million the government spends on the grand prix and inject the funds into country roads; provide 40-kilometre-per-hour flashing lights at all schools on VicRoads transport routes; create better job opportunities by stopping the dumping of foreign product into Australia; decentralise government services from major cities to make services easier to access by people in country areas; support industry to grow and employ more Victorians; support traditional rural activities that are important to all electorates; and — one close to my heart — support horse racing, including jumps racing.

I am passionate about ensuring that the people of western Victoria have a strong local voice in Parliament and that issues relevant to the area are raised, heard and acted upon by the state's elected representatives. Locally, a pressing issue for my town of Port Fairy and surrounds at this point in time is an adverse possession claim at 107 Gipps Street, Port Fairy, by a Melbourne-based individual. This land is and always has been regarded by my community as common open space and has been regularly used as such by the fishing community and general public for many decades. Without the knowledge of most of my community, the Victorian titles office has recently made an incomprehensible decision to award this land to an opportunistic blow-in. I will be seeking to have this horrible adverse possession decision overturned and the land returned to the community as public open space.

Finally, I thank the coalition for its work over the past four years and congratulate Daniel Andrews and the Labor Party on their success in November. I have read with interest Labor's jobs creation policy and look forward to working with it and all other parties to create a stronger Western Victoria Region and Victoria as a whole.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan).

Debated adjourned until next day.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

West Gate distributor

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The Greens welcome the government's commitment to the West Gate distributor and to reducing the impact of freight trucks travelling through Melbourne's inner west. We are, however, concerned about the lack of detail and consultation around the project, despite it already being out for tender. Important questions remain about the design, how local impacts might be mitigated and whether the project will deliver the best outcome for the community as a whole. We ask the government to commit to doing five key things as part of the West Gate distributor project.

The first thing is to meaningfully consult with the community to minimise the potential impact of the project and properly inform and support residents through the construction period. The second thing is to create pedestrian and bike lane and bike trail connectivity alongside the new road, enabling the Federation Trail to be completed in order to maintain links along the Maribyrnong River and provide safe bicycle travel between the city and the Footscray shopping hub, including Shepherd Bridge. The third thing is to include best practice noise mitigation measures and revegetation for visual amenity along the West Gate distributor.

The fourth thing, once the West Gate distributor is built, is to ban truck movements, except for local deliveries, on all roads in the city of Maribyrnong, aside from the West Gate distributor itself. This would ensure that trucks use this route rather than continuing to rumble up local streets. The fifth thing is to develop a strategy to move more freight onto rail to reduce the ever-growing number of trucks on our roads and reduce local air pollution and greenhouse emissions.

The action I ask of the minister is that he commit to including these key elements in the contract, in legislation and in policy to ensure that the road delivers the best possible outcome for the health and wellbeing of residents in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Shepparton rail services

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — The matter I raise today is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns the need for additional passenger rail services on the Shepparton line. My request of the minister is that the Andrews Labor government match or better the coalition's election commitment that would have delivered improved rail services for Shepparton. The people of Shepparton are crying out for improved rail services. They were completely overlooked by the Bracks and Brumby governments when they favoured Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo and Traralgon for the so-called fast rail project, and I note that all of those areas were in Labor-held seats at the time of that project.

In contrast, the coalition did significant work to improve timetables on the Shepparton line and established a new morning service that arrives in Melbourne at 7.59 a.m. in time for the working day. The coalition made an election commitment of \$178.1 million to further improve long-distance V/Line train frequencies, including 79 new long-haul train trips each week for country commuters. This would have been the biggest single boost to V/Line's long-distance trains in the past 30 years and the beginning of the coalition's plan to double V/Line's long-distance patronage within 20 years. For Shepparton this commitment included an additional train from Southern Cross station to Shepparton on weekdays and additional return train services on Saturdays and Sundays. Currently many Shepparton residents are forced to drive to Seymour to catch a train that suits their needs.

Shepparton is Victoria's fourth largest regional city. The demographics of Shepparton show that there is significant disadvantage, and a large proportion of its population are low-income earners, of Indigenous background or new settlers. Residents of these demographic groups rely more heavily on public transport than other communities, particularly in regional Victoria, where the cost of petrol is significantly higher. Shepparton deserves to have the option of train services that better service the needs of its growing population.

The coalition commitment was fully costed and submitted to Treasury prior to the election to lock it into the coalition's future budget estimates. The money is there and tagged to be spent on services for Shepparton. If Labor chooses not to deliver these additional services, then the Andrews Labor government will be taking funding from Shepparton to prioritise funding in Labor electorates, once again demonstrating to the people of Shepparton that Labor does not care about

their needs. The action I seek of the minister is that the Andrews Labor government match or better the coalition's election commitment to improve rail services for Shepparton.

Mobile phone data usage

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. The matter I raise is in relation to mobile phone contracts and mobile phone use, where parents can be exposed to paying excessive phone bills on behalf of their under-age children. I am referring to the situation where parents have the choice of entering into a contract with Telstra or other telecommunication companies with either a prepaid or fixed amount. But the hidden cost with some of these contracts is when the data usage hits the roof without parents knowing that their kids have actually exceeded their data allowance. I am sure that has happened to many people in the state of Victoria and, for example, it happened to me a number of times.

The telecommunications company sends a text message to the phone user when the data usage allowance has been exceeded. That is fair enough, but in most cases the parents do not know about it and can end up with a bill of up to \$1000 in some cases. I have talked to a lot of people about this. It is a serious problem.

The action I seek is that the minister investigate the possibility of retailers being required to offer consumers the option of a contract that restricts the service to emergency calls only once the agreed usage limit is reached. This would make it more like the service people have at home, where if the data limit is exceeded, the download speed is automatically reduced. This service is not available for mobile phones — instead people are overcharged.

If it is not possible to introduce this under state laws, I ask that the minister take the matter up with the appropriate federal minister and look at options so that we can alleviate the financial hardship which is affecting many parents in Victoria.

Macalister irrigation district

Mr O'BRIEN (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture, who is also Minister for Regional Development. The action I seek is for the minister to undertake to visit the Macalister irrigation district (MID) in Gippsland to see how important this district is as a major productive farming region for Gippsland and for Victoria. In particular I would like the minister to come bearing a

small cheque — ideally for \$10 million — to enable the continuation of funding for the MID 2030 upgrade. This project will deliver significant water savings that can then be reinvested in the district to boost productivity.

The former coalition government committed \$16 million to phase 1A of the MID 2030 project, a figure that was matched by irrigators in the district, and the project is well underway. During the last election campaign the coalition government committed \$10 million to phase 1B of the project, which includes the Southern Tinamba pipeline. I am now calling on the minister to visit the region and invest the additional \$10 million to ensure that the project continues to tick along.

Stage 1B will deliver savings of nearly 10 000 megalitres of water, which can be reinvested into production. In the next few weeks we will see the next auction of water savings from phase 1A. These savings will go back to farmers to reinvest in their farms, which will increase production in the region. An additional benefit is the reduced nutrient run-off, which will be good for the Gippsland Lakes.

Our future in Gippsland is closely tied to food production. As we have heard from other members, it is absolutely critical that we support and enhance our agricultural industries, which are the bedrock of our future exports. The MID's good soils and moderate climate are already home to a world-class dairy industry and a growing vegetable and horticultural industry. The area produces about \$500 million of economic activity every year, and this additional funding would help to grow that area by \$45 million each year.

I ask the minister to visit the MID and ideally bring with her the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water and a cheque for \$10 million. The minister is welcome to visit this fantastic productive irrigation district and see the benefits of investing in the MID 2030 project.

School completion rates

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Education, Mr Merlino, and relates to school attainment and retention rates in south-western Victoria.

As the minister would be aware, the completion of secondary school has become more influential in determining the opportunities a young person will have available to them now and in the future. The level of an

individual's health, economic and general wellbeing outcomes is closely correlated with their education, particularly at secondary school level. In addition, graduation from secondary school, or its equivalent, has now become an important benchmark both in Australia and internationally and is required for further studies or participation in most areas of the labour force. For these reasons Australia, like a number of other countries, has set targets for secondary school attainment.

I bring to the attention of the minister the year 12 completion rates for students in south-western Victoria, which are well below the state average. As stated in the Great South Coast Group's *Year 12 or Equivalent Attainment Project — 2013–14 Preparatory Phase* report:

Our current generation of young people in the Great South Coast reflects poorer education, life skills levels and health than their peers across the state.

The report also states:

The number of our young people who are not making a successful transition to long-term, full-time employment is significant and compares unfavourably with other regions.

Last week I was in Hamilton, Portland, Port Fairy, Tower Hill, Warrnambool and Camperdown, where I met with all local government organisations and a range of community groups. Every single one of them raised this issue at meetings. It has become a matter of real urgency and an absolute priority for the region. In a recent Victorian Auditor-General's report into the support provided for students to complete secondary school it was found that during the whole period of the previous coalition government, year 12 attainment rates across Victoria had not improved.

This is a cause for concern in the region. Much work has already been done, and I ask the minister to meet with the Great South Coast Year 12 or Equivalent Attainment working group in the near future to discuss and resolve this very important issue.

Rural council planning flying squad

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Local Government. Having travelled through much of western Victoria over the past month, I have had conversations with many mayors and CEOs across the region. They have expressed to me their great concerns about the government's policies as they stand in regard to local councils.

My matter specifically relates to the rural council planning flying squad. The flying squad was launched

in November 2011 under the coalition government to provide specialist expert and technical assistance to rural and regional councils on issues such as major developments, long-term land use issues and strategic plans as well as providing immediate planning support with planning permit and amendment work.

This flying squad is vitally important in ensuring that smaller councils have the opportunity to deal with important planning issues for their communities in a timely manner. Over the time since its inception the flying squad has undertaken more than 160 projects for local councils across Victoria. Can the Minister for Local Government guarantee that the rural council planning flying squad will continue to operate in its form and will not be another service to be cut by this Labor government?

Whooping cough vaccine

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy, and it concerns the reintroduction of the whooping cough vaccine for expectant parents and parents of newborns. I congratulate the minister up front on reintroducing this program, which unfortunately was axed by the former Baillieu and Napthine governments. It is unfortunate that, because of that action, in the past 12 months there has been a 57.7 per cent increase in notifications of cases of whooping cough. The figure is up from 2926 in 2013 to 4615 in 2014.

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, the member is making a series of unsubstantiated assertions. In fact the whooping cough rate is far lower than it was under the previous Labor government.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Davis knows a point of order is not a debating opportunity. What he has tried to do is enter into the debate and correct the member by way of a point of order. It is not a point of order; it is ruled out of order. I really get a little terse when I have these sorts of points of order being raised when members know very well they are not points of order and they are just trying to participate in the debate.

Mr LEANE — There has been an increase in the number of cases among children younger than one year old. As we know, whooping cough can be deadly in children of that age.

The action I seek is for the minister to ensure that the Victorian public is fully informed about the Andrews government reintroducing this important service of

providing these free vaccinations and, through that information, to ensure that Victorians know at what medical facilities this service will be available.

Northern Hospital

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health, and it concerns Northern Hospital, one of the busiest hospitals in one of the fastest growing areas of Melbourne. Despite being in government since 29 November, the Minister for Health still has not visited one of the busiest hospitals in Melbourne.

Just in the last week 61 babies were born at Northern Health, and there were 1451 emergency attendances and 3969 outpatient attendances. An average week at Northern Health includes 1361 emergency department presentations, including 249 paediatric presentations, 377 ambulance arrivals, 3816 outpatient appointments, 282 elective surgeries, 117 emergency operations and 62 births, with a record 3241 babies born in the 2013–14 financial year.

The Napthine coalition government actively supported Northern Health, with \$24.5 million for a new emergency department, which has now been opened, and a further \$29 million to build a three-storey, 32-bed facility there, and construction has commenced on that. During the election campaign the Napthine coalition government committed \$98 million if the coalition won the state election. That was clearly unmatched by the Labor Party. The people of the north feel quite neglected by Labor because they feel it does not really appreciate the pressures on people in Melbourne's north.

The multimillion-dollar commitment given by the Napthine coalition government included three storeys and a rooftop helipad to be added to the inpatient tower which, as I said, is currently under construction. It would have included 64 inpatient beds, 2 operating theatres, 12 intensive care beds, and additional day surgery and consulting suites — none of which was matched by the Andrews-led Labor Party.

My call is to the minister to come with me to visit Janet Compton, the CEO, and her leadership team who are doing a wonderful job, together with the great staff at Northern Hospital who are under daily pressure due to the growing area to the north of Melbourne. I ask the minister to visit the hospital with me so she can truly appreciate the need and requirement for the Andrews Labor government once and for all to get behind Northern Hospital.

Sunbury municipality

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter on the adjournment this evening with the Minister for Local Government, and it concerns the decision by the former coalition government to allow a stand-alone Sunbury council from the middle of this year. As the house would be aware, this follows some 20 years of campaigning by local people. Labor promised both in 1999 and in 2002 that it would allow a vote of local people to decide the municipal future of Sunbury. On both occasions the promise was not kept; indeed, some might even say it was broken.

The coalition government finally granted the vote during the course of the last government and there was a resounding yes vote for Sunbury out of Hume. It was not just the people in Sunbury but people from other areas within the city of Hume who voted for Sunbury to have a stand-alone council.

The former government respected the voice of the people and announced last year that there would be a new council from 1 July this year. But since the election of the new Labor government there has been silence — we have heard the crickets. Indeed the newly elected member for Sunbury, Mr Josh Bull, has refused to meet with locals to discuss this matter. I would have thought for a newly elected member that is probably not a good start, and I would advise him to begin meeting with some local people and having a chat.

An honourable member — He should get out more.

Mr FINN — He should get out more, and we will try to get him out altogether at the next election.

The campaign against Sunbury out of Hume has been run by a number of individuals associated with the ALP, including one prominent councillor. Members of the Australian Services Union have been very active in campaigning for Sunbury to stay within the city of Hume. It should not be of any surprise to anybody to learn that Sunbury people are indeed very worried, and they may be worried with good reason given the silence of the government on this particular matter.

I ask the minister to reassure the good people of Sunbury that the planned new council will go ahead from 1 July, and I ask her to give that assurance as soon as she possibly can. Obviously people need to make plans, and we need to look to the future with confidence. At the moment nobody can say with any confidence what exactly the government has in mind. I ask the minister to make it clear for the people of

Sunbury that the Sunbury council will go ahead from 1 July. I ask that she show Sunbury the respect it deserves and stop the contempt that the ALP has shown Sunbury for some years.

Weed management

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Ms Neville. It has been an absolute pleasure during my years in this place to work with Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs. As many members would be aware, weeds are an ongoing issue in the Dandenongs. It takes ongoing investment and the goodwill of many community groups that work diligently, giving their time and energy to attacking the scourge of weeds that proliferate throughout the Dandenongs.

In that context it was most unfortunate to see in Labor's financial statement of 2014 that the urban fringe weed management funding had been slashed by Labor — \$3 million is gone, according to its document. I have received representation from Community Weed Alliance of the Dandenongs. Its letter of 23 December says:

Are you aware that the new government has decided to not continue with the urban fringe weed management initiative ...

It goes on to say that it had been achieving excellent results with the initiative and would have in the future with the urban fringe weed management initiative in terms of weed management. It then goes on to talk about some of the other positive things that are happening with commonwealth funding in relation to wandering trad.

The action I seek from the minister is that she advocate in government around the cabinet table to look to restore this funding. I make the point that because the funding works with community partners, it goes a long way. Weeds are an ongoing issue in the Dandenongs. It is most regrettable that this funding has been cut, and I urge the minister to reconsider this decision.

Fishermans Bend development

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My matter for the adjournment tonight is for the Minister for Planning. It concerns planning for bicycle paths and a full integration of bicycles into the development of Fishermans Bend. This is a very important zone, a massive new area of development. The state government in the previous period put significant work into ensuring that Fishermans Bend was well planned

and that the important task of providing houses for new Victorians in that area was able to be undertaken.

The other day I met with the Port Phillip Bicycle User Group and spent time talking to its members about their understanding of the process and their concern to see sufficient focus on separate bicycle paths and the incorporation of bicycles as a significant part of the development of Fishermans Bend. I make the point that as I looked at this I saw that a significant reduction in rail support for that area is likely if the Montague station is removed, as the current government is proposing to do. We want a public transport-friendly focus on Fishermans Bend. We want to see a good outcome in terms of rail but also a linking with other forms of public transport and a significant role for bicycles to ensure that the new development there is able to deliver what is required.

Georgina Fyffe-Jamieson and the committee of the Port Phillip Bicycle User Group are seeking a close involvement in the planning of the Fishermans Bend development, so I think the bicycle user group is a very important vehicle to assist with the planning in that area and also specifically with the liaison with the local council. I urge the Minister for Planning to commit to a close involvement of the bicycle user group and a comprehensive maintenance of a bicycle strategy and to ensure that the Melbourne rail project continues and that bicycles are linked with other modes of public transport.

Responses

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised on 23 December 2014 by Mr Davis, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, Ms Lovell, Mr O'Donohue and Mr Ramsay.

As to the matters that were raised on the adjournment tonight, Ms Hartland raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety relating to the West Gate distributor.

Ms Lovell raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport about the passenger rail services to Shepparton.

Mr Melhem raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation relating to mobile phone contracts. He was seeking some comfort for families who currently feel that their children in particular may expose them to large financial outlays and would like to know what powers the minister has to work either within her own

jurisdiction or with the federal jurisdiction to resolve the matter.

Mr O'Brien raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture, who is also the Minister for Regional Development, and invited her to visit Macalister irrigation district with what he described as a 'small cheque', but in my lexicon what he asked for is quite a significant investment by the state of Victoria. The minister will respond in her own way.

Ms Tierney raised a matter for the Minister for Education, drawing attention to the very poor education and job opportunities that currently exist, particularly for young people, in south-western Victoria. This is an issue that Mr Purcell raised in his inaugural speech this evening, and obviously it is a matter of profound concern to residents of the south-west. Ms Tierney called upon the Minister for Education to support a groundswell of concern in south-western Victoria to ensure that better education and employment opportunities are found for that community.

Mr Morris raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government. He asked her to support the provision of rural planning flying squads, which he suggested provide a useful support service to local governments across the regions.

Mr Leane raised a matter for the Minister for Health and asked her to ensure that the re-introduction of the whooping cough vaccine to Victorian families to try to reduce the incidence of whooping cough in our community is rolled out at the earliest opportunity and to make sure that the public health message that is associated with that important program is well publicised so families know of and take advantage of that opportunity in a climate where that program was cruelly curtailed in the last term of the Parliament.

Mr Ondarchie raised a matter for the Minister for Health, seeking her support and focus on the healthcare needs of Northern Hospital. He took the opportunity to indicate that in particular there were pressures in relation to birthing and paediatric care. I encourage him to reflect on his urging of this government to deal with that matter and the past experience of the Northern Hospital, which was to regularly close paediatric beds during the term of the last government. Whilst the outgoing government made some investment announcements in the lead-up to the election, all indications are that Northern Health experienced great stresses during the last term of government and that on various occasions not only did it not feel supported but it felt under great pressure in relation to an amalgamation process, which was probably very

unsettling for it. I am certain that the Minister for Health will be alive to the issues of support for that community into the future.

Mr Finn raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Local Government, urging her support for the outcome of the referendum that was held by the Sunbury community in relation to its desire to disaggregate its local government arrangements with Hume council and to share the view of the government in relation to that endeavour into the future.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the attention of the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, urging her to support community weed alliance activities in the Dandenongs.

Mr Davis raised a matter for the Minister for Planning which combined a variety of issues but was primarily through the prism of support for bicycle paths. I was very interested that he wanted them to in some way articulate into a fixed rail system. I imagine that that will be a challenge for the Minister for Planning to work his way through.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 10.26 p.m.