

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT**

**FIRST SESSION**

**Tuesday, 24 February 2015**

**(Extract from book 3)**

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<sup>1</sup> Resigned 25 February 2015

**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



# CONTENTS

## TUESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2015

### CONDOLENCES

*Hon. Evan Herbert Walker, AO* ..... 265

### RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

*Sessional orders* ..... 272

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

*Wi-fi access* ..... 274

*Police human source management report* ..... 274, 275

*Roads and bridges* ..... 275

*TAFE funding* ..... 275, 277

*Fruit fly* ..... 277

*Regional and rural gas supply* ..... 279

*Family violence* ..... 280

*Community services sector* ..... 280, 282

*Taxi and hire car industry* ..... 282

### CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

*South Eastern Metropolitan Region* ..... 282, 283

*Western Victoria Region* ..... 283, 284

*Southern Metropolitan Region* ..... 283

*Eastern Victoria Region* ..... 283

*Eastern Metropolitan Region* ..... 283

*Northern Metropolitan Region* ..... 284

*Western Metropolitan Region* ..... 284

### SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS

#### COMMITTEE

*Alert Digest No. 1* ..... 284

*Statute Law Revision Bill 2014* ..... 284

PAPERS ..... 285

NOTICES OF MOTION ..... 285

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*General business* ..... 287

### MINISTERS STATEMENTS

*Greyhound racing* ..... 287

*International education* ..... 287

*Kindergarten funding* ..... 288

*Small business bus* ..... 288

### GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

*Address-in-reply* ..... 289

### MEMBERS STATEMENTS

*McGrath Foundation* ..... 292

*Steele Sidebottom* ..... 292

*Kindergarten funding* ..... 292

*Wendy Pearl* ..... 293

*Coptic Christians* ..... 293

*Violence against people with disability* ..... 293

*Roads and bridges* ..... 294, 295

*Fed Up Lunch* ..... 294

*Officer Specialist School and Officer Secondary*

*College* ..... 294

*Dr Mike Helal* ..... 294

*Frankston Hospital* ..... 295

*McAuley Community Services for Women* ..... 295

*Leukaemia Foundation* ..... 296

*National security* ..... 296

*Community services sector* ..... 296

### UPPER YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG

*RANGES REGIONAL STRATEGY PLAN* ..... 297

### BACK TO WORK BILL 2014

*Second reading* ..... 298

### ADJOURNMENT

*Keysborough South bus service* ..... 314

*Goulburn Valley Health* ..... 314

*Renewable energy* ..... 315

*Monbulk Recreation Reserve* ..... 315

*Disability services* ..... 316

*Geelong defence contract bid* ..... 316

*Prahran electorate secondary school* ..... 317

*Local government rates* ..... 318

*Clyde Road, Berwick* ..... 319

*Taylors-Kings roads, Delahey* ..... 320

*East-west link contracts* ..... 320

*Ballarat rail fares* ..... 320

*Pipis* ..... 320

*Responses* ..... 321



**Tuesday, 24 February 2015**

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

**CONDOLENCES**

**Hon. Evan Herbert Walker, AO**

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

That this house expresses its sincere sorrow at the death, on 15 February 2015, of the Honourable Evan Herbert Walker, AO, and places on record its acknowledgement 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 Melbourne from 1979 to 1992 and as Minister for Conservation and Minister for Planning from 1982 to 1983, Minister of Public Works from 1983 to 1985, Minister for Planning and Environment from 1983 to 1986, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs from 1985 to 1988, Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources from 1988 to 1989, Minister for Major Projects, Minister for the Arts and Minister responsible for Post-Secondary Education from 1989 to 1990, Deputy Opposition Leader in the Legislative Council from 1979 to 1982, Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council from 1982 to 1983, and as Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council from 1983 to 1990.

In moving our expression of sincere sorrow to the family of Evan Walker on behalf of the Labor Party and the Victorian government, I express from the outset that we on this side of the chamber believe Evan Walker was a true hero of the Victorian Labor Party, somebody for whom we have the highest regard. I hope to convey adequately through my contribution our sincere condolences to his loved ones at this time.

Quite often when a member makes a contribution to the debate on a condolence motion they are tempted to say more about themselves than about the person who has left us. Whilst I will make some references to my connection to Evan Walker in a number of ways, I do not want to gild the lily in terms of the length of our personal connection. Indeed it is my loss to report to the chamber that my connection with Evan Walker was not as permanent and lasting as it should have been by design.

By and large the esteem in which I hold Evan Walker in terms of his contribution to the Victorian community is based on what I have witnessed through the sheer breadth of his personal achievements and the legacy he has left behind. Often I have learnt about him and his legacy at second or third hand from people within the Labor movement who are very close and dear to me, people who have been the beneficiaries of his wit and

wisdom and who know his outstanding contribution to good governance in Victoria.

After being elected as a member for Melbourne Province I assumed the responsibility of being Deputy Leader of the Labor Party in the Council, so there is a resonance between me and Evan Walker. In my inaugural speech I drew attention to some comments he had made in his inaugural speech. I will not replicate exactly those quotes today, but I will put on the public record some other comments. From the outset we should quickly understand the type of human being we are talking about. Beyond a politician and a significant member of our community, Evan Walker was a human being in the finest sense of the values and the objectives that bring people to this place.

Evan Walker identified that in his inaugural speech. He said:

I am personally committed to working for a radical redistribution of wealth and power in this society for both ideological and practical reasons. We are facing unprecedented problems at international, national, state and local levels; problems of unemployment, of social dislocation, of fuel and energy shortages, of inadequate education, of industrial injustice and of degeneration of the moral fabric of society.

These are not the words of a Marxist but a Methodist, and it has been reported that Evan Walker did make that comment on a number of occasions in his life. When we think of the revolutionary zeal that perhaps underpins our desires and intentions on coming into public life, from day one Evan Walker hitched his colours to the mast.

He also drew attention to the environment in which we convene. For the benefit of members of the Parliament of Victoria who may not know why the Knight Kerr room is called that, Evan Walker referred thus in his inaugural speech:

I pay particular tribute today to the architects of this magnificent chamber, a partnership of two men, Messrs Knight and Kerr, who were, at the time they designed this building, aged respectively 32 and 28 years — very young men. They had the building built in 11 months — this chamber and its pair, the Legislative Assembly chamber. It is as fine an example of mid-19th century state architecture as will be found anywhere, and I give credit to them. The colony at the time was just 21 years old. It was a supreme achievement. My only regret is that the institution which it houses still reflects a 19th century nature.

It is our collective responsibility to rise above that and demonstrate that we can move beyond the reputation that lingered in this chamber for many years, some aspects of which may continue to this very day.

This is a very different world, and a very different Victoria, from the day Evan Walker made his inaugural speech. One of the things he commented on in that speech was that 8 of the 12 Victorian Football League teams were located within Melbourne Province. Yes, this is within our lifetime! He thought that was a major distraction because it was very difficult to work out the appropriate allegiances within the tight domain of just four lower house seats. It is quite extraordinary when you think of the current concentration of that now national sporting body and what has happened over time.

Evan Walker's comments about the Yarra River show us another remarkable transformation of this city. Many people visited the Southbank precinct over the weekend and were caught up in the crush of White Night. Many have experienced the excitement and vibrancy of that precinct in Melbourne, which thousands of our citizens see each and every day in not only their leisure time but also their working lives. It is a very different environment to the one that preceded Evan Walker's arrival in the Parliament. He commented on the extraordinary difference in the quality of the water supply east of Swanston Street's Princes Bridge and the west. He wondered about the fact that the water on the eastern side was good enough for 'private school chaps to row on' but when you crossed to the western side it became the city's sewer.

I have rowed on the Yarra River only once in my lifetime; Beaufort High School had a very small rowing team. But when you passed under Princes Bridge and came within sight of the much-maligned Allen's factory — which took responsibility for all the sewage and pollution in the water, although it was just one of a number of industrial complexes on that side of the river — the change in the quality of the water and the smell of the city was quite extraordinary.

Evan Walker was very concerned about the quality of life in our city. Those who have travelled to London and experienced the extraordinary dislocation between the East End of London and the wealth and splendour of the West End will know Melbourne was very similar — the transition happens in a 5-minute walk through parts of London. Similarly in Melbourne there was a quite extraordinary dislocation. Evan Walker was determined through the prism of his sense of the aesthetic, his appreciation of architectural values and his understanding of planning processes to open up that precinct, and today we have an extraordinary precinct that we have every reason to be proud of.

Of all the extraordinary contributions to public life that Evan Walker made, which in no small part is measured

by the length of the motion I moved, it is extraordinary to see the breadth of portfolio responsibilities and the contribution to a reforming government under the Cain administration that Evan Walker was responsible for. I could, and other members of the chamber may, go through those extraordinary achievements in other aspects of his portfolio responsibilities, but I will concentrate on Southbank for another reason. Apart from the fact that it has now become a glory and a joy to travel to that part of Melbourne to enjoy the life we have, I was very touched when I went back and re-read a moving piece by Paul Heinrichs, who wrote something of Evan's personal journey. In a *Sunday Age* article in 2004 he wrote:

Slowly, the old river god draws himself up from the seat on the promenade at Southbank and makes his way to the footbridge to Flinders Street station.

Prematurely aged by Parkinson's disease, his stooped figure is silhouetted against the Yarra, the repeated focus of half a century of his work.

The walking stick is a necessary nuisance. He can't walk far. The shuffling seems to start at the hips.

...

No-one recognises Evan Walker, one of the transformative figures of the city Melbourne has become, as he moves among the midmorning beneficiaries of the milieu of Southbank, his best-known legacy.

That doesn't trouble him. He has never been an attention seeker, always content to remain the policy facilitator, the constructive chairman of a thousand difficult meetings, a minister in charge of widely differing portfolios during a period of marked social change overseen by the Cain government of the 1980s.

What a breadth of responsibilities he had in the sheer volume of his ministerial workload, in the alliances and in the stability he formed as part of the Cain government during that period of the 1980s. Many people have said they were in awe of his outstanding contribution.

As testament to that yesterday I had the good fortune to attend an extraordinary funeral along with many members of the Victorian community and many members of the Labor movement. Indeed at my count seven premiers were in attendance as well as many ministers and many members of Parliament from all sides of political life. It was a mark of our respect for this remarkable man.

In the funeral ceremony a couple of speakers commented on a challenge from Evan's wife, Judith, to be revelatory and to convey some warts. Michael Henry in his beautiful contribution had a similar segue to the one I have created, but he backed off — no warts. I say

to Judith that as a mark of respect to her challenge I will see if I can go somewhere there.

Yesterday during the funeral service I swear I heard former Premier John Cain use the phrase ‘factional organiser’ in a positive way. Presumably it was only in the context of Evan Walker’s factional organising ability, because that is the first time in a political lifetime that I have heard John Cain use that phrase in a positive way.

I also heard Daryl Jackson talking about some corporate intrigue. Daryl Jackson made it very clear that soon after he and Evan Walker established their combined architectural practice Evan flitted off to Toronto in the name of study but also to pursue a variety of other interests, which included collecting a wife. It was a lengthy absence, and Daryl reported that family connections on either side of this divide would call in regularly with totally opposing perspectives on what was happening. Daryl Jackson’s father thought it was an outrage that Evan Walker had deserted the firm, yet Evan Walker’s father was very appreciative of Daryl’s attempts to keep Evan’s practice going. This could be described as a hotbed of corporate intrigue, but fortunately it did not blow up their relationship, and in fact Daryl Jackson seemed to be quite happy to reflect on those moments.

That was not the only moment of candour that we might be troubled about. Chris, Ben and Rebecca did a sterling job reminding us of their father’s humour, capability, tenacity and creative drive, but they did make one important admission. They made it pretty clear that the planning permits associated with the work undertaken at Cape Liptrap were of a very dubious nature. I will leave it there.

Michael Henry summed up Evan’s qualities in the spirit of the rich comedic pedigree that Evan’s children had outlined. He made a profound and deeply moving statement on Evan’s behalf: ‘If something is worth doing, it’s worth doing badly’. That is the sort of contribution from which I, as a member of the current government, draw great encouragement. It encourages us to have a go, and as members of a government that wants to be a reforming government, we want to have a go.

In my last comment about the warts-and-all nature of what was revealed yesterday I want to put on the public record how mortifying it is to be required to read Tennyson’s *Morte d’Arthur* in a public setting. Let me leave that for our contemplative reflection. It is a very difficult challenge, and all of us will spend some time reflecting on the depth of that challenge.

One thing that came through clearly at the funeral service yesterday was the close bonds and connections that have been maintained over the years, and how powerful and loving those connections were. One way of understanding how difficult a political life can be is through listening to the contributions of people at the funeral of a former MP. We have all contemplated the difficulties involved in our commitment to public life, especially with regard to honesty and how this may be sorely tested from time to time. Not many people in public life go to this place, but in the spirit of Evan Walker I will go there.

At the time he left the ministry Evan made a speech about the nature of honesty in public life. This speech was not intended to imply that ‘politicians are liars’, even though that is how it was reported at the time. Rather, it was about how we try to acquit our ministerial or portfolio responsibilities while simultaneously trying to meet the public’s belief that it has the right to know and its expectation that we convey the full truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Evan was prepared to talk about those matters. Very few of us would be prepared to talk about those matters. Evan talked about them very clearly from a faith-based perspective. He had great confidence in his own faith and in the sense of his own integrity, and from that he extrapolated to commenting on those issues in a speech which was part of a series called *Keeping Society Honest*. Probably on reflection he may have preferred that it did not draw much commentary, and he may still have preferred that up until this very moment, but nonetheless, it provides an opportunity for me to give a personal connection because I had not thought about the following experience for many years.

It may come as a huge surprise to people, who might think that I come more from the Marxist end than the Methodist end of political or theological perspective, but in fact in my early life I was a Methodist. My family was Methodist, I went to Sunday school and I remember very vividly being part of a Sunday school group that was asked in the church, in front of all our families, in front of all our friends, whether as children we had lied. I was about six or seven at the time, and I put up my hand to say that I had lied. I was completely castigated and set aside by everybody else in the Sunday school because I had told a lie. I did not necessarily reflect on their duplicity or dishonesty in that action, but it is a very vivid memory now that I return to it. If we can try to steer a path where we maintain integrity and honesty in the work we do, that is a residual lesson we should all learn, maintain and do our best to acquit.

Two of the people about whom Evan Walker had commented and drawn attention to in relation to the connection between Christianity, honesty and integrity, were both speakers at the funeral yesterday: John Cain, whom most people in public life continue to this day to respect as a man of honesty and integrity, is not a Christian; and Brian Howe, who is a Christian, has been understood over his political life to be a spear carrier for the Labor Party through hell or high water. Each of them has been able to acquit, through different faith bases, a commitment to the Labor Party, a commitment to good government and a commitment to honesty. Worthy of consideration by all in this Parliament is whether we can find a space to respect the diversity of views that may be so evident in, for example, such commentary as is found in many of the inaugural speeches made in the previous sitting week of this Parliament. It is a contemporary issue for us to consider, and I encourage all members to reflect on it as a contemporary legacy of the pain and suffering that Evan Walker went through in those days in 1990.

Evan's pain and suffering continued for many years after that event. It was not because of his lack of contribution to public life after he left Parliament, because he continued to excel in his whole career in relation to architecture and academia for many years of that journey.

In the article by Paul Heinrichs that I referred to earlier, Judith indicated that it was a very difficult transition when Evan's physical abilities deteriorated, which may have been disconcerting for his friends and loved ones. They had always seen him as the rock, the sheet anchor and the inspiration, and that transition and loss of capacity affected their sense of connection and shook them. At the funeral yesterday the love and connection over the 11 years since the article appeared, in 2004, was clearly on show for all of us. Despite a deterioration in capability, a profound connection had been maintained. A profound love and regard has been maintained.

It is an extraordinary thing Evan's family lived through, and they are stronger, wiser, more resilient and more capable because of that experience. Whilst we in the Labor Party, on behalf of the government, condole with them — we offer our sincere best wishes and regards for them now and into the future — we are very honoured to pay our respects to the outstanding life of Evan Walker.

**Ms WOOLDRIDGE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am also honoured to contribute to this condolence motion for Evan Walker, AO, former MLC. I believe people come to this place with the desire to make a

difference — to make a difference to their community and to their state. It is clear through reading, understanding and listening to Evan Walker's contribution that he achieved that at both levels and in so many ways. The basis of his life and the contribution he made was founded very strongly in his passion for education. He was educated at Box Hill Grammar School, where his father was the headmaster. He also went to Melbourne High School. He got a degree in architecture from Melbourne University and a masters degree from the University of Toronto on a Canadian commonwealth scholarship. The practice and expertise he brought to this place and to his work more generally were very much steeped in the base of knowledge and learning that he loved throughout his life.

He had a very successful career before he turned to politics. We have heard about his very successful architectural practice, Daryl Jackson Evan Walker, which was one of the major Melbourne firms and had 30 employees at its height. He won many awards for his work at that time. The Leader of the Government said that often these condolence speeches are a bit about yourself as well as the person you are acknowledging, but I think we all seek to find a connection with the person we are talking about. While I never had the opportunity to meet Evan Walker, in reading about him there were connections we all feel in terms of work and experiences of this place.

I also had a connection from my primary school days and through my high school. In my reading I found that one of the awards Evan Walker had won was for the library and resource centre opened in 1974 at the Methodist Ladies College (MLC). I was a grade 2 student at MLC at that time, but I very clearly remember the opening of that centre and the controversy that surrounded it. In seeking to get a little bit more information to contribute to the condolence motion today I read the MLC website, which still talks about the building and its architecture on what is a very large campus and a diverse campus in terms of its buildings. It says, when talking about the resource centre:

This building is an example of 'brutalist' architecture that originated in Britain in the mid-1950s. This controversial 'industrial' style celebrates the materials from which buildings are constructed, particularly concrete. There is no attempt to hide or decorate the concrete exterior or even smooth its roughness and marks. Save for the rounded 'turret' stairwells on our resource centre, the building's exterior is comprised of sharp angles.

The centre was both praised and criticised when it opened. Students described it as 'super cool'. A nearby neighbour described it as resembling 'a penitentiary or grain silo'.

It goes on to say in relation to a request that the school paint the building's exterior:

We can be thankful that ... the architect (Evan Walker) and MLC administration took the brave step to bring this unique building to our college.

For me that is a very good example of taking risks and the fact that Evan Walker was out there taking risks, seeing opportunities and having the confidence to pursue them and follow through. What he was doing in terms of his work in the early 1970s, and I am sure through his entire career as an architect, continued in the work he did as a minister and a parliamentarian.

The motion outlines Evan's extensive range of portfolio responsibilities. Much of the focus is on his work in planning, public works, conservation and the environment, and it is clear that he saw architecture as much more than buildings. He saw planning as much more than lines on a map. It was about bringing together the impact of that work for the benefit of the broader community. Evan left that career saying:

An architect can't do much. We were doing good work, but I was a bit frustrated.

He felt he could make that broader contribution by bringing to this place the skills he had acquired through training. His talents have been recognised by all sides of Parliament. I also enjoy a quote from Geoff Underwood, who was Alan Hunt's former chief of staff. He said:

Walker had this 3D view of things, he was able to see things with an architect's eye.

The respect Evan garnered from not only this place but also the Victorian community as a whole reflects the esteem in which he was held.

There is no doubt that he had a longer term vision. We have heard about some of the changes and differences that he made. He showed bravery in the battles for things like Southbank and its development, the protection of Collins Street and the installation of the MCG lights. I understand he even turned his hand to designing the look of those lights himself. When members think of some of the highlights of this city — some of the things we promote to Australia and the world — they are things to which Evan Walker made a significant contribution.

Evan held some controversial views, as has been mentioned by the Leader of the Government. One of Evan's views that was outlined in his maiden speech — and the Leader of the Government did not mention this — was that we should have a unicameral

parliamentary system. He did not believe in the future of this chamber, and in fact he acknowledged the President by saying it might be the last time the President was acknowledged in that way. Evan held this view very strongly at the time, and I believe it was also the policy of the Labor Party at the time. Most of us are very thankful that that particular view did not come to fruition, although I can see some quizzical looks from the other side of the chamber in relation to that.

Another comment that stuck in my mind was one from the Leader of the Government relating to Evan Walker's belief in the radical redistribution of wealth and power. He was a man who had strong views and a broad perspective. He also had the confidence and courage to promote those views, advocate for them and in many cases deliver on them.

A lot of the commentary indicates that Evan Walker was very urbane. The work he did in his time in Parliament and afterwards reflects some of that broader perspective. He had a love of the arts and a very significant role in the Melbourne International Arts Festival, the Playbox Theatre Company and the Victorian Arts Council. He was a painter, and he enjoyed making movies. He saw real value in education — and not only his own. He was on the board of the RMIT University council and was a member of the Council of Adult Education. As a member of the Prime Minister's Urban Design Task Force and chairman of the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, which continues to play a very important role today in terms of housing, he very much valued urban and social planning.

Evan Walker lived a significant life and a good life that made a real difference. There is no doubt that our city is richer as a result of his leadership, his vision and his contribution. On behalf of the parliamentary Liberal Party I pass on condolences to his wife and his family. May he rest in peace.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — The members of the Greens would like to associate ourselves with this motion. At the time of Mr Walker's parliamentary service, a reporter described him as a 'tough-minded, down-to-earth idealist'. I am sure that every member of this house would take great delight in being described that way.

In his inaugural speech to Parliament Mr Walker described himself as the first architect to have entered the Parliament, although he also said he thought he had uncovered one MP who had had a very brief tenure in the profession. It has been noted by others how few

architects there have been in this Parliament since that time. Mr Walker made specific reference to the particular sensibility and outlook architects bring to the questions we debate here — the view not just of what is and what has been but also the possibilities of what can be.

Mr Walker was an activist for conservation in this city before he entered Parliament, but when in Parliament, with the numerous ministries and many responsibilities that were thrust upon him as soon as he arrived, he was able to participate in that balancing act most directly. While many of the things he did in his time attracted controversy, that may have been because the portfolios he took responsibility for are inherently controversial, and they continue to be to this day. The issues he grappled with are very much live and contemporary issues, including, I was pleased to read, some of his opposition to the folly of the continuous expansion of urban freeways and what they will eventually do to this city. Mr Walker would be very much in place and of great service to the chamber if he were here today.

Mr Walker was involved in some things that we probably would not deal with today, such as the use of emergency services powers to ensure that the milk supply continued to flow. Clearly that type of issue has passed on, but the matters he dealt with, the territory he carved out and the arguments he made are very much the building blocks of the issues we continue to deal with in the chamber today in relation to Melbourne and Victoria. For that reason all members of my party are most keen to be associated with the condolence motion for Mr Walker, for his life's work and for his career as an architect both before and after his time in the Parliament. We send our best wishes to his friends, family and loved ones.

**Mr DRUM** (Northern Victoria) — I would like to associate The Nationals with this condolence motion. In reading through a range of material about Evan Walker, I learnt that he came to this chamber in 1979. Like the Leader of the Government, I read his maiden speech to look at some of the things that were dear to him as he entered the Parliament. He did not hold back in that speech. He had a good crack at the big muddy hole that was to become the convention centre; he did not like it. Further, he was not too enamoured with the West Gate Bridge, he did not like the Eastern Freeway and he was not too keen on the underground rail loop. However, over time this man became one of the great advocates for this great city. He became an amazing visionary in looking at all that Melbourne has to offer. I am sure that over his time in this Parliament he would have looked at those major pieces of infrastructure and realised just how crucial they are for this city.

We all marvel at Melbourne's sporting precinct, and we all understand that it is unrivalled — we have so many different facilities on the doorstep of our CBD. My understanding is that Evan Walker played a huge role not just in the construction of the lights at the MCG but also in the development of that whole precinct. We need to dip our lid to the people who made these decisions some 35 years ago — they gave this city what it has and made it quite unique from all other cities.

I also note that in his maiden speech — I suppose it would have sounded rather innocuous at the time — he paid tribute to three totally different people. One was a politician for whom they were debating a condolence motion; he then paid tribute to a young soldier who was killed in the First World War — the anniversary of his death was on that day; and he also paid tribute to a blacksmith who had forged his craft in the CBD and then had moved around various parts of Victoria. Quite simply, the wash-up is that in this man's eyes it really did not matter whether you were a politician, whether you were a blacksmith forging a business for your family or whether you were a young soldier who had died on the battlefields of France; he considered their contributions to this state were equal and should be seen as such. That was a poignant insight into what this man was thinking and how he viewed others as he set about his own journey through the Parliament.

I read some of the more controversial reports about Mr Walker, as Minister for Conservation and as Minister for Planning — portfolios he held at the same time — and I noted that they said he seemed to upset developers and builders because they thought he was way too much of a conservationist. Reports also state that radical conservationists were deeply upset because they thought he was way too easy on developers and builders. If on balance he upset them equally, he was probably pretty close to getting his parliamentary and ministerial duties on the mark. That is certainly a good example where two negatives came up with a brilliant positive.

It is also worth noting some of his statements during the period when he was the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs. He made a statement, which is dear to us, that most if not all farmers are tremendous conservationists themselves. Farmers believe it. They understand that their assets are improved by the work they do in conserving their own farms. Mr Walker made a very strong point of noting that.

He was continually referred to as an articulate and eloquent man. He comes across as a very strong man for the time — and you have to put yourself back into the thinking of the time. He was certainly not one for

necessarily going along with the factions or with what was being done by his own political party. He comes across as a very strong individual. He comes across as somebody I would have loved to have met and would have loved to have gotten to know. That was not to be the case. Mr Jennings — and I am sure quite a few other members of the Labor Party — would have had that privilege.

I pass on my condolences to Evan's wife, Judy, his children, his extended family and his close friends. Let us all be grateful for the time that we had with this man.

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My contribution will be brief, but I want to associate myself with this condolence motion for Evan Walker. In doing so I particularly note his very impressive career. At the memorial service yesterday it was clear that there was enormous community support for what he achieved. I very much feel for his family. The contributions yesterday revealed the closeness of the family. I was particularly impressed by the contributions from his children. His business partner, Daryl Jackson, also made strong points about their business relationship, their friendship and what had been achieved through that process.

Mr Walker came to this Parliament following an extensive career, and he brought with him enormous experience and a deep commitment. John Cain, who was the Leader of the Government at the time, also made a number of important points at the service yesterday. I note that Mr Walker's contribution to the reform of the Labor Party was singled out by Premier Cain.

I also want to say something about his legacy. There is no question that the city of Melbourne is a better place for his contribution. His vision was shared by many, but he was able to take that forward in a successful way, bringing with him the concepts and ideas of his architectural practice and his commitment to reform, and doing so in a way that achieved great outcomes for Melbourne and Victoria. The Yarra, Southbank — both are part of his legacy.

It is interesting, though, to look at Evan Walker on a personal level. It is clear that he was a person of great humility. I met him only very briefly in the early 1990s so I cannot claim to know or understand him particularly well, but it is clear that his humility and at the same time his deep knowledge came through to all those who knew him.

I was struck by the honesty of the 'Keeping society honest' speech to which the Leader of the Government

referred. I am not sure I agree with much of it, but nonetheless I think Evan Walker tried to deal with a certain view of politics. I note also the responses of the then opposition to many of those comments. He was a person who was prepared to speak his mind, to put on the record what he thought and to bring his great powers of persuasion and understanding to bear. People can be proud to see a Victorian who has contributed so much.

**The PRESIDENT** — I will add some remarks to the condolence motion. There is no doubt that Evan Walker was a reformer in his political party, initially in the organisational wing of the party where he brought to bear a number of changes that I think established an opportunity for the Labor Party to actually win government and secure it for a good many years following his intervention with a number of other luminaries of the Labor movement that are now household names. He was also a member of a group — a ginger group, if you like — within the Labor Party that contributed very strongly to the election of John Cain's government. He was one of the key people who saw the need for reforms and change in the way the Labor Party approached its policy and its direction to embrace Victorians. There is no doubt that he contributed very much to that electoral success.

Evan Walker was highly regarded and admired. In a government that was not without its trials and tribulations, he would have been, without doubt, one of the most respected members of the ministry and of that government. I think his training as an architect brought to bear quite a number of qualities that served him well in politics. Perhaps if we had all done a block or two of architecture, we might also have similar attributes that we could bring to bear. He had analytical skills but he was also a man who could envision what something might look like, how it might work and indeed what had to be brought to bear to achieve it, particularly in terms of collaboration with people — bringing people together and ensuring that they were all on the same page in terms of the project, program or policy that was to be implemented. I have no doubt that in the context of his contribution to the Parliament the skills he had were augmented by his wife, Judith, who I understand was a very important confidant and provided wise counsel to Evan on many occasions.

Evan Walker was collaborative. He had a number of significant ministries. When you look at the range of ministries the Leader of the Government outlined in his condolence motion, you recognise that he was a man who was appreciated for both his capability and his capacity, because they were very significant ministries and he discharged them with aplomb.

Evan Walker was a man of intellect. For those who were not as well acquainted with Evan as his close family and friends, what came out of his funeral yesterday was his extraordinary sense of humour. We were obviously aware of his breadth of experience — that again was a foundation of his performance in Parliament on behalf of the people of Victoria — but his sense of humour was something that shone through.

Another thing that most people might not be aware of is that Evan was a person who could sketch and paint as well as being a very good wordsmith. What I was struck by yesterday during some of the eulogies was the recounting of poignant and insightful observations that Evan brought to bear on a number of matters at different times.

I will give the house the gist of a story about Evan that I was quite taken by yesterday. I am not going to be able to recite it word for word, as Evan's son did yesterday during one of the eulogies, but I think it is very instructive for members of Parliament to hear. The story goes that Evan was attending a very difficult and robust public meeting at which a guy got to his feet and asked him one of those long and involved questions that we get from time to time in politics. As Evan's son said yesterday — he was actually in the audience — he did not quite appreciate the nature of the question, but he knew his father was in trouble. Evan rose to his feet in response — and I am not going to do this the justice that it deserves — and said something to the effect of, 'In my experience in politics, when someone asks a question of that nature, they usually have the answer themselves'. Indeed I think he invited that person to offer the answer to those in attendance at the public meeting.

Evan Walker did much in terms of the life of this city, particularly its built form and especially Southbank, as has already been mentioned. We might well line up on different sides of the fence in terms of our attitudes towards Swanston Street as a mall, but that is also one of Evan Walker's legacies. I can remember walking down Bourke Street on one occasion — some of you might have done the same — when it was covered in grass. It seemed like a quite extraordinary thing to happen, but it was an attempt by Evan Walker and people with whom he had engaged to try to sell a different vision of Melbourne. He was trying to break minds, shake people up and say, 'Hey, look, you should see this street, you should see this thoroughfare, you should see this major spine of Melbourne in a different way'. They sought to interpret that through laying lawn down Swanston Street. I think it lasted for about an hour before it was trampled on, but nonetheless it was an interesting exercise.

Whilst the renewal of Southbank is very much an area of Melbourne to which Evan Walker contributed, it is also important to recognise that Evan Walker also appreciated Melbourne's fabric and aesthetic. He had a very strong focus on heritage. Indeed the architectural practice he shared with Daryl Jackson has a reputation of being very focused on the importance of Melbourne's heritage.

I indicate to the house that members of Evan's family are here today, including his wife, Judy, his daughter, Rebecca, sons Chris and Ben, some of his siblings and others. I think the closeness of this family and the intellect of Evan Walker can be best expressed via another small anecdote which, again, I will not do justice to because I do not have the exact words at hand. This is as close as I can get from my memory of hearing it yesterday. On one occasion Evan Walker penned two short lines to the effect of, 'I have lived a fortunate life, made all the better by my choice of wife'.

**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 the Honourable Evan Herbert Walker, AO, the sitting will now be suspended until 4.00 p.m.

**Sitting suspended 3.01 p.m. until 4.04 p.m.**

## RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

### Sessional orders

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I wish to make a statement about my interpretation and application of the sessional orders that have been introduced and apply from this day of meeting. I wish to provide the following guidance to the house about the way I intend to apply the sessional orders adopted by the house in the last sitting week. As members would be aware, the sessional orders amend the procedure for question time, introduce a new type of ministers statement and introduce a completely new procedure called constituency questions. There are a number of procedural issues that I believe require some guidance for members and ministers.

With regard to questions without notice, first of all I commend the government for its willingness to reform question time. I note that the sessional order requires me to determine whether an answer to a question without notice is responsive. This significantly alters the previous rules and practice that merely required a minister's answer to be apposite to the question and not

debate the matter, if the minister chose to answer the question at all. It was previously open to a minister to not answer at all or to take a question on notice. Where a question has been asked of a minister in their capacity as minister representing a minister in the other place, it has been understandable that a minister would take a question on notice.

In applying these new sessional orders I will be mindful, in exercising my judgement, of the scope of a question and its factual, logical and administrative connection to the minister's responsibility. I would qualify 'factual', because I will not always be in a position to establish that a minister is answering factually. It will be open to a member of the house to move a motion that an answer be taken into account on the next day of meeting if they have concerns about the factual nature of the answer, but to the extent that I can, I will certainly have regard to the factual nature of the answer as much as the other two aspects.

While I will judge every answer by a minister on its merits, I indicate that the following are likely to be considered unresponsive and therefore required by me to be answered in writing and submitted to the Clerk by 11.45 a.m. the next sitting day in accordance with what the house has adopted: firstly, an answer that is not direct, factual, succinct and relevant, which are qualities for an answer expressly listed by sessional order 5; an answer taken on notice either wholly or in part; or a failure to provide any answer at all.

It is my intention to decide such matters immediately so that the minister and the member who asked the question know at the earliest opportunity that a written answer is required to be submitted by the minister. However, there may be the odd occasion when I am unable to determine until a slightly later time that an answer has been unresponsive and a written answer is required. If such time is required, I still regard it as open to me to direct a minister to provide a written answer on the next sitting day, but I will certainly have regard to the logistical aspects of this point.

I also remind members that there is an increased onus on them — on each member asking a question — to be succinct and factual in their question if I am to enforce the rule that a minister's answer is to be responsive.

With regard to constituency questions, constituency questions are laid out in sessional order 4 and are referred to as a 'question relating to a constituency matter'. I advise members that in the 1 minute they have to ask their question, they should satisfy the Chair that the matter relates to their region. This does not prevent the matter from also being relevant to other

regions, but the matter should not be so general as to have only incidental relevance to a member's region.

The sessional order states that 'up to 10 members may ask ministers an oral question relating to a constituency matter'. If less than 10 members make a statement in a day, I do not think that it is open for a member to ask more than one question. The sessional order is clear in saying 'up to 10 members'. It does not say 'up to 10 constituency questions'. The Chair will therefore interpret the sessional order as limiting members to one constituency question per day, and no more than 10 members asking a question.

I also note that answers to constituency questions are subject to a 30-day rule, similar to questions on notice. However, whereas the standing orders on questions on notice provide a formal mechanism for members to follow up on unanswered questions, the sessional order does not have any formal mechanism for a member to take a point of order if the 30-day rule is not complied with. I therefore caution members that there is little scope for the Chair to observe a point of order about unanswered constituency questions.

On ministers statements, there are two matters of interpretation that arise from the sessional order on ministers statements. Firstly, the order states that 'up to five ministers may make a ministers statement'. I note that there are five ministers in the house and there may be many occasions when not all ministers will make a statement, which raises the question as to whether a minister could give more than one ministers statement per day provided the overall number does not exceed five.

I interpret the intent of the sessional order to mean that only one statement may be made by a minister per day, just as the constituency question sessional order should be read as restricting members to one constituency matter per day. It has been raised with me that ministers can have more than one portfolio and perhaps I should give consideration to whether or not the same minister may make more than one statement on the basis of their different portfolio responsibilities. That is a matter that I will take on notice and give further consideration to.

The second issue arises from the sessional order's description of a ministers statement being 'new government initiatives, projects and achievements'. It is possible that a new government initiative, project or achievement may have already been announced or reported in a forum other than the house. In such cases it may be new in the sense of being contemporary, and it may be new in the sense that the house itself has not been advised of the matter.

The Chair should not interpret what is new so strictly that the government is prevented from advising the house of genuine matters of public interest, which is where such matters should be advised in the first place. However, if a statement is in relation to a matter the government has announced or referred to in the house in a previous statement or other procedure, the Chair may rule the matter out, but only if the Chair is certain that the matter is not new. A ministers statement is limited to just 2 minutes, and it may be difficult for the Chair to determine such matters on certain occasions.

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Wi-fi access**

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. Last year the coalition commenced the rollout of the \$6.7 million Victorian government free wi-fi project to provide free, ubiquitous wi-fi access across the Melbourne CBD, Bendigo and Ballarat to any internet user, regardless of their telecommunications provider. Can the minister update the house on the progress of the rollout of this free wi-fi initiative?

**Mr SOMYUREK** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — The former Victorian government, as the former Minister for Technology said, commenced deployment of a free public wi-fi pilot in central Melbourne, central Ballarat and central Bendigo. There were issues concerning connection to the service, which my department is now investigating. It is important to note that the network has not been fully deployed, which may limit access. It is anticipated that network deployment across the three areas will be completed by the end of December 2015. The three public wi-fi sites are already in operation at Melbourne’s Queen Victoria Market and outside the council office in Ballarat and the arts centre in Bendigo. We will be watching this program closely and monitoring its outcomes, as we intend to do with all Victorian government programs, grants and initiatives.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer. Given there is already a contract in place with iiNet and memoranda of understanding in place with the cities of Melbourne, Bendigo and Ballarat, can the minister provide an assurance that the current wi-fi program will be rolled out to its full extent, as envisaged in that contract with iiNet? The minister referred to the pilot sites, which are less than the full original program. I

seek an assurance from the minister that the free public wi-fi as provided by iiNet will be rolled out to its full extent as originally intended.

**Mr SOMYUREK** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I can only repeat that we will be watching the program closely and monitoring its outcome, as we intend to do with all Victorian government grants, programs and initiatives.

**Police human source management report**

**Mr O’DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — My question this afternoon is to the Special Minister of State. I refer to the now concluded IBAC investigation into Victoria Police human source management, the report of which has been provided to the government but has not been released to the community. This is a matter of significant public interest and goes to the heart of our justice system. It is important that as much of the report is released as is safe to do so. The Premier was quoted in the *Herald Sun* of 11 February as having said in the context of responding to a question about the release of a suitably redacted and safe version of the report, ‘I hope to have more to say on that soon’. My question to the Leader of the Government is: what advice has the government received about releasing a safe and redacted version of this report?

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — I thank the member for his question. Within his question he identified the principles that should apply to the public release of any report that has been issued by IBAC in terms of the fundamental test about whether it is safe to release the document and in whose judgement it is fundamentally safe or unsafe to do so.

The member will be reassured to know that the government is supporting the independence of IBAC to make that determination itself. The government sought clarification from IBAC on the day the report was commented on in the public domain that the report had been prepared for the police to take on board recommendations that came from the scrutiny of IBAC and to implement recommendations that may be embedded in that report. At that time courtesy copies were provided to the Minister for Police and the Victorian Inspectorate with clear and unequivocal guidance from IBAC that the report’s detail should not be circulated in the public domain because it would be unsafe to do so. The government sought clarification on that matter, and IBAC confirmed that it would be inappropriate to release the document in any shape or form. The government totally accepts that advice and is acting accordingly.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — I thank the Leader of the Government for his response. To be clear, this is a matter of significant public interest and, as I said in my substantive question, some of the issues go to the heart of our justice system. It is a very sensitive issue. The Premier said he would take advice, and I want clarification from the Leader of the Government that the advice is that the report will not be released in any form — that is, that a redacted, safe version will not be released and no version of the report will be released at all. I ask the minister to confirm that.

**Mr JENNINGS** (Special Minister of State) — I stand by my substantive answer because I believe it was fulsome in responding to the member's question. It may be that he is implying that at some point in time IBAC may make a determination to report in any form the substance of this report. That is a determination that IBAC may make in the future, but the government respects the independence of IBAC and totally understands that we are obliged to enable it to acquit its responsibilities to the Parliament and, most importantly, to the people of Victoria by accepting its recommendations on how to handle sensitive material. IBAC has determined that it is inappropriate to release this document, and the government will act in accordance with that advice. If IBAC changes its mind in the future, that is a matter for IBAC.

**Roads and bridges**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Regional Development. I refer to the cuts to the very popular, very successful and vital country roads and bridges program, and I ask: why is this government breaking its promise to put people first in country Victoria by cutting this very important funding stream to local councils?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Regional Development) — I thank Mr Ramsay for his question. This government will always put people and regional Victorian communities first. In relation to the member's question about how we will be providing support for the maintenance of country roads and bridges, I remind the member of the Andrews Labor government's commitment to provide \$1 billion in funding for country roads in Victoria. I also bring to the member's attention announcements made by my colleague the Minister for Roads and Road Safety last week in support of country bridges and safer country roads and rail crossings. These are essential for enhancing the productivity of our agricultural and other regional

industries and ensuring that our roads are safe for all Victorians travelling in regional Victoria.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — The response by the minister is nonsense. She is aware that funding under this very successful program, which is supported by local government, is provided directly to rural shires. It is local asset investment. Under the program described by Ms Pulford, funding goes to state assets, not local assets. The supplementary question is: as a result of the axing of this specific program, which I again say has been extremely popular through regional Victoria, how many jobs will be lost in those rural shires throughout the state?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Regional Development) — The Andrews Labor government is committed to creating employment opportunities in a number of ways for people right across regional Victoria. There will be countless jobs created as a consequence of the \$35.8 million commitment to make improvements to 48 bridges in country Victoria and to improve 52 priority roads and crossings. These are roads and crossings with high numbers of heavy vehicles or where high-speed trains travel. This is about creating jobs across regional Victoria, about improving safety for road and rail users and about increasing productivity for our regional communities.

**TAFE funding**

**Mr DRUM** (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. Can the minister advise the house which government and which minister introduced full market contestability in the Victorian training and skills system?

**Mr HERBERT** (Minister for Training and Skills) — To answer in a DFSR — direct, factual, succinct and relevant — manner, the former Labor government in 1998 introduced the system of contestability. I am sorry; that is not right. The Kennett government opened up the training market to private providers back in the 1990s. When Labor was elected in 1999 the then Minister for Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment identified that the system was going off the rails and put some restrictions on it. In 2008 the Labor government introduced the system of contestability in terms of the training market. However, the question asks about full contestability. Then it was recognised that public TAFEs did a lot more than just training. They also provided community service obligations, they had huge infrastructure costs, they looked after thin markets — —

**Mr Drum** — On a point of order, President, it was a very narrow question: which government introduced full contestability into the Victorian training market? I do not want a history lesson. I just want one answer; it is very narrow. Maybe the minister does not know, but if he does know, he has to answer the question.

**Mr Jennings** — On the point of order, President, Mr Drum may not want a history lesson, but I put to you that the minister's answer has been totally on the money in relation to being responsive to the issue and completely in accordance with the guidelines and directions that you issued to us from the chair before this question time commenced.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I am satisfied that in fact the minister's answer is apposite to the question. It might be more expansive than the member had anticipated, but I do not see that as such a bad thing.

**Mr HERBERT** — Sometimes you need a complex answer to a simple question. The answer is that in 2008, as I said, it was introduced. In 2012, following a major mismanagement of that scheme, major cost blowouts and a major refusal to act, the previous government introduced a new funding model for that contestable system — —

**Mr Drum** — On a point of order, President, the minister just said that the answer to the question is 2012. I just want to know if I misheard him or whether he is in the process of telling us that the government that introduced full contestability was the government in charge in 2012. That is what he said.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! We do not do replays in this place; that is saved for the cricket and football. The minister should continue with his answer; he may wish to respond to Mr Drum's query.

**Mr HERBERT** — It is a silly point. In 2008 contestable training was introduced. In 2011 it was implemented. In 2012 the implementation was such a shambles that the budget blew out enormously and the previous government failed to act. It completely changed the funding system to a different rate or type of subsidy and it slashed TAFEs, which affected the 25 per cent funding differential that the previous Labor government had in there to support all those community services. It slashed those, estimated at about \$300 million a year, and we have ended up with the disaster we have now in terms of our TAFE system having 25 per cent of the market share, having lost 30 000 students per year. It is a disaster we are going to fix.

**Mr Drum** — On a point of order, President, I think in amongst all that I heard the answer was 2008. I also asked which minister, and then there was a whole range of debate which started to ensue. Again, I ask the minister to come back to the question: which government and which minister introduced full contestability into the Victorian training system?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Drum would have been on safer ground if he had said the minister was debating, and I think he was. The minister moved into an element of debate. The minister has 1 minute 40 seconds to go, and he may well give the member the name he wishes to hear.

**Mr HERBERT** — Decisions about major things are government policy; they are done through cabinet. As I said, there was a decision in 2008 to expand the contestable training market to be more open for training providers by lifting the current caps.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr HERBERT** — Jeff Kennett was the Premier when the contestable market started, but — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr HERBERT** — I can understand, without debating the question, why members opposite are ashamed about what happened under their administration in the last four years and ashamed at the decimation of our TAFE system.

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, President, answers to questions are not opportunities to attack the opposition, and the minister was debating. I wish the President would now call the minister back to order.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister was provoked, and indeed when people are provoked it makes it more difficult for me to intervene. I also make another point on this occasion. This question time has been remarkably placid, and I welcome that, but I indicate that with the new sessional orders there is a significant increase in responsibility for me in terms of both hearing and understanding the question and, more importantly, hearing and understanding the answer. If I am to make judgements on these matters going forward, then I am going to need to hear them. I cannot afford to be hit by a barrage of interjection where I am unable to hear or miss parts of the answers. Members need to bear that in mind as we go forward.

With regard to Mrs Peulich's specific point of order, I uphold the fact that the minister was debating. I accept that the minister was provoked into that by an

interjection, but interjections are unruly and the minister does not need to take them up.

**Mr HERBERT** — In conclusion, it was in the early 1990s that the Kennett government opened up our training system, our public funding of training, to a contestable market. In 2008 the government expanded that training system with a different funding model. In 2012 the previous government had a completely different funding model and withdrew funding subsidies to TAFEs, which resulted in their demise, and also changed the funding system to an unstable system whereby even some of the best smaller training providers were on their knees in this state. Anybody knows that industry is absolutely shattered by what has happened to the training workforce and the skills needed to continue.

**Mr Drum** — On a point of order, President, the minister has 15 seconds left to complete his answer. I again ask him: if he knows the name of the minister, he should give that answer to the question in the way that it was asked.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The question was specific. If the minister is able to venture the name of the minister, it would probably be helpful.

**Mr HERBERT** — I am not sure of the minister. When the question is, who opened it up to contestability, then it is very simple — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister's time has expired. The minister has informed the house of a number of times when there was a contestability or a competitive regime in this area, so I dare say that more than one minister was involved.

*Supplementary question*

**Mr DRUM** (Northern Victoria) — I ask the minister if he would support the following statement from the minister who was in control of the training system in 2008, Jacinta Allan. She said:

We want all Victorians to have a choice about where to have their skills development needs met — whether it be at TAFE, their local ACE provider or at a private provider.

**Mr HERBERT** (Minister for Training and Skills) — I thank the member for his supplementary question. I assume the quote is correct. There is nothing wrong with that. Absolutely we believe in competition in the training market. The issue is not about that, though. Of course that is a good statement, and of course we support that. The question is about quality. It is about the funding system. It is about the gutting of

TAFE that happened under the previous government. The member opposite knows exactly what the issue is here. These sorts of questions are all very illuminating in terms of them not having learnt the lesson of the last election and what happened with TAFE in this state.

**Fruit fly**

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. Orchardists in the Goulburn Valley and north-eastern Victoria have reported that fruit fly numbers have dramatically increased in the past two months. I ask the minister for a yes or no answer. Will the government provide assistance to communities in the Goulburn Valley and north-eastern Victoria to combat the current increase in fruit fly numbers, yes or no?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I am concerned about the question in this context. I will obviously ask the minister to respond, and the minister may well be prepared to respond in such stark terms. Questions of this nature can be difficult in the sense that they seem simple, straightforward and easy to answer, but I think we all know that politics is a little more complicated than that and that most issues are a little more complicated than that. When I am considering questions, there are times when this could be a very valid question — and I am not reflecting on the particular question that I have before me at the moment — and there are other times when it could almost be a trick question. I would be concerned if that were the case, that a question was an attempt to diminish a minister's answer or to reflect on them in a way that I felt was unfair. Nonetheless, I accept that this is an important issue and that the minister may well be in a position to provide such an explicit answer.

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) — The government is well aware of the concerns facing growers and residents in this area. If my recollection of my diary serves me correctly, I will be visiting Shepparton to talk to growers and community leaders about these very issues next week. I can inform the member that the government is already providing assistance. It hosted a meeting of growers which I believe was very well attended and signalled the beginning of an important discussion about how the government and the community will work together to respond to this issue.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — Given that it has taken so long to announce any assistance to the Goulburn Valley, what has the economic cost to the region been?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) — There are a great many challenges in the management of Queensland fruit fly, and I would remind the member, who was a minister in the former government, that there was a considerable increase — a dramatic increase — in the reporting of outbreaks of Queensland fruit fly in the former government's time and that this is a significant challenge. It is a challenge for growers, and it is a challenge for residents. I am looking forward to meeting with people who are dealing with this issue firsthand next week — —

**Ms Lovell** — On a point of order, President, it was a specific question about what the cost to the region has been of delaying assistance.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! That is the question as I understand it. I ask Ms Pulford to respond to the question.

**Ms PULFORD** — If I could respond to the member, assistance is forthcoming. There has been assistance to the local community in the facilitation of some meetings and some discussions. These will be ongoing. We will work with the community to ensure an appropriate response in the management, control and, where possible, eradication of Queensland fruit fly.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! In respect of the answer to the supplementary question, I would ask that the minister tomorrow provide, in accordance with the sessional order, a departmental estimate on what the cost of this fruit fly problem has been to the region.

**Ms PULFORD** — On a point of order, President, would it be appropriate to provide this information for the period from 2011 to 2015?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I would have no problem with that.

**Ms PULFORD** — That would be my pleasure. I will do that.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister's answer to the supplementary question was a valid answer except that the question went to the economic cost of this infestation to the region. I am sure the member would be quite happy to have a departmental estimate of what the economic cost of this infestation is.

**Ms Wooldridge** — On a point of order, President, just for clarification, the question was about the numbers having dramatically increased in the past two months, so the question was in relation to the current increase in numbers. I put it to you that the question was very focused on the impact of the change in the last

two months, and hence the supplementary question directly related to the economic cost of the government having delayed providing further assistance. That is not relevant to the last five years. It is actually relevant to the two months that were specifically outlined in the question.

**Mr Jennings** — On the point of order, President, I raise this issue regardless of the intervention of the Leader of the Opposition with her point of order. It relates to what information may be currently available and in the minister's or the department's hands in order for the minister to be able to acquit an answer. In relation to the expectation that you have put on the minister, President, that she respond within a 24-hour period, it may well be that the only information available to the minister may be something that attributes the costs over a period of time. Whilst that may not be in keeping with the intentions and desires of the opposition, it may be what exists. I am sure, President, that you are not indicating to the chamber that you have an expectation, or any other member has an expectation, that if a report does not exist, the government must generate it within a 24-hour period. The only information the minister should be required to provide, regardless of whether it suits the purposes of the opposition or not, is that which is at hand, and there should not be a requirement that the minister generate a new report in order to provide that information.

**Ms Lovell** — On the point of order, President, just to clarify, earlier I asked about the increase over the past two months, and my supplementary question was about the economic impact of delaying the announcement of any sort of assistance to the fruitgrowers. That economic impact might be appropriate if we were given a forecast for the next five years, but not over the past five years.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! There are a number of matters here, and this is going to be a process that will evolve in terms of our expectation of what can be achieved under the sessional order. In terms of my referral of the supplementary question to the minister for a response, whilst I might well have paraphrased what I saw as an appropriate response, what I am referring to the minister is indeed a response to the supplementary question that was asked. It is important that the minister actually has a response to that question. From the point of view of members having the information they need to make an assessment, it would be relevant to have a broader period that suggests what the economic forecast going forward would be, but I am referring the specific supplementary question to the minister.

I indicate that whilst I accept what the Leader of the Government said, that a report might not have been generated that details the costs emphatically, I would be surprised if there were not some expectation of what costs might well be going forward if the infestation is not arrested and if certain measures are not taken. That is what the member is trying to determine. That answer may well be informed by some of the past data.

In terms of answers that are presented by ministers, under the sessional order I will also have an ability to assess just how apposite those written responses are to the questions that have been asked. Therefore there will be another opportunity to ensure that those questions do meet the expectations of the house.

**Mr Jennings** — On a point of order, President, I know that you did not comment on this issue, but in terms of the direction you have just given us, can I suggest that if any member of this chamber believes they have the prerogative to stand and ask for a piece of public policy analysis or cost analysis that is currently not available to the government, the government puts on the record that it believes it is an unreasonable use of question time to allow members to have an expectation that the government should generate that information within a 24-hour period if it does not exist.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I accept the point that has been made.

### Regional and rural gas supply

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Regional Development, Ms Pulford, and relates to a program the minister has inherited known as Energy for the Regions to connect the fossil fuel gas network to a number of regional towns in Victoria. The latest information put out about this program appears to be somewhat out of date; it is from the middle of last year. We learnt that about \$4.5 million has been spent at Huntly to connect only 180 properties, which would imply about \$25 000 per connection. Can the minister provide us with any updated, more current information as to how many properties have been connected in each of the towns serviced by this program to date?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Regional Development) — I thank the member for his question about the Energy for the Regions program, which was a program of the former government. I can indicate to the member that prior to the election the former minister entered into arrangements for the supply of natural gas to a number of the towns that were part of the former government's election commitments in 2010. This is a

program that was troublesome for the former government, to say the least. I gather the initial tender was spectacularly unsuccessful and there were numerous attempts to land this particular election commitment.

**Ms Wooldridge** interjected.

**Ms PULFORD** — I am sure that as a member of the former cabinet the Leader of the Opposition would know more about how complicated this was than I would, but certainly from the then opposition's perspective it looked messy, to say the least. I can provide Mr Barber with the number of properties passed and the state contribution in Avoca. I am advised that the state contribution in Avoca was \$8.389 million. I have the number of properties passed by the pipeline at 700. I do not have available to me the number of households actually connected. I gather that it is something for households to choose to opt into. I gather this is highly variable in different locations where this promise has been made. My undertaking to the Parliament and to the people in the towns that were sold this particular story by the former government is that we will do everything we can to fix this botched program in the quickest way we possibly can.

### *Supplementary question*

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — I will make this a supplementary question rather than a point of order, and we will see where we get to in terms of responsiveness to the original question. There is media reporting that the minister has evaluated this program and has decided to continue it. That appears to be what the minister has just indicated. Was this data collected as part of the evaluation, and can the minister tell us what options she looked at in deciding to continue the program?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Regional Development) — I thank Mr Barber for his supplementary question. I am curious about the media reports he is citing. The contracts were signed by the former government, so they have not been revisited. Contrary to Mr Drum's earlier interjection, we understand that it will take a good while yet to conclude this program — maybe three years or more — but we understand that this messy business of the former government is one of a long list of things we have to fix, so we will seek to fix it. As I have indicated, I am happy to take the specific question about the number of houses connected in Avoca, or indeed in each town, and to make that information available to Mr Barber.

**Family violence**

**Ms SPRINGLE** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children, Ms Mikakos. In the previous Parliament the then Labor opposition, with the strong support of the Greens, took steps to delete clause 4 of the Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Bill 2014. This clause relates to failure-to-protect laws which could result in women in abusive relationships who fail to report to police the abuse of their children to being criminalised themselves. At the time the now minister stated that this clause fails to recognise the complexity of family violence situations and is not the best way to protect children from abuse. My question for the minister is: now that she is in government will she legislate to delete the failure-to-protect laws from the Crimes Act 1958, and if so, when?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question. The member would be aware that the government has established a Royal Commission into Family Violence. The royal commission has broad terms of reference. It will look at a range of matters, including the very strong connection between matters to do with child protection and family violence; it is concerning to me that there is a strong connection between these matters. Therefore there will be the ability for community groups and members of the public to make submissions to the royal commission about these broad-ranging matters, including whether there need to be any changes to the legislative framework that surrounds these issues.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms SPRINGLE** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her response. Given the unintended consequences of clause 4 of the bill, can she elaborate on what the government will be doing to keep children and women safe while these matters are deliberated?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. We have initiated a royal commission with wideranging terms of reference to look at a range of issues, and we have already committed to implement its recommendations. In relation to what will happen in the meantime, wideranging services are available to women and children who are facing family violence. We think the interest in and demand for these services may well increase in response to the public discussion and debate that will be generated around these issues. We will have more to say about these matters as the royal commission gets underway this week. It is a very

important issue to the government. We have said on a number of occasions that we regard family violence as the no. 1 law and order issue facing Victoria at the moment.

**Community services sector**

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Minister for Families and Children. In an Australian first, the coalition government undertook significant reform to bring government and community sector service providers together under new Services Connect partnerships. Services Connect provides a model for integrated family and child support. My question is: will the minister's government commit to keeping Services Connect?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question now that she has actually asked me a question that relates directly to my portfolio. Services Connect is premised on the idea of integrated service delivery. I remind members opposite who think that they came up with this concept that it was in fact a previous Labor government that first introduced the concept when it initiated platforms such as Child FIRST, which was in fact about integrated service delivery. We are very much committed to the idea of having an integrated response to the needs of an individual and having different services and departments working together to ensure that the needs of that individual are provided for.

It may well surprise members opposite — and in particular the former minister — that Services Connect remains an enigma to the community services sector. I have had wideranging discussions with community sector organisations in relation to the Services Connect model, and I can tell members that those organisations have expressed a great many concerns to me about this particular —

**Ms Wooldridge** — On a point of order, President, sessional orders require that the minister be factual. In sessional order 5, in the summary under 'Content of answers', subsection (1) says all answers must be 'direct, factual, succinct and relevant'. The member should try reading it. The fact of the matter is that there are 121 agencies from the community sector delivering Services Connect. The minister is incorrectly representing this and is not being factual in her response.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! That is not a point of order; it is a debating point. If the member is querying the factual nature of this question, then the only matter

of fact that is at issue is whether or not the minister has had discussions with agencies. I take her response to the question at face value, that she has had discussions and has had some concerns expressed to her from at least some of those agencies, notwithstanding that there might be many contracts involved.

**Ms MIKAKOS** — I received a letter dated 23 December 2014 from the peak body, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, in which its CEO expressed the significant concerns of the sector. I will quote from that letter, seeing as the member opposite was challenging me on the factual nature — —

**Ms Crozier** — On a point of order, President, I seek your guidance. The minister is now debating this issue. I would ask you to — —

**Ms MIKAKOS** — I am responding to the question.

**Ms Crozier** — No, you are debating. I seek your guidance, President, as to whether Ms Mikakos is debating.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! At this point of the minister's answer, particularly as a previous point of order called into question support of organisations for this scheme versus the concerns expressed to the minister, I think Ms Mikakos is quite in line to raise the letter from a peak body which substantiates what she was talking about. However, the substantive question was whether or not the program would continue, so I would expect that the minister will respond to the substantive question as part of her response.

**Ms MIKAKOS** — Members opposite need to understand that if the government has identified concerns and issues around particular programs and services, then of course it is going to look at those issues and respond to them. I am committed to working closely with the community services sector, unlike the previous government and the previous minister, and I will take on board its concerns.

When I have the CEO of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare write to me and say:

Service providers have also reported a significant number of issues in the model design remain unclear or are being applied inconsistently by department of human services division.

A number of other concerns are outlined in a very detailed, lengthy letter, so of course I am going to take on board these concerns, and I will continue to have discussions with the sector. What we saw from the previous government is that instead of going and fixing the problems — —

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, President, I note that the minister has selectively quoted from the letter. In order to establish whether her response is factual, I ask that she make the letter available to the house.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister is not obliged to table the letter, but if she wishes to, she is entitled to. Does the minister wish to table the letter?

**Ms MIKAKOS** — President, I am very happy to have this letter tabled so that members opposite might be illuminated by the concerns of the sector. Instead of getting on with fixing the problems, the previous government came up with the Services Connect model. One might say that the emperor was busy admiring himself in the mirror when he had no clothes. The previous government did not get on with fixing the problems; it came up with these models to look like it was doing something.

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, President, the minister is using question time in order to criticise the opposition rather than factually respond to the question. I ask that you bring her back to order.

**Mr Jennings** — On the point of order, President, you will remember that the substantive question asked by the member related to a pre-existing program of a former administration and asked whether that program was going to continue in that form or whether the government was going to change the program. The minister has brought evidence to bear about concerns raised by the sector itself on the nature of those programs, and the minister is acting in response to the document she has referred to and is prepared to distribute. If the point of order raised by Mrs Peulich is to say that the minister has no opportunity to reflect on the previous administration, when the question itself relied upon a program introduced by the previous government, then what option does the minister have but to answer in the way that she is answering or not answer the question at all?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I hear what the Leader of the Government is saying, and I rue the fact that we lose some colour in these issues, but when the minister talks about emperors with no clothes that probably does venture beyond factual, succinct and whatever the other guideline is.

**Ms MIKAKOS** — I am being responsive in that I am indicating to the house that issues have been identified and I wish to engage with the sector to address these concerns. The Services Connect sector partnerships were intended by the previous government

to be pilots. We will evaluate the pilots once they are completed and determine their future accordingly. I will be working closely with the sector to determine the appropriateness of the model that currently exists and to address its ongoing and significant concerns.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer. Given her answer in what I have to say was a long-winded debate, there was no real commitment to Services Connect, and given that Services Connect won the top national award for public policy innovation, is the government's lack of support for Services Connect not purely political?

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — The member's supplementary question is perplexing; she was not listening to the answer I gave. If members opposite took the trouble to go and have discussions with the community services sector, they too would understand there are many concerns about this model. That is what I am doing: I am having discussions and I am seeking to address these concerns. We are committed to getting our services that support vulnerable families and children right, and I will continue to look at how we can strengthen services and programs to ensure that we keep vulnerable children safe.

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, President, the minister undertook to provide a copy of the correspondence, and I ask that she do so.

**Ms MIKAKOS** — Is Mrs Peulich asking me to run out during question time and make her a photocopy?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister has indicated she will supply the correspondence, and I am sure she will do so.

**Taxi and hire car industry**

**Ms PATTEN** (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the minister representing the Minister for Public Transport. With members of the public seemingly voting with their feet and using the ride-sharing service Uber in large numbers, there has been an understandable concern from the taxi industry. The Andrews Labor government has promised to establish a taxi and hire car industry ministerial forum to consider ongoing industry reforms, red tape reduction and other matters. The taxi industry says the government is dragging its feet on this issue, while the Minister for Public Transport yesterday blamed the taxi industry for the delay. As this issue cannot wait, I ask the minister to explain when this forum is due to meet,

what the agenda will be and what the government will do to ensure that new technologies like Uber are not disadvantaged in the process.

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for her question, which was directed to my colleague in the other place, the Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan, who is the responsible minister. As the question is quite specific about meeting agendas and group compositions, it is appropriate in the circumstances for me to refer that question in its entirety to Minister Allan for a response.

*Supplementary question*

**Ms PATTEN** (Northern Metropolitan) — I appreciate that. A further commitment was made to provide \$4 million for a taxi hardship fund. Can the minister explain how taxi licence holders will become eligible for this fund and what constitutes hardship?

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for her supplementary question on this matter of taxi licences. It is a detailed question that I will refer to Minister Allan for a response, but the Andrews Labor government will be delivering on each and every one of its election commitments. I will refer the member's interest in the delivery of this particular election commitment to Minister Allan for a thorough response.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I therefore indicate that, in accordance with the sessional orders that the house has adopted, the minister's answer will be available tomorrow at around 11.45 a.m.

**CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS**

**South Eastern Metropolitan Region**

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Special Minister of State. I refer to representations received from a constituent in Frankston in relation to his contact with a local VicRoads office regarding Frankston-Flinders and Hastings roads. My constituent has expressed his concern that he had to contact that VicRoads office via a 13 number, which attracts a higher charge than regular local call costs, and that this practice is common across government agencies and departments. Can the minister advise if there is a whole-of-government policy concerning the use of the higher cost 13 and 1300 numbers, and if so, the application of that policy across agencies and departments?

### Western Victoria Region

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Education and is directed through the Minister for Training and Skills, Mr Herbert, in his capacity as representing Minister Merlino in this chamber. It is in regard to the current structure and role of regional offices within the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Over the coalition government's reign a number of significant changes were made to the education department's regional offices. On numerous occasions over the past four years organisations, principals, teachers, parents and other constituents have raised issues about regional offices being pared back, not providing sufficient support to local schools and not being aligned with the key issues confronting local schools. I ask the minister to inform me whether the Andrews government will conduct a review of regional offices of the education department, how such a review would be conducted and when our education community can expect an outcome?

### Southern Metropolitan Region

**Ms PENNICUIK** (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. In September 2014 the Auditor-General tabled a report on governance arrangements for the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve. The audit concluded that the trustees have not been effective in their overall management of the reserve, conflicts of interest have not been adequately managed, and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries had not effectively overseen the management of the reserve by the trustees and had not intervened in significant issues that adversely affected the trustees' management of the reserve, and therefore there has been a lack of accountability over the trust's performance. In October 2014 the chairman of the trustees wrote a letter to many members of Parliament raising concerns about decisions that had been made by the trustees. Therefore my question to the minister is: what action has she taken to reform the governance arrangements at the Caulfield Racecourse Reserve?

### Eastern Victoria Region

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Progressively during the term of the previous government there was significant infrastructure upgrade along the Pakenham rail corridor, including the delivery of the new Cardinia Road railway station, the delivery of a new power substation to provide additional services along the

Cranbourne-Pakenham corridor, the duplication of Clyde Road, the upgrade of the crossing at Clyde Road and the progressive duplication of Cardinia Road between the Princes Highway and the Pakenham bypass, which is ongoing. Before the 2010 election there was a commitment to upgrade the pedestrian crossing at McGregor Road. What is now required is the upgrade of the intersection at McGregor Road, between the railway line and McGregor Road. I ask Minister Allan to commit to that project.

### Eastern Metropolitan Region

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Education, Mr Merlino. In the last term of government the education department set up a web-based system for schools to be reimbursed for short-term leave, as in the cost of replacement teachers for teachers on short-term leave, and this has been ongoing for a long time. While the development of this web-based system has been ongoing, no schools have received funding from the department for their replacement teachers in this short-term leave program. Can the minister let me know what facility there is for schools to receive this funding during the building of this web-based system?

### South Eastern Metropolitan Region

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, Ms Allan. Given that Labor's election commitments included the commitment to remove 50 level crossings — a list which contains 18 level crossings across South Eastern Metropolitan Region — I seek information from the minister about the time frame for the removal of these level crossings, information about any compulsory acquisitions of property and an undertaking to notify all of those who will be affected, including households, businesses and stakeholders such as local government.

### Eastern Victoria Region

**Ms SHING** (Eastern Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Corrections. I seek an update in relation to the opening of new beds and accommodation at Fulham Correctional Centre in Sale to alleviate pressure in the correctional and prison system at large. This is following the inheritance by Labor of a prison system under enormous pressure, which has necessitated the opening of a significant number of beds and new accommodation to cope with increased demand and to offset or mitigate the challenges and difficulties faced as Victoria's prison population hit 6500, for the first time, in late January.

The shared facilities have become inadequate, and I seek an update from the minister in relation to how this is proposed to be alleviated and how the Andrews Labor government is supporting a secure and sustainable prison system that provides prisoners with genuine rehabilitation opportunities and also keeps the community safe.

**Northern Metropolitan Region**

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Emergency Services. The Country Fire Authority (CFA) does an amazing job. In addition to traditional firefighting, the Epping CFA brigade in my electorate undertakes a growing amount of road rescue work both within in its immediate catchment area and well beyond, including covering road rescue requirements in Metropolitan Fire Brigade areas in northern metropolitan Melbourne. Epping CFA has a medium size rescue vehicle that is due for replacement in the next 12 months. Due to the brigade’s enormous workload and growing geographical coverage, it really needs a heavy rescue vehicle, a requirement agreed to by the CFA’s analysis. The Napthine government agreed to ensure that Epping CFA got its heavy vehicle. By comparison, the Werribee, Pakenham and Melton CFA brigades — all with similar challenges — have heavy rescue vehicles. Will the Andrews Labor government also commit to the Epping CFA that it will get a heavy rescue vehicle at changeover?

**Western Victoria Region**

**Mr MORRIS** (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. Just outside Stawell in western Victoria there is a site that is currently home to an estimated 9 million used tyres. As we are currently in the bushfire season, this site, which is surrounded by scrubland, is of great concern to local residents. If this tyre dump were to catch fire, the township of Stawell may have to be evacuated, perhaps for an extended period, with the added concern that the Western Highway may also have to be closed. My question is: what is the minister going to do to ensure that the township of Stawell is protected from this very real threat?

**Western Metropolitan Region**

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, represented in this place by the Special Minister of State. Could the minister advise me why the opening hours of the

Exhibition Street office of Consumer Affairs Victoria are restricted to between 12.00 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. Monday to Friday? Given that access to consumer affairs information is vital to both businesses and consumers, could the minister explain why CBD access is so limited? I have been approached by a number of my constituents in the western suburbs regarding that point, so I would appreciate the minister’s explanation in relation to this matter.

**SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE**

*Alert Digest No. 1*

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) presented *Alert Digest No. 1 of 2015, including appendices.*

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered to be published.**

**Statute Law Revision Bill 2014**

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) presented report, including appendix.

**Laid on table.**

**Ordered to be published.**

**Mr DALLA-RIVA** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

For the record, it is important for new members to know why another Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee report is being presented in Parliament. This one is on the Statute Law Revision Bill 2014. It is the result of a motion moved by the Leader of the Government on 11 February that the bill be referred to the committee for inquiry, consideration and report.

I am happy to say that part of the role of the committee in considering the bill was to ensure that the amendments sought to be made to a large number of unrelated acts were not of a substantive policy nature, rather that they were strictly confined to the correction of minor errors or omissions such as cross-reference, spelling, drafting or grammatical errors. Where statute law revision amendments are intended to apply retrospectively, the committee then seeks to ensure that there is a rationale and a legitimate reason for applying the amendment to the particular retrospective date required.

As part of that process, we engaged with the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. The chief parliamentary counsel provided the committee with a certificate dated 16 February declaring that the bill contains only amendments appropriate to be included in a statute law revision bill and does not contain amendments that make any substantive changes to the statute law of Victoria.

Further to that, on 23 February we also took evidence from Ms Gemma Varley, the chief parliamentary counsel, Ms Elizabeth Moore, parliamentary counsel, and Ms Natalie Plumstead, parliamentary counsel. The certificate is contained in the appendix, as I indicated.

In the schedule there are 68 amendments to the acts specified in those items. There are six retrospective provisions to various acts, which I will not go through but which are listed in the report. The committee says in recommendation 1 that it considers the retrospective application of the amendments proposed to the acts listed in specific items to be appropriate to ensure that the respective amended provisions took effect as originally intended. The committee also considered that the amendments did not trespass unduly on rights or freedoms.

Further work was undertaken in terms of spelling, grammar, punctuation and typographical errors and extraneous or omitted words; reference or cross-reference errors; redundant provisions, of which there is a substantial list; repeal of spent provisions that have commenced operation and achieved their purpose; and finally, ineffective legislative instructions — that is, where the word ‘insert’ was used instead of ‘substitute’, where there was a failed amendment or where there had been a numbering error. This is pretty much a machinery of government process, but it is an important process.

In recommendation 2 the committee was satisfied that the proposed amendments made to the act listed in schedule 1 were not of a substantive nature and only corrected minor errors or omissions, repealed spent sections, divisions or parts of acts, or remedied incorrect legislative instructions or failed amendments. The committee also considered that the amendments were therefore appropriate to be included in the Statute Law Revision Bill 2014. I commend the report to the house and recommend the bill.

**Motion agreed to.**

## PAPERS

### Laid on table by Acting Clerk:

Interpretation of Legislation Act 1984 — Notices pursuant to section 32(4) in relation to Statutory Rule No. 59/2006 and Waste Management Policy (Ships’ Ballast Water) 2004.

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

Ballarat Planning Scheme — Amendment C187.

Bayside Planning Scheme — Amendment C112.

Boroondara Planning Scheme — Amendment C207.

Colac Otway Planning Scheme — Amendment C74.

Corangamite Planning Scheme — Amendment C37.

Surf Coast Planning Scheme — Amendment C102.

A Statutory Rule under the Building Act 1993 — No. 8.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 —

Documents under section 15 in respect of Statutory Rule No. 8.

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

Notice of 16 February 2015 appointing Easter Sunday 2015 as a public holiday under the Public Holidays Act 1993.

Guidelines for Assessing Fitness to Drive of 5 February 2015 under the Road Safety Act 1986.

Victorian Pre-Commitment Player Account Equipment Technical Standard of 17 November 2014 under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003.

## NOTICES OF MOTION

### Notice of motion given.

#### Mr FINN having given notice of motion:

**Mr Jennings** — On a point of order, President, I ask you to review the notice of motion given by Mr Finn relating to the member for St Albans in the Assembly. I note that the way to attack other members of the Parliament is through a substantive motion; I am not disputing that that is a form of scrutiny that may appropriately be applied within the Parliament. What I am asking you to do is reflect on whether the notice of motion is based on fact or an assertion by Mr Finn. Given that Mr Finn asserts certain attributes to the member for St Albans and does not rely on any evidence to support his assertion yet his notice of motion may be read on the notice paper now and in the future as an item of fact, I ask you to make an assessment about whether it conforms with the spirit

and intent of items that should be considered appropriate as to the structure of a notice of motion now and into the future.

**Mr Finn** — On the point of order, President, as you are aware, there is only one way a member can make an allegation of this nature, and that is by way of substantive motion, so I have taken the opportunity to do that. On the question of the truth or otherwise of the allegation, I fully intend to provide evidence for that when given the opportunity to debate this matter.

**Mr Davis** — On the point of order, President, as Mr Jennings well knows, members have the ability to put motions on the notice paper to make points about other members and to do that by way of substantive motion. If the member's suggestion that the truth or otherwise needs to be substantiated now were accepted, Mr Melhem's motion would be ruled out of order because of his claim that there were reductions in funding of the health budget. There were not. My point is that the putting of a motion on the notice paper does not in itself test the veracity of the points that are in the motion. That is for the house to later determine. Mr Finn has done entirely the appropriate thing by putting on a motion that draws attention to the former activities of a member in the other place, including an Ombudsman's report about that member and the detailed findings that the Ombudsman made at the time, which can be further tested in the chamber at the appropriate point.

**Mrs Peulich** — On the point of order, President, there are a number of reasons I believe you should rule against the minister's point of order. First and foremost, it is in compliance with the standing orders that a notice of motion is the appropriate vehicle by which a member can be censured; two, the person concerned is a sitting member so that person has a means of responding to the allegation, whether before or after the debate, as do other citizens through the right of reply; three, the Labor Party has not hesitated to use similar tactics against a number of us in this chamber, including my son and I on allegations that went nowhere and were intended to malign by having them printed on the notice paper; four, to rule in favour of the minister would constrain the rights of members and the privileges that they have in this chamber as members of Parliament; and lastly, the purpose of debate is to substantiate claims, and clearly this process would be curtailed by you forming a view at this early point in time.

**Mr Jennings** — Further on the point of order, President, I did not ask you to make a ruling at this time. I asked you to reflect about whether the form of the motion was an appropriate form to be considered by

the house at a subsequent point in time. I did not enter into the debate of the relative merits of — —

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr Jennings** — I asked the President, in light of the absence of evidence and a clear assertion that was embedded within the motion, to consider that matter — that is all I have asked him to do — not to rule on this matter, as has been asserted in the points of order made by the opposition.

**Mr Davis** — The member did assert that the matters around the veracity or otherwise of the motion could at some point be tested now. It cannot be tested now. It is a matter for formal debate.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! On the point of order, I will take this motion under consideration. I do not want it published on the notice paper tomorrow, because I have concerns about the motion. In part I uphold the point of order that has been made. I accept the points that have been made about the fact that a substantive motion is the way to pursue a debate that might involve the conduct of a member in this place or another place.

While I accept what the Leader of the Government has said, I will discuss this with Mr Finn in forming a decision, and it may well be that the motion is simply reworded. My concern is in respect of the first part, not the second part, to which Mr Davis's and to some extent Mrs Peulich's points of order referred. The first part says:

... expresses its deep concern at threats by the member for St Albans ... to abuse parliamentary privilege to falsely tarnish the name of a political opponent ...

This has not happened yet; it is speculative. To suggest that it is an abuse of parliamentary privilege is entirely speculative, because it has not happened yet. I do not know whether or not an abuse of parliamentary privilege will actually occur, so this motion is really premature in the sense of item 1. I will discuss this with Mr Finn, and perhaps we will look at slightly alternative wording which captures what he wants to put to the house but is not quite so speculative in its form. To that extent I will take the matter under consideration.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****General business**

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

That:

- (1) precedence be given to the following general business on Wednesday, 25 February 2015:
  - (a) order of the day 6 standing in the name of Ms Wooldridge in relation to the production of documents on the West Gate distributor;
  - (b) notice of motion 29 standing in the name of Ms Pennicuik in relation to the production of documents on the grand prix;
  - (c) notice of motion given this day by Ms Pennicuik in relation to grand prix attendance figures;
  - (d) notice of motion given this day by Mr Barber in relation to the production of documents on the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project;
  - (e) notice of motion given this day by Mr Davis relating to the production of documents for the Bayside planning scheme C125;
  - (f) notice of motion 11 standing in the name of Mr O'Donohue in relation to additional police officers;
  - (g) notice of motion 4 standing in the name of Ms Crozier in relation to funding cuts for family violence;
  - (h) notice of motion 9 standing in the name of Mr O'Brien in relation to the Sale Specialist School; and
- (2) this house authorises the President to permit notices of motion, general business, items (1)(b) and (c) as specified above, to be moved and debated concurrently.

**Motion agreed to.**

**MINISTERS STATEMENTS****Greyhound racing**

**Ms PULFORD** (Minister for Agriculture) — On Monday, 16 February, ABC *Four Corners* aired a program titled 'Making a Killing'. It detailed investigations made by Animals Australia and Animal Liberation Queensland into greyhound training practices in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. Animal welfare is important to the Andrews Labor government, and we take the allegations of animal cruelty, including live baiting, extremely seriously.

Under animal cruelty legislation there are specific offences for live baiting in addition to aggravated cruelty. Offenders face fines of more than \$30 000 and up to two years in prison. Orders can also be made disqualifying a person from caring for or having custody of animals for up to 10 years. There are potential wildlife offences in instances where possums are used — for example, it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1975 to take or destroy wildlife without authorisation, with fines of the order of \$7380.

The government has acted quickly and instigated a broad investigation into animal welfare and allegations of animal cruelty in the greyhound racing industry. This work is to be led by Dr Charles Milne, chief veterinary officer of Victoria. The terms of reference for this inquiry have been published on the department's website this afternoon. Another investigation into industry participants will also be conducted independently by racing integrity commissioner Sal Perna.

RSPCA Victoria received a formal complaint on 28 January that alleged live baiting was taking place in the training of racing greyhounds in Victoria. With the assistance of police, RSPCA inspectorates in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria conducted simultaneous raids on the properties that were the subject of the complaints. RSPCA Victoria executed warrants at a greyhound training facility in Tooradin on Wednesday, 11 February. It is continuing its formal investigation into these and other allegations regarding live baiting. I am expecting a preliminary report from Dr Charles Milne within two weeks.

**International education**

**Mr HERBERT** (Minister for Training and Skills) — I am pleased to inform the house about the state of international education in Victoria under my portfolio responsibility of training and skills. International education is vitally important for Victoria's economic growth, the development of new industries and technologies and the vitality and richness of our culture. It is Victoria's single largest export industry, generating over \$4.7 billion in export revenue for the state in 2013–14 and creating around 30 000 jobs.

The Andrews government is all about jobs — jobs, jobs and more jobs. That is why we have included international education as one of our state's six key future growth industries in our *Back to Work* plan. We have always been about jobs; we have always been about strengthening international education. To see evidence of our commitment you only have to look

back to 2010 when the Brumby Labor government created the International Student Care Service, now known as the Study Melbourne Student Centre, to support international education. That is also why the Andrews government is providing \$4 million for international student welfare grants.

We are also looking after students economically in all sorts of matters because it is the right thing to do. We have been providing public transport concessions as of 1 January this year; we have introduced a 50 per cent discount on all annual public transport tickets covering all zones. When it comes to the long-term future, on behalf of Victoria's TAFE sector we are arguing the case to the commonwealth government for inclusion in streamlined visa processing arrangements. For some reason the commonwealth government has taken a dislike to some of our bigger TAFEs in this regard.

Growing international education is all about growing our reputation as a stable, high-quality provider of education and training. While we have some of the best universities in the world, our TAFE brand has been devastated by the previous government's shameful \$1.2 billion funding cuts. We intend to fix that situation. Our \$320 million TAFE Rescue Fund is already rebuilding our TAFEs, saving campuses, retaining staff — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The minister's time has expired.

### **Kindergarten funding**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise to inform the house of the most recent developments in the Andrews Labor government's efforts to secure ongoing federal funding for 15 hours of kindergarten. On Friday the final report of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into child care and early childhood learning was released. I welcome the Productivity Commission's finding that 15 hours of kindergarten in the year before school provides formal benefits in terms of child development and a successful transition to school. Positively the Productivity Commission also recommended that the federal government continue to provide payments to states and territories for investment in 15 hours of kindergarten.

The Andrews Labor government is committed to making Victoria the education state and recognises that lifelong learning starts at birth. The evidence is overwhelming. Children develop and learn much faster during their first five years than at any other age. Prime Minister Tony Abbott has indicated that a families

package will be announced, potentially in a matter of weeks, in response to the Productivity Commission's report. This families package is a critical opportunity to end the uncertainty regarding the future of 15 hours of kindergarten funding for Victorian parents and kindergarten providers. I have previously written to the relevant federal ministers about the importance of the funding and I look forward to having a direct dialogue with them about this matter.

The Early Learning Association Australia and the Municipal Association of Victoria have also called for the federal government to adopt the Productivity Commission recommendation to continue to fund 15 hours of kindergarten. The federal minister is seeking public feedback on the Productivity Commission's proposals, and I assure the house that I will be providing feedback on behalf of Victorian families and children. In particular I will continue to call on Prime Minister Tony Abbott and federal minister for Social Services Scott Morrison to provide ongoing funding in the families package for 15 hours of kindergarten.

### **Small business bus**

**Mr SOMYUREK** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — If there were still Dorothy Dixers, I am sure the question would have been, 'How is the government supporting small business in suburbs and regional Victoria?'. Last week the Andrews Labor government doubled mobile support for small businesses by expanding the small business bus program. I had the pleasure of joining the member for Bendigo West in the Assembly, Maree Edwards, and representatives from the Bendigo Business Council and the Small Business Mentoring Service in Bendigo to launch the second small business bus. The second small business bus will expand the service first launched in 2010 to support small businesses that may not have the time or the resources to access the range of services the government has to offer.

The buses provide free and personalised advice on board from the Small Business Mentoring Service specialists. These experienced mentors are skilled in marketing, finance, human resources and sales, and have extensive experience in running a small business or senior business management. Importantly the second vehicle will enable greater flexibility to respond to the needs of businesses and provide support to communities affected by bushfires, floods, drought or other disasters. This successful Labor initiative travelled to more than 120 locations over a 156-day period last year. It delivered 978 free mentoring

sessions and information to 2900 current and prospective business operators.

There are more than 525 000 small businesses in Victoria, representing 96 per cent of all Victorian businesses, and around — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Thank you, Minister.

**Mrs Peulich** — On a point of order, President, Given that this is a new segment of our proceedings, I want to raise a point of order with you in relation to what we can expect in the new ministers statements — not the ministerial statements. They are called 'ministerial statements' in the flyer that is being distributed, but I believe that is probably an error. The emphasis is on new government initiatives, projects and achievements.

Reflecting on the statements that were made today I thought a particularly good example of the use of ministers statements was Ms Pulford's response to the live baiting issue and her outlining of what the government is planning to do. What we received from Mr Herbert was, I thought, against the sentiment of this new sessional order. He basically used the opportunity to attack the opposition and hark back to information from 2010 and budget allocations in 2013 and 2014. He referred to nothing particularly new in that area.

I ask that you perhaps reflect on the answers and on the use of the word 'new', which I think should be the definitive word when considering what is appropriate content of these ministers statements, and that you provide further guidance about how this sessional order is to be used and applied in the future.

**Ms Lovell** — On the point of order, President, I would put it that Ms Mikakos's contribution was also not new given that it was a statement about a Productivity Commission report that was handed to the federal government on 31 October last year. The recommendation of the 15 hours came about as a result of work done under myself as minister and the Napthine government.

**Ms Mikakos** — On the point of order, President, the Productivity Commission report was only made publicly available after being tabled in the federal Parliament on Friday. It relates to ongoing funding for kindergartens — obviously we provide funding for them as well — and has direct relevance to families and children in our state. I was providing an update to the house in regard to my ongoing efforts to secure an ongoing funding contribution from the commonwealth.

**Mr Herbert** — On the point of order, President, I had two new initiatives. If I had had a little bit more time, I would have been delighted to talk about the John Monash Scholarship — another new initiative. It seems an extraordinary proposition that the entire 2 minutes of a ministers statement should be about totally new initiatives without any sort of reference to the context in which those initiatives are being introduced. It is astounding. I do not know how we can have that.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! In respect of this part of our proceedings, and in respect of the constituency questions, I plan to review today's questions and answers. There were a couple of constituency questions that on first hearing I thought were wide of the mark. I plan to go through and have a look at those, not to rescind the matters that have been put on the record but just as a matter of guidance as we develop these proceedings so we understand exactly what a constituency matter is and, in accordance with the interpretation I delivered earlier today, so that members have guidance on it. I do intend to have a look at those, and I will also give some consideration to the ministers statements to ensure that they also comply with the spirit of what has been suggested in terms of new initiatives.

I accept Mr Herbert's point that the whole thing does not have to be about a new initiative. If there is some context for how the initiative came about, I think it would be an appropriate proposition to put to the house.

**By leave, members statements postponed until later this day on motion of Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan).**

## GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

### Address-in-reply

**Debate resumed from 12 February; motion of Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) for adoption of address-in-reply.**

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Thank you, President. I congratulate you on your appointment; I have not yet had an opportunity to do so.

I stand here today proud to be the first Greens representative for the people of Eastern Metropolitan Region. It has been an unpredictable and occasionally impulsive journey. I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay my deep respects to elders past and present. In particular I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of Eastern Metropolitan Region, the Wurundjeri people.

The Wurundjeri have lived on this land for tens of thousands of years in the Birrarung Valley. British settlement impacted greatly on the Wurundjeri, their number reducing to only 28 people. Their survival to this very day is testament to their resilience, rich cultural history and deep connection to country.

Eastern Metropolitan Region contains some of the Wurundjeri people's most culturally significant sites, in particular Birrarung — the Yarra River. To this day the Yarra is iconic and culturally significant to the people of Melbourne. The Wurundjeri have a profound connection to the land, underpinned by strong cultural and spiritual values. The land is the mother, the land is the provider. This land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

To understand my journey I will start with the journey of my parents. Both of them immigrated from the United Kingdom with their respective families in the late 1950s. They, like thousands of others, were looking to make a better life in Australia. My mother's journey began on the *Fairsky* in 1958. She and her family initially established themselves in the Nissen huts at Fishermans Bend in Melbourne. My father's journey with his family began in 1959 on the *SS Strathnaver*, which arrived in Melbourne in the summer of 1960. My mother and father met at Fishermans Bend and married in 1962 in nearby St Kilda. I arrived two years later in 1964.

Originally settling in Malvern, my parents decided to move to Adelaide, but the pressure to maintain connections to extended family was great, and we moved back to Melbourne in 1972. My parents chose the east of Melbourne to settle, and I grew up in the leafy outer eastern suburb of Boronia, nestled in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges. My parents love what my mother calls Mother Nature and my father calls the bush. My earliest memories are of spending endless weekends camping rough in many parts of south-eastern Australia. They never stopped camping, never upgraded to a caravan — that is a luxury! — and it seemed the rougher and more remote the campsite the better and happier they were. Many sites are still etched in my memory — Wilpena Pound in the Flinders Ranges, Mannum on the Murray River and the wet mountain ash forests of Mount Field in Tasmania. Those growing years instilled in me two important values that have carried through to adulthood — the beauty and importance of a healthy environment and a strong work ethic.

My career as a young adult led me through a number of different sectors. As a bookkeeper I had fully transportable skills and found myself working for a

range of private sector employers, in retail, the arts, the motorcycle industry and the floriculture industry. It was not until I found the not-for-profit sector that I connected the satisfaction of work with the reward of social justice outcomes. My 13 years of work in the apprenticeship and traineeship sector was immensely rewarding, and I was proud to play my part. I saw the graduation of hundreds of apprentices and trainees, young people who gained qualifications that set them on their way. They were secure in having completed trade training in a framework that provided job security, a nurturing environment and encouragement along the way.

During this time, something significant happened in my life — the birth of our son, Forrest. The arrival of a baby has a profound effect on families, but the arrival of Forrest was to have a profound effect on the direction I was to take in life.

My journey to this place began in local government. However, my journey to local government began due to the collision between the childcare needs of baby Forrest and a council of the day keen to close my son's council-run long day care centre, Sherbrooke children's centre. I was part of the parent committee that fought to save what was, and still is, a best practice community-based long day care centre. We fought hard and long over two years in our relentless pursuit to save the centre. Our fight led to the 2005 council elections.

As part of our campaign two parents decided to run in the Yarra Ranges Shire Council elections. I was one of them. In a case of 'be careful what you wish for', I was enormously surprised to find I was elected the first Greens councillor to the Lyster ward in Yarra Ranges shire, a direction I had not figured my life would take. I am enormously proud of my achievements in local government, the tier of government closest to the people. It is often taken for granted by other tiers of government. In times of need, particularly natural disasters, the community always turns to local government as the first port of call, and local government provides an enormous range of critical services such as child care, maternal and child health centres, meals on wheels, libraries, parks and gardens and infrastructure services. These are many of the things that underpin the livability of this great state.

My time in local government spanned three terms, just over nine years. I was first elected in 2005, re-elected outright in 2008 with a 54 per cent majority and again re-elected in 2012 with a 59 per cent majority. Local government opened my eyes to a wealth of opportunities and means by which I could follow my passions. For me those passions were the early years,

public transport advocacy, community governance, libraries, planning and last, but never least, the environment. Yarra Ranges certainly provided ample opportunities to get into the nitty-gritty of those passions.

I have been proud to serve as the Eastern Transport Coalition chairperson for five years, as the Victorian Local Governance Association treasurer and president for five years and the Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation chairperson and deputy chairperson on and off for four years. It has been a great experience, and I have relished being a strong advocate for community and local government across these sectors.

Not only have I relished my role as advocate, I have treasured the connections I have made with the community and the friendships I have made with my councillor colleagues, particularly Crs McRae, Cox, Cliff, Avery and Heenan. My time with them on Yarra Ranges Shire Council saw the development of a progressive council with community and environment at its heart and at the centre of its decision-making. As I look forward to this new role, I will always remember very fondly my time as the Lyster ward councillor in the Yarra Ranges Shire Council — and, yes, I, along with the support of my councillor colleagues, did save Sherbrooke children's centre.

I thank the voters of Eastern Metropolitan Region for electing me their first Greens MLC. My election reaffirms the need for a rail line to Doncaster, improvements to the existing rail and tram network and better bus services. People want to see a transition to renewables, action on climate change, a reduction in emissions and the establishment of a Great Forest National Park. I will be using my time in this place to be a strong advocate on these issues.

My earliest experiences have defined what is fundamentally important to me — a healthy environment, which underpins everything we do. Without a healthy ecosystem and a healthy planet we cannot expect a healthy or prosperous long-term future. Victoria's natural environment has much changed since British settlement. Much of the vegetation that once covered this state has long been cleared. This makes the pockets that remain even more precious. Our environment is under more pressure than ever, with a changing climate, continued land clearing, threat of bushfire, pollution and pest plants and animals.

Our state faunal emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, Victoria's canary in the coalmine, provides a health indicator as to how our environment is faring, and the picture it paints is grim. With an estimated

800 Leadbeater's possums left in the wild, a trendline headed downwards, threatening processes impacting on their survival, including the continued loss of habitat, the future of this little arboreal mammal, our fairy possum, is bleak. There is a solution for not only the Leadbeater's possum but the dozens of threatened and endangered species that live in the central highlands of Victoria, and that is the creation of the Great Forest National Park.

I will be using my time in this place to pursue the survival of not only the Leadbeater's possum but also those hundreds of endangered species across the entirety of Victoria, whether they be fauna or flora. We are at a critical juncture in our history where we need to quickly resolve what sort of future we want. Our future is underpinned by a healthy environment and action on climate change. To do anything less would short-change our children and their right to intergenerational equity.

I am proud to make up the team of elected Greens in Victoria — the 10 MPs and 15 local government councillors. I honour and thank those candidates who have run in past elections for Eastern Metropolitan Region; they have helped to build ongoing support for the Greens over the years. I thank the people who helped get me here: my lower house candidates, my supporting upper house candidates, and the branch members and supporters across Eastern Metropolitan Region. Running a campaign across an upper house electorate is an enormous task, and the candidates and volunteers put in an extraordinary effort.

In particular I thank Loretta Agius, my campaign coordinator, who worked tirelessly on the campaign, tying up every loose end and coordinating a multitiered group of individuals; it seemed like 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I also thank A. J. — Andrew — Rawson and Jacqui Raymond, key volunteers who dedicated many hours to the campaign. Their efforts were boundless, and I very much appreciate the countless hours they dedicated to the campaign.

Of course I thank my family and friends, who at every stage have supported my efforts to be elected at both a local and state level. My partner, Gary, has been a close confidante and constant supporter and has kept the home fires burning for the countless nights I have not been home. I thank my beautiful son, Forrest, who has grown up in a highly unusual household, filled with discussions of campaigns, councillors, community consultation and capital works. I am sure those discussions might change a little bit in the future. He keenly takes the credit for the path I have followed. My

mother, Trish, has instilled in me qualities that continue to serve me well — tenacity, strength, determination, good humour and a keen sense of justice. I will use these qualities to fight for a fair and just society that cares for our environment and acts on climate change. To my friends, I thank them for being who they are — they are a great sounding board — they help keep it real, and they keep my feet on the ground.

I will be unrelenting in the pursuit for better public transport, action on climate change, protection of our environment and ensuring that our children's right to live in a fair and just world is safeguarded for future generations. It is a privilege to be elected as the first Greens MLC in Eastern Metropolitan Region, and I will not let the people of Eastern Metropolitan Region down.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan).**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

## MEMBERS STATEMENTS

### McGrath Foundation

**Mr YOUNG** (Northern Victoria) — I take this opportunity to talk about the McGrath Foundation, named after its founders, Jane and Glenn McGrath. This is a foundation born from the experiences of a woman battling breast cancer and her recognition of the importance of having access to breast cancer nurses. It was not until Jane was being treated for secondary cancer that she had access to such a nurse and described it as having:

Someone who could answer the questions only a nurse could answer whilst also being the support I needed to unload my frustrations and emotions.

More than 7000 Australian families were referred to a McGrath Foundation breast care nurse in the 2014 financial year, bringing the total to over 28 000 people who have received much-needed support. The McGrath Foundation breast care nurses also have a strong presence in rural areas with over 80 per cent of McGrath Foundation breast care nurses working in regional communities in that same year. Furthermore, they continue to champion nurse training and education through nurse scholarships; they proudly provided four full scholarships in 2014. This all adds to the general awareness provided through advertising and fundraising campaigns that the foundation promotes each year.

I thank all the volunteers who put in an enormous effort to these causes and those who generously donate to the breast cancer battle. Having said that, it pains me to have witnessed the backlash the foundation has received over the past few days. I am disgusted by the comments of emotionally charged people who have suggested this foundation be stripped of all support because of a separate issue — that being hunting. I hope people can look past their misguided and ill-informed ideological views and continue to support such a fantastic initiative for women and their families across Australia.

### Steele Sidebottom

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — I am thrilled to congratulate Tallygaroopna's own Steele Sidebottom on being named one of Collingwood's vice-captains for the 2015 AFL season, his second year as part of the Collingwood leadership team. Steele played in the Murray Bushrangers and the all-Australian team before being selected by Collingwood as draft pick 11 in the 2008 draft. At 19 years of age he was the youngest member of Collingwood's 2010 premiership side. Steele — or Rusty, as he is known locally — is the youngest of five boys. All five have been gifted local athletes, particularly excelling at football and cricket. Steele's older brother Ryan, better known as Golly, has also excelled beyond the local level, playing cricket for the Victorian Bushrangers and as a member of the Melbourne Stars squad. I congratulate Steele on his vice-captaincy and wish good luck to all AFL teams, particularly the mighty Tigers, for the 2015 season.

### Kindergarten funding

**Ms LOVELL** — I thank the many members of the early learning sector who have contacted me to congratulate me, the Naphthine government and departmental staff on our fierce advocacy for 15 hours per week of funded kindergarten programs to be supported in the final Productivity Commission's inquiry report entitled *Childcare and Early Childhood Learning*.

I am pleased to say that the report is clear on the benefits of 15-hour programs and recommends the continuation of funding. I thank the entire sector but in particular the department, the Municipal Association of Victoria and the Early Learning Association Australia for their support in achieving this recommendation. The Labor Party in opposition was very vocal about the need for certainty in the sector over this funding. We know kindergartens are taking enrolments now for 2016, and the Andrews government has not yet advised the sector of this funding. I urge the Andrews

government to provide certainty for the sector by advising — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Thank you, Ms Lovell.

### Wendy Pearl

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — I rise to pay tribute to Wendy Eleanor Pearl, who died late last year. The massive attendance at the mass of thanksgiving held at St Francis Xavier Church in Corio on 30 December 2014 was an indication of the deep love and widespread respect felt for Wendy by the people of Geelong and in particular its northern suburbs.

Wendy was a mother of four, a grandmother, a great-grandmother, a wife to Joe and a teacher. Wendy taught at Corio Primary School for many years, imparting reading, writing and maths skills along with the true nature of compassion and social justice. Wendy was always aware of those around her who were less fortunate, and she did whatever she could to improve their lives and the wider community. Children who needed help often ended up living with the family in their modest housing commission home. Wendy also found time to be involved in a vast number of community organisations. She was a life member of the Geelong Irish Society, the Geelong Greyhound Racing Club and the National Coursing Association of Victoria.

Wendy was a doer. She was clever. She walked tall, gave solid advice and brought out the very best in people. Wendy enjoyed a loving marriage to Joe Pearl — a partnership that was rich and enduring. I know Joe and the family keenly feel their loss, but they know they were fortunate to have such a wonderful woman in their lives for so long. Wendy's life was one well lived, but the sky would have been the limit if she had been born at a different time where there were more opportunities for women. It was an honour to know Wendy Pearl. I will cherish her words of wisdom and her knowing smile. Vale Wendy Pearl.

### Coptic Christians

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — On Saturday, 21 February, I attended a very sad occasion — a service to honour and pay respect to the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox community after the beheading of 21 Coptic Egyptians in Libya. The service was presided over by His Grace Bishop Suriel, head of the diocese of Melbourne for the Coptic Orthodox Church; Father Abanoub Attala, the local priest; along

with Father Elijah Fanous, Athanasius Attia and Timotheos Gabriel.

I welcomed the attendance of the imam of the Heidelberg Heights mosque as well as the head of the El Sedeaq Islamic Association. The mayor of Casey, Cr Nick Moreland, attended as well as former mayors of Casey in Cr Sam Aziz, Cr Stapleton and Cr Ablett. A local federal member also attended the occasion at St Mina and St Marina Coptic Orthodox Church. We stood together to denounce the loss of innocent lives and the violence that seems to be happening in ever-increasing amounts and intensity.

In a couple of hours, at 8 o'clock, there will be a similar service at St Paul's Cathedral. Regrettably I will not be able to attend, as I guess would be the case for many members in this chamber, but no doubt all of us in Australia, no matter what our religion, will stand together to say that the taking of innocent lives is never acceptable, no matter what the motive — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Thank you, Mrs Peulich.

### Violence against people with disability

**Ms HARTLAND** (Western Metropolitan) — Tonight I would like to use my members statement to congratulate Senator Rachel Siewert and the federal Greens. This is with regard to the Senate inquiry into violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings. This will build on the work done by Women with Disabilities Victoria in its groundbreaking report entitled *Voices against Violence*. The inquiry will include gender and age-related dimensions and the particular situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and culturally and linguistically diverse people with disability. This is a timely inquiry. There is already heightened awareness of the abuse of women, and this will be further heightened with the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The darkest corners of abuse are against people with disabilities. I read the report from Women with Disabilities Victoria. One of the worst parts of the report concerned a man who, while not physically violent to his partner, would take the wheels of her wheelchair each day so that she became a prisoner in her own home. These kinds of actions can never be accepted. With the work of the royal commission and the Senate, we can shine a light on this abuse and move very quickly to make sure that it does not continue.

## Roads and bridges

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I draw attention to the very successful country roads and bridges program, initiated by the coalition government in 2011 as a \$160 million program over the four years from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2015. This program provides funding support to 40 rural shires and has enabled more than 900 local roads and 100 local bridges to be repaired or upgraded. These rural shires have been able to catch up with an infrastructure backlog that accumulated in the previous decade. The program is strongly supported by rural shires, the Municipal Association of Victoria, the RACV and the Victorian Farmers Federation. Improving local roads and bridges is also an important measure in helping to reduce the country road toll.

The Andrews government will terminate the country roads and bridges program on 30 June 2015, cutting \$1 million per year from Victoria's 40 rural shires for upgrades to their local roads and bridges. The Minister for Roads and Road Safety confirmed this when he said in the other place recently that the country roads and bridges program is a 'lapsing program' under the Andrews government. The Andrews government has pointed to its promised \$1 billion fund for regional roads as a substitute for the country roads and bridges program, but this funding is for state assets, not local government assets. While the Premier announced a \$38.5 million regional bridges program last week, this too is for state assets, providing no assistance to local government, and it is only using funding already allocated in the current budget. I strongly believe the Andrews government is cheating country Victoria with the removal — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! Thank you, Mr Ramsay.

## Fed Up Lunch

**Mr DALIDAKIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — On Saturday, 21 February, I had the pleasure to support a luncheon called Fed Up. This luncheon was set up by a group of gentlemen to say that they are fed up with domestic violence happening across the state and the community. Fed Up was started by Michael Jones, who works at Sportsbet. He, along with Toby Potter, Peter Fraser, Scott Walker and Nick Paul went about setting up the luncheon, which was held at the races last Saturday. The luncheon raised in excess of \$30 000 for McAuley Community Services for Women. That will enable us to continue to fight what is a genuine scourge of society. We must continue to be ever vigilant about

the dangers that domestic violence place on the community.

Fed Up was created by a group of five gentlemen, who met every Wednesday over a 10-month period to put this event together, to network and to create an environment for those people fed up with domestic violence and prepared to do something about it. I am extremely proud to be associated with this organisation. I encourage other people to get involved. I thank Mr Jones and his friends for their work on this genuinely worthy cause.

## Officer Specialist School and Officer Secondary College

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — Prior to the 2010 election, the then coalition opposition promised to build two new schools in the Berwick-Pakenham growth corridor — Officer Specialist School and Officer Secondary College. As members of the house would be aware, Officer Specialist School has been open for some time now and has provided much-needed additional resources in specialist education in the Cardinia shire and the ever-growing corridor.

With regard to Officer Secondary College, I was very pleased to visit the school with my good friend and colleague the member for Gembrook in the other place. The school is now open and taking enrolments. When the member for Gembrook and I visited, the students had just returned from their first school camp and were very excited about the school and the educational opportunities that were being provided. The school continues to grow and expand. Stage 2, which was funded by the coalition government, is now under construction. This will ensure that the school continues to grow in line with the population.

It is often said that not enough infrastructure is provided for growing communities to keep pace with population growth. When it comes to specialist education and secondary education in the Cardinia shire, these two schools have been built in advance of residential growth in the Officer community, providing certainty for families looking to move to that area — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Time!

## Dr Mike Helal

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — Last weekend I was deeply shocked and saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Mike Helal. Mike was a well-loved and widely known young man throughout the

Australian Lebanese community. I met him through Dr Elie Khalil shortly after his arrival in Australia from Lebanon in 2004. He was a shining example of what can be accomplished academically. His kind nature was evident in his provision of academic opportunities for others less fortunate than himself.

Mike and his beloved young wife, Lama, founded the Aspire Fund, a not-for-profit organisation which assists disadvantaged students to complete their undergraduate degrees and in doing so positively influences their lives forever.

At the age of 28 Mike received his PhD in the economics of education from the University of Melbourne, tragically, just two days before his passing. He leaves behind a grieving wife, family and community who will never forget his dedication to and enthusiasm for helping others. I extend my sincere condolences to Mike's wife, Lama, and family on their tragic loss.

### Frankston Hospital

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Peninsula Health and to indicate that last week I attended, along with a number of others, the opening of new sections of Frankston Hospital, an \$81 million project. I might add that this project was funded with \$5 million from the federal government as well as two major funding tranches from the previous state government in the 2011–12 and 2012–13 state budgets. There is significant new emergency capacity at Frankston Hospital, as well as a new 68-bed ward, which includes 64 new beds and 4 additional intensive care beds. The additional capacity of the emergency department is also very significant.

I want to pay tribute to the work of the project control team, headed by Leanne Price at the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as current Peninsula Health CEO Sue Williams, her predecessor Sherene Devanesen, as well as the acting CEOs. Under Nancy Hogan the board has also performed admirably, delivering a great outcome for the community.

The \$81 million project was brought in ahead of time and under budget. The previous government allocated additional money to expand kitchen capacity at the hospital. This is a good project. We have also seen other significant outcomes in terms of new cardiac units, fewer 24-hour waits — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Time!

### Roads and bridges

**Ms SYMES** (Northern Victoria) — I rise to make a statement about the Andrews Labor government's investment in regional Victoria and in particular my electorate of Northern Victoria. The Labor government is getting on with the job. We are funding key bridge repairs and upgrades as part of our Stronger Country Bridges program, delivering projects that the people of my electorate want and need.

In particular I am very pleased that this funding will increase the capacity of heavy vehicles travelling along the Hume Freeway and Goulburn Valley Highway. This investment has been keenly welcomed by the Committee for Greater Shepparton, local freight operators and business people that I have met in relation to these projects.

The Shepparton freight industry and those who rely on it welcome this news. An editorial in the *Shepparton News* of Saturday, 21 February, hit the nail on the head when it comes to this vital regional issue, in saying:

Mr Andrews made it clear he was open to suggestion and would back anything that presented a good case for Victoria, for business, for jobs and prosperity. He's off to a good start.

...

... this is one decision that will get the state moving.

There have been negative cries from those opposite, but the editorial in the *Shepparton News* set the record straight when it also said:

... Ms Lovell was a minister on the coalition government that had four years to make something happen — other than the new court complex — but did not.

In contrast, this government is getting on with the job of repairing roads and bridges, securing jobs and giving regional businesses in northern Victoria the confidence they have been searching for from government. I welcome this funding commitment and thank the Minister for Roads and Road Safety for securing the future — —

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Time!

### McAuley Community Services for Women

**Ms CROZIER** (Southern Metropolitan) — When Joce Bignold, the CEO from McAuley Community Services for Women, went on radio eight months ago to speak about what men could do to stop other men from being violent, it hit a chord with a young man who heard the interview. Michael Jones was that man. He wanted to do what he could to raise awareness amongst

men of his age, so he got some of his mates together and they formed the Fed Up Lunch.

On Saturday, in my capacity as shadow Minister for Families and Children, I had the pleasure of attending the Fed Up Lunch at Flemington along with around 180 other guests, including Mr Dalidakis. It was a terrific event that not only created further awareness of the issue of family violence within our community but also raised funds for McAuley Community Services for Women.

McAuley provides practical services for women and children affected by family violence. It operates the only safe house in Victoria. It provides refuges for women and children who are escaping from family violence and has jobs programs for those women who want to return to the workforce or access training. I acknowledge Michael Jones for taking the initiative, working with a group of five or so of his friends and getting this great event to fruition.

With attention in recent days being focused on the Royal Commission into Family Violence, it is organisations such as McAuley that provide the practical programs for women and children who may be subject to family violence today. I congratulate Joce Bignold and her team at McAuley on the ongoing work they are doing in providing support and assistance to the many women and children affected by family violence.

### **Leukaemia Foundation**

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — I was lucky enough recently to meet up with Stephanie Hechenberger, who is the general manager for the Leukaemia Foundation of Victoria/Tasmania, to discuss its ongoing services and how the foundation is going. I was surprised when she alerted me to a service that I did not know the foundation delivers, and has delivered since 1999, in which volunteer drivers using the foundation's car take patients to and from their medical appointments and to see specialists. This takes pressure off patients getting to those events. Another concern the foundation has is that during treatment people's immune systems are severely weakened, so they can potentially pick up infections from catching public transport.

This service has been supported by Bridgestone Tyre centres, Holden and originally by the Peter Brock Foundation through generous donations of cars. It is also staffed by fantastic volunteers who drive patients to and from their medical appointments.

### **National security**

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to commend the Prime Minister's statement yesterday on new security arrangements in Australia. It is the beginning of a recognition by the commonwealth government that Australia is but one country at war with radical Islam. It is a war that impacts almost every nation on Earth. It is a war we did not start. It is a war we do not want, but it is a war that all governments have a responsibility to protect their people from. Whether federal or state, it is our job.

It is a war that we must win. Radical Islamist terrorists have shown themselves to be ruthless, heartless, cruel, and without conscience or mercy. Whatever our politics, we must band together to defeat and destroy this evil. It is the greatest threat the world has seen or is likely to see this century. If radical Islam is allowed to prevail, Australia as we know it will be no more.

I commend the Abbott government for beginning the process to protect Australia and Australians. It sets an example we all should follow. The lives of millions of people depend on it.

### **Community services sector**

**Ms MIKAKOS** (Minister for Families and Children) — During question time the opposition sought to defend its abysmal record in community services. When the child protection system was in crisis, the previous government's answer was Services Connect, which shows just how out of touch it was. The community services sector has expressed considerable concern to me about Services Connect. The CEO of the peak body Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare expressed some of those concerns to me in a letter dated 23 December 2014, which is a letter I have made available to members in the house today. The letter says:

Evaluations of the trials commissioned by the department of human services have not been made public nor were community sector organisations consulted in a meaningful way on the design of the trials.

...

The broad, high-level goals of the trials to integrate and streamline services are broadly supported, however, it remains unclear what mechanisms are required to achieve these aims, nor how such mechanisms will relate to existing services such as Child FIRST and Integrated Family Services. Instead, community organisations have been required to propose potential solutions and this has resulted in a very diverse range of approaches across the eight trial sites.

Service providers have also reported a significant number of issues in the model design remain unclear or are being applied inconsistently by department of human services divisions.

... prior to the establishment and consolidation of the new services —

it urges me to —

revisit and review the Services Connect model ...

The opposition should talk to the sector.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT** — Order! The member's time has expired.

**Sitting suspended 6.36 p.m. until 8.08 p.m.**

## UPPER YARRA VALLEY AND DANDENONG RANGES REGIONAL STRATEGY PLAN

**Mr SOMYUREK** (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I move:

That, pursuant to section 46D of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, amendment 121 to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* be approved.

This amendment is required to enable the premises at 261 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road in Ferny Creek to be used and developed as a restaurant and caretaker's residence. The proposal has been through a public consultation process and considered by an independent panel, which has supported it.

The proposal also has the full support of the Yarra Ranges Shire Council, which has requested this amendment. This is a local issue and comes before the house because the Planning and Environment Act 1987 requires the approval of any amendments to the strategy plan to be ratified by both houses.

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise and make a contribution to the debate on this motion:

That, pursuant to section 46D of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, amendment 121 to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* be approved.

I note that this matter goes back into the period of the last government, during which the work on it was done. I also note that amendment 121 works in conjunction with amendment C129 to the Yarra Ranges planning scheme, which was prepared and adopted by the Yarra Ranges Shire Council, and deals specifically with 261 Mount Dandenong Tourist Road, Ferny Creek.

I make the point clear in the chamber that there has not been a lot of discussion by the government about this matter and about the uniqueness of the circumstances of this issue having come to the house in the last Parliament. I acknowledge completely that the stretching of this matter from one period to another is an unusual occurrence. However, as one who will have responsibility for ratification processes and other planning processes from the opposition's perspective in this chamber, I make the point that I seek to ensure, particularly on future occasions when this may occur, that a process is put in place whereby the Minister for Planning will respond to questions from the non-government parties. This process operated during the 2002 to 2006 Parliament and provided members with an opportunity to engage with the minister on some matters of detail.

Considering its circumstances — the matter's uniqueness and crossing of two parliaments, and the fact that this work was largely undertaken by the previous planning minister — I think this move is largely supported by the community, so the opposition will not be opposing this ratification motion and indeed it will support the steps the amendment proposes to take.

I know that one of our new members will have something specific to say about this matter, having come off the local council as a Greens councillor and entered this Parliament as a Greens member. I know she will have a good deal to say about this motion.

I indicate to the chamber that I have consulted with the local council, and I understand some of the council's points around this matter, but I think that on this occasion the key point is that we need to have a very clear process in place. With these planning ratification motions and other planning steps, aside from normal bills, there also need to be opportunities to ask questions of the relevant minister.

**Ms DUNN** (Eastern Metropolitan) — Congratulations on your appointment to this role, Acting President Patten.

I am in a unique position as I have already voted on this motion once before as a local government councillor. I will say up-front in my contribution that the Greens support this motion. The *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan* plays a fundamentally important role in the Yarra Ranges municipality. It is a planning instrument that has been in operation for decades and has guided the good, proper and orderly planning of that area. This house should not lightly consider any amendments to that

regional strategy plan, the only one in operation in the state.

The situation of a restaurant that has languished without operating since its construction in the year 2000 is a bit of a sorry tale, but this motion seeks to remedy that. I am satisfied — and I say this with insight — that the council has gone through an appropriate process of consultation on this, with the matter having been referred to a planning panel that provided insights into the incorporated document and some conditions having been imposed on what should be included in that document to steer what happens in the sensitive area of Ferny Creek, an important site in the Dandenong Ranges.

I am delighted that the first notice of motion I am speaking on relates to the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan*. I cannot stress how important that document is in terms of planning, and I commend the motion to the house.

**Motion agreed to.**

## BACK TO WORK BILL 2014

*Second reading*

**Debate resumed from 12 February; motion of Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State).**

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise to make a few brief remarks on the Back to Work Bill 2014, in anticipation of making some further remarks in a later committee stage.

There is great irony in the title of the bill before the house. The Back to Work Bill 2014 suggests a grand scheme, a grand plan, on the part of the government to address employment issues here in Victoria, but what is actually in the bill is far removed from its grand title. The irony also extends to the fact that no sooner was this bill introduced in the other place on the opening sitting day of Parliament in December last than the government adjourned debate on the bill and went on holidays! The first action as part of the Back to Work agenda was to go on holidays. The government had the opportunity to debate the bill in the other place in the week of the opening of Parliament, but the government declined to take the opportunity to sit a second day and start debate on this legislation.

There are other ironies in this bill and its Back to Work title because one of the first acts of the government and of the Premier was to stop work on the east–west link, a major infrastructure project in Victoria which would

have created 3700 construction jobs over the course of the project. At the same time as the government is saying it is about back to work, one of its first acts is to cut 3700 potential jobs through the state’s largest infrastructure program.

**Mr Drum** — People who were already working.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Indeed. As Mr Drum says, people who were already working in the lead-up to Christmas. They lost their jobs as a consequence of that decision by the Premier and the government. We also saw the Linking Melbourne Authority disbanded by the government and more jobs lost.

Not only have we seen the loss of the potential jobs on the east–west link but we have also seen great uncertainty over the rest of the state’s major infrastructure program. In its 2014–15 budget the Napthine government created and provided for a \$27 billion infrastructure program for Victoria, covering road projects, rail projects, education projects and hospital projects. It was the largest infrastructure program in this state’s history. The Napthine government allocated funding last year, and around 10 000 construction jobs were expected to be created over the course of the rollout of that infrastructure program. But from this government we now have great uncertainty around not only the east–west link, which the Premier has halted, but also the future of the full infrastructure program and its 10 000 construction jobs.

The third irony is that one of the first acts of the new Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade was to introduce two new public holidays, the consequence of which will be that casual workers, particularly those in retail, will not be working or getting paid on those public holidays. They will lose income and work opportunities as a consequence of the government introducing two additional public holidays. While the headline is ‘Back to Work’ the reality is quite different.

To get an understanding of where the government is going with the bill it is worth reflecting on the Labor Party’s pre-election policy document entitled *Back to Work — Victorian Labor’s Plan for 100 000 Jobs*.

**Mrs Peulich** interjected.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — I will take up Mrs Peulich’s point about it being a very skimpy document. What I would say to the house and to Mrs Peulich is that in fact this document contains far more detail than the bill that is before the house. The glossy policy document released by the Labor Party before the election contains far more detail than the bill that the house is now debating. The document, which

was released by the then Labor leader, now Premier, Daniel Andrews, says:

An Andrews Labor government will get them back on track, helping to create 100 000 new jobs with the Back to Work act.

...

Commencing July 1, 2015, 50 000 payments will be available per year, for two years.

The Labor Party's pre-election promise flagged that its solution for employment and unemployment in Victoria would be a Back to Work act which would create 100 000 new jobs. The government committed to 100 000 new full-time jobs.

It is interesting to reflect on the government's performance in its first month in office, because the first set of Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released since the government came to office show that from December 2014 to January this year full-time employment in Victoria declined by 2200 people. Not only does the government have to create 100 000 new full-time jobs, but it has to make up the 2200 that have already been lost on its watch. We are already seeing employment in the state go backwards under Labor despite it introducing a bill with the grand title of the Back to Work Bill.

I reflect on episodes of *Yes Minister*. When a government has something difficult to deal with, whether it is a report or a paper, the refrain is always to put the difficult thing in the heading. If you deal with it in the title, you can ignore it in the content, and that is what we have before the house this evening. We have the Back to Work title, but we do not have any plan in the bill as to how the government's target of 100 000 new full-time jobs in the next two years is to be achieved.

Significant in the bill is clause 4 of part 2 which provides under the heading 'Establishment of Back to Work Scheme':

There is established by this Act a scheme for payments to employers for the purpose of providing relief in respect of the costs associated with hiring certain unemployed or retrenched workers.

Clause 4 is the only description in the bill of what the scheme is about. The rest of the bill deals with the mechanics. It deals with matters such as the repayment of penalties; confidentiality by the State Revenue Office, which will administer this scheme; and investigative powers for the State Revenue Office. What it does not deal with is the substance of the scheme. All we have are undefined payments as to their

level and quantum to some undefined employers for the purposes of providing relief of an unknown level in respect of undefined costs associated with hiring certain undefined unemployed or retrenched workers. We have no definition of which employers will be entitled to the payments, no definition of the level of the payments or to which unemployed or retrenched workers payments will be made. None of the detail has been provided in the bill.

All we have in clause 5 is a provision stating that the minister is to determine the criteria and that they will be published in the *Government Gazette*. Despite the government having the Back to Work Bill set down in its election policy, we have no content. We do not know who the employers are, we do not know the level of subsidies that will be payable, and we do not know who the unemployed or retrenched workers will be. None of that detail is provided by the legislation. It beggars belief that this is the centrepiece of the government's approach to employment in the state, the key part of its election platform, and that not a single detail as to how the scheme is constructed and how it will work has been included in the bill.

It gets worse because clause 53, headed 'Appropriation of Consolidated Fund', provides:

All Back to Work payments are to be paid from the Consolidated Fund which is appropriated by this section to the necessary extent.

The bill is what is known as a special appropriation bill, and a special appropriation sits outside the ordinary appropriation bills. It sits outside the budget bills that the house deals with annually. In May and June the house will deal with appropriation bills for the budget. This bill is different because it appropriates whatever funds are required for the scheme. It will not come back through the budget process, and it will not be subject to scrutiny as part of that process. The funds for the bill will be automatically allocated by this legislation, if it passes, without any further parliamentary scrutiny.

The problem is that we are being asked in clause 53 to provide open-ended appropriation without any detail as to the extent of the scheme — whether it is to be \$50 million, \$100 million or \$500 million. There is no detail in the bill as to how the scheme will work, and there is no detail in the bill as to the extent of the funding that the government intends to allocate to the scheme. But there is a blank cheque in clause 53 which says, 'If the Parliament passes the bill, it will appropriate whatever funds are required to implement the scheme however the government finally designs it'.

The coalition has great concerns about the legislation — —

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** — Ms Shing indicates that we are supporting the bill. I say to her that the position the opposition is taking is that it will not oppose the bill on its second reading. However, through its committee stage we expect the Leader of the Government, as the minister responsible for the legislation in this house, to provide to the Parliament considerable detail as to how the scheme is going to work, to what extent it is going to be funded, how many employers and what size of employers are going to be eligible, and what unemployed and retrenched people employers are going to receive payments in respect of. The bill does not address any of the key issues with respect to the government's plan around back to work. What was a central, core, policy of the government leading into the election has not been fleshed out.

The opposition will reserve its position on the third reading in respect of understanding the detail of the bill. It does not deliver on the government's commitment, and it falls far short of any piece of legislation we have seen before in this house. It includes a clause that says basically, 'We'll set up a scheme and we will tell you later what that scheme is'. This is appallingly bad legislation in the sense that it does not lay down the detail of what it is trying to achieve, and the opposition will expect substantially more detail from the minister in committee.

**Mr BARBER** (Northern Metropolitan) — The Greens will support this bill. We have a persistent unemployment problem in this state. The unemployment rate is higher than any of us want it to be, and if the next move in the unemployment rate is not sideways, it could very well be up.

It is not as if unemployment is spread evenly across the community. Six per cent unemployment does not mean that you, I and everybody else is unemployed for 6 per cent of the year or 6 per cent of our working lives. Some people persistently suffer from unemployment while the rest of us can do quite nicely, thank you very much. Those groups include certain demographics, such as people who come from certain circumstances or people in certain regions. That may be the reason we have a Vote 1 Local Jobs member here from Western Victoria Region, because in certain parts of western Victoria there is persistent unemployment while in other parts unemployment is very low because people have left those areas and moved closer to the city to try to find jobs.

This is a topic we have debated many times in this chamber. We have also talked about the solutions; I do not intend to speak terribly widely about them. Suffice it to say what the Greens have put forward in this place is the need for a government program that aims to enhance productivity in the broadest sense, because that is the only way we will continue to improve our prosperity. We need an improvement in productivity in the way our transport system works. We need better public transport to relieve our roads. We need public transport that extends out of Melbourne into the furthest corners of the state. I am not aware that this government has come forward with any plan of action to expand public transport in regional Victoria. I am yet to hear of it, but I want to hear of it, having travelled all over this state by public transport.

We need a healthy population. We need a group of workers, and a community as a whole, who have good health in the broadest sense and are not dragged down by the burden of disease that makes it difficult for them to participate. We need an educated population, and we need an education system that builds our human capacity. We are the lowest spending state in Australia when it comes to public education, both primary and secondary, and a succession of governments have taken the axe to the TAFE system at the worst possible time.

To make this state an attractive place that people want to live and set up their businesses in, we need to maintain the livability of our community, because increasingly mobile businesses, which can choose which world capital they set up in, set up in a city based on its livability factors. They can then attract the skilled mobile workers they need.

For that matter, if we do not address the current threat of climate change, we are going to be wiped out by its effects. Australia is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the effects of climate change, but if we address it correctly, we can enhance economic growth by developing renewable energy and getting more efficient about the way we use energy. Developing renewable energy will be one of the best job creators, particularly for regional Victoria.

That is the program of productivity-enhancing investment that we need this state government, and in fact every state government in succession, many years into the future, to adopt. Instead we have this bill, which is the centrepiece of what the government has put forward to address the crisis of unemployment. Make no mistake, Premier Andrews said while in opposition that unemployment was former Premier Napthine's fault and that it was his responsibility to fix it. The same applies now that Labor is in government,

so Labor will not blame macroeconomic factors or somebody else.

Labor has stated that this is a problem that the state government must fix, and so far this bill is the centrepiece of what the Labor government is offering. It went on telly and told the public it would create 100 000 jobs, which would cost \$100 million. A hundred thousand jobs at \$1000 per job — I would love it to be so, but there is something about labour market economics that makes me suspicious. You cannot simply go out and create a brand-new, full-time job for \$1000. If you could, somebody might have done it already. The federal government might have written a big cheque and gotten rid of unemployment in one go. If it simply takes the addition of \$1000 to create a brand-new job, I will go downstairs and put my microeconomics textbook through the shredder.

What this bill could do, though, is provide extra incentives to certain groups who have traditionally faced big barriers to getting into employment. They include people with disabilities. Ms Hartland will address this issue in a minute, because we have not been able to address it by proposing an amendment to the bill. It includes newly arrived migrants and people who for one reason or another have a patchy education history. It even includes refugees and asylum seekers, some of whom are in this country having escaped from their own countries and who are highly qualified but who for various reasons — whether it be the quality of their visas, lack of recognition of their qualifications or even just the barriers of communication — are unable to work.

None of us would want to see a brain surgeon driving a taxi, but at the same time we would not want to see people being brought in under 457 visas when people with the same skill sets are already here but there is a barrier to their employment. It would be great if this bill could become a mechanism to help break down some of the barriers among those groups that are stuck in stubborn levels of unemployment, if you like, not so much to reduce the total number of unemployed, because I do not think this bill could do that, but to bring people up again from the bottom of the pool of unemployed and give them a chance to participate in the market. That in itself would be quite an effective efficiency mechanism.

I said that the government promised 100 000 jobs for \$100 million, but the bill does not deliver either of those things. The bill simply gives the minister the power to determine some criteria down the line as to who would be eligible to attract this payment, and nowhere in the bill does it say that the payment is

\$1000 or any other amount. The bill, as Mr Rich-Phillips rightly pointed out, is simply a shell. I have not seen a bill like it in eight years. The bill effectively licenses the government to spend any amount of money on almost anything.

Clause 5 says that the criteria for who is eligible and on what basis will come later. Clause 53 simply says:

All Back to Work payments are to be paid from the Consolidated Fund which is appropriated by this section to the necessary extent.

That could be a \$10 million program, \$100 million program or \$1 billion program for all we know. The money will automatically be taken from the Consolidated Fund as each payment is made. I do not know if members are used to writing blank cheques in their personal lives, but we would at least want to stop and consider what we might be doing before we do the same thing with the public's chequebook, otherwise known as the Consolidated Fund.

The part that worries me more is the guidelines. The bill seems to leave it extraordinarily open to the minister to set any criteria that he or she wants. It might not be \$1000 per job; it could be \$10 000 per job, as the federal government offered to attract people who are near retirement age back into the employment pool. If members take a look, they will see that hardly anybody has taken up the \$10 000 wage subsidy. I have some doubt as to whether a \$1000 wage subsidy will be taken up.

In the lower house Liberal Party members argued that this bill simultaneously has too much red tape and not enough. They are worried that the provisions of the bill and any guidelines that come down the track could be subject to fraud. If members watched *Four Corners* last night and saw some of the job agencies and the way they had been churning through paperwork, in some cases to create completely fictitious jobs in order to collect their little slice on each job, they would be worried. At the same time, it could be the case that employers do not want to go through the paperwork, but we do not know yet because we have not seen the eligibility criteria and therefore we do not know how onerous the paperwork will be. I am pretty confident that someone will work out a way to take maximum advantage of the scheme, even though, based on other schemes we have seen in operation in Tasmania and New South Wales, it is quite likely that this scheme will not go anywhere near paying out the 100 000 different payments that were envisaged in the Premier's promise.

As this bill has moved through the various stages in the houses, through briefings, through discussions and

through distribution via emails, time and again we have asked the government what the criteria are going to look like and how the guidelines will be written. The government was happy to tell us that it has some guidelines and happy to make promises and assertions about what will be in the guidelines, but it was not willing to show them to us. That is very unfortunate for a bill that gives such wideranging discretion to a minister on an unlimited budget line. We should have seen the guidelines, and I am going to keep asking for them even as we go through the committee stage of the debate.

If we are to approve this scheme, we need a little more transparency than what is on offer. It is for that reason the Greens have proposed an amendment that would require the State Revenue Office to report quarterly and by region on the uptake of the program, which will be of interest to different members in this house from different regions. The State Revenue Office does a bit of that reporting now in relation to the first home owner scheme. Members can look up those numbers if they want to, and they include the top 10 postcodes. That is a very simple scheme where eligibility is clear, payment is routine and qualification is quite fixed. This is a much more expansive scheme where I think the government over time may be trying many different approaches to get the scheme up and running and get some uptake of the scheme if, as it seems to indicate, this is the centrepiece of its unemployment strategy. The Greens amendments have been circulated in the lower house. I ask that they be now circulated so that members can address them in their contributions during the second-reading speech debate.

**Greens amendments circulated by Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) pursuant to standing orders.**

**Mr BARBER** — The proposal regarding reporting is one amendment that the Greens would like to move. There is another amendment for members to peruse which relates particularly to the issue of asylum seekers. As the government has brought this bill forward there has been a shifting description of what unemployment might mean.

At first we were told unemployment meant being in receipt of a commonwealth unemployment payment. Not everybody is receiving those: people on disability pensions, for example, are not receiving those, and yet we like to see them come back into the workforce if they are able. You could have simply been unemployed for a period of time by your own choice. You could be an itinerant worker, maybe moving around the country and working periodically as need be, but you would be

ineligible under that definition of unemployment. As we said in relation to refugees and asylum seekers, in some cases they are prohibited from receiving unemployment benefits, but in other cases they are just jobseekers who are not receiving benefits.

The government then started to put forward a different definition of what might constitute unemployment. It still does not seem to pick up the issue that Ms Hartland is going to raise about disability support pensioners, but we will see, I guess. We are waiting to see these guidelines, and I think it is entirely reasonable that the house should expect to see them before it proceeds with the bill. The government may put forward some arguments against my amendment in that instance, but until it shows us the guidelines it will not be able to demonstrate that that or any other group is definitely going to be eligible for this scheme. For such an expansive and politically important scheme for the government, and for such an important issue, it is not good enough that we are not seeing the guidelines just yet.

I have covered the more important policy issues here. I have talked a little bit about the mechanics of the bill and how it works. Most of the rest of the bill is simply around powers of investigation and the requirement for keeping records. We have put forward two amendments for consideration by other members of the house.

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — I am very pleased to stand here this evening and speak on the Back to Work Bill 2014. This bill was tabled just prior to Christmas and is the foundation stone that Labor members brought before the Victorian public because we understood that Victorians were hurting. We understood that the level of unemployment in this state was at an absolutely appalling rate, youth unemployment in this state was at an incredibly high rate, and in our regional areas it was abysmal. It gives me great pleasure to speak on this bill tonight because those who are returning members to this chamber will remember that I spoke almost incessantly about unemployment, the need for jobs and the need to keep industry in this country. Mr Ondarchie and I had many duels across the chamber about the need to keep the automotive industry in this state and the need for a proper renewable energy industry as well.

We have before us the *Back to Work* plan, which has four pillars. The first is the bill we have here tonight, which enables the establishment of a \$100 million fund to provide payroll tax relief to companies hiring unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers for full-time employment. The second pillar is the Premier's Jobs and Investment

Panel. It is an independent body of senior business and industry leaders providing direct advice to the Premier on the expenditure of \$500 million funding for investment and jobs. The third pillar is the Future Industries Fund, which is a \$200 million grant program to support job-creating projects in six identified high growth areas, including pharmaceuticals, new energy, food and fibre, and international education. The final pillar is the Regional Jobs Fund, which is a \$200 million investment fund to support job-creating opportunities in regional Victoria.

The bill before us this evening deals with the first of these four pillars. The scheme will provide financial assistance for businesses to employ certain unemployed persons, including unemployed youth, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers through a \$100 million dollar fund. It implements a commitment made by Labor leading up to last year's state election to provide relief to businesses, particularly in the context of the challenging economic outlook and the weak labour market while also addressing the high unemployment levels that arose under the Napthine government. This bill targets categories of unemployed workers where there is the greatest potential to have a positive impact. The key legal elements necessary for the administration of the scheme are established in this bill, and the Andrews government will closely monitor take-up rates and industry behaviour to safeguard the integrity of that scheme. This has been a debate in the press in recent times, and we — in particular Premier Daniel Andrews — have absolutely given that commitment. It will come into effect on 1 July 2015.

The other reason I am particularly pleased to speak on this bill tonight is that the previous government did not believe it had any role at all as a government when it came to the issue of unemployment or facilitating the continued existence of industry and business in this state. Members opposite just never got it, and they sat on their hands as company after company announced their closures and entire industries walked off the shores of this great nation — and they continue to do so as a result of announcements that those companies made during the reign of the former government.

This state voted. Victorians did not want a situation where they were unemployed or where their children were unemployed. They had lost the sense that there was a future for their families. We on this side of the chamber wanted a state that was prepared to go back to work. We wanted optimism in the air and a future for those who wanted to be engaged in the labour market and more importantly have their aspirations about their livelihoods and lifestyles guaranteed.

When the previous government came to power the unemployment rate in Victoria was 4.9 per cent, and two years later it hit nearly 7 per cent, which was the highest it had been in 13 years. We had the slowest rate of jobs growth in the entire country, and the hours worked per capita figure for Victoria was at its lowest since the recession of the 1990s. Victoria went from being the jobs capital of Australia in 2010 under the previous Labor government to a state with the worst unemployment figures on the mainland.

My electorate of Western Victoria Region, which I share with a number of other people — Mr Morris, Mr Purcell, Ms Pulford and Mr Ramsay — has unfortunately received the worst end of the stick in relation to rates of unemployment. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data showed youth unemployment at nearly 21 per cent and general unemployment at 9.5 per cent in regional centres like Warrnambool and Geelong. Youth unemployment in Ballarat reached a staggering 22.8 per cent, representing a 17 per cent rise under a one-term coalition government.

**Ms Hartland** — On a point of order, Acting President, I am trying to listen to Ms Tierney because I think she is making a very good contribution, but the interjections from all sides are making it very difficult.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Patten)** — Order! I thank Ms Hartland.

**Ms TIERNEY** — In talking about the high levels of unemployment in the electorate of Western Victoria I once again highlight what has happened in our great electorate. We have seen close to 200 people lose their jobs in Portland at Keppel Prince. There were 100 jobs that went just before Christmas, and there were significant numbers that went before that. A lot of that was a result of this government sitting on its hands. It was also this government refusing to — —

**Mr Ondarchie** — This government?

**Ms TIERNEY** — The government over there; the one that we put in exile in November. When those opposite were in government they refused to accept that jobs in Portland were incredibly important, and they did not do a thing to help people in Portland. The company Rivers lost 25 jobs, Kitset Kitchens lost 30 jobs, Koroit's Murray Goulburn factory lost 20 jobs, Dick Smith lost 25 jobs, Medicare Local lost 85 jobs, Godfrey Hirst lost 36 jobs, Target lost nearly 100 jobs, Ford lost 240 jobs, the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority lost 7 jobs and South West TAFE lost over 100 jobs. At one stage Gordon TAFE had lost 55 jobs, but I know that number increased.

Avalon Airport lost 40 jobs, Barwon Water lost 53 jobs, Alcoa lost 800 jobs, the University of Ballarat, which is now Federation University, lost 70 to 100 jobs in the TAFE area, the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority lost 3 jobs, Fonterra lost 130 jobs, Mars lost 38 jobs and CMI Industries lost 67 jobs. A whole range of public servant jobs were also axed. Who could forget how the previous government also shut down the Department of Primary Industries front offices throughout regional Victoria?

The list I have just read out is minor and is just a sample of reported job losses. We know thousands of other people lost their jobs when the previous government was in power. One can only imagine the number of people who worked for smaller companies or who subcontracted and lost their jobs during that period of time.

Not only did Western Victoria Region have a state government that did not care about it, it was also an electorate that was hurting. It was not just hurting in Geelong, Ballarat, Warrnambool and Portland; it was hurting right through western Victoria. We are still suffering as a result of what the previous government did not do. This is an electorate that needs assistance and requires the facilitation of a government that understands it has a role to play when it comes to employment and industry in this great state.

Under the previous government we had a situation where even the Treasurer, Kim Wells, did not mention the word 'jobs' once in his first budget speech. Is it any wonder that we ended up in the situation that we did? Those opposite refused to have a jobs plan, because they did not believe one was warranted. On top of that, it was basically a crime to be young — let alone young in regional Victoria. There were no jobs, and you could not get into TAFE. We were going backwards at a great rate of knots. That is what happens when one-term governments refuse to acknowledge there is a problem and refuse to move on and get anything done.

We also had a government that refused to have an infrastructure program. The workers who were being retrenched had no jobs to go to. Time and again I heard of people in my electorate staying by the phone every night waiting for a call to tell them they had a job. The phones went absolutely dead. There were no jobs, and there were no roads being built — nothing was happening. It was absolutely horrific.

We know that the former government had no plan for manufacturing. Basically it wanted manufacturers to pick up and leave.

It is now the job of the Andrews government to fix up the mess — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I am having a great deal of difficulty hearing Ms Tierney, and I ask Mr Ondarchie and Mr Ramsay to show a little restraint and allow Ms Tierney to carry on without assistance.

**Ms TIERNEY** — It is now the job of the Andrews government to fix the mess left by the previous government and get Victoria working again. That is exactly what we will do. It takes discipline and hard work to grow jobs in Victoria. Most of all Victoria needs a government that is serious about job creation. It does not need a government whose members are indifferent, incompetent and sit back and do nothing, and whose members stick their heads in the sand when things go belly up.

I look forward to Victorians getting back to work. There are far too many people either unemployed or in insecure employment in this state. Victorian families need jobs, income and the ability to plan for their future and to aspire to a future that is better for them and better for their children. I implore those who are in the chamber tonight to vote for this bill, because it is a vote for Victorians, a vote for jobs and definitely a vote for western Victorians.

**Mr PURCELL** (Western Victoria) — I rise to speak on the Back to Work Bill 2014. These issues are close to my heart, as members would expect, given the party I have established and the issues I am involved with in relation to jobs.

When I saw that the government had introduced this bill I was excited because I thought it would have a lot of detail about how the government was going to spend its time, and I thought the government was going to create a lot of jobs. Unfortunately the bill does not go into that detail. The bill really throws very little light on how the jobs will be created and how that work will make a big difference to my part of the world and the rest of western Victoria.

The problems we have in relation to jobs go fairly deep. It is starting to become a generational problem. There are many areas in western Victoria in which people are actually third or fourth generation unemployed. When things get to that stage it becomes an issue of whether we have the capacity to create jobs at any time in the future for that generation. That is a particular concern.

As Ms Tierney pointed out, the unemployment rate in many parts of western Victoria is high. In some parts we have youth unemployment approaching a rate of 20 per cent. We have some of the highest and fastest growing rates of unemployment, and the job losses are very significant.

For a number of years I did some volunteer work for various employment agencies. It is interesting to spend some time working with the unemployed and working out the issues they have in relation to getting back into the workforce. It is not just a matter of giving money to an employer, and it is not just a matter of, in some cases, finding jobs for people; it is a matter of having people job ready. Unemployment is more than just having jobs for people who are officially unemployed.

We need to concentrate on where we have the advantages, and as I said in my inaugural speech, we need to concentrate on agriculture and we need to concentrate on the renewable energy sphere. This week a firm in western Victoria announced it was putting \$31 million into expanding its factory. I refer to the Fonterra factory in Cobden. Fonterra created 30 jobs, and last weekend it advertised those jobs and invited people to come to the factory if they were interested in applying for them. By 10 o'clock in the morning 300 people were knocking on the door. In total 500 people turned up. While many of those people are unemployed, they do not register as being unemployed. We have a problem in relation to not only people needing a job but also people needing more work.

The Fonterra expansion and its need for more staff show that we need to create more jobs that are suitable for people. As Ms Tierney correctly pointed out, the renewable energy target and the issue of that not being decided has caused huge concerns and a lack of confidence in that industry. Until that is sorted out, that industry will not improve. There is some great potential in agriculture, in value adding and also in other areas of agriculture. A lot of work needs to be done to make those industries even better.

Reading through the Back to Work Bill 2014 one thing I could not find was reference to the consideration of cost-benefit analyses. Much of the bill covers penalties companies will incur if they do the wrong thing. The bill needs to be more positive in relation to how we can encourage companies to be involved in creating jobs rather than discouraging them. The bill also indicates that certain matters may be referred to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, but there are no companies that really want to take that action.

The eligibility clauses need to be sorted out. There are some maybes, ifs and what-ifs in those as well.

The issue of payment for employers is not the main one that needs to be addressed. The main issue is creating worthwhile employment and making sure companies can work better.

This is a big issue, and it is one I will have a lot more to say about over the coming years. I commend the government for putting jobs first, but I believe this bill needs some work.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Back to Work Bill 2014. I start by saying — and members might find this unusual — that I agree with Ms Tierney. She said she tends to go on incessantly about unemployment, and I agree with her on that point.

This is not the first interesting thing the government has done. Its very first act in this state was to introduce two new public holidays. This bill could well be called the Back to Less Work Bill 2014. I commend Mr Purcell on his contribution because, like him, I am focused on creating more opportunities for Victorians, particularly younger Victorians.

What leaves me feeling incredulous is that this bill is a thought bubble with no content to it. The government ran ahead with this, and as Mr Purcell, Mr Barber and Mr Rich-Phillips have said, what we have in front of us is a shell bill with no content. However, that is hardly surprising, because this government project is in the same mould as the desalination plant, the north-south pipeline and the myki ticketing system: Labor had an idea, it pushed on regardless, and it said it would write the cheque at the end. The government has no concept about appropriate fiscal management in this state, and that does not surprise me.

Let us talk about Labor's track record.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I was thanked by Mr Dalidakis a little earlier for offering the protection of the Chair to Ms Tierney. I have no doubt that he will thank me again for offering that protection to Mr Ondarchie.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — The Back to Work Bill 2014 leaves me incredulous — incredulous because let us look at Labor's track record 86 days into government.

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I know Ms Shing is big on stats, so here they come. There are 3700 jobs down the gurgler with the east–west link. There are jobs gone at the Linking Melbourne Authority. There are jobs gone at Betta Foods. There are jobs gone at Dairy Bell. There are 205 jobs gone at Coles. There are 80 jobs gone at Ernest Hillier. There are 130 jobs gone at ANZ bank. Ballarat had 600 VicRoads jobs stolen from it. These were to be opportunities for people in Ballarat to get jobs — opportunities for young people — and what is Labor’s action? It takes the jobs away from Ballarat. There are another 100 jobs gone at Telstra in Ballarat. I know Mr Morris and Mr Ramsay are strong advocates for the people of Ballarat. They are absolutely disappointed that one of the first acts of this government was to rip jobs out of Ballarat.

As I said, one of the first things Labor did in government — and it has been here for 86 days — was to kill off 3700 jobs on the east–west link. As a result of that, business confidence is down in Victoria. Labor said it would deliver on every one of its election commitments. It should have said that one of its first commitments would be to drive jobs out of Victoria. That is what the government is doing. Businesses are less likely to invest in this state because of this government’s acts. Businesses are less likely to grow in this state and less likely to employ people.

The government has put up this bill, which, to quote the Premier, may not be worth the paper it is written on. There is no content. The bill does not tell us how it is going to work. That has become the ALP manifesto: to come out with a policy idea that has no content. Victorians be warned: we are going to have four sad years of this — four sad years of lack of content.

The government has a program to create 100 000 jobs. If we were to put up a scoreboard now, the government would already be in the negative. It is already heading backwards. This is not the start.

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — I will take up Ms Shing’s interjection. Let us put the scoreboard up. The target is 100 000 jobs, and the government is currently minus over 5000 jobs. Gee, it is going well! I suspect there are more job losses to come, but I hope not.

**Mr Dalidakis** — On a point of order, Acting President, the member is speaking against another member by taking up her interjections, which is making it difficult for me to follow his contribution. I ask you to draw the member back to debating the bill.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! I understand that Mr Dalidakis is having a bit of difficulty following the debate, as I understand he has from time to time on similar matters. I suggest that if members did not interject during Mr Ondarchie’s speech, he would not be tempted to respond and Mr Dalidakis would therefore be able to follow the debate with much greater ease. I ask members to cease interjecting and request Mr Ondarchie to continue his contribution without assistance.

**Mr ONDARCHIE** — Perhaps those interjecting could get back to work themselves. We do not know what the minimum number of hours required under this bill will be. Nobody knows the rules. Those on the other side advocating for it today by way of both substantive contribution and interjection do not even know the rules themselves. Is that not an important message? They are standing up defending something, and they do not even know what they are defending. That is really interesting. Is it going to be 10 hours per week? Is it going to be 20 hours per week? Is it going to be 5 hours per week? The government does not know, nor do we and nor do Victorians. This is consistent with the way the Labor Party operates in this state.

It could be said with some fairness that putting forward a bill with no content was just an oversight by the government, but it has a track record of doing this. There is a big plant down in Wonthaggi that was built without a solid case around it. There is a myki ticketing system that Victorians are still suffering the effects of, and Labor will not confess to Victorians that it started that system. Labor is in government now, and it is their job to fix it. The myki ticketing system did not work. Another thing that did not work was the north–south pipeline. It goes on and on. I will not take any more of the chamber’s time at the moment, but rest assured I have a lot of questions to ask during the committee stage.

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise with great pleasure to support and speak about the Back to Work Bill 2014. This bill arises from an election promise made by the Labor Party to the people of Victoria, which was to get this state back to work by creating mechanisms that will give meaningful financial incentives to employers and benefit long-term unemployed or retrenched workers who are desperate to get back into the workforce. The scheme is designed to deliver strong, quantifiable results. The overall responsibility for managing the project will rest with the commissioner of the State Revenue Office (SRO). The scheme has been modelled on existing provisions to ensure continuity of the administrative framework in which the State Revenue Office operates.

Under the Back to Work scheme, employers will be required to demonstrate that eligible employees have been employed for a three-month probation period before they can lodge a claim for payment under the scheme with the SRO. The scheme provides financial assistance for businesses to help offset the employment costs associated with the hiring of unemployed and retrenched workers. The eligibility criteria — including definitions of long-term unemployed, young unemployed and retrenched workers — will be determined by the Treasurer and published in the *Victoria Government Gazette*. This mechanism, which is similar to that taken in other jurisdictions with equivalent schemes, provides maximum flexibility to ensure that the scheme will operate effectively.

An added fail-safe in the bill provides that the Treasurer is to determine the eligibility criteria for payments under the scheme. The effective date of commencement is 1 April, with scheme payments to be made available from 1 July. The Back to Work Bill 2014 is beneficial to all Victorians as it tackles in a productive and proactive way the issue of unemployment in our state. It provides hope for the unemployed and incentives to the employers. It is what we call a win-win situation.

The proposed method of payments to the participating employers is flexible and workable. In other words, there is not red tape a mile long to hinder the application of this worthy scheme. I embrace this scheme wholeheartedly, and I am sure that Victorian workplaces will be enriched by the participation of long-term unemployed or retrenched men and women who have much to offer by way of experience and maturity. I commend the bill to the house.

**Mrs PEULICH** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to join the debate on the Back to Work Bill 2014. I guess what the government wanted to create was a political illusion that one of its very first acts is job focused. When it reports on its achievements at the 100-day juncture, it would like to be able to list this as one of its achievements. But it is an empty promise — a political illusion, a mirage. I hope something more materialises from it, but the absence of detail gives me little hope. Worse still, it is not only this but also the other actions the government has taken — the job-destroying policies that it has adopted — that make me highly sceptical.

The idea of an employment program that targets particular demographics that experience high levels of unemployment is not new. In fact the coalition introduced such a scheme when it was elected to government in the 1990s under Jeff Kennett. The minister responsible was Mark Birrell, and he

introduced a scheme to target youth unemployed, older workers and workers from multicultural backgrounds.

**Ms Symes** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — No, it was not work for the dole.

It was a successful scheme because it was run in parallel with a range of other government initiatives. The Kennett government had inherited a state that had been left bankrupt by Joan Kirner and the Labor Party, and it instigated a massive investment even though Victoria had no money.

I could not endorse anyone's comments more wholeheartedly than those of Mr Purcell. It was a simple contribution on a complex issue. What he basically said is what the coalition believes — that job generation and growth occurs predominantly in the private sector and that the government has to create the conditions that generate investor confidence to create jobs and make them sustainable. That does not mean there is no room for special programs to get people back into the job market, but it gives me little confidence given all the other actions that have been taken by Labor.

Again, I am cynical and sceptical. In about two weeks the government will probably issue a document on its achievements over the first 100 days in office, which will probably be an example of spin and deception. I think it will be a laugh a minute, especially if you consider what the government has done since it came into office. Basically it has been killing jobs in this state.

We heard Ms Tierney waxing lyrical about this great state. Three months ago it was the worst state in the world, and suddenly we have had a transformation. I have never heard greater hypocrisy in my life! A person who used to run the state down — she said it was the worst state in the world three months ago — is suddenly talking about this great state. Having been in government and in opposition, I have seen what Labor does over a long period of time.

I guess I am a lot more sceptical than some other members. But when we look at the tearing up of the east-west link contract, which is supported by 62 per cent of the population and by the government's own members, such as Cesar Melhem, the unions and every person who cares about getting more people into jobs, Premier Andrews and his government are hell-bent on cancelling the east-west link and killing off the potential of employing 3700 people in jobs. We heard Ms Shing, a member for Eastern Victoria Region, talking about how many jobs were lost in Victoria

under the former government. Of course what she did not mention was that there were 79 000 more jobs when we left office than when we came into government.

Markets change and jobs are lost. That will always happen in a changing world and through innovation. I have been in small business for 45 years, and my husband still runs a small business; he gets dirt under his fingernails, unlike those opposite, who have mostly been union organisers and who have not done an honest day's work in their lives. The only jobs those opposite are concerned about are those of their friends in the union movement and those related to setting up a scheme that will enable them to recruit more members rather than getting people into real and sustainable jobs.

If Labor cared about jobs, it would proceed with the construction of the east–west link. It would proceed with many of the shovel-ready projects that could create more jobs to get those in particular demographics into work. In addition to that, there is a big question mark over the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail upgrade, an investment of between \$2 billion and \$2.5 billion that could happen in the south-east — the area where those opposite are hoping to keep the six seats that Labor won —

**Ms Shing** interjected.

**Mrs PEULICH** — Ms Shing is an intelligent woman. She should have her turn and not sit there like a petulant child, yelling out the same interjection. She should at least be creative and intelligent with her interjections. She should not just repeat herself.

The Cranbourne-Pakenham rail project was fully funded by the previous government to deliver 25 new trains, four grade separations, high-capacity signalling and new stabling facilities. There are doubts about the CityLink-Tullamarine Freeway widening project, which was conceived, funded and signed off by the previous government. The abolition of Victoria's construction code compliance unit is so that the government can curry favour with its union mates. Then there are the two new public holidays. Many businesses will suffer because of them.

I remember when we ran a restaurant in Oakleigh for 10 years. At 3 o'clock in the morning, a time when many members were probably wining and dining or sleeping in their beds, my mother, who migrated here as a 34-year-old and has worked two jobs all her life, would still be toiling away — as I did most of my life. Those opposite struggle to find the high moral ground. But being a union organiser is very different from doing

an honest day's work. I can say that we have certainly done that. Two more public holidays means that small business, which is the engine driver of the economy, will probably be forced to employ family members rather than create jobs or provide additional employment opportunities for other employees.

This government continues to make reckless and empty promises, with no concrete plans to meet those promises. This bill is an example. It is a shell, with no ideas. While Mr Rich-Phillips was complimentary about the jobs policy that was released, a look through it reveals that there are more photographs than there are good ideas, which is a signature of the Labor Party under Mr Andrews. That is highlighted by the bill, which is lacking detail. We hope some of that will be fleshed out in the course of the debate. The bill lacks any sort of accountability measures which would enable us to judge the performance of the scheme or to scrutinise how that money is expended.

We are concerned about the lack of accountability in terms of there being no parliamentary scrutiny of the guidelines. We are very concerned about the lack of accountability in that there is no reporting of the progress — the success or otherwise — of the payments being made under the Back to Work scheme.

The bill promises to create 100 000 extra full-time jobs. The claim is that 100 000 new full-time jobs will be created over two years through once-off payments of what is currently an indeterminate amount. The Treasurer has failed to provide details of the scheme. We do not know what the eligibility criteria for this scheme are. The bill provides that the eligibility criteria are to be gazetted and not subject to parliamentary disallowance. The explanatory document accompanying the exposure draft says:

It is proposed that the scheme be available in respect of full and part-time workers, with a minimum number of hours per week to be enshrined in the guidelines.

Of course we do not know what those guidelines are; the government has not provided them.

What is it worth to business? The government says that it is worth roughly \$1000, which will be paid to businesses for employing a person full-time. The amount would be taxable, so the actual benefit would be around \$700. Is that a sufficient incentive to hire a long-term unemployed person or a young person without any experience or prior training? I say that that remains to be seen, especially given all the other decisions this government has made. The employer would have to go through a lot of red tape to eventually

receive the benefit, and there are certainly lots of loopholes.

Employers offering fixed-term roles qualify for the \$1000 benefit. This could turn out to be a loophole in the bill that businesses could exploit, so I think the accountability measures are going to be crucial in making sure that this money is not wasted. The employer could offer a job to a person, grab the \$1000 and dismiss the person without giving him or her access to the unfair dismissal regime.

Young mothers appear to be completely overlooked. Many young mothers seeking to return to the workforce would be at a competitive disadvantage because hiring them would not bring in the \$1000. No clear guidelines exist as to how reporting can be discouraged. The government says it wants to avoid reporting, but it has not made clear how this is going to occur through the eligibility criteria. The bill says that a claimant must keep a Back to Work record in English or in a form that can be readily converted or translated into English.

The opposition does not oppose the bill. However, we are concerned about most aspects of it, in particular the fact that, basically, it is an empty shell. It is slipshod, poorly developed and conceived, more a political stunt than anything else. I look forward to the committee stage and hearing some of the details fleshed out, if indeed there are details to be fleshed out.

If this government is serious about getting Victorians back to work, the best thing it could do would be to start honouring contracts, stop doing nothing and start building the major infrastructure projects that were fully funded by the coalition government. That would create real jobs, as opposed to spouting rhetoric and keeping some public servants busy drafting legislation that has no detail and which certainly cannot satisfy this Parliament or create hope that it will make a difference. With those few words, I thank the house for the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate on the bill.

**Dr CARLING-JENKINS** (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to make a few comments on the Back to Work Bill 2014. The DLP will support this bill; however, I have some concerns about it which I would like to raise. This bill establishes a Back to Work scheme designed to provide relief for employers as an incentive towards hiring certain unemployed or retrenched workers. I take on board and agree with the assessments of other speakers in this place tonight, which are that the bill would be enhanced by more definition and a lot more transparency, scrutiny and more detail.

This bill is a step — even if a small one — towards supporting employment growth in light of a Victorian unemployment rate which has increased over the past several years. As we have already heard, Melbourne's west — which I represent — has the highest unemployment rate in Victoria. Youth unemployment in Melbourne's west is a particular concern; statistics I have seen place it at over 15 per cent. I look forward to seeing what the government of the day will do to assist in this space because while it is easy to quote statistics — we can say 8 per cent, 15 per cent or 20 per cent — it is important to remember that people make up these statistics, and these people are suffering. The cost of living is rising, and job opportunities are limited. When people are unemployed or underemployed, life is that much harder.

I would like to highlight one aspect of the bill, which is the incentive of payroll tax relief. It is DLP policy that payroll tax should be phased out altogether for small businesses. This bill represents a step in the right direction in this space. But again I would like to emphasise that it is a small step, and I would urge the government to consider the expansion of this initiative in future legislation.

As I mentioned in my first speech in this place, it is time to move towards a cooperative rather than an adversarial way of working in this state. This is a bill which represents, in a small way, an opportunity for government, for business and for employees to work cooperatively towards a common good — economic opportunity for some. Over the next four years I hope we can work together towards economic opportunity for all, regardless of factors such as disability, capacity, gender or place of origin.

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Back to Work Bill 2014. I want to make some opening remarks in relation to the bill. The first point I put on the record is that finding work for the unemployed is an honourable pursuit, and I support the government of the day in looking for ways we can not only find employment for currently unemployed people but also try to break the nexus of the generationally unemployed. That will unfortunately take more than this bill offers; it will take significant cultural and behavioural change that will require a much better government response than this bill provides.

Nearly all the speakers who have spoken tonight on this bill have indicated that the primary shortcoming is the lack of detail. I cannot remember — and I have only been in this place for four years — a bill coming into this chamber that has been so scant on detail and so thin

in its guidelines. This bill exposes Victorians to a potentially significant financial liability without providing any sort of governance around the detail.

I can think of an instance where a project lacked a business case. As my parliamentary colleague Mr Ondarchie pointed out, the desalination plant is perhaps the biggest white elephant that Victorians have had to suffer in relation to financial liability. It was not so much the waste of money and the largesse of that project down in Wonthaggi that was a problem, it was the fact that it created a whole new industrial reform process for which we are now all paying the price — the penalty price, if I can use a pun. During the construction of that plant down in Wonthaggi, for which there was no business case, a whole range of enterprise bargaining agreements were created that unfortunately set a precedent whereby contractors, subcontractors, workmen and working women were paid extraordinary award rates and allowances that we have not seen before in this state. That has created an expectation that those allowances and payment rates are the accepted norm in other enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations.

The Labor Party can potentially take the blame for what we are now seeing: a lot of the transitional industries moving offshore into those countries that can compete more effectively globally in relation to labour markets. It is very disappointing that Labor has set a very ugly precedent in this country in relation to the industrial awards that were allowed to be established during the construction at Wonthaggi.

I have mentioned the lack of detail in this bill. I have read through it — in fact it only took me about 5 minutes to read it — and there are parts of the bill that do not have any description. This is particularly the case in relation to explaining the eligibility criteria, not only for those seeking work but for the employers themselves.

Unfortunately, I see a bill that has been rushed through the Parliament to complement the government's election campaign jobs policy, which has been roundly criticised by most in the business industries across the state. As a populist slogan we have seen '100 000 new jobs for \$100 million'. The Labor Party is wedded to its election commitments, so it has seen fit to hastily draw up a shell bill and ram it through the Parliament in the first couple of sitting days. Then it can sit back and say, 'We have fulfilled our election commitment: here is the Back to Work Bill — 100 000 new jobs'. The \$100 million? It could be that, or it could be \$1 billion. We do not know because there is no detail in the bill.

Once again, Labor leaves us very exposed as taxpayers of this state.

I will use the example of the public holidays. Members of this chamber have heard me raise considerable concerns in relation to the two extra public holidays proposed to be gazetted this year. I raised these concerns with the backing of a constituent who is a small business owner who came to see me in my Ballarat office. He said the financial implications of declaring a new public holiday are that he will have to close his business on that particular day, and we have lots of public holidays in this state throughout the year. He employs eight people and runs a small Subway franchise in Ballarat. The public holiday will close that retail precinct, that shopping plaza, because most of the business activity is done in normal business working hours. Once you close a retail precinct or declare a public holiday and close business down, you do not get the volume of traffic moving through.

His other point was that if he were to continue to operate that business during the gazetted public holiday, he would have to pay penalty rates to his staff. Suddenly that business becomes uneconomical. My question in relation to the preparation of this bill is: did anyone talk to the employers? In relation to the gazetted public holidays being proposed, did anyone talk to the employers about the financial and economic impacts of declaring those holidays? No, I do not think so. I do not believe so. I do not see any background notes to indicate what sort of consultation was done in relation to, firstly, the gazetted public holidays or, secondly, this nonsensical bill that has been presented to the chamber tonight with its lack of detail.

**Mr Dalidakis** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — Mr Dalidakis's interjections give me an opportunity to keep practising his name, and the more he interjects, the most likely the result is that I am never going to get it right.

**Mr Dalidakis** interjected.

**Mr RAMSAY** — If Mr Dalidakis feels free to keep interjecting, I will feel free to keep working around his name for the rest of the night.

In relation to the jobs aspect of this bill, I enjoyed Mr Purcell's contribution. He is very passionate about the area he lives in in Port Fairy, and as a member for Western Victoria Region I know he has their interests at heart. He made some very commendable points in his contribution. There is an example in relation to Ms Tierney — and Mr Purcell has raised it before — around Keppel Prince. I do not know why, but that

company always seems to be used as an example in relation to some of the challenges it has found in its workplace.

In relation to the renewable energy sector, half the workforce at Keppel Prince works in the aluminium smelter. In fact that company will be impacted by the renewable energy target perhaps more than the Keppel Prince manufacturing plant that used to make components of the turbines. Unless the aluminium sector gets an exemption from the renewable energy target, it is going to be more at risk in relation to its employment prospects than the Keppel Prince that is manufacturing the turbines. If Ms Tierney had bothered to speak to the management of that company, she would have realised the work that was traditionally carried out by the company was being done overseas because the company could not remain competitive in building the product. Again that stems from some of the precedents set by Labor in the industrial award system and the enterprise bargaining agreements that have left our labour market unable to compete globally.

In relation to some of the areas Ms Tierney referred to, I might add that I was very proudly associated with CRF Meats in Colac. CRF was a greenfield company in which I, along with 10 other shareholders, invested money to build a brand-new export facility for lamb processing. We employ over 400 people in that company. It is the largest employer in the Colac region. Many other companies are growing in the region, such as the Cotton On Group, Birregurra Farm Foods and Provedore, AKD Softwoods, Air Radiators and, as Mr Purcell mentioned, Fonterra in Cobden.

Ms Tierney always reverts back to the obvious manufacturing companies in Geelong that have suffered significantly in relation to global competition, in particular Ford and Alcoa. I remind Ms Tierney that agriculture and agribusiness employ twice as many people in Western Victoria Region as do Alcoa and Ford or some of the traditional manufacturing industries. There are great things happening in new and innovative industries — for example, the carbon fibre being produced by Carbon Nexus at Deakin University. I find it interesting — other people may not — that the International Fibre Centre where the carbon fibre is being manufactured was set up by former Premier Jeff Kennett to bring expertise in from other countries to help with the processing of wool. We have moved from sheep fibre to carbon fibre. That is a great little story for the Geelong area. The industry grew from having 5 employees to 130 employees in that sector. It is a great success story that is being replicated all over Victoria.

I say to government members that with this bill they have not done justice to people. It is an honourable pursuit. It is an important goal to try to get those who have experienced long-term unemployment back in the workforce, but this bill does not have the guts to do it. I am pleased that the Legislative Council has the structure to conduct a full committee process so that we can find out exactly what the government of the day is thinking about this bill and how it will have a productive impact on the unemployed. I look forward to that review process in committee.

**Mr HERBERT** (Minister for Training and Skills) — I am very pleased to get the call, Acting President. It is a great pleasure to speak on the Back to Work Bill 2014 because it goes to the heart of the Andrews government's commitment to creating jobs. As the Minister for Training and Skills I know the link between jobs, skills and productivity is crucial. Education and training drives job growth, and jobs start with skills.

Before I go into the details of the bill, I refer to comments from some of the speakers who preceded me in this debate. I must say I am pleased with Mr Ramsay's commitment to jobs and industry growth, but I was a bit shocked by his cynicism regarding what is in the bill, the intent of the bill and what that intent should be. It is unbecoming. Incredibly, Mr Ondarchie — and we go back some way after our many years in politics — seems to suggest that the job losses we have seen in the state over the last two months have somehow suddenly happened since the election, as if businesses woke up and said, 'We're going to sack all the staff and close down the business'.

Of course that is an absolutely ludicrous proposition. He referred to the jobs lost and the companies that went bust, and he knows that they are a direct legacy of his government's action. He should have thought a little bit before he made those comments.

In her contribution Mrs Peulich seemed to suggest that the only road to creating jobs in this state was through this program and through this bill and that it did not stack up to the folly of the opposition's east-west project. Of course nothing could be further from the truth. This is important legislation, but it sits alongside a whole heap of other job creation initiatives.

This legislation sits alongside funding of \$100 million to get rid of our 50 most dangerous level crossings, which will create 4500 jobs. It sits alongside the bringing forward of the Melbourne Metro rail project, the most ambitious project we have seen, which will create five new stations,

9 kilometres of track and 3500 jobs. This legislation sits alongside the \$30 million we have brought forward for the Murray Basin rail project, which is incredibly important for northern Victoria. It sits alongside the \$38 million — —

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn)** — Order! Members on my left need to relax and put their feet up. I call on Mr Herbert to continue.

**Mr HERBERT** — Thank you, Acting President. I appreciate your protection. There is \$36 million to upgrade bridges across regional Victoria so that trucks can use routes to take produce from the farm through the countryside, creating jobs and creating wealth. There is \$50 million to improve regional crossings, \$100 million to upgrade Flinders Street station and \$3 million to fix local jobs. There is also the mandated target of 10 per cent of the workforce on a major project being apprentices. There is Labor's pledge to halve car registration fees for apprentices so that young people can not only get to work but can afford their tools so that they can get an apprenticeship and get a job. The list goes on.

This is an important piece of legislation. It is important in the context of a government that is determined to reverse the desolation in our state as a result of the economic vandalism and job vandalism of the previous government. Let us have a look at what we inherited when we came to government. We had gone from a situation where, in Labor's last term — between 2006 and 2010 — unemployment was under 5 per cent and more than 250 000 new jobs had been created. If we fast forward four years, we see that unemployment is at 6.8 per cent, the economy is in all sorts of strife, youth unemployment for 15 to 19-year-olds is a record 23 per cent and regional unemployment is absolutely outrageous. In Bendigo youth unemployment is 8 per cent; in Geelong, 8.2 per cent; in Shepparton, 7.4 per cent; and in Warrnambool, 6.7 per cent — and things are getting worse. Industry is in disarray. Why? Because we had a government that had no plan.

We have had criticism of this first piece of the plan, the first piece of legislation, the first tranche of a comprehensive plan, but let us remember that for four long years we had industry, we had communities — whether they were regional, suburban or inner city — all calling out for a government to develop a jobs plan to address the crisis. But no. When it came to a plan to create jobs, former government members were stuck in the mire. We had four years of indecision, four years of ineptitude and four years of inaction, and now those

opposite have the nerve to criticise a plan that will address that issue.

There is no doubt about it. I have talked to many employers, and they all say the same thing. They know that our economy stagnated, that business confidence was low and that full-time jobs growth is lower than population growth. Incredible! We inherited from those opposite a situation where employment growth in this state was less than population growth. Seriously, Victoria was an absolute economic basket case. We all know that a strong economy also needs a strong skills base. We know that jobs and skills equal productivity which equals profit which equals growth which equals jobs.

Not only did we have a jobs crisis in this state but we also had a skills crisis. We had a crisis where \$1.2 billion was gutted out of our TAFEs. I am astounded to see those opposite here. They all know what happened to the TAFEs in their communities. They know what happened to the job hopes of many young people, yet they sat there and did nothing. Now, after a couple of months they seem to have forgotten all that devastation. I do not forget, and the Victorian community do not forget. They do not forget the 3000 TAFE staff who were sacked, the campuses that were closed right across regional Victoria, the courses that were cut, the fees that skyrocketed and the TAFEs that were crippled.

When TAFE courses and skills are slashed, job opportunities are slashed. For many people, particularly younger people, their first step to a job is an apprenticeship, a traineeship or a course through which they can pick up their literacy. It is an opportunity for a step forward to a better life. That was devastated, because the former government had no plan and no desire to try to fix the situation.

Members of the government are different. We are committed to jobs growth, not just in rhetoric, which is what we heard from those opposite, but in reality in terms of the projects we have foreshadowed and the bill before the house. We are not just making promises; we have high targets for jobs growth, and they are linked to this bill. We have already started, with an announcement of \$100 million over two years for payroll tax incentives which target young people, the long-term unemployed and retrenched workers. Some are cynical about that, but I am hopeful because we need to do something to give opportunities to long-term unemployed people. The government is providing not just that incentive. Government members will make sure that people get skills, that they get some training so that they can stay in the jobs they get and make those

companies more productive. Then the circle turns, profits are made and more jobs are created.

In addition, the government will monitor the scheme closely. People constantly asked for detail in their nitpicking about everything under the sun. Schemes such as this have to be a bit flexible. They have to be looked at to see if they work and be changed if they need to be. The government will monitor the scheme, including industry behaviour, and make sure that the integrity of the scheme is preserved.

The *Back to Work* plan has many other aspects. There is \$500 million of spending which the Premier's Jobs and Investment Panel will advise us on to make sure that industry has a say in how money is spent to create jobs in key areas. There is \$200 million for the Regional Jobs Fund. There is \$200 million for the six key future growth industries — that is, medical; new energy technology; food and fibre, which Mr Ramsay talked about and which included the great opportunities in agriculture; transport; defence and construction; and international education and professional services.

Earlier I spoke about the great importance of the international education sector to our economy. That sector provides \$4.7 billion worth of job opportunity and growth. The government will make sure that that industry, which is one of the state's key areas, also grows. The international education area is of some interest because part of its growth is about perceptions. People come to Victoria because they want hope and opportunity. Families from many countries around the world spend their life savings to send their sons or daughters to Australia to get a high-quality education, bring it back and get good jobs.

Whilst there is no doubt that our higher education institutes enjoy a strong reputation worldwide, our TAFEs have been gutted, and because of those funding cuts their reputation internationally has been destroyed. International education is intricately linked with rebuilding our TAFEs — that is, rebuilding the brand, rebuilding the quality of the courses we have on offer and rebuilding our international reputation. That will assist that no. 1 industry in wealth creation in this state, and the government will make that happen.

In conclusion, jobs are about generating opportunity, they are about generating family and personal security, and they are about economic growth. Northern Victoria Region is a pretty big electorate. It covers half the state, from Diamond Creek up to Mildura and across to Wodonga and Corryong. Since I have had the honour of being a member for Northern Victoria Region I have had the opportunity to visit many communities. I have spoken to many individuals and had industry forums

about the very issue of how we create jobs. It is right to say that there are varied opportunities.

If you go to the Murray region and visit the Callista farm, you will see that new agriculture with major changes has the potential, with a bit of help from government in terms of skills development and new and advanced technologies that people can learn, to grow jobs. It is an area that needs massive help in growing jobs. In Shepparton there is a great need for skills and support for the army of young people who suffer from the scourge of unemployment in that region. A bit of regional support will help grow, develop and create job opportunities in great cities like Bendigo — and the list goes on.

When one talks about jobs, it is not just about the pay packet. When there are huge levels of unemployment, there are high levels of despair and a lack of hope. Have no doubt that if you look at the rise of ice addiction, violence and a whole heap of factors throughout Victoria, you will see the link between a lack of economic security and those scourges in our society. If we tackle the jobs crisis, we will also tackle many of the other issues that come from it.

People with little hope of a better life often turn to destructive behaviour. Give them hope, and they turn that destructive behaviour into positive behaviour and become a great asset to the state. The truth is that this state needs a helping hand and a positive government with an economic agenda to create jobs. We need to create jobs, we need to create new industries and we need to create a better economy for the state. This bill does that. I am absolutely delighted and proud to support it, and I hope everyone in this chamber supports it.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Barber has proposed some amendments which will be dealt with in due course when this bill is committed, which I presume will be on Thursday. I have had a look at those amendments and am of the view that they are in order and have no implications for the ability of this house to determine matters that might relate to the financial decisions of the state. In other words, whilst the amendments extend the eligibility of certain persons, they do not impinge on the commissioner's ability to determine who would be eligible in quantum for this support. There is no impact on the financial responsibilities of the Legislative Assembly.

**Debate adjourned on motion of Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria).**

**Debate adjourned until next day.**

**Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.**

## ADJOURNMENT

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The question is:

That the house do now adjourn.

### Keysborough South bus service

**Ms SPRINGLE** (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I raise a matter for the Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan. I call on the minister to act on the City of Greater Dandenong proposal to extend the 709 bus route. The proposal is modest and cost effective. It would extend the 709 bus route and link it to other transport services so that the Keysborough South community can access trains, shops, schools, libraries, religious services and medical centres.

Keysborough South is an incredibly fast growing area. It is growing so fast that the usual bus service review process may not pick up on the urgent need for a new bus service. Keysborough South started to grow during the early 2000s, but there was not a bus in the area, so the new residents just bought extra cars and coped without a bus. When a new suburb does not have transport services from the beginning, the residents have to pay for cars while their taxes are going towards transport services in other suburbs.

Since the residents were forced to buy all those extra cars, a bus service review, like the one that took place in 2010, will show an artificial lack of demand, because the residents are already driving everywhere, and their children are not yet in secondary school. But those days are over. Large numbers of children born into the young families in that community are now becoming teenagers. They will be isolated and disadvantaged in terms of work and education if they do not get a bus service soon. Meanwhile their grandparents are moving back in with the families, and they need public transport too.

The City of Greater Dandenong, in discussion with Ventura Bus Lines, has worked out a cost-effective plan to link the Mordialloc-Waterways bus with the Dandenong-Noble Park bus via Parkmore. They have submitted their business case to Public Transport Victoria. The new bus would take residents to the Frankston or Pakenham train lines. It would take them to school; there is no local government school in the area. The only schools that kids can walk to are private schools. The nearest libraries are in Dandenong and Springvale. For the older people, a bus will take them to Parkmore, which is the local shopping precinct, and also to religious centres, doctors and physiotherapists — things they need for a happy life. If the teenagers can get to Parkmore or Noble Park by

bus, they might get their first part-time job, which would give them the opportunity they need to get a start in life as young adults. If they can get to a train station by bus, they have a much better opportunity for post-secondary education.

The bus proposal is cost effective, because the bus service will replace a segment of the 815 bus service, which goes from Dandenong to Noble Park train station. In short, the residents of Keysborough South via their local council are not asking for much — just a bus every half-hour. I call on the minister to act on the proposal.

### Goulburn Valley Health

**Ms LOVELL** (Northern Victoria) — The matter I raise today is for the Minister for Health, and it concerns the Travis review, which is looking at capacity in the Victorian health system and Goulburn Valley Health's application for additional capacity under that review. As a result of the Travis review Goulburn Valley Health has put in an application for funding to open six additional beds and for 200 to 300 additional weighted inlier equivalent separations (WIES) to operate those beds. The action I seek from the minister is to provide Goulburn Valley Health with the funding for the six additional beds and the additional 200 to 300 WIES it has applied for.

The government has commissioned Dr Doug Travis to conduct a statewide review of hospital and theatre capacity. The minister was quoted in the Shepparton *Weekend News* of 14 February as saying:

The Travis review, which has visited Goulburn Valley Health, will provide the government with recommendations to increase capacity, and open more beds and theatres across the Victorian health system.

The needs of Goulburn Valley Health are serious. The minister is well aware that the hospital is operating beyond its capacity, that it no longer meets the needs of the community and that it urgently requires a major redevelopment. I have outlined the redevelopment needs to the minister both during the adjournment debate and in a meeting with the minister and her chief of staff.

Master planning is currently underway, and both the master plan and feasibility study should be completed by June. Unfortunately this is the fourth master plan that has been undertaken in the 12 years that I have been a member of this place, and only one of those plans ever received any funding. That particular plan had 11 stages, and only stage 1 was ever funded. The

other two completed master plans are just gathering dust on a shelf, and now we are going through the process of master planning for a fourth time. The minister could not blame the community for considering master planning as just another stalling tactic.

The minister is well aware that Goulburn Valley Health needs between \$10 million and \$12 million in this year's budget for some urgent infrastructure works and some preliminary works to assist in progressing towards the redevelopment. The coalition had committed \$75 million for stage 1 of the redevelopment and submitted its costings to Treasury for inclusion in the budget. I have asked the minister to ensure that this \$75 million remains in this year's budget as a show of good faith to the people of the Goulburn Valley and to prove that this new master plan is not just another stalling tactic.

Currently the hospital is conducting escalation meetings up to twice a week to consider ways of freeing up beds. Solutions have included moving patients to hospitals in Benalla, Cobram, Kyabram and even Melbourne. Moving patients adds additional costs to their treatment and does not provide the best result for the patients or the families who wish to visit them. The main emergency department at the hospital is also under stress. It was built with capacity to treat 24 000 patients a year. It is currently catering for 35 000 patients, and the demand is growing.

The six additional beds and the additional WIES that the hospital has applied for will not solve the problems that exist, but they will help to ease the burden providing the government gets on with the redevelopment urgently.

### **Renewable energy**

**Ms TIERNEY** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Energy and Resources, Ms D'Ambrosio, and it is in relation to the renewable energy target (RET) and the renewable energy industry. To give some background, the RET was established in 2001 to ensure that 20 per cent of Australia's energy comes from renewable sources by 2020. Since then the RET has successfully reduced emissions by 22.5 million tonnes. If the RET had been left unchanged, it was anticipated that emissions would have been reduced by a further 76 million tonnes by 2020.

The Australia Institute released a research report in July 2014 entitled *Fighting Dirty on Clean Energy — The Case for the Renewable Energy Target*. The research

found that despite the federal government blaming rising electricity prices on the RET, it is only responsible for around 3 per cent to 4.5 per cent of the increase. In fact the research indicates that the RET is likely to put downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices, which will flow through to retail prices and ultimately benefit consumers.

In 2011 more than \$5 billion was spent on renewable energy due to incentives provided by the RET. Some 90 per cent of additional renewable energy generation since 2001 can be attributed to the initiative. In addition to the environmental and financial benefits of renewable energy the Australia Institute found that consumers strongly support it. Of the Australians surveyed, 86 per cent wanted to see more renewable energy, while 79 per cent thought that governments should support renewable energy expansion. Last week marked 12 months since the Abbott federal government announced its review of Australia's renewable energy target. Since the announcement there has been much damage done to the renewable energy sector. According to the Clean Energy Council, investment in large-scale renewable energy over the last 12 months has been cut by almost 90 per cent, with many of the sector's 21 000 employees having already lost their jobs.

As I said in an earlier contribution tonight, Keppel Prince Engineering has retrenched many of its workers. Indeed 100 workers were retrenched in October, and that has had a devastating effect on those employees. Travelling to Colac last Tuesday night I listened to the ABC's *PM* program when Steve Garner from Keppel Prince said that the company is ready to walk away from the renewable energy industry. I am quite concerned. Given the inaction of the federal government with respect to renewable energy, I ask the minister to outline what action the Andrews Labor government is taking to support and develop Victoria's renewable energy industry.

### **Monbulk Recreation Reserve**

**Mr O'DONOHUE** (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Sport, Mr Eren. On 3 October 2014, prior to the last election, the Napthine government committed to a funding upgrade for the Monbulk Recreation Reserve. The reserve is at the heart of the Monbulk community. Many members of the chamber will know Monbulk is a beautiful place. It is a very productive farming region in a very community-minded town and surrounding district.

The football netball club and associated organisations that use Monbulk Recreation Reserve are at the heart of the Monbulk community. In government I was pleased to join with the Liberal candidate for the Assembly seat of Monbulk to make a funding commitment of \$500 000 for the Monbulk Recreation Reserve. I was pleased that on 28 October the Labor Party made a commitment to the Monbulk Recreation Reserve as well, so going into the election the Monbulk community was confident of bipartisan support for the upgrade of the reserve. This is good news. It is the product of a great deal of work by the Monbulk community and by the leaders of the football club in response to the clear need for an upgrade of that facility.

Now that the election is over and the new government is in power, I seek a commitment from Minister Eren that this upgrade be funded in the first budget to be delivered by the Andrews government, in May, so that it can take place as soon as possible.

### **Disability services**

**Dr CARLING-JENKINS** (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the Honourable Martin Foley, and concerns the matter of social inclusion of Victorians with disabilities. We have come a long way since the days when children with disabilities were routinely institutionalised. However, we have seen the restrictive environments that existed within institutions being reflected far too often in our community. As a consequence many people with disabilities remain on the margins of our society.

Disability is not easily defined, nor should it be. The experience of disability is different for us all. I understand that this brings challenges to the government — challenges that I encourage it to embrace so that the needs of people may be adequately addressed. The government must grapple, for example, with the needs of people with physical disabilities who have been inappropriately placed in nursing home care when this is the only supportive accommodation available for someone with an acquired injury, and it must grapple with the needs of people with Down syndrome and early onset dementia who are unfairly treated within this same system. The government must also grapple with the needs of children with disabilities who have been left to struggle in mainstream classrooms without adequate supports, all in the name of inclusion, and with the needs of children who are placed in special or alternative education options.

In 2015 Victorians with disabilities continue to face numerous challenges that impede genuine social inclusion. We contend with limited access to affordable, adaptive technologies. We struggle with a lack of appropriate accommodation and income support. We face an increasing risk of homelessness and continue to encounter inappropriate and inadequate health care. We are under-represented in employment and in secondary and higher education, and we continue to face an overall lack of understanding both within and without the disability service sector.

The national disability insurance scheme is a step forward in addressing these issues. However, its success relies on capacity being built within the disability support system. For there to be full inclusion of people with disabilities, there must be a rights-based framework adopted alongside the service transformation being undertaken by the transition to the national disability insurance scheme. Only a rights-based framework will empower and build the capacity of individuals, families and communities. Strong policy and whole-of-government accountability are critical to ensuring success.

Throughout my term I will be bringing disability issues to the attention of this house. At this time I urge the minister to do all that is in his power to support the full inclusion of Victorians with disabilities.

### **Geelong defence contract bid**

**Mr RAMSAY** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Premier. The matter I raise is in relation to the \$10 billion LAND 400 combat vehicle purchasing program currently being undertaken by the Australian Defence Force. The defence force needs to replace its 253 Australian light armoured vehicles, which came into operation in 1994 but have now been found not to provide adequate blast protection from roadside bombs. The LAND 400 program — Australia's largest and most expensive and complex combat vehicle purchase — will provide the army with a world-class armoured fighting vehicle capability for the next 20 years.

Along with the City of Greater Geelong, G21 and the wider community, I believe the Geelong region is well placed for the design, production and maintenance of this new combat vehicle. High-technology manufacturing, advanced composite production, software development and maintenance, along with vehicle system integration and logistic skills at a high level, will be required to meet the LAND 400 program objectives.

Geelong has advanced capability in all these areas and has the capacity and the will to become an internationally competitive, advanced, manufacturing-led economy. This capacity is being recognised in a range of new and innovative industries, which I mentioned in my contribution to the debate on the Back to Work Bill 2014, such as the manufacturing of carbon fibre products and the Carbon Revolution works. A successful Geelong tender to build these combat vehicles will help Geelong transition from its existing manufacturing sector, which has been under threat with the closure of Alcoa and the foreshadowed closure of Ford. Many of these highly trained and skilled employees are now ready to be redeployed in this new advanced manufacturing industry.

The federal member for Corangamite, Sarah Henderson, has also recognised the importance of this project to Geelong and has been using all the means at her disposal with her state coalition colleagues to give Geelong every opportunity to present a strong case throughout the tendering process. The federal Minister for Defence, the Honourable Kevin Andrews, was at Puckapunyal last Thursday where he announced a \$10 billion vehicle request for tender.

In the last days of the state election campaign the Labor Party committed \$5 million for a procurement office in Geelong after significant pressure from the City of Greater Geelong, G21 and others. With the South Australians breathing down its neck, Geelong is fighting hard to win the LAND 400 contract, but our Labor members in Geelong seem to be asleep at the wheel, and regrettably the Andrews government is silent in its advocacy. The Avalon air show is on next weekend and is a great opportunity for the Victorian government to meet delegations from the Australian Defence Force and advocate strongly for the merits of Geelong being recognised in the tender process.

My request is for the Premier to explain how well the procurement office is functioning in Geelong, given his government's commitment to it, and to describe what actions he is taking to advocate strongly for Geelong — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The member's time has expired. That contribution was dangerously close to a set speech.

### **Prahran electorate secondary school**

**Mr DALIDAKIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — I will do my best to observe protocols in the house. I raise a matter for the attention of the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Education. The action I seek from

the minister is that he reconfirm and put on the record that the Andrews Labor government remains unequivocally committed to building a school in the Prahran district.

**Mr Davis** — You didn't actually commit to it.

**Mr DALIDAKIS** — We actually did commit to it. I refer to a press release that the Andrews Labor government put out at the time.

**Mr Barber** interjected.

**Mr DALIDAKIS** — Once again the Greens are trying to take credit for other people's work — what a surprise!

On 18 November the Labor Party put out a press release supporting the building of a school in the Prahran district:

A Labor government will immediately commence negotiations with Deaf Children Australia about the purchase or lease of the site for a Prahran High School.

The reason this is so important for the district of Prahran is that for four years the previous government failed to build a school that it promised to build, having previously sold off two schools in the Prahran area under the Kennett government.

**Mr Davis** — On a point of order, President — —

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Mr Davis knows it is not a point of order. I know it is not a point of order. We both know he wants a debate. He should do it tomorrow.

**Mr DALIDAKIS** — I wish to thank the education minister, the Deputy Premier, for his previous support for this policy while the Labor Party was in opposition. What we want to see achieved is a school building for the community of Prahran. The then opposition committed to continuing the funding that had been provided in the budget, which was \$20 million, and it will continue that funding, because Labor is the party of education. The public well knows that, and we will continue to do the good work of building schools.

It is very easy for the now opposition to talk about selling schools. It is very good at selling schools. We are in the habit of building schools and building for local communities. Labor was very clear in its education policies in the lead-up to the election that it would unequivocally build a school in Prahran. We were committed to it, we will remain committed to it and we will build it. We will deliver it. My adjournment question is to seek confirmation from the

Minister for Education that he will provide the community of Prahran with an assurance that Labor remains committed to the area. Unfortunately the previous government spoke loudly about building something but never did, and the Andrews Labor government looks forward to delivering that building.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! This is where I have trouble, because the member has done a set speech where he has banged the drum about what the government is doing and the fact that it will deliver this promise, and then his desired action is to get the minister to confirm that the government will do it. The member has said that the government is going to do it, but then he is asking if the minister will confirm that the government is going to do it. This is the problem we sometimes get into with set speeches.

I might also say that the reflection on the Greens claiming credit was not easy and not something I would like to see in the adjournment debate, which is really about the actual substance of the issue that a member seeks a minister's action on. The member also finished with comments about the opposition, which again is not really part of the adjournment debate. There are other mechanisms within the Parliament to tackle that.

As I said — and I say it constructively for all members — there is this issue where members are not supposed to make set speeches in the adjournment debate. It makes a bit of a nonsense of asking the minister to confirm that something is going to happen when Mr Dalidakis is standing up here vigorously saying that it is going to happen and that other people have not done it.

**Mr DALIDAKIS** — On a point of order, President, I certainly apologise for responding to unruly interjections, and I take your guidance on that. I am not a minister. I am certainly not the Minister for Education, so I am not in a position to guarantee on behalf of the Andrews Labor government that it will be built. The adjournment matter itself, as a question to the Deputy Premier, who is the Minister for Education, is entirely appropriate and relevant. I may have gotten carried away in claiming that the Andrews Labor government will implement its policies, but nonetheless I am not provided any ability under the Crown to make such a commitment, whereas a minister is able to do so.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Then perhaps Mr Dalidakis might have been less vigorous and a little more humble in suggesting what the government had already agreed to and what he put out as material in the Prahran electorate at the time. When the member reads

*Daily Hansard* tomorrow and reflects on his contribution he will see the problem I had.

### Local government rates

**Mr DAVIS** (Southern Metropolitan) — My matter is for the Minister for Local Government, and it concerns the government's policy of rate capping. All in this place would be very familiar with the need to manage costs for households and businesses, and the last government was very active in seeking to manage costs for households, businesses and local councils as well. The current government went to the election with a clear promise to cap rates at the consumer price index level. Certainly that was a solemn pledge by the then Leader of the Opposition. What he did not say is what the government would do in terms of the impact on services — so, what would it mean for the renewal of infrastructure and new infrastructure? What would it mean for service delivery by local councils?

The previous government worked very hard to lift the support to local councils that came from state government sources. The country roads and bridges program saw \$1 million a year going to 40 councils. Over four years it was \$160 million. There was \$100 million from the Regional Growth Fund for local government infrastructure programs — very significant funding — and \$39.52 million in recurrent funding for Victorian public libraries. The list could go on in terms of the commitments. It is important to — —

**Mr Herbert** — On a point of order, President, I appreciate the use of the chamber, but you have just given a ruling about set speeches, and the member opposite is clearly making a set speech. We have not even come close to an action he is seeking from the government. I ask for some clarity on that.

**Mr DAVIS** — On the point of order, President, I am simply putting a context in terms of precise numbers in spending, and I will seek certain actions that flow from those numbers.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! In terms of the action that members seek in the adjournment debate, they do not have to make that request up-front. Some members do by way of clarification so that everybody understands where they are going, but it is not necessary for a member to request that action or call for a minister's response up-front. It is possible to leave it to the last 10 seconds, which is about what Mr Ramsay did. It is also valid for a member to provide context and provide some information that will support the request to the minister. To that extent I do not think Mr Davis has transgressed yet, but it is true, as I have indicated

during two previous contributions in debate tonight, that it is important not to veer into a set speech and to make sure that it is part of the context. I have been watching Mr Davis, and I noticed that his reference to notes has not been significant at this point. Sometimes notes are a dead giveaway of a set piece speech. From that point of view I am happy at the moment, but I trust that Mr Davis is continuing to only provide some context for his action

**Mr DAVIS** — Thank you, President, and I will continue. The 2014–15 state budget was an important one in the sense that it provided 64 per cent higher funding than that which was inherited from Labor in 2010 for local government from state government. A significant increase was provided by the previous government.

What I am very concerned about, and many others in this chamber will be as well, are examples like the Shire of Baw Baw, where 30 to 40 jobs will go — redundancies that will occur simply because of the state government's decision to cap rates, and cap rates in a context where reduced funding is likely to flow to local government from state government sources. My concern is that if you are cutting funding on the one hand from the state government and on the other hand capping rates, you are going to have a very deleterious effect on the ability for local government to deliver services and the ability for local government to renew infrastructure and put in place brand-new infrastructure as well as dealing with the growth pressures that many councils face. An example is the City of Monash, which has a low rate level and will face some significant challenges.

In that context what I am seeking from the minister is an action to ensure that not one penny less is spent across government on supporting local government — not one penny less spent across the whole of government. The government needs to make it very clear that there will be no cut to funding for local government.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! The member's time has expired.

### **Clyde Road, Berwick**

**Mr MULINO** (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to seek an action from the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask the minister to visit the Clyde Road intersection with the Pakenham line to see firsthand how bad the peak-hour congestion has become at that intersection. I will ensure that the minister can meet with community representatives when he visits.

That intersection is a major source of congestion in the Berwick-Pakenham-Beaconsfield area. The congestion is becoming worse, particularly at peak hour, when trains are more frequent. Clyde Road is a major transport route connecting housing estates in Berwick, Clyde and Clyde North to schools, health services and retail activity centres. The intersection is extremely busy during morning peak, school drop-off and afternoon peak times — or in other words, almost all of the day. It is a challenge when the rapid population growth in Pakenham is creating demand for additional train services and when people living in eastern Victoria rightly demand additional V/Line services. In addition, the intersection is very close to the access road for the Berwick Country Fire Authority (CFA). It is a CFA branch that gets hundreds of call-outs a year, and when Clyde Road is congested around the level crossing access for fire trucks is extremely difficult.

Last week the government announced the establishment of the Level Crossings Removal Authority, which will be tasked with removing our 50 worst crossings. The project will generate a number of benefits, including greatly enhancing the productivity of our overall transport infrastructure system, of which road and rail intersections are a major part; reducing travel time for commuters; reducing the risk of accidents between motorists, train passengers, cyclists and pedestrians; allowing for additional passengers, particularly on busy lines such as the Pakenham line; and creating 4500 additional jobs, including 100 jobs per level crossing and around 300 per level crossing during peak construction.

Clyde Road in Berwick will be one of the 50 level crossings removed. A total of 14 level crossings will be removed along the Dandenong line, which will greatly benefit commuters in the Berwick, Beaconsfield, Officer and Pakenham areas. As an example of how much this issue affects people travelling along the entire Dandenong corridor, a recent study by VicRoads experts found that just three more train services on the Dandenong line, which is very easy to imagine with population growth, would see the gates at the Poath Road, Murrumbeena, level crossing closed for 50 minutes during the morning peak — a ridiculous, unsustainable outcome.

I commend the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and the Minister for Public Transport for acting on this problem so quickly, and I look forward to assisting them in alleviating the difficulties faced by residents in my electorate. I look forward to meeting with the minister and also with constituents from my electorate.

### Taylor's–Kings roads, Delahey

**Mr FINN** (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I should perhaps apologise to the minister at this point because he will be hearing a lot from me in the adjournment debate over the next period as the area I represent is the fastest growing in Australia. When one travels down through the Melton and Wyndham areas it is quite extraordinary to see that often new subdivisions have gone up just in the previous few weeks. I want to direct the attention of the minister to one particular intersection. It is the intersection of Taylor's Road and Kings Road in Delahey, adjacent to the Delahey shopping centre.

At the moment it is a roundabout, and because of the extraordinary growth in places such as Burnside Heights, Taylor's Hill, Caroline Springs and Kings Park, on many occasions we see queues banked back for kilometres to get through this particular roundabout. It is obvious to anyone, even Mr Melhem — and I am sure he would agree — that it is an unsatisfactory situation for the thousands of residents who have moved into that general vicinity. It is intolerable to have thousands of cars on roads when those roads are not up to the mark. It is bad enough that the government would deny the people of the western suburbs the east–west link, but to have all those goat tracks carrying cars banked back for many kilometres at peak hour and at other times is appalling.

My suspicion is that this particular roundabout needs to be replaced with traffic lights, but not being an expert on this matter I am requesting that the minister direct VicRoads to conduct an investigation and report to him, and I would not mind seeing a copy of the report as well. I request that VicRoads report to the minister about what can be done to help people who are stuck in traffic on Taylor's Road, Delahey.

### East–west link contracts

**Mr LEANE** (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Treasurer, Tim Pallas, and the action I seek is for him to send a precis to all state and federal members of Parliament, particularly in the eastern suburbs, of the details of the east–west business case revealed after the change of government, specifically the details that were not released before the election. The reason is that last Saturday four federal government MPs held a minor event in the car park of a pub in Ringwood advocating for the east–west link to be built. They released some information and links to a website they have developed, none of which had all of the details of the project. Some of the glaring things

they missed were the 50 years of tolls, the fact that the Eastern Freeway and the West Gate Bridge would have to be tolled as well — —

**Mr Melhem** — Minor details!

**Mr LEANE** — They are all minor details. Also left out of all their material and their website was the fact that Victorian taxpayers would lose 55 cents for every \$1 spent. To help these federal members advocate for the people they represent in a clear and honest manner, I reiterate my request for action — that is, that the Treasurer send those details that were unearthed after the election to all federal and state MPs.

### Ballarat rail fares

**Mr MORRIS** (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Public Transport. As has been reported in local media, particularly in the *Ballarat Courier* of 14 February, there is a significant issue with the way train trips from Ballarat to Melbourne are priced, or, probably more correctly, the way they are being charged. At the moment if a train user catches a train from Ballarat to Melbourne during peak time, they are charged \$19.20. However, if the same commuter gets off the train at Bacchus Marsh, touches off using the myki system, touches back on and then re-boards the same train, instead of being charged \$19.20 for the trip, they are charged only \$9.64, which is \$9.56 less than they would have been charged had they made an unbroken journey.

Public Transport Victoria has made some comments advising commuters not to touch on and touch off at Bacchus Marsh due to safety concerns, but I ask the minister what he is going to do to ensure that Ballarat commuters are not faced with a situation where they need to choose between placing their safety at risk or being overcharged by the Labor government.

### Pipis

**Mr O'BRIEN** (Eastern Victoria) — Thank you, President, and I have brought a note as an apology for my lateness today. My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Agriculture in her role as the minister responsible for fisheries, and it concerns pipi harvesting in Venus Bay. I met with people at the Venus Bay Community Centre who have raised their concerns about overharvesting of pipis in and around Venus Bay.

There are a number of issues with this, and it is a very serious issue. The concern is that there is a level of environmental damage being done, particularly to the resource, and whether the harvesting of pipis around

Venus Bay is sustainable. There are concerns about environmental damage being caused to the sand dunes around Venus Bay by the harvesters climbing over fences and not using the tracks. Those who are concerned about this have provided me with photos of rubbish left around the beach and in the town. I have also seen photos of the harvesting itself occurring, with trenches some 25 metres long being dug up on the beach, which is certainly causing concern to other beach users.

There are other concerns with this practice that are not directly related to the minister's portfolio but are pertinent to this issue, and they include the pressures this harvesting places on Venus Bay itself. Venus Bay has narrow roads and limited beach access, and having hundreds of harvesters there at any given time creates difficulty, particularly for emergency services workers, who are very concerned that in the event of an incident on the beach they would have trouble accessing the beach to rescue someone in a situation that could be life threatening. The other concern is that Venus Bay is a small town with only one road in and one road out, so the additional numbers cause bushfire concerns.

I am asking the minister to address this issue by ensuring, firstly, that Fisheries Victoria has good data collection on the fisheries resource so we know how well it is being harvested and managed. The community is concerned that the resource is not well known, and there is an old saying that if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it. Some of the data that has so far been collected has been viewed quite sceptically. Secondly, depending on the outcome of this data, I ask the minister and the department to consider a closed season for pipis, which may be pertinent over the summer months and particularly around Christmas when Venus Bay is already quite strained by the influx of tourists.

I emphasise that this is an important issue. The community is very concerned. It is quite concerned about serious social disharmony, because this is causing quite an issue of insiders and outsiders in the community. I ask the minister to treat this matter very seriously.

President, may I have a moment of indulgence?

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! Yes, indeed.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Thank you, President. As members may know, tomorrow I will be visiting the Governor to hand in my resignation as a member for Eastern Victoria Region, as I will be nominating in the next few days for the by-election for the Legislative Assembly seat of Gippsland South. With your

indulgence, I would like to say thank you to everyone here for the privilege of serving in this house. It has been a great privilege. I would like to thank the clerks; the attendants, particularly Grumpy Greg, who has been a great mate going back many years in fact — —

**An honourable member** — Unparliamentary!

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Very unparliamentary; I am sorry. I thank all the other Parliament House staff, who have been very supportive and put up with a rookie in this place, as they do so often. I would like to thank my Nationals colleagues in particular — Damian Drum and, in the previous Parliament, David O'Brien, my brother and my other factional colleague. To my coalition colleagues in the Liberals, thank you. To the government members, it has been fun, and for some of them it has been too short, but thank you. I thank the Greens and in particular Mr Barber, because we have had some good sparring. I look forward to seeing him in the other place at another time perhaps.

*Honourable members interjecting.*

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I have achieved something: I have made the Green go red! And to my newfound friends here on the crossbenches, I am sorry it has been so brief; it would have been good to stay here and work with you, but we might have the opportunity in the future. I thank my family, of course, who have been very supportive in my short time here, but most importantly I thank the people of Eastern Victoria Region, who gave me their forbearance as a casual vacancy appointee but then elected me in 2014. It has been an absolute pleasure and a privilege to represent them for the past 12 months or so. I have really enjoyed every moment of it. I sincerely hope I have the opportunity to represent the people of Gippsland and the people of Victoria again in the future. Thank you.

### Responses

**Mr HERBERT** (Minister for Training and Skills) — Firstly, I have a written response to an adjournment debate matter raised by Mr O'Brien on 12 February.

This evening Ms Springle raised a matter for the Minister for Public Transport. She requested that the minister extend route 709 from Keysborough South.

Ms Lovell raised a matter for the Minister for Health. She requested more funding and more beds for Goulburn Valley Health.

Ms Tierney raised a matter for the Minister for Energy and Resources. She requested that the minister outline the government's support for renewable energy.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Minister for Sport. He requested funding in the Andrews government's first budget to upgrade Monbulk Reserve.

Dr Carling-Jenkins raised an issue for the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. She requested more support for people with disabilities.

Mr Ramsay raised an issue for the Premier. He sought support for the Geelong tender for the LAND 400 contract.

Mr Dalidakis raised a matter for the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education. He requested confirmation of the building of a secondary school in the Prahran district.

Mr Davis raised a matter for the Minister for Local Government. He asked her to ensure that local government does not receive less funding.

Mr Mulino raised an issue for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. He asked the minister to visit Clyde Road where it crosses the Pakenham-Cranbourne railway line.

Mr Finn also raised an issue for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. He sought action to address the Taylors Road and Kings Road roundabout and to get VicRoads to undertake an investigation and report on improvements.

Mr Leane requested that the Treasurer send details of the east-west link business case to all state and federal MPs, particularly those in the eastern suburbs.

Mr Morris requested action from the Minister for Public Transport regarding public transport costs for Ballarat residents travelling to Melbourne.

Mr O'Brien requested action from the Minister for Agriculture on the issue of pipi harvesting in Venus Bay. He requested the collection of data and suggested potentially closing the beach to pipi harvesters in the summer.

I shall refer all those matters to the relevant ministers.

**The PRESIDENT** — Order! I congratulate Mr O'Brien on his contribution to this house. He has been a fine contributor. If he happens to succeed in his efforts to represent Gippsland South in another place, we are confident that people there will be pleased with

the contributions he makes in that house. He has set a strong example here of his capabilities. I thank him. It has been a privilege to have him as a member of our house. The house stands adjourned.

**House adjourned 10.49 p.m.**