

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 25 February 2015

(Extract from book 3)

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The Lieutenant-Governor

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Legislative Council committees

Procedure Committee — The President, Dr Carling-Jenkins, Mr Davis, Mr Jennings, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Pulford, Ms Tierney and Ms Wooldridge.

Joint committees

Environment and Natural Resources Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Battin, Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson and Ms Ward.

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

Assembly — Clerk of the Parliaments and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Mr R. W. Purdey

Council — Acting Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:
The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:
The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of The Nationals:
The Hon. D. K. DRUM

Leader of the Greens:
Mr G. BARBER

Member	Region	Party	Member	Region	Party
Atkinson, Mr Bruce Norman	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Mikakos, Ms Jenny	Northern Metropolitan	ALP
Barber, Mr Gregory John	Northern Metropolitan	Greens	Morris, Mr Joshua	Western Victoria	LP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFP	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel	Western Metropolitan	DLP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ¹	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Patten, Ms Fiona	Northern Metropolitan	ASP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	V1LJ
Elasmar, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Northern Victoria	ALP	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFP

¹ 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

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Wednesday, 25 February 2015

The **PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson)** took the chair at 9.34 a.m. and read the prayer.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Sessional orders

The PRESIDENT — Order! I wish to make some comments in respect of some of the proceedings yesterday. I indicated I was going to reflect on several matters, and in particular a point of order Mrs Peulich made with regard to ministers statements. I have looked at all the ministers statements from yesterday, and I am satisfied that all of them met the criteria and intentions of the government. Whilst they might well have had a number of contextual facts in them, each of them indicated some new decision, new initiative or something that had recently occurred, and from my point of view they all satisfied the criteria for ministers statements.

With regard to constituency questions, I thought a couple sailed close to the wind in that they did not make a sufficient connection to the local region. Our regions are very large, so it is quite easy to establish a connection with the region, and reasonable to expect a member to do so, but several of the questions were borderline in terms of establishing sufficient connection. By way of guidance to assist members in terms of how to frame constituency questions, might I say I was very satisfied with and felt the criteria were met wholly by the contributions from Mr O'Donohue, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Pennicuik, Ms Shing, Mr Ondarchie and Mr Morris. With regard to the contributions of Mrs Peulich, Ms Tierney and Mr Melhem, I thought those members needed to do more to make a connection with their region.

In terms of Mr Leane, his constituency question could have been about the United States, Russia, China or wherever. That is an exaggeration, but Mr Leane's matter referred to a web-based system which has broad Victorian application and there was no attempt to make a connection with any school or with Eastern Metropolitan Region. I know this because I closely read his question twice. It is important to make that connection. I can accept that some of Mr Leane's schools were affected by that particular service — a departmental service — but that connection was not made in his constituency question. It is important, as I have said, to make that connection.

With regard to ministers statements, which were also made for the first time yesterday, I outlined my

expectation on ministers statements. It was raised with me that while I had said one minister ought have only one opportunity to make a ministers statement on each day of meeting, a number of ministers have more than one ministerial responsibility. I have determined that <>where a minister has two or more ministerial portfolios I am happy to allow the minister to make one statement on each of their portfolios. An example would be Ms Pulford, who is the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Regional Development. I would see it as permissible for Ms Pulford to make ministers statements about each of those portfolios on one day if there was a need to do so. Ministers statements are to be only one per portfolio area.

Mr Leane — On a point of order, President, can you provide clarity about your position on the constituency question I asked yesterday? My question is: what do we deem a constituent? If you meet principals or constituents during the week before Parliament and they flag an issue they would like you to bring to the attention of a particular minister, I would suggest that that is a clear example of a constituency question. We need to understand. Are we in a position where we have to name publicly in this place the principals or constituents who bring these issues to our attention for our constituency questions to fall into your ruling? As members of Parliament we have relationships that we like to keep with these people so they are not identified to a particular department as the ones bringing the issue to the attention of the minister. If that is the ruling we are going to have, I see it as an ongoing problem.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank Mr Leane. He has other mechanisms as well if he feels that the particular matter he raised yesterday needs to be processed. The adjournment debate is one mechanism by which matters that do not relate to constituency matters may be raised. The issue is — as somebody to my left was interjecting, albeit quite subtly — that a constituency question is a geographic matter, and Mr Leane made absolutely no connection with his region. He never mentioned his region, a school, an individual or anything except a statewide program, so it was a fairly easy decision for me. Between the two of us, between the fall, there is ample scope for him to pursue matters as long as they are pertinent to his region and as long as he links them to something that is in his region.

In terms of constituency questions, in most cases I think it is actually better that the matter be descriptive in terms of what the issue is. Mr Leane is shaking his head, but a statement was made yesterday in respect of these matters, and I thought it was fairly clear. I think

the government's intention was fairly clear. If Mr Leane reads the constituency questions from yesterday that I have referred to, I think he will see the difference between his and Ms Shing's, for instance, and realise what my problem was with it.

Mrs Peulich — Further on the same point of order, President, if I may, I raised a constituency question in relation to 18 level crossings that were promised to be constructed by the government in my region. I could have taken some time to list those 18 level crossings from the list that is publicly available; I chose not to in the interests of brevity. Is my understanding correct that constituency questions are an opportunity to raise matters pertaining to one's electorate and/or voters in one's electorate?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Yes, that is correct. As I said, Mrs Peulich's constituency question was not too bad, and the other ones I mentioned — Ms Tierney's and Mr Melhem's — were in the same light, but I think they — —

Mr Leane interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Would Mr Leane like to go outside, have a cup of coffee and think about what I have said? I am on my feet.

Mr Leane interjected.

Rulings interrupted.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Mr Leane

The PRESIDENT — Order! Fifteen minutes.

Mr Leane interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Half an hour!

Mr Leane withdrew from chamber.

RULINGS BY THE CHAIR

Sessional orders

Rulings resumed.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mrs Peulich is absolutely right. Constituency questions are about matters concerning constituents or the region itself. She did refer to her region in terms of the crossings. As I said in clarification yesterday, members are allowed to talk about a matter in their constituency that has relevance to other regions and broader government

policy as well, but it must come back to their region. There is no way I would have ruled out either Mr Melhem's, Ms Tierney's or Mrs Peulich's matters yesterday, or probably on subsequent days, but I am simply trying to sharpen it up a little bit. In the case of Mr Leane's question, as I said, he made no reference at all to the region. I suggest that members have a look at his question and at the others that were asked. Many of the others were quite specific in their requests, and I think they definitely met the intention of the government in terms of constituency questions.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, in relation to ministers statements as opposed to ministerial statements, it is my understanding that ministerial statements — and not ministers statements, which have recently been introduced — provide an opportunity for the opposition to debate them. This is unlike ministers statements, for which we do not have an opportunity to interject, take points of order or debate. Without reflecting on your ruling, President, my concern is that if ministers statements are used to attack the opposition or to be provocative, we have no opportunity for rebuttal, which is clearly not in the spirit of democratic debate in this chamber. I ask that you monitor that situation to ensure it is not being abused. During questions without notice and Dorothy Dixers we can take points of order and have some recourse.

Mr Jennings — On the point of order, President, I have to comment on the ridiculous contribution that has just been made by Mrs Peulich. It was the government's intention last sitting week to include ministers statements within question time, which would have enabled the member to interject and defend herself if she felt it was necessary. But in fact it was her party and others in this chamber who made the decision for that not to be the case. Talk about having two bob each way! The government's intention was to create greater transparency and accountability and to make question time more functional. It was other people who made the decision for that not to be the case in relation to how ministers statements are treated.

Today we have spent the last 15 minutes on interpreting what the government's intention was by introducing constituency questions. President, I think your interpretation of the government's intention in relation to matters that relate to voters and regions is a reasonable one, but it is just an interpretation. The further we go in trying to clearly define this issue, which was originally driven by opening up opportunities for members of both this place and the other place to raise matters of concern for their electorates and communities, the further we get into the realms of the ridiculous.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I understand what Mrs Peulich is saying in raising her point of order. She is asking me to make sure that ministers statements are in fact statements of initiatives and not matters of debate in terms of reflecting on the opposition. Certainly the statements made yesterday all met that criteria and I will continue to be mindful of that.

I indicate that there is nothing to stop me from entertaining a motion to take note of a minister's statement. I believe there is still an opportunity for a member to pursue this, as they would with a question. A take-note motion would be an acceptable motion to move in this place and might well be accepted by the house.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Acting Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services: High-value Equipment, February 2015 (Ordered to be published).

Public Hospitals: Results of the 2013–14 Audits, February 2015 (Ordered to be published).

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency — Report, 2013–14.

Legal Profession Act 2004 — Practitioner Remuneration Order 2015.

Ombudsman — Councils and complaints — A report on current practice and issues, together with a good practice guide, February 2015 (Ordered to be published).

Statutory Rule under the Road Safety Act 1986 — No. 9.

Surveillance Devices Act 1999 — Report pursuant to section 30Q of the Victorian Inspectorate.

PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Membership

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I desire to move, by leave:

That standing order 23.08(3) be suspended so as to provide that —

- (1) the Procedure Committee will consist of eight members with three members from the government nominated by the Leader of the Government in the Council, three members from the opposition nominated by the Leader of the Opposition in the Council, one member from the Greens nominated by the Leader of the Australian Greens in the Council, and one member from among the remaining members in the Council nominated

jointly by minority groups and Independent members; and

- (2) a quorum of the Procedure Committee is five members.

Leave refused.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — This ambush is an extraordinary situation. Leave has been refused because it was the government's intention to move this matter yesterday without necessarily the compliance of other parties in the chamber.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The government did not do it. We asked yesterday about doing it today, and the government has not moved it today.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Leave is not granted, so it simply becomes a notice of motion.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Level crossings

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — In my capacity as Leader of the Government I want to discuss a matter that could be of acute interest to Mrs Peulich, who yesterday in her constituency question raised a matter about the level crossings program and the commitments by the Andrews government to replace 50 level crossings across the metropolitan region within the next two terms of government, of which 20 should be completed by the end of this term.

As a measure of the government's commitment to that program, funding of \$100 million in financing commitments was brought forward last week — before the budget. This funding was announced to enable a business case to be developed and planning to be undertaken for those projects, including 18 level crossing upgrades in South Eastern Metropolitan Region. I would have thought the community would be very supportive, not only in South Eastern Metropolitan Region but right across metropolitan Melbourne, of the government's initiative to bring forward an average of \$2 million to be allocated to support the business case and the planning arrangements to fast-track the ability of the government to deliver on that commitment.

Last week's announcement was not only about the Andrews government bringing forward public expenditure to drive infrastructure programs. Prior to this year's budget in May, this government has brought forward funding of \$40 million to be allocated immediately to support the early staging and planning

works for the metropolitan rail system improvements that will see a true metropolitan-style public transport system delivered in this state, one which will leverage the most effective process of level crossing removal by building a tunnel that connects the eastern, western and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Roads and bridges

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — Last week the Andrews Labor government announced a number of initiatives to improve regional road and rail crossings and strengthen bridges. This series of initiatives will create jobs, improve livability for people in regional Victoria and create greater efficiencies for regional producers seeking to move their goods to market.

A key feature of this program is the \$20 million Safe System Road Infrastructure program, which will deliver projects at six regional sites: the Calder Highway at Mildura; Daylesford-Malmsbury Road at Coomoora; Midland Highway at Epsom; Inverloch-Venus Bay Road at Inverloch and Venus Bay; the Pyrenees Highway at Green Gully; and the Calder Alternative Highway at Lockwood. Upgrades will include installing roundabouts at intersections, installing barriers and run-off-road preventions, including wider shoulders, ripple strips and wire rope barriers.

As I indicated, the government is also strengthening bridges on some of our main regional freight corridors and improving safety at 52 regional level crossings. This \$35.8 million commitment will be fast-tracked to strengthen 48 bridges, which will reduce freight costs and increase productivity for businesses right across regional Victoria. The previous coalition government neglected transport infrastructure links in regional Victoria. As a consequence, low load limits were imposed on several major routes due to deterioration. Work is expected to commence this year on the first stage of this program, and the initial focus will be on 17 priority bridges.

The \$50 million Safer Country Crossings program will boost safety at 52 priority roads and level crossings which carry high-speed passenger trains or very large numbers of heavy vehicles. We will be working hard to improve quality of life and efficiency for businesses in regional Victoria.

Foster carers

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise to inform the house of what this government is doing to recruit more foster carers in

Victoria. The Andrews Labor government is focused on making a difference to the lives of all children. The best place for a child is in a loving and nurturing home. Labor understands that foster care is and always will be vitally important to Victoria's out-of-home care system, but there are not enough foster carers to provide the safe and caring homes every child deserves.

Under the previous government we were losing more carers than we were recruiting. Not only did members of the former government fail to take action to stem this exodus but they also stripped funding from the foster care recruitment and retention strategy set up by the former Labor government. The feedback I have received from the sector is that the stripping of funding effectively rendered the strategy useless. One of my immediate priorities on coming to government was to fund the development of a new approach to attracting, recruiting and retaining Victorian foster carers — a \$1.5 million commitment.

This is not a quick fix; it is about developing a considered long-term strategy. Developing this approach will be the first item of action for the ministerial advisory committee I have set up for children in out-of-home care. It will focus on increasing the community's awareness of foster care, strengthening training and supporting carers so we can retain them for longer.

I have met with many foster carers and heard about the challenges and rewards of foster care. In January I met with a group of foster carers and kinship carers at the Berry Street Foster Care Camp at Camp Wilkin in Anglesea, and I heard their thoughts and concerns. I met some incredible people who have been foster carers for many decades. They are incredibly selfless individuals, and I thank them for the work that they do. I will be holding round tables for foster carers to hear their concerns directly. Our government is committed to examining how it can recruit more foster carers in Victoria.

President, I have a further ministers statement. I take on board the ruling you made earlier in relation to ministers who have different portfolios, and I have a ministers statement in relation to my youth affairs portfolio — a separate matter.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will call that separately.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, I ask that you review the statement the minister has made. I believe it is substantially similar to an answer the minister gave in response to a question last sitting

week in relation to foster care recruitment and the \$1.5 billion plan the government is claiming to have. From my perspective, in light of your earlier ruling, this ministers statement could not be classified as new.

Ms Mikakos — On the point of order, President, in the ministers statement I have provided some context for the work I will be doing as the Minister for Families and Children in relation to foster care. I have outlined the historical context. I have outlined the work I am doing in announcing a recruitment and retention strategy and the fact that it will be an item of business for my ministerial advisory committee, which will be meeting shortly.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will continue to monitor ministers statements as we find our way through the practice. I took it that the ministerial advisory committee might be the new initiative that had not previously been mentioned in the house. Is that right?

Ms Mikakos — Yes, that is one element.

The PRESIDENT — That is a new element but nonetheless the point of order is certainly valid to the extent that ministers statements — and I am sure ministers are well aware of this — are not a second bite of the cherry regarding something that has previously been advised to the house.

We are in a rather interesting situation where we had government questions in question time for the first two weeks of sitting and now we no longer have those. We now have a different process, so there is a bit of change. Ministers statements should not be a process of regurgitating other information; they need to be about new initiatives. In this one I took it that the ministerial advisory committee was one of the new initiatives, and that was the context.

Mrs Peulich — On a further point of order, President, just so that we have a clear understanding — as you say, it is an evolution of practice — does the ministers statement need to be overwhelmingly about the new initiative or just a little tag to it to make sure it qualifies?

Mr Jennings — On the point of order, President, if the opposition does not want ministers statements to be made, it should clearly articulate that. It should clearly articulate that the opposition's intention is to deny ministers the opportunity not only in question time but at any time during the day to make ministers statements. The opposition should be clear about it so that —

Mr Drum — That's not a point of order!

Mr Jennings — It is a point of order because the President is going to be spending more time interpreting questions and points of order than any other matter during the course of a sitting day. The ridiculous interventions of opposition members this morning indicate that they have no intention of listening to the government's agenda being reported to the Parliament. If that is what the intention is, the opposition should be honest enough to articulate it.

Mr Herbert — On the point of order, President, I support the point made by the Leader of the Government. Sessional order 2 about ministerial statements is clear. In creating standing order 5.14(7) it uses the following words:

... to advise the house on new government initiatives, projects and achievements.

It seems that those opposite have missed the last two parts of that standing order — that is, the government's agenda.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I thank Mr Jennings for his vigorous defence of the President's position, but it was probably not a point of order. Nonetheless, I agree with him that I do not want to be drawn into a situation where I have to arbitrate on every matter raised in the house because of points of order. Hopefully as members become familiar with these processes that will not be a requirement. This is where interpretation comes in. It is a judgement call as to whether or not the information provided meets the sessional order, is new and is about a project or an achievement.

If I heard Ms Mikakos correctly, it was about a ministerial council. I think that is a new initiative, and it was probably sufficient in terms of advice to the house, with the other parts of it in context. I certainly agree that it should not be an incidental tag on the end that says, 'By the way, we are doing this'. There was a clear intention to bring new information to the house and to inform the house, and the whole thing does not need to be on one new item. I think context is fair enough so we have a full understanding of perhaps why a new initiative has been implemented.

Vocational education and training

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I will try to make an interjection-free contribution.

Last week in response to growing concerns about the rise of low-quality training in the state I announced a review of quality assurance in Victoria's vocational education and training (VET) system. The urgent need for this review is highlighted by new findings, which I will release today, in a campaign by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to investigate training quality for automotive apprentices. I am appalled by some of the findings, which reveal a government-funded registered training organisation and a number of employers failing to meet their obligations to apprentices.

The investigation of 115 automotive businesses employing 160 apprentices resulted in 99 training contracts being cancelled. The types of compliance breaches identified by the investigation include: supervised training being provided very infrequently or not at all; supervisors who were not appropriately experienced or qualified to train students; the work tasks or facilities not being appropriate for automotive apprentices and in many cases the employer was not even principally an automotive repair workshop; no training plans or training materials such as workbooks or work logs; and no contact with the training provider.

Students who wish to continue their apprenticeships are being assisted to find other training organisations, but in some cases the damage has already been done. What this investigation highlights is how a single bad training provider can affect the lives of so many students and have a potentially disastrous impact on their futures. This simply will not be tolerated under the Andrews Labor government, and we are committed to cracking down on low-quality training.

That is why I have urged the federal government to follow Victoria's lead in taking strong action against low-quality providers. When it comes to the VET FEE-HELP scheme there needs to be a thorough overhaul of the system. The Andrews Labor government will review quality assurance and will provide a new framework for Victoria to ensure that all training providers that deliver government funded training meet quality standards. Along with rescuing the TAFE sector and rebuilding the funding system, restoring quality is part of our agenda.

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

Mr Drum — Do members have an opportunity to ask for the date when that investigation took place?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Not in ministers statements. If the member wishes to pursue the ministers statement further, he has other opportunities within the processes of the house. Question time is coming up later this day, during which the member can pose that as a question. There is also the adjournment tonight when the member can ask the minister for further information about the study or report that has been commissioned.

SYN Media

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I rise to bring to the attention of the house a significant announcement by the government regarding providing further community engagement and development opportunities for young Victorians. The Andrews Labor government is committed to supporting young people and to helping them realise their full potential and be more engaged in the community.

Members may be familiar with SYN 90.7, a youth community radio station. SYN Media, the organisation which runs SYN FM, provides a powerful engagement opportunity for young people, which has the added benefit of providing job-ready training. I was immensely proud to be able to announce recently that the Andrews Labor government will double funding to SYN Media, an organisation first funded by Labor in 2008. This additional funding will provide an opportunity for SYN Media to develop a new radio broadcasting mentoring initiative and to deliver training workshops for young people, volunteer staff and community radio stations in rural and regional Victoria.

The media landscape of the future will increasingly feature digital and social media technologies and content trends that are emerging today. SYN Media will receive \$400 000 over four years to train the next crop of radio and digital media talent in Victoria. The extension in funding will target young rural and regional Victorians to help them get their start in radio broadcasting, but more importantly it will give youth a voice and broaden the platform for youth engagement in this state.

I take this opportunity to express how impressed I was by the enthusiasm of the people I met on my visit to SYN Media's headquarters, named the House of SYN. I was very impressed by Claudia, the young woman who interviewed me on air, and the very perceptive questions she asked. I am sure she will make a significant mark in journalism in the future. SYN Media is to be commended for the very important work it does in giving young Victorians a voice.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Murray Basin rail project

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I want to bring to the attention of the chamber an issue in relation to the funding of the Murray Basin rail project. The coalition announced \$180 million to \$220 million for the Murray Basin rail project in last year's state budget, which included \$11 million for the 2014–15 year, \$35 million for 2015–16 and then ongoing funding from there on. The money was to come from the sale of Rural Finance, the proceeds of which were intended to be used specifically for regional infrastructure projects. As I said, \$220 million was allocated to the Murray Basin rail project.

I have been a strong advocate for the standardisation of rail lines for freight from Mildura to the ports of Portland, Geelong and Melbourne, and I see this as a key infrastructure project to support our farming communities right across the state of Victoria, particularly in the west and north-west. However, it concerns me that there has been silence regarding this project for months and Labor has only recently announced a token \$30 million allocation for first stage, which is money that was already allocated in the coalition government's last budget.

I know this is not the adjournment debate, but I am calling on the Andrews government to fully commit \$200 million for the full standardisation of rail freight tracks from Mildura to Victorian ports so farmers can take the opportunity of moving their produce efficiently on standardised tracks.

Pako Festa

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — On Saturday, 28 February, tens of thousands of people will converge around Pakington Street, Geelong, to celebrate the 33rd Diversitat Pako Festa. Pako Festa is the largest free celebration of multiculturalism in Australia. People attend the festival and enjoy cultural performances, activities, food from all over the world and artists from all walks of life. This is truly a festival that unites the whole community with local ethnic communities, schools, local businesses, community groups, street traders and artists all coming together to enjoy an integral part of Australia — its multiculturalism. I encourage anyone who has the opportunity to attend to do so and not miss out on what is always a highlight on the Geelong events calendar.

University deregulation

Ms TIERNEY — With the beginning of the university year upon us, many Victorians will be excited to start a new phase of life, while others will be returning for another year to achieve their chosen degree. However, along with that excitement, there are many students who are very nervous about the Abbott federal government's plans for university deregulation. It is a policy that will result in significantly higher course costs, while creating a two-tiered university system that will be socially damaging for Australia. It will significantly disadvantage regional universities, which have much thinner markets, usually consisting of higher levels of disadvantaged students, against the larger universities, which have a wider market and larger competitive pull.

The Abbott government will be remembered not only for savage cuts but for taking away the hope and aspirations of young Australians and dividing Australians into two categories — entrenching forever those who have, and those who have not.

Sungold Field Days

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — The Sungold Field Days were again held opposite Warrnambool Cheese & Butter at Allansford this year, for the 34th time, with chairman Tony Rea once again at the helm, as he has been for every one of the past 33 field days. Parliamentarians who attended the field days were the member for South-West Coast, Denis Napthine, and the member for Polwarth, Terry Mulder, from the Legislative Assembly; the federal member for Wannon, Dan Tehan; the federal Assistant Treasurer, the Honourable Josh Frydenberg; and me.

The innovation on display from the 245-plus exhibitors showed the ever-increasing technological developments that are taking place in the area of dairy production and the importance of events such as field days for farmers and other interested parties to meet, share and discuss the latest industry advancements. In the wake of the current concerns we have seen in regard to food imported into Australia, it should be acknowledged that the dairy industry sustains the people of Victoria with safe, nutritious and delicious dairy products.

Flinders Street station

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to commend the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport on the announcement that the Andrews Labor government will introduce funding to restore the Flinders Street station. While the former government

spent \$1 million of taxpayers money on an international colouring competition, the station roof was leaking and the exterior was decaying and becoming unsafe for commuters. That waste of time by the Liberal government produced plenty of imaginative, space-age designs but no repairs, and it left the same badly run facilities for commuters.

This government's \$100 million investment will see the heritage building restored and its functionality improved. Works will include fixing the leaky roof, making the building structurally sound, restoring the famous clock tower and giving the whole exterior a fresh coat of paint. There will be new information displays, more myki readers, better lighting and brand-new toilets, which will make using the station easier and more enjoyable for commuters.

In addition to this overdue investment, we are also developing a business case which will allow the government to consider options to fix the old ballroom and other parts of the building that are falling apart. It is the first step towards bringing in new tenants and creating an exciting commercial precinct. This announcement by the Andrews government adds to its commitment to make Victoria's public transport system world class. Work on the removal of 50 level crossings is also to begin this year, and the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority will be established.

Greg Mills

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — It is always a pleasure to congratulate a constituent on a great achievement, and today I congratulate a constituent who not only lives in my electorate but whose place of employment is also in my electorate. It is with great pleasure that I announce that our own Greg Mills, from the Victorian Rugby League Referees Association, was awarded life membership of the Victorian Rugby League at its annual general meeting on Monday night.

Greg has had over 15 years of continued contribution to the development of Rugby League in this state, with 20 years of service to Rugby League in Victoria. He joined the Victorian Rugby League Referees Association in January 1990 and has served 23 of his 25 years on the committee as president, vice-president, secretary and with other forms of membership. He was president of the referees association from 2009 to 2014. He is a Rugby League referees association coach and mentor, and is currently an active referee and a life member of the Victorian Rugby League Referees Association. Greg is the National Rugby League interchange steward at Melbourne Storm home games,

and we know he has an overall passion for the game of Rugby League, not only in Victoria but right across Australia. Once again I, and I suggest this Parliament, congratulate Greg on this great honour of life membership of Victorian Rugby League.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — This month is Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, and I was delighted to have read that my constituent Ms Leanne Wood is taking part in a competition being held to raise awareness of ovarian cancer. Ovarian cancer is the eighth most common cancer and sixth most common cause of cancer death affecting women in Australia. In 2010, 1305 new cases of ovarian cancer were diagnosed in Australian women and in 2011 there were 903 deaths caused by ovarian cancer in Australia. Currently there is no proven screening test for the disease, which is extremely frightening as ovarian cancer may not present any symptoms and too often is only present once the cancer has spread. This is why raising awareness and this month are so important.

Ovarian cancer does not discriminate. It affects mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, aunts and friends, and having competitions and fundraisers such as this means more money is going into finding an appropriate screening test and effective treatment. During Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month women are being urged to host a morning or afternoon tea to raise awareness for the signs and symptoms of ovarian cancer. I encourage women in my electorate to get involved. Ms Wood has created a superb cake modelled on a stiletto shoe, and I wish her every success for the competition.

St Michael's Grammar School

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to talk about my old school, St Michael's Grammar School in Windsor, which is in my electorate and which was good enough to invite me back to speak to its year 12 legal studies students on Monday, 16 February. It was a great honour to go back to the school and speak to the students about a whole range of different issues that we deal with in this place, including legislation and petitions, and also just to talk to students about being actively involved in politics. Regardless of what their political persuasion is, encouraging them to participate and be engaged — something that all of our young people can do to encourage and grow democracy — is something I am sure honourable members on the other side of the chamber would support. I might add that in doing so I did not give them any ALP membership forms, though I did think about it.

Mr Morris — Not according to one student.

Mr DALIDAKIS — No, they were all above age to become members of the Labor Party. It was a great honour to be back there. In fact three of the teachers who taught me when I was a student at St Michael's prior to 1993 are still there, and all three were present for the conversation. I pay my respects to Ms Gee, Mr Morrison and Mr Gill. All three of them were integral to my education, and education remains a vital pillar of the policies I support and the work I hope to do here in Parliament.

University orientation week

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — Next week marks the start of a university career for tens of thousands of students, and I congratulate each and every one of them on that achievement. It also means that many universities are holding orientation week activities and events this week. I encourage new students to attend to get a head start on the semester. This week is a great opportunity to take a tour of your new campus and get to know your way around, and to speak with your lecturers and tutors. Perhaps students might like to join a club or society, and there are opportunities to join sporting clubs, whether they be football, skiing or even dragon boat racing, if that is your taste. Some students might like to volunteer for the student union, or others may just want to have a chat with their mates to find where the best coffee is served.

If students, in getting to know each other, would like to have a drink or two, I ask that they behave responsibly and remember that they will have many years ahead of them to socialise and make merry with their new mates. I wish all the best to those taking the next big step in their lives, education and personal development. I wish them well.

Greyhound racing

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Like all Australians, I was totally shocked and disgusted after watching the appalling footage of live baiting at greyhound training facilities shown on the ABC's *Four Corners* program last week. I would like to congratulate Animals Australia and Animal Liberation Queensland for exposing these practices in three states — something which should have been done by the industry regulators, who we can only infer were not paying attention or were turning a blind eye to what was going on. As has been the case with so many animal welfare issues over the years, the regulators have been missing in action. Animal cruelty has been

going on under their noses, and animal welfare groups have been the ones exposing the practices. I totally agree with Lyn White from Animals Australia, who said that putting animals, gambling and prize purses together is a toxic mix.

Yesterday Ms Pulford talked about the inquiries that have been set up under the racing integrity commissioner, Sal Perna, and the chief veterinary officer of Victoria, Dr Charles Milne. They seem to be quite technical reviews. The state government should be inquiring into not only the alleged incidents but also Greyhound Racing Victoria itself and its ability to regulate an industry it is also promoting. I commend the chair of Greyhound Racing Victoria for resigning. I think the rest of the board should follow suit, and I think the government should be explaining why it has given Greyhound Racing Victoria \$3 million to investigate its own ineptness.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed from 11 February; motion of Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house requires the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council to table in the Legislative Council, by 12 noon on 16 March 2015, a copy of all documents in relation to the West Gate distributor including, but not limited to —

- (1) the business case;
- (2) interim or final traffic and traffic management studies, reports or briefings;
- (3) environmental studies, reports or briefings including historical studies, reports or briefings relating to Stony Creek;
- (4) Aboriginal cultural heritage studies, reports or briefings;
- (5) advice on compliance with the Hobsons Bay planning scheme and Maribyrnong planning scheme and proposed consultation on required planning approvals;
- (6) departmental advice and briefing documents; and
- (7) evidence of consultation on the above.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I will recap my contribution to the debate on this motion. The West Gate distributor, which was announced by the government prior to the election and was part of the Eddington report into transport needs in Victoria, has been the subject of a lot of consultation between various groups within the community. It is a part of *Project 10 000*, which we have committed to in order to remove 5000 trucks from the West Gate Bridge every

day, thereby getting trucks away from suburban streets and extending the life of the West Gate Bridge. The cost of this project is estimated to be close to \$500 million. A lot of work has been done in relation to that. As I said last sitting week, stage 1 of the project has gone out to tender. The first package was worth \$40 million.

The Andrews Labor government has taken advantage of the position the federal government has adopted. The Prime Minister wants to be the infrastructure Prime Minister, but he obviously likes roads, not rail. The logical thing for us to do is look at how we can capitalise on that and make sure Victoria gets its fair share of — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr MELHEM — I thank Mr Ramsay for raising that matter. The regional rail link was funded by Labor governments at both the state and federal level. It was not courtesy of coalition funding. Get that right. I take it that Victorian Liberal-Nationals coalition members are happy to support the government's position and to ask their brothers and sisters in the federal government in Canberra to start funding Victorian rail projects. I welcome the support of members opposite. It is a great idea, but the hypocrisy of those opposite is amazing.

The motion refers to the release of documents. The business case for the West Gate distributor, for the whole project, is currently being developed. Unlike the former government, we will not shy away from producing business cases. We will make them public. Infrastructure Victoria will be established to do exactly that. It will be an independent body that will evaluate projects, look at their cost benefits and make sure that the community gets a good return on investments. This is unlike the situation under the former government, which resisted releasing the business case for the east-west link. It only released about four or five pages of nice, coloured pictures of trams and bridges. It took a Labor government to release the full business case. We now understand why the former government did not want to release the business case. It was because the cost analysis showed that the project was only going to return 45 cents in the dollar. The government was making a loss on that project.

I take this opportunity to talk about the West Gate distributor and what other people have said about it. The Maribyrnong Truck Action Group represents people who live in the west, and I think its opinion is important. The distributor does matter to people. It does not matter what I or other members think. The people

who live in that area or the people who are going to be directly affected are the ones we should pay attention to. They are very supportive of the project, as are the Greens. The Public Transport Users Association has also publicly backed the construction of the West Gate ramp.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MELHEM — It so happens that I do live in the west, and as a matter of fact the project will pass my office. I am very supportive of the project. It is a real project. It can start straightaway, and it can start delivering some immediate benefit, unlike the east-west project, which was going to be in the never-never. It had no end date and no starting date. The coalition did nothing for four years. Coalition members should be ashamed of themselves.

The truck curfew is also part of that project. It was introduced recently by Mr Donnellan, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The government has placed a curfew on both Somerville Road and Moore Street. It took effect on 29 January this year.

Members opposite do not want to hear what people in the west think about the West Gate distributor. The people in the west want the government to get the trucks off the West Gate Bridge. The distributor will provide a second means of access to the city in the short term. Unlike the coalition's east-west project, which might have taken 20 years to build, if it were ever going to get off the ground, construction on the first stage of the distributor is due to commence in four months. A further lane will be added to the West Gate Freeway, and we will seek \$180 million from the federal government to fund that. That will commence — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr MELHEM — Unlike you, Mrs Peulich, I do not lie — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr MELHEM — I ask Mrs Peulich to withdraw, because I do not like to be called a liar.

Mrs Peulich — I withdraw if that was the member's interpretation of what I said. I certainly did not intend to make a reflection on him. I was reflecting on the government.

Mr MELHEM — I thank Mrs Peulich. I did not think she really meant it.

Obviously there is a fair bit of consultation yet to take place — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MELHEM — Mr Finn will not be consulted, because his opinion does not really matter. I know he likes to brag about the western suburbs, but I did not see him do much in his time in government. He cannot look himself in the mirror. I had better not stoop to name-calling.

A number of issues were raised with me by the City of Melbourne. I had the pleasure of meeting with the CEO and the mayor in my office on 13 January. They raised a number of issues with me, and now they are in discussion with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety providing feedback on how the West Gate distributor should be delivered. Issues were raised such as those relating to the bike lanes, the facilities, opportunities to minimise transport impacts related to the truck curfew, the signalisation of the intersection of Parker and Moreland streets, traffic calming, minimising traffic on Whitehall Street north of the Moreland Street intersection. The list goes on. Unlike those opposite, the government is happy to sit down with local councils and local people and talk about these things. That is something the former government refused to do with any of the city councils when it was developing a useless project.

Another issue raised was in relation to property acquisition. The government will be sitting down with the affected councils and people to work through that process. Obviously if it is going to have any impact on heritage sites or any environmental impact, these things will be canvassed as part of the consultation process. The government will come up with a final business case, get stages 2 and 3 of the project underway and complete it in the appropriate time. It will be well before the former government's ill-fated project, which it really botched, would have been done.

I conclude by saying that the Andrews Labor government will get on with business. It is getting on with it. It is delivering. In less than 100 days the government has done, and is about to do, more than the former government did in four years. The former government did not do much in four years. Can members opposite name one single project that was announced, commissioned and completed in their own right? Name one!

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MELHEM — Name them! Keep going. I wonder why Victoria tossed the former government out. The single reason was that it did not do much.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr MELHEM — Let us blame the unions. Let us blame the workers, bash the workers. Opposition members are very good at bashing the workers in this country. Without the workers, we are nothing.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MELHEM — I conclude by saying that unlike the Liberal government, the Andrews Labor government is not afraid of releasing a business case. It is not afraid of facing the people and respecting their opinion, unlike the opposition, which would probably not have elections if it had its way. It would probably not allow voters to vote a government in or out. You might as well have a dictatorship. But on this side we respect democracy, we respect the right of people to have a say about who governs this state and to pass judgement on performance. The Victorian people have passed judgement on the opposition's performance, which is why it is not in government anymore. We know that Victoria will pass judgement on this government's performance in four years time or thereabouts. Over the next four years the government intends to deliver some real projects that will have real benefit for Victorians.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — As this house is aware, I am a man of charity and compassion. I am feeling very charitable and compassionate towards Mr Melhem because he has been dealt a rough deal today. He has been dealt a rough deal by the leaders of the Labor Party because they know his background in supporting the east–west link project. Mr Melhem has left the chamber. Out the door he goes. It is the most exercise he has had in a year. He is out of here!

The leadership of the ALP is aware that Mr Melhem was — and I hazard a guess that he still is — a very strong supporter of the east–west link when he was state secretary of the Australian Workers Union (AWU), one of the people who ran the Labor Party. He has taken a few steps back but he is hopeful of getting his status back at some stage. We all remember the statement he put out when he was state secretary of the AWU saying, 'Build the thing'. You would think he was a Liberal MP from the eastern suburbs. He was saying to build the thing. We remember that very well. Here he is today being thrown the job of trying to defend what the ALP has done on the issue of the east–west link and

putting up some sort of argument in support of some mysterious beast called the West Gate distributor.

I would be tempted to say — and I will clean my speech up a bit — that today Mr Melhem has been chomping on a fertiliser sandwich. I do not think there is a lot of bread in that sandwich. I feel sorry for him because of the job he has been given, and I can understand why his heart was clearly not in it. I can only wish him better luck next time, because the arguments he put forward today were second rate, to say the very least. It is being very generous to describe them as being second rate.

We were told by the Premier before the election and then again after the election that this mysterious beast called the West Gate distributor was shovel ready. I do not know what the Premier's definition of 'shovel ready' is, but I have a fair idea of what the Premier is shovelling, and it is not entirely unrelated to what is in Mr Melhem's sandwich. In fact he can shovel as much as he likes, he ain't going to build no roads anywhere with that sort of material! But he will no doubt continue down that path.

I have a very genuine interest in seeing this motion pass. In fact I think this is a crucial motion, because it will hopefully answer a question that I and the people in Western Metropolitan Region have — namely, what the hell is the West Gate distributor? We have seen a few drawings, animated depictions and suggestions of what it might be and where it might go, but it is all airy-fairy and pie in the sky, quite literally. Nobody quite knows what it is. I am hoping that if this motion is passed — and I am very hopeful that it will be passed — we will be able to find that out, that these documents will enable us to learn what this beast called the West Gate distributor is. Nobody actually seems to know, and that includes the members of the government.

This motion will enable us to know what the beast — the West Gate distributor — will do. At the moment I am not sure. The government tells us it will take 5000 trucks off the West Gate Bridge and extend its life for evermore. So eternal life for the West Gate Bridge and the removal of 5000 trucks a day from the West Gate Bridge — —

Mrs Peulich — And where are they going to go?

Mr FINN — That is the next question, Mrs Peulich — where will those trucks go, and who will this project impact upon the most? Will this project make traffic worse in the inner west? I have been dealing with people in Yarraville and Footscray

for quite some time, and I was very excited about the east–west link, because apart from the fact that it would ease congestion on the West Gate, Tullamarine and Calder freeways, at long last we had a solution for the truck problem in the inner west of Melbourne — at long last Francis Street would be truck free, trucks would be out of Footscray and those people suffering in the inner west of Melbourne would be free of the nightmare of trucks in the inner west.

Of course Labor got in, and it scrapped the east–west link. I understand that as we speak the Premier is still trying to rip up the contract — —

Mr Ramsay — And 7000 jobs.

Mr FINN — Indeed, 7000 jobs; we will get to the jobs a little bit later on, Mr Ramsay, but that is a really important point.

But I really want to concentrate on the impact that this West Gate distributor will have, because we had one option that would have solved the truck problem in the west, but these 5000 trucks that will allegedly be removed from the West Gate Bridge will have to go somewhere. You just cannot make 5000 trucks disappear. I do not care how many votes you win an election by or how clever you are; you just cannot make trucks disappear. They have to go somewhere, and it seems to me that they will be going through the inner west.

We have a situation where places like Francis Street in Yarraville are already overburdened with trucks, and they will have more. That is just so typical of how the Labor Party treats the western suburbs of Melbourne. That is something we have come to expect. I recall that in the 2010 election campaign the slogan 'Labor neglects the west' was used to great effect. The truth is that Labor does indeed neglect the west. The slogan resonated with the people of the western suburbs, because everybody in the western suburbs knows that Labor neglects the west of Melbourne. There are no greater examples of that than the scrapping of the east–west link and the adoption of this weird and unknown beast called the West Gate distributor.

Then of course we have the added question of how much this will cost. Mr Melhem went on at some length about how it was necessary to get the federal government to kick in even though apparently the project had previously been entirely funded. I had a bit of trouble following what Mr Melhem had to say on that. It is either fully funded or you need federal

government funds; it is one or the other. But if we as a state are going to put our hand out to Canberra for some money, we should do it pretty quickly, because there has already been a \$180 million blowout in the cost of this project before one sod of dirt has been turned. So if we want to get money out of Canberra, or indeed if Canberra wants to give us money, it had better happen quickly, before the project cost blows out some more, because we know what Labor's record on major projects is — if you can call this a major project — and if anyone thinks this one is going to be any different, clearly they are wrong.

This has already blown out. We need to know; we need the documents to know exactly how much this project will cost. We do not want to go down the path of the last Labor government in this state which gave us a whole range of projects that were way over budget and way beyond schedule and — as the desalination plant has turned out — entirely useless. We do not want that, but unfortunately, when you look at Labor's record, that is inevitably what it will give us.

Mr Melhem kept using the word 'consultation'. He said that he would be very keen to consult —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr FINN — I think it might have been tongue-in-cheek, Mr Ramsay. I have to say I laughed myself fit to burst because, quite frankly, to say that the Labor Party has consulted anybody on this project is a total nonsense; it is an absolute, total nonsense. Nobody knows what this project is, nobody knows what it does and nobody knows who it will impact. There has been no consultation, so for Mr Melhem to get up here and say, 'We have consulted' is just ridiculous; it is absolutely ridiculous. He got up here and said, 'We will sit down and we will talk to the councils'. No, Labor will not talk to the councils; it will tell the councils what to do because with the exception of Maribyrnong it is in total control.

I will give you an example. Wyndham City Council ran a campaign — surprise, surprise! — in the months leading up to the state election last year. 'Get Wyndham moving' it said. Many hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent on this particular campaign. I understand the entire campaign was \$2 million all up, which seems to me to be an amazing waste of ratepayers money, but that is nothing new for Wyndham council, I have to say, or indeed any Labor council because nobody wastes money quite like Labor. It has two things that it is good at — one is wasting money and the other is stuffing things up. We have to bear that in mind.

Wyndham council ran this campaign. You would have thought that if it was fair dinkum about getting Wyndham moving, it would be throwing its support wholeheartedly behind the east–west link. Oh, no, not a chance! It made some sort of obscure reference somewhere to the fact that, yes, it did support the east–west link, because it could not have done otherwise. Anybody who is serious about removing the traffic congestion problem in the western suburbs has to support the east–west link. Anybody who wants to be seen as serious about removing the traffic problem in the western suburbs has to be a supporter of the east–west link.

So Wyndham council — controlled by the Labor Party — made that obscure reference to its support for the east–west link but then went on a campaign to attack the Liberal Party, which was, strangely enough, proposing and supporting the east–west link. Talk about having six of one and half a dozen of the other! But that is what we have come to expect from some councils out in the west, and unfortunately some councils in the east and indeed some in regional and rural areas.

I say to Wyndham council that if it was fair dinkum about looking after the people of Wyndham, if it was fair dinkum about removing the problems that the people of Wyndham face, it would have supported the east–west link. I heard on the radio this morning that there was a prang at Laverton this morning on the inbound freeway and the traffic was again banked up almost to Geelong. This is not unusual; this is almost becoming a daily event. If the Wyndham council and the Labor Party were fair dinkum about fixing the problem, they would be throwing their wholehearted support behind the east–west link.

But the Wyndham council did not. It was playing politics with ratepayers money. It has to be said that this government is doing exactly the same because the Andrews government — or the Andrews opposition, as it was then — opposed and promised to scrap the east–west link for one reason and one reason alone, and that was to save a few seats in the inner city of Melbourne. That only partially worked, it has to be said.

The Labor Party felt the heat of the Greens in its inner city Assembly seats. It felt the heat of the Greens in Melbourne, it felt the heat of the Greens in Richmond, it felt the heat of the Greens in Brunswick and indeed it even felt the heat of the Greens in Prahran. Indeed we felt the heat of the Greens in Prahran as well. But you have to remember that those members in Brunswick, Richmond and Melbourne are all members of the Socialist Left faction and they have a factional alliance

with Dodgy Dan — I am sorry, I mean with the Premier. I am sorry, Acting President; one should not refer to the Premier as ‘Dodgy Dan’ because that would be unparliamentary, and that is not something that I would ever — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr FINN — I would not call him Dictaphone Dan either, Mr Ramsay, or anything similar, because that would be grossly unparliamentary. But it has to be said that a lot of people in the electorate are referring to him in those terms, and I am quick to bring them into line, as you would understand.

But that is what all this is about. It is about sandbagging the Premier’s political base; it is about saving a handful of seats in the inner city of Melbourne — and to hell with the outer west of Melbourne, to hell with the people of Wyndham, to hell with the people of Melton, to hell with the people of Hume. Labor has never cared about the west of Melbourne, and yet again it is showing it does not care. It just does not care.

This western diversion, the western distributor, is more of a diversion than a distributor. While the Premier, or the then opposition leader, was trying to save a few seats in the inner city of Melbourne, he was being accused of all sorts of things by people in the west — and understandably so. I recall being at the footy at Werribee one day. It was just after the then opposition leader announced he would scrap the east–west link. I can assure members that if Mr Andrews had been at the football at Chirmside Park, Werribee, on that particular day, they would have strung him up.

Mr Morris — He would not have got out.

Mr FINN — He would not have got out; Mr Morris is spot on. They were absolutely ropeable. Clearly the message got back to the then opposition leader and the Labor Party that its base — which it likes to take for granted, likes to call its own and in fact likes to believe it owns — was unhappy with the decision. Labor decided it would throw the west a bone. The trouble is there is no meat on this bone. This is the boniest bone you have ever come across. My dog would not eat off this bone. This is just a pathetic attempt at subterfuge. It is a pathetic attempt to say, ‘We are actually caring about the western suburbs’. In fact, we know that they do not.

This morning we saw gridlock on the West Gate Freeway, the Tullamarine Freeway and certain sections of the Calder Freeway, and we will see the same thing tomorrow morning, the morning after that and every morning. Does anybody seriously suggest the western

distributor will do a single thing to solve that? We need to pass this motion, because thousands of people will be stuck in traffic coming in from the west and north-west of Melbourne tomorrow, and they want answers. They are entitled to answers, just as this Parliament is entitled to answers. They are the people who were sold a pup at the last election. They were sold more than a pup; they were sold a dog of a project. This one is a real woof. They want to know what it is about. They want to know how it will affect them. These documents will enable us to inform them what is going on, and I urge the house to pass this motion at the first opportunity.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I actually live in West Footscray and my office is in Seddon. I use these roads — Moore Street, Francis Street, Somerville Road and Barkly Street — that are profoundly affected by the 21 000 truck movements that come through Footscray every day. I am a little surprised by this motion — though we will support it because we support documents motions — because I did not notice that the former Liberal-Nationals government cared particularly about people in the inner west during the last Parliament. I called upon the former Minister for Health on a number of occasions to do studies, particularly around the effect of diesel fumes on children whose school is on Somerville Road, and the minister did not seem to think there was any concern. That said to me that there was no great concern from the previous government about children, especially those from the inner west. There are 21 000 truck movements through Footscray a day, and the previous Liberal-Nationals government did not deal with that issue.

I do not support the east–west link. If it were such a fantastic project, I would have thought the previous government would have released the business case. It would have told us exactly where it was going to go. It would have told us how many houses in West Footscray would have been acquired. It would have told us which neighbourhoods would be profoundly affected. It would have told us if there was going to be an open cut, if it was going to be an elevated road and where the tunnel was going to be. None of those things seemed to matter very much to the previous government, and that goes a lot to its total disregard for the west.

While the Greens support this motion, we also have a number of major concerns with the West Gate distributor. We support it in principle, but I have written to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety about our concerns. Unfortunately we have had no response from the minister to the letter which was sent on 3 February. It says:

The Greens welcome Labor's commitment to the West Gate distributor and to reducing the impact of freight trucks travelling through Melbourne's inner west. As you can imagine, at this stage we, along with the community, are awaiting the details of the project to be provided by the government to ensure it delivers the best outcome from the community as a whole.

Some of the questions we have are:

Will the West Gate distributor be tolled?

Will the West Gate distributor carry both trucks and cars?

Will the government implement a ban on truck traffic (aside from local delivery) on local streets in the city of Maribyrnong once the West Gate distributor is built?

How will the ramps remove 5000 trucks per day from the West Gate Bridge?

What will stage 2 of the West Gate distributor look like?

Will it differ from the VicRoads preferred route detailed in the truck action plan?

When will stage 2 details be publicly available?

Will the government complete the federation bike trail as part of this project?

Will the government create bike lane/path connections along Napier Street, between Footscray Road and Buckley Street as part of this project?

Will the government improve bike and pedestrian lanes/paths in other areas, such as across Shepherd Bridge, as part of the project?

What measures will be in place to protect the Stony Creek from potential environmental impacts and enhance the environmental integrity?

When will affected residents and businesses be informed of acquisition plans?

What processes and practices will you adopt to meaningfully consult with, inform and reduce the impact on the local community, and particularly those directly affected by acquisitions and construction?

Will you be implementing best practice measures in noise mitigation on the completed road?

Will the government develop a best practice approach to vegetating along the road to improve the local amenity?

We would like to meet to discuss these matters.

Obviously we would like to meet with Mr Donnellan on this matter and, as I have said, we have had neither a meeting nor any contact from the minister's office, which I find quite disturbing considering that the letter was sent on 3 February.

While the Greens will be supporting this motion, I find it quite surprising that this motion has been put forward

given that the previous government refused to release the business case, refused to tell us what would happen in the western section and would not tell us which houses were going to be acquired, what our neighbourhoods would look like and whether it would be an open-cut project. The government did not seem to care enough about all of those major and profound things to tell people, especially communities in the western suburbs.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — One point I will quibble with the previous speaker on is her describing this motion as a documents motion; I would describe it as being more of a fishing expedition. Indeed I think a couple of the previous speakers might have had a few flies in their caps and brought a reel or two into the chamber when they randomly started casting about.

Although there are very few matters on which I would agree with the commonwealth government, one is that the super-trawler should be banned from Australian waters. I am thinking of asking the federal government to ban the operation of super-trawlers in this state as well as from the sea surrounding some of the Australian continent, because I think what the opposition is basically doing at the moment is casting a net so wide that it is a little bit ridiculous to imagine that some of its members' crocodile tears around public policy are genuine. What those opposite are really looking to do is try to randomly get any document they can and use it for political purpose, and in the process they are trying to impede the development of good policy.

I will start my contribution with what it is that constitutes solid process in the development of a capital spend and solid process in the development of the design and implementation of a major infrastructure project. In so doing government members can answer this question that has been put forward to us, and I think answer it quite clearly in the negative.

Transparency is a worthwhile starting point in developing major capital expenditure projects and major infrastructure projects, and I think everybody in this chamber would agree with that. We start with transparency and wanting to have documents on the public record, but I think we need to dig a bit deeper than that. We need to work out at what point documents become publicly available in order for a process to be workable and in the public interest.

Let us start with some of the processes that already exist in our toolkit, processes that I imagine are broadly agreed with across this house. One is the gateway review process, which is applicable to major capital spends, not just public-private partnerships (PPPs) but

capital spends across all portfolios. One of the key elements of the gateway process is to identify high-value and high-risk projects. The identification of those projects is critical, and the gateway process has a number of thresholds that make sense in terms of digging deeper into projects where taxpayers interests are at risk. Where projects meet certain thresholds of either being high value, for example, over \$100 million total expected investment, or high risk — many IT projects would fall into that category for example — then certain gateways will have to be met.

There are six gates for the standard gateway process. They include such things as a planning day, a number of key decision points and a four-day review which involves stakeholders. Here is a process which involves working through a capital spend, and this could be across any portfolio, and I think everybody in this house would agree with this process.

Another process that we have put in place for various capital spends is the Partnerships Victoria guidelines and the other processes around Partnerships Victoria projects. These have been developed by governments from both sides over the last two decades and more. Those guidelines involve a number of protections for taxpayers. They also involve balancing a number of interests, such as transparency on the one hand and protecting taxpayers interests on the other. Then there is a whole range of planning, environmental and other requirements. A whole range of processes are already in place in government for major capital expenditure projects and infrastructure projects.

In developing optimal processes one needs to balance a number of at times competing objectives. Firstly, there would be a rigorous project evaluation and, secondly, risk management. Risk management can be a critical element of PPPs where risk management is inherent in contract design, but it might be relevant for other types of projects as well, such as design and construction projects where there is inherent project risk which government needs to be aware of. That is where we go back to things like gateway processes, where projects that might be delivered by government itself need to have risks assessed up-front and then managed throughout the project. Thirdly, there is protecting taxpayers interests, which has to be one of the key guiding objectives of any process, and fourthly, transparency.

As I said, I think that all of us in this house value transparency, but it is only one of a number of objectives. We need project evaluation in order to achieve maximum public policy benefit, risk management, protection of taxpayers interests and

transparency. Usually these different objectives are in alignment, but sometimes they are not. For example, transparency and optimal public policy development may not be in alignment at the very early stages of a project. That is why we have the cabinet-in-confidence process.

I imagine everybody in this chamber agrees with the concept of the cabinet-in-confidence in principle. It is there to foster full and frank discussion and the capacity for a government to evaluate the full range of options at the early stages of a project. Here we have different objectives which might potentially be intention, transparency and maximising public policy benefit. Another objective might be transparency and protecting taxpayers interests, which we have discussed a number of times over the last couple of sitting weeks in this place. Objectives can be at odds at different points in the procurement process, so we need to develop a process that appropriately balances all of these different guiding objectives. That is why this government is committed to Infrastructure Victoria, because that is the way it will put in place an overarching process for infrastructure projects across the different portfolios, respecting the four different guidelines and allowing the government to balance those guidelines in a way that maximises benefits for taxpayers.

Establishing Infrastructure Victoria will establish a much-needed process for evaluating major infrastructure projects and seeing them through the process, from policy design through to implementation and delivery. It is critical that we look at it from a holistic perspective, because we are behind when it comes to evaluating projects in a holistic way. We are behind other jurisdictions in Australia, and we are behind other comparable jurisdictions globally. It is telling that New South Wales has had Infrastructure New South Wales (INSW) for some time now. INSW is now in its second iteration of a multi-decade plan for that state's infrastructure. It is telling that INSW is on the second iteration of something we have not had a first iteration of.

The commonwealth has had Infrastructure Australia for well over five years now, and it has been working towards developing processes for a national infrastructure pipeline for some time. We need to catch up to these other jurisdictions. We can look at developments overseas. The Obama administration's Building America's Infrastructure was an initiative which was to bring together nine major agencies and move towards a whole-of-government process.

Everybody is moving in this direction except Victoria. After four years of inaction, we had a hodgepodge of ad

hoc processes for projects which either were never going to be delivered or were going to be delivered for very low public benefit. We had plenty of fake tickets and Monopoly money being handed out but no real projects. We need to move towards a process where projects are evaluated in a rigorous way from the very beginning of the policy development stage right through to implementation.

This will also provide far more certainty for external stakeholders, which is critical given so many projects in Victoria in this modern era involve external stakeholder participation in delivering the project, financing the project or using the infrastructure. It is critical that we move towards an organisation such as Infrastructure Victoria, with a best-practice and whole-of-government perspective on infrastructure delivery.

Establishing an organisation such as Infrastructure Victoria will enable Victoria's infrastructure program to dovetail better with other jurisdictions, in particular the commonwealth. So many projects will have to be delivered with cooperation between those two levels of government and, in some cases, between all three levels. Dovetailing with Infrastructure Australia and the national pipeline that it is going to establish will require an organisation such as Infrastructure Victoria.

We need a body like that to develop a proper process. As I have alluded to, that process will involve transparency, but it will not involve the disclosure of all documents at all times. There are going to be times when some documents in a process will not be appropriately disclosed. As I have already mentioned, one of those times is when there is consideration of options at a very early stage. I think everybody in this chamber would agree with the broad cabinet-in-confidence concept, so clearly where there is early consideration of a range of options, it would be appropriate for that process to play out in a way that respects the capacity of the cabinet to have full and frank discussions.

Another stage of the process at which full disclosure of documents may not be possible at all times, or the disclosure of documents might need to be delayed until an appropriate time, is the procurement of certain services. This does not necessarily have to be limited to public-private partnerships; it could be in alliances or during a design and construct process. There could be all sorts of processes where disclosure of certain documents might need to be held up for certain reasons. One example might be where there are repeat transactions, where it would not be in the taxpayers interests to flag the government's willingness to pay for certain types of services. Where that is the case, it

would not be appropriate to disclose documents publicly while other transactions related to a current transaction are in the pipeline. That would be standard practice in the private sector. Should the government be involved in procuring certain services, it would have to bear in mind that there might be circumstances where a certain document might be commercial in confidence and need to be withheld for a certain time to protect taxpayers interests.

Another example is counterparty concerns in relation to privacy. Some information might have to be held back for a certain time where not to do so would scare private sector parties away from a particular part of a process and reduce competitive tension.

These are broad principles. As I said earlier, transparency is important, but where the government is involved in procuring services, and clearly that is the case with this project, there are instances where it is not in the interests of taxpayers to put every document into the public sphere as soon as it is created. We have to balance the different objectives when working out how to proceed optimally with major projects. There are exceptions to the general principle of disclosure that need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. We have issued an expression of interest for the project. We are in the midst of some sensitive procurement aspects, and we need to bear that in mind when we think about what we put on the public record.

In terms of the project, we have already heard a number of valuable contributions outlining its key benefits. Clearly it will be very valuable to take trucks off the West Gate Bridge — 5000 trucks a day will be taken off as a result of the project. It will improve safety, it will improve the productivity of the freight industry and it will improve the capacity of the West Gate Freeway. It is important to improve the capacity and utilisation of existing assets. We have a huge transport network already in place and we need to build on that network, but we also need to more efficiently utilise what we have. That will be where we get the biggest bang for our buck in general.

The West Gate distributor project is a classic example of a project that produces far greater benefits across the network as a whole than we see from the marginal addition of the project itself. It will produce significant advantages to the surrounding suburbs. It will produce significant advantages to the freight industry, which is a critical economic industry, and it will also create benefits right across a transport system with so many interdependencies.

I stress that this is not a project that has seen any cost blowouts. We have seen an addition to its scope and a change in costing that reflects that, but there have been no blowouts whatsoever. What we will see in its delivery is a project that delivers a cost-benefit ratio that is far in excess of projects that the government is rejecting and that the voters in the state rejected.

We have a major project which is being delivered according to a process that is respectful of the competing objectives of any sensible delivery of a major project. It will be delivered with rigorous evaluation and a very solid public policy case. The project will be delivered with solid risk management, in a way that protects taxpayers interests, and in a way that is appropriately transparent. But we will not put every document on the table as soon as it is produced if it is not in the interests of Victorian taxpayers. I recommend that the chamber does not support the motion.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the motion to produce documents in relation to the West Gate distributor project. I listened attentively to Mr Mulino's contribution. It was not surprising that he spent a considerable time advocating the case for Infrastructure Victoria, more so than he did in relation to the document motion. It came to me that perhaps he was doing a little bit of freewheeling given his past occupation as adviser to Steve Bracks, John Lenders and Bill Shorten. His speech sounded more like an advisory-type contribution than it did a member's contribution. I have some sympathy with Mr Mulino in that a mechanism to allow infrastructure projects to have some long-term non-political interference planning is a good thing, and Infrastructure Australia has proven that such a vehicle — that is, a state-based infrastructure organisation — would enhance some of the long-term planning we have to do, particularly in road and rail infrastructure.

So far as I know, Infrastructure Victoria is not running at this stage, and we have what I believe to be a bandaid solution to removing congestion on the West Gate Bridge and, to a larger extent, the West Gate Freeway. In government we offered an alternative to remove congestion from the West Gate Freeway and the West Gate Bridge in the proposed east-west link. While some of my parliamentary colleagues were getting very excited about the fact that the eastern part of the east-west link was a priority for them, for me it was the west link that was a more urgent need to remove congestion on the bridge, and I said that many times both within the party room and in the public arena. Even our friend Mr Pallas, who is now the Treasurer, said in 2012 that

it was imperative to proceed with the west link, a second river crossing to reduce dependence on the bridge, and I concur with his statement.

The West Gate Freeway opened in 1971 and the bridge was completed in 1978. The growth in vehicle movements across the bridge has increased by about 2.1 per cent annually. In 2008 there were 180 000 vehicle movements a day. In 2015 we see just over 202 000 vehicle movements a day on the bridge. There is no doubt that we have a problem with the amount of traffic on the West Gate Bridge and the West Gate Freeway. I suffer that every day as I travel up to Melbourne from my home in outer Geelong. I invariably get stuck on the freeway approaching the bridge at about 6.30 a.m. for about 55 minutes.

That is very unproductive and inefficient, so I can only have sympathy for small businesses and transport operators that are caught in the quagmire of congestion at the West Gate Freeway and bridge, where they are losing money by the minute because of the inefficient traffic flow. We need to do something, and it is my view that a second river crossing should be this government's priority, as it was the coalition government's priority to try to find an alternative river crossing.

However, today's motion is about the provision of documents, and I congratulate Ms Wooldridge on pursuing this motion. We have been criticised for the lack of a business plan in relation to the east-west link. It is interesting that Mr Mulino spent some time telling us why, because of confidentiality and sensitivity issues, on certain occasions the government should have the option not to produce certain documents regarding infrastructure projects. One minute he is criticising the government of the day for not producing documents, and the next he is providing a defence as to why the government of the day should not be producing documents. It is a bit like having your cake and eating it too. I am sure that we can debate that down the track.

The issue I want to take up today is in relation to commentary made by the Andrews government. I suspect that is why this motion was brought forward in the manner it was. I remind the chamber that on 15 September 2014 Labor announced the plan to release the expression of interest (EOI) on the entire West Gate distributor project by Australia Day 2015. The now Premier, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, was quoted as saying:

Labor's West Gate distributor is ready to go ...

In other words, it was shovel ready. On 21 January 2015 the Premier announced the release of an EOI for

only minor works, including traffic lights on Footscray Road, which accounted for only \$40 million of the total half-a-billion-dollar project. The project was also some 3 kilometres away from the West Gate Freeway itself. It was not shovel ready, and the EOI did not provide the sort of detail that Mr Andrews claimed it would in September last year. There are concerns about what has been said and the amount of trust that can be placed in the government's statements about this distributor.

The distributor is also not supported by transport user groups. In fact I have only heard negative comments about what this proposed West Gate distributor will do in terms of moving heavy vehicles off the bridge and providing an alternative route to the port of Melbourne.

On 29 January 2015 the *Herald Sun* reported on a \$180 million black hole in Labor's West Gate distributor project. Labor tried to blame the costs on the need to build additional lanes, but that is not the reason for the cost blowout. The Attorney-General, Martin Pakula, told Neil Mitchell:

... the widening of the West Gate is an alternative project ...

However, Labor's own *Project 10 000* document confirms that the \$400 million to \$500 million cost already included an extra lane in each direction. That is on page 30 of the document, so to argue that the extra lane would cost an extra \$180 million, which the government claimed was not included in the original costings, is a nonsense. These are more mistruths from this government. It is no wonder that people do not have trust in what Labor is saying about the costs associated with this project.

Labor's *Project 10 000* boasts it will get 5000 trucks a day off the West Gate Bridge, but the RACV's policy manager, Brian Negus, has questioned the detail. He said:

Labor says it will take 5000 trucks off the West Gate Bridge every day, but there's no detail ...

Furthermore, the RACV said:

We see this as a short-term project to reduce truck traffic in the area, but a longer term solution is needed — and that solution is the east-west link, integrated with the Metro Rail, which should be built in the next 10 years.

Again the RACV says this is just a bandaid solution that is not addressing the real problem, which is an appropriate east-west link or, at the very least, a western link with a second river crossing to remove some of the congestion from the West Gate Freeway.

Even Craig Rowley, CEO of LeadWest, which is a western suburbs advocacy group, has been quoted as saying:

The West Gate Freeway and bridge, as Melbourne's west continues to grow —

and I talked about the annual increases of 2.1 per cent —

isn't going to be sufficient.

He is also reported as having said:

The city will fall behind its infrastructure needs ...

Even the chief advocacy group LeadWest, which I assume Labor has taken its policy from, said the distributor is merely a short-term, bandaid solution to a much longer term problem associated with congestion on the bridge and the freeway itself.

Neil Chambers, the chief executive of the freight and logistics industry group the Victorian Transport Association said the West Gate distributor is:

... not a suitable replacement in our view for a full river crossing that meets the Western Ring Road ...

Labor members have today used local spokespersons to support their arguments on this issue, so I will do the same. Hobsons Bay City Council has raised many questions about what the distributor will provide for its ratepayers and constituents. The council claimed:

It is unclear whether the potential loss of public land in Hobsons Bay, potential amenity impacts ... and project cost outweigh any benefits gained by the removal of trucks from such a short section of the West Gate Freeway and Bolte Bridge ...

Even the council representing the city through which a lot of this traffic will flow has raised concerns about the benefits that will come from the alternate traffic flow that the distributor will produce.

In fact a resident whose home may be compulsorily acquired under the distributor project has been quoted as saying:

It seems strange, if they're starting building this in the next six months, that no-one would speak to us.

Ms Hartland raised this issue regarding whether home owners who will be adversely affected by this distributor by way of compulsorily acquired property have been consulted. No-one has been speaking to the people who will be affected by the distributor, so it is hardly shovel ready, as suggested by the Premier.

Dr Darren Bennetts from Friends of Stony Creek highlighted the contamination issues that make it unlikely the project would be shovel ready. He said:

Undoubtedly the environmental condition of the land where the road is proposed could be a major impediment to the project, both in terms of time and cost ...

A former WestLink community representative told local media:

It's a complete con on the residents of the west and ... a half-baked proposal ...

I could go on, but I think the members in the chamber are getting the flavour that hardly anyone agrees that the West Gate distributor will provide the sorts of benefits that have been indicated by the Andrews government. The government is not addressing the real problem. The real problem is congestion on the bridge itself and the freeway, and the vital need for a second river crossing. This is very short term and populist. It is poor policy by the Andrews government, and that is why it is imperative that we support this motion to allow the documents to be placed on the record so we have the opportunity to critically review and investigate what has been proposed in the financial and economic information in relation to this project. In closing, I support the motion before the chamber this morning.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am not quite clear on the government's position regarding this production of documents motion in relation to the West Gate distributor. It has been the custom in this chamber for requests for the production of documents to be agreed to. That was the culture and the attitude we established when in government. What could be released was released unless it was subject to factors such as being commercial in confidence or whatever. In the spirit of the Andrews government's commitments to reform Parliament and become an open and accountable government, it would be extraordinary for members opposite to oppose this motion. This custom has worked well and has made governments answerable to the ultimate institution that holds executive government to account — that is, the Parliament and this chamber. It would be a very bad precedent and yet another lie if the government renege on its commitment to become an open and transparent government or to increase openness and transparency.

On the subject of the West Gate distributor, I agree wholeheartedly with every word spoken by Mr Finn and Mr Ramsay. These questions need to be answered. The claim by the government and the Premier that the project is fully funded is clearly not the case, given that the government has been pounding on the doors of the

federal government to extricate it from making some very expensive commitments and not really securing the funds. We need to know more. Certainly the costing of the project seems to have blown out by \$180 million. There are a lot of questions surrounding whether this project has been fully funded and how it has been funded.

There is enormous doubt about whether this is a shovel-ready project. Clearly the costings highlight the fact that in some documentation the off ramps have been factored in, as was the case in a submission to the federal government, and in some instances the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Mr Donnellan, has said that that was not factored into the costings. The design of the project is unclear, the costing of the project is unclear and the funding of the project is unclear. The benefits of the project also deserve closer scrutiny.

Obviously the government does not support the port of Hastings project. It wants to maintain the port of Melbourne and needs to be seen to be addressing the heavy congestion on the West Gate Bridge, particularly given the continued growth of the port of Melbourne, so it needs to be seen to be doing something. As Mr Finn said, the government promised it will take 5000 trucks off the West Gate each and every day. The question remains: where will those trucks go? Which local streets are going to end up having those trucks going past the front door, day in and day out? Which businesses are going to be impacted upon? What is going to be the traffic route?

I note Mr Melhem said that government members would sit down and discuss the project with councils. I am aware that the Australian Labor Party rulebook mandates the establishment of municipal caucuses, where, if there are three or more members of the ALP elected to a council, they must caucus on council business, which is in breach of the Local Government Act 1989, but that is what Labor does. The notion of consultation has a very precise definition within the Labor Party. We know what it means, but it certainly does not involve consultation with those who will be affected, mostly the residents and the businesses that will be impacted by the 5000 trucks that will be diverted into their suburbs and their streets as part of the West Gate distributor.

In closing, there are so many questions, so many inconsistencies and so much doubt about the entire project that I have no doubt this has been developed on the fly. This government would be struggling to find a shovel-ready project.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — We have filled the holes that Labor left in this state over many years. In 1992 it bankrupted the state, and it took us until 1999 to get it back. Yet again in 4 years Labor expected us to do what it could not do in 11 years, and now it is trying to claim the high moral ground and say that it can do it in 100 days, but pigs will fly.

The Labor Party has never been able to deliver on its promises. Its ability to manage money has been proven a failure. Its ability to manage projects has been proven a failure. This chamber is exercising its authority to scrutinise promises that have been made. We need to see these documents, which is why I urge everyone to support this motion, particularly the government, which is committed to reform of the Parliament in order to make it more open and accountable.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The issues have been well canvassed in the debate, so I do not intend my summing up to be extended other than to say that the contribution from those opposite underlines the reason this production of documents motion is so vital and why we need this information to validate the repeated claims that the project is shovel ready — it will show us the evidence.

Though Mr Melhem did not mention it, Mr Mulino said that the government will be opposing this motion. As Mrs Peulich said, that is a very unusual step from a government that is claiming greater transparency and accountability. I strongly encourage the government not to take that step but to commit to the release of documents, which is consistent with its broader commitments to the operation of the Parliament and in particular in relation to this motion to table documents on the West Gate distributor. We need the documents because we need to know what studies have been done and we need to know who has been consulted. We need to know what the genuine costs are because it appears that there are significant blowouts already. We need to know what will actually be achieved compared to what is being claimed by the government.

This is a reasonable request for a set of documents, and providing them will recognise the primacy of this Parliament to be able to make a request of this nature. I strongly encourage the government and the house to support this motion.

Motion agreed to.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order! I call on Ms Pennicuik to move her motions 29 and 55. I advise the house that Ms Pennicuik has been authorised to move both motions cognately so that members may debate both motions at one time.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Thank you, Acting President, and I congratulate you on your elevation to the position of Acting President, a position I enjoyed very much during the previous two terms. I am very happy to pass the baton to you.

I move:

- (1) That this house requires the Leader of the Government to table in the Legislative Council by Tuesday, 17 March 2015, the contract, in full, signed by the Napthine government to host the F1 grand prix in Melbourne from 2016 to 2020.

I advise members that the motion has been amended this morning to change the date on which the contract should be tabled. The date previously read yesterday's date and has now been changed to read 17 March. That is the only amendment to that particular motion.

I also move:

- (2) That this house calls on the government to require the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to undertake and publish, by 16 March 2015 —
 - (1) an accurate figure of total attendances for the 2015 Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix to be held in Melbourne from 12 to 15 March 2015, inclusive; and
 - (2) a full and accurate count of daily attendance, including a full and accurate breakdown of attendance at the event by —
 - (a) paid general admission;
 - (b) grandstand and corporate suites;
 - (c) complimentary or free admission, including attendance by all classes of accredited attendees including media, officials, race teams and all other event staff; and
 - (d) the number of free passes issued but not used.

I thank all members of the Council for allowing me to move these two motions and debate them cognately, because they are clearly related. I had been planning to move the first motion regarding the contract in the previous sitting week during general business, but I was not able to do so because we ran out of time. I thought it would be good if I could move it this week as well as my motion regarding the counting of attendance.

I am not intending to spend a great deal of time on these motions today. For the benefit of new members of the Council and of the Parliament, I have raised the issue of the grand prix in the past, particularly the secrecy around the cost of the race to the Victorian taxpayer and the fact that the grand prix has never been required to accurately list its attendance figures on a day-by-day basis or in totality across the four days of the event. It has been widely reported in the media by both commentators and people who are watching that the estimated attendances of that event are an overestimation. Save Albert Park, of which I was a member way back when, participated in the counting of attendance by sitting next to the entrance gates and physically counting the people who went in. Those counts always produced smaller figures than those released by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation.

I would go so far as to say that some of the figures released by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation regarding the number of attendees at the event are completely beyond belief. Footage shows, for example, that on the first day, which is basically trials et cetera, hardly anyone attends the event — the people number in the hundreds. That means the attendance figures the grand prix corporation claims are for four days are really only for three days. A finite number of people can fit into the general admission area and the grandstands. The number of people the grand prix corporation claims has attended over the years does not fit with the number of people who could have actually fit into those admission areas over three days.

In August last year the then Premier and the then Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Ms Asher, the member for Brighton in the other place, announced that the government had secured — I love the word ‘secured’ — the Formula One grand prix for Melbourne for another five years, as if that was ever really in doubt. There was a lot of song and dance and pantomime about tough negotiations with Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone, who pockets a large amount of taxpayer money every year, to come up with a better deal than has been the case in the past.

We know, for example, that the first grand prix cost the taxpayer about \$1.7 million. Over the last five or six years it has been around a \$50 million loss to the taxpayer every year. Six years with an average loss per year of \$50 million is \$300 million. When I was speaking on a similar motion in 2012 I put the estimate at about \$500 million. Save Albert Park group economists, who track the event every year, conservatively estimate that the grand prix has cost \$630 million to run since its inception. If we assume, as everybody does, that it will probably cost taxpayers

\$50 million a year for the next five years, that is another \$250 million, which comes to \$880 million in total. I would suggest that that is a conservative estimate. For many years I have said that I expect the grand prix, over its 25 years to 2020, to cost taxpayers around \$1 billion. By any measure that is too much money to be spending on a car race that lasts four days per year and has very limited audiences here and overseas. We should be thinking seriously about any more money going into that event.

The contract has been kept secret ever since the race was first hosted in Melbourne. In August last year the Napthine government again signed a contract which it says has to be kept secret and is commercial in confidence. It used the spurious reason that other Australian cities are vying for the event. I would be surprised if any other Australian cities would want to sign up for a \$50 million budgetary loss every year.

This is a cognate debate, and the other motion we are looking at requires the Australian Grand Prix Corporation to count the number of people who attend the event. Dr Napthine last year said:

Formula One is a key pillar of Victoria’s major sporting events strategy. This calendar is unrivalled worldwide, commencing with the Australian tennis open and Asian football cup in January, followed by the ICC Cricket World Cup in February, the Formula One Australian grand prix in March, the AFL final series and the Spring Racing Carnival.

These are the major events, but only one event there does not count its attendees. The tennis, the football, the cricket and the races all accurately count the number of attendees. Those who have been at the tennis or the cricket — the test matches and the world cup that is on at the moment — would know that by about 3.00 p.m. big figures come up on the screen stating exactly how many people are at the MCG or the tennis centre.

An event that swallows up so much taxpayer money and has lost taxpayers \$50 million per year in the last five years and is set to do the same for the next five years — that is half a billion dollars in those two five-year periods — cannot afford the approximately \$200 per entrance turnstile per day in order to accurately count the number of its attendees? Event organisers could be even more modern and use barcodes and scanners like other events. Apparently, however, this is beyond the affordability of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation.

The reality is that the corporation does not want people to know that there are a lot fewer people at the event than is claimed. As my motion suggests, a lot of the people who are counted as attendees are in fact called accredited attendees. They are part of the pit crews or

the race teams or they are other event staff. People are also counted many times; for example, people who attend every day are counted again and again. A lot of double counting goes on. I commend these two motions to the house in the spirit of transparency. The government has said that it is committed to openness, honesty and transparency, so it should release this contract to the people of Victoria. For an event that gets so much support from taxpayers, its organisers should at least be honest about how many people attend over the four days it is held.

People clearly know that I am not in favour of the grand prix, but considering the rising cost of this event to the taxpayer, I am becoming more concerned about its continuation. Whether you support it, whether you are a fan or whether you go to it are separate issues to the question of whether a corporation that has an overseas owner and is funded by taxpayers should be held to standards of scrutiny, openness and transparency regarding its contracts and the number of people who attend its event every single year. That is all I am asking for. I hope members will support these two motions. I thank the house for allowing this cognate debate. The two motions will be voted on separately.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, we seem to have a minister missing, and I am wondering if he is being represented by another minister or if he will be attending the chamber for question time.

Mr Jennings — As a courtesy to the house, I apologise that one of our ministers is not in attendance at the moment. If there is any confusion about that matter, I will take questions on behalf of any of my colleagues. By all means, if there needs to be a default setting, the Leader of the Opposition may ask me a question.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Jennings — However, in other circumstances we will create the opportunity for the correct minister to take the question.

Public holidays

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. In Labor's financial statement there is a cost to the budget over the forward estimates of \$91.51 million for the grand final public holiday and

\$45.76 million for the Easter Sunday public holiday. What specifically are these funds being spent on?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I am coming. The problem is, as I have said in this place before, that the grand final Friday public holiday and the Easter Sunday public holiday are election commitments of the government. We stick to our election commitments, unlike those opposite, who tend to say and do anything in order to get into government. The fact that I am here — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! I think I can anticipate a point of order from Ms Wooldridge. The minister is heading down a slippery slope at the moment. I will take it that he is providing some very brief context to the answer he will give to the very specific question.

Mr SOMYUREK — In relation to the member's question on the cost of the grand final public holiday, I have to say that I and the people of Australia are bemused that members opposite keep going on about cost while never acknowledging and never factoring in the broader economic benefits to the state and indeed the social benefits of government decisions. The coalition has not yet worked out that cost is only one factor that should drive modern-day government. The cost is important, but it should be just one factor that drives any modern-day government's decision-making. It is a combination of economic and social returns, including things such as entrepreneurial and community opportunities created by government decisions.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, I asked a very specific question about funds. These are funds that are outlined in Labor's financial statement, and they are also funds outlined in the budget update. They were twice outlined in very specific detail on a year-by-year basis, and I have asked the minister what they are being spent on. It is a very simple question, and I ask you to bring the minister back to answering it.

Mr Dalidakis — On the point of order, President, I ask you to consider that the question is out of order. It deals with costings so it is a Treasury matter, and it does not deal directly with the policy substance of the minister's portfolio.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister is responsible for both of the public holidays, and there is a specific provision in these financial statements to cover some costs associated with those public holidays. The Leader of the Opposition has sought to find out the scope of the spending of the funds, and that specifically is what I want to hear from the minister.

Mr SOMYUREK — I was getting to this. Obviously those funds are for the loadings on the wages and salaries of people who work for the government on those days.

Supplementary question

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Given that the minister has now admitted that there is a very significant cost in public sector wages and given that it is 65 days since I first asked the question, can the minister now specify what is the cost to the Victorian economy of the Easter Sunday and grand final eve public holidays?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — The shadow minister was asking about direct costs to government before, and now she is asking about costs to government. Out there in the public domain I have heard so much speculation due to members opposite going around quoting figures. If members opposite have some specific figures, they should let us know, because they have been putting out all these figures in the public domain. We are going through a regulatory impact statement (RIS) process.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, the minister has had over two months to ask the department for these figures. He also specified that they will be fully outlined in the RIS. I believe that the work has been done, and I ask that you, President, ask the minister to answer the question, which is: what is the cost to the Victorian economy of the public holidays?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Before I make a ruling on that point of order, I indicate that there is a photographer in the gallery. It is a Parliament-commissioned photographer working for the education unit. It is part of our development of brochures and information for education materials.

Mr Dalidakis — On the point of order, President, the member has requested a figure for the costing of a future event that has not occurred previously, so she is asking for a forecast. As a question she is asking for a numeral that is certainly not within the purview of the government to provide.

Mrs Peulich — On the point of order, President, in addition to Ms Wooldridge's point of order, quite clearly the impost of the additional public holidays has a direct cost to government and a further cost to the community that is of a financial nature. That was the question. The minister should be asked to answer the question rather than engage in attacking the opposition, which is against standing orders.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question is quite specific, and I think the government is in a position to do regulatory impact statements. As I understand it, cabinet has impact statements on various matters that it considers. I would have thought that an economic impact statement was likely to be part of cabinet documentation for certain matters, and therefore I would think that this may be a position the minister could advise the house on. If he cannot, then that will be the minister's answer.

Mr Jennings — On a point of order in relation to this matter, President, the information may be available at some point in time, and the minister has indicated in his answer that there is going to be a regulatory impact statement to be undertaken in relation to this, and in fact the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that in her question. She makes an assumption — that may or may not be correct — that the full economic analysis is available and will be fully explored in the RIS. Indeed that is the nature of that process, to determine the cost structures to Victoria, both in terms of the cost benefits and the impacts of those regulations. The minister has volunteered that that is a process that is underway. So there was an in-built assumption in the member's question that the complete information may be available within the scope of cabinet considerations. I draw that to the President's and the house's attention in relation to a process that the Leader of the Opposition did not ask about in her supplementary question, 'When is the RIS that you have referred to coming?'. She did not ask that. She is asking for that process to be pre-empted. That is the effect of the question.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I concur with an interjection that you were providing an answer that we might have expected from the minister. That was not a point of order. It was information for the house, but we do not really have a process to accept that sort of information as a rule. If we did, all hell would break loose. But that was the answer that perhaps we might have expected from the minister.

Mr SOMYUREK — Before points of order were raised with regard to me, I was about to say that the Andrews government is currently undertaking — and I have said this before — a regulatory impact statement which includes a consultation engagement period. The RIS process will provide insightful and meaningful analysis, including both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the benefits and costs of the public holidays for businesses and the broader community.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, I put to you that that answer was unresponsive to the question about the economic cost and ask you to ask the minister to provide a written response tomorrow.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am in a difficult position because in all truthfulness I do not regard the minister's answer as being as helpful as was the Leader of the Government's answer to the supplementary question. Given that the minister has responsibility for this in his portfolio, I will ask for a confirmation of the regulatory impact statement process as a response for tomorrow morning. It is only in respect of the supplementary question, and essentially it is only to confirm what Mr Jennings has provided to the house.

I also bring to the attention of the house that a former member, Mr Tarlamis, is with us today. He is not in the public gallery, which is the normal domicile for revisiting members. Mr Tarlamis has been appointed a government adviser and is therefore in the advisers box. I do not intend to acknowledge him on every occasion he attends the house, but we extend to him our welcome back to the house today.

Public holidays

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. It concerns his media release of 17 February, which says that commencing this year Easter Sunday will be a public holiday. I further note his response to Mr Morris on 10 February when in response to a question about public holidays he directed Mr Morris to look at Labor's financial statement via Google. I note in the recurrent funding commitments listed on page 7 of Labor's financial statement there is no provision — zero funds committed — in 2014–15 for the Easter Sunday public holiday. I therefore ask: is the minister, as the minister with portfolio responsibility for public holidays, responsible for this omission, or has the Treasurer failed to make provision, or is it true that public sector shiftworkers will work at no additional salary despite your declaration of an additional public holiday?

The PRESIDENT — Order! I come back to Mr Dalidakis's point of order in that I do not believe this minister has responsibility for forward financial estimates. The first question was totally in order because I think the minister did have a capacity to respond to say what that amount was to provide for. However, in terms of forward estimates and the allocation of funds, I do not believe that is this minister's responsibility as such.

Mr Davis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! So it is for this year? I will have a look at the question. My confusion — and I ask for clarification on this — is that the question says:

I note in the recurrent funding commitments listed on page 7 of Labor's financial statement there is no provision — zero funds committed — in 2014–15 for the Easter Sunday public holiday.

That is Mr Davis's question, and yet if my memory serves me right, Ms Wooldridge's earlier question referred to an amount.

Ms Wooldridge — Over the forward estimates.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Over the forward estimates, so that was not for 2014–15. I will let the question stand, but I point out that the minister may well not be responsible for this matter.

Mr Dalidakis — On a point of order, President, Labor's financial statements were produced during the election campaign. Subsequent to that we have had a budget update provided by the Treasurer. I ask that you rule the question out of order because the member did not refer to the budget update statements, which are the financial documents the government works by.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Whichever documents we are talking about, my view is the same, that this may well not be within the minister's responsibility in terms of the funds. As I said, there is a distinction between this question, which ties the minister directly to the funding, and Ms Wooldridge's question, which was that the money was there and it asked what it was being used for. There is a distinction between those two questions. Nonetheless, I will be attentive to the minister's response to see if it does line up.

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I would like to confirm that there will be an Easter Sunday holiday this year.

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, that is clearly not — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Yes, I know. I ask Mr Davis to proceed to the supplementary question. I will deal with that in a moment.

Supplementary question

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Why did the government not provide funding for the resources for the additional costs incurred by public sector agencies for the 2014–15 Easter Sunday public holiday, or is it

the case that the government expects public sector workers to work at no additional charge?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — Clearly that is a question for the Treasurer, and it has nothing to do with my responsibilities as Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade.

Mr Drum — On a point of order, President, quite simply all ministers are responsible for their portfolio. If they are going to make decisions within their portfolio that will create an impost on the government, they are responsible for the impost. If they are going to make a decision within their ministry, where they are responsible, and create an impost on the people, they are responsible for that impost on the people. Irrespective of that, the minister cannot walk away from the responsibility for the impact his decisions will have on both the government sector and the Victorian public.

Mr Davis — On the point of order, President, what the minister is asking us to accept is that he has declared a public holiday without any discussion, dialogue or decision about whether provision will be made for public sector funds and public sector agencies. That is clearly, firstly, not tenable — I do not think it is true — and secondly, clearly he does have responsibility for that engagement across government and into the relevant sectors.

The PRESIDENT — Order! We actually have questions and answers, supplementary questions and answers, but no elaboration. Does the minister wish to add to the point of order?

Mr Somyurek — Okay, I will add to the point of order.

The PRESIDENT — Order! It must be on the point of order.

Mr Somyurek — I will wait for them.

Ms Wooldridge — On the point of order, President, if that is concluded, under the standing orders that answer was not responsive to the question, so I request that we have a written response from the Treasurer tomorrow, because clearly the minister is abrogating all responsibilities in relation to funding.

Mr Jennings — On the point of order, President, my point of order relates to a minister's responsibility in this chamber and his or her obligation to respond to a question that was asked in this chamber within their responsibilities and your direction, President, about whether they adequately acquit their responsibility. I

believe that what has been raised by the Leader of the Opposition goes beyond the scope of that and is now asking for not only ministers in this chamber to be accountable within a 24-hour time frame for responsive answers within their responsibility but a roping-in mechanism to allow for ministers in the other place to be subject to that expectation as well. That may have been an unintended consequence for the Leader of the Opposition, but I encourage you, President, to carefully consider what you have been asked to issue a direction on in relation to whether you wish to set a precedent that ministers in the other chamber will be expected to respond to questions in this chamber within 24 hours. I suggest to you that that is beyond the spirit, the intention and the scope of the standing and sessional orders.

Mrs Peulich — On the point of order, President, the minister is responsible for the public holiday policy, which has been adopted by the government. As minister he has responsibility for knowing the impact of that policy on the private sector and on the government sector, which can be surmised through, obviously, documents such as the budget papers. It goes without saying that the minister should be able to provide that information to this chamber as requested.

The PRESIDENT — Order! On Ms Wooldridge's point of order, I direct the minister to provide a written answer tomorrow, because notwithstanding what the Leader of the Government said, and I agree with the implications as he has stated them, my problem with Mr Somyurek's answer to the substantive question is that it was — and I may be paraphrasing this, but not by very much — that there would be a public holiday on Easter Sunday. I do not regard that as responsive in any way to the question that was asked. Indeed had the minister responded in a way more akin to what the Leader of the Government suggested in some of his remarks to the house today, then I might have been more satisfied. But the way the minister responded to the question was clearly not satisfactory and did not really indicate the government's position in respect of the financial aspect of the Easter Sunday holiday, which we already knew was happening.

Mr Davis — On a further point of order, President, in response to that question the minister has implicitly asked us to believe as a chamber that he does not have responsibility for this policy, yet he has separately indicated to the chamber that he has ordered a regulatory impact statement on precisely these matters. It seems to me that it is impossible for the minister to argue that he is not responsible yet at the same time to order a regulatory impact statement. There is an inconsistency there. I ask you to turn your mind to

whether it is possible for the minister to shirk responsibility on one hand but order a regulatory impact statement on the other.

Mr Somyurek — On the point of order, President, the member's question was about the latest financial statement. In his question the member raised doubts as to whether the Easter Sunday public holiday was going ahead. Now he is talking about the regulatory impact statement process. Clearly we made provision for the Easter Sunday and grand final holidays to be costed and funded. It is one of our policies. We are confident that every one of our election commitments is affordable, but the rest is up to the Treasurer.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I have already asked for a written answer because I did not regard the answer as responsive. I am not going to take a position, as requested by Mr Davis, until I have seen a written answer.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the minister's answer be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I will accept the motion, but I tend to agree with the interjections from the government side that it is putting the cart before the horse in that I have already ordered a written answer to the question. Therefore it is my view that at the moment there is no answer before the house, or certainly not a satisfactory one. The member is clearly saying, 'Let's take note of the response to this point'. It is not in my power to rule out a procedural motion of that nature so I will put it to the house.

Motion agreed to.

Public holidays

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, and I ask: did the minister undertake any impact assessment before gazetting the Easter Sunday public holiday?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — The regulatory impact statement process (RIS) started on 4 February and the public holiday was gazetted after that.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I take it from the minister's answer

that the regulatory impact process has not been completed. Indeed the minister gazetted the public holiday on 16 February and has indicated that the RIS will be completed sometime later this year. I ask: what is the point of undertaking a RIS when the holiday has already been gazetted and the event will be over before the minister knows the impact it will have on the Victorian economy?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — It was in the public interest to gazette this public holiday early because small businesses and the people of Victoria — workers, businesses and workers' families — needed certainty around Easter Sunday.

Public holidays

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. Casual employment makes up a significant proportion of the hospitality workforce. However, casual employees are not often rostered to work on public holidays due to the high wage cost to small businesses. Why is the government hindering small business and job creation by establishing new public holidays?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — Again I say that this was a longstanding election commitment of the Andrews government. Unlike those opposite, we stick to our election commitments. The fact that we are not getting Dorothy Dixers from this side two weeks into our parliamentary term of office indicates that we stick to our election commitments. Five years ago those opposite committed to getting rid of Dorothy Dixers and for four dark years —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister knows that under the standing orders that is debating. The elimination of Dorothy Dixers has little to do with the question. I am going to have to do enormous somersaults to understand how that response has anything to do with the specific question before the minister today.

Mr SOMYUREK — It might not have been that responsive, but it was factual. The Easter Sunday public holiday is good for workers and it is good for their families. In particular it demonstrates that the Andrews government cares about frontline workers who have to work over Easter. We understand that Easter Sunday is no ordinary day.

In 2011 members opposite changed a non-trading day into an ordinary day. Easter Sunday is no ordinary day. Think about those frontline workers, such as emergency services workers, policemen and nurses, who have to work on Easter Sunday. These are the people who keep us safe and healthy on Easter Sunday while we are enjoying the day with our families and friends, yet those opposite are asking these people to work on Easter Sunday and not be fairly compensated.

Supplementary question

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the member for his answer. I talked about the hospitality industry and the minister went on a side rant. I ask the minister: in the context of my question relating to the hospitality industry, has the minister's department received advice similar to that provided by the Australian Hotels Association, which claims that many small businesses with casual employees are trading unprofitably on public holidays and that the new public holidays are a further disincentive to open small business doors?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — Members opposite do not want to talk about the social benefits; they want to talk about the economic consequences. Let us talk about — —

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, the minister has immediately launched into an attack on the opposition rather than answering the question, and I ask that you bring him into line.

The PRESIDENT — Order! At this point the minister has made an introductory statement; I do not accept that it launched into an attack. The other issue for me is that I am dealing with many points of order. Frankly, I know what we are talking about. I am listening to the same conversations as members are in terms of the questions and answers, and I really am in a position to determine most of those satisfactorily without all the points of order. I understand the concerns that some members might have about answers from ministers and so forth. As I have said, there is a significant responsibility on me now to interpret and to make decisions on answers to questions, and all members know that I am prepared to do it. I get a bit aggravated if I have persistent points of order which are raking over ground that I can deal with without those points of order, particularly when they bring in matters of debate rather than actual points of order.

Mr Drum — On a point of order, President, I concur with what you have just said. Quite often we

will be sitting here in opposition and wondering. Sometimes you do stop a minister who is debating, and other times you wait for us to call the point of order. I would be happy to stay seated if you are going to call ministers and stop them when they start debating and when they start attacking the opposition.

The PRESIDENT — Order! My hearing is not so bad that I do not hear the point of order the first time. When it runs to two, three and four people on the same point of order, in the same time frame and on the same question, I get a little agitated.

Mr SOMYUREK — That is hypocrisy from Mr Drum. For four years, two years, or however long he was in office, he hardly answered one question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister!

Mr SOMYUREK — President, I was provoked.

As it is, the grand final is a key contributor to the Victorian economy and to the Victorian tourism industry. Therefore the grand final brings with it significant economic benefits for central Melbourne. The grand final public holiday will deepen those economic benefits for central Melbourne and will also spread those benefits to the rest of Victoria, including regional Victoria. An extended grand final weekend is likely to — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Minister. I require a written response to the supplementary question, which was specifically whether or not your department has had representations from organisations like the Australian Hotels Association with regard to the impact on employment in their industries. While I note your answer, it did not address the supplementary question.

Public holidays

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, and I refer him to comments by the National Retail Association chief, Trevor Evans, warning that the new Easter Sunday public holiday would mean the retail sector would 'basically shut for four days straight' over the Easter period. Is this also your official departmental advice?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — No.

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Is the Easter Sunday public holiday just poor public policy, as indicated by the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, or is the minister just catering to union demands, including that of his own union?

Mr Jennings — On a point of order, President, you know that the obligation of those asking supplementary questions is to make sure that the answer builds directly on what was in the question or answer. The material Mr Finn has added to his supplementary question is outside the scope of the matters he raised directly. In relation to the body he relied on as his evidence to support his substantive question, it is not the evidence he relied on in the supplementary question. The minister's very appropriate, direct and succinct response to the member's question did not provide the scope for Mr Finn to pursue new material.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, President, the supplementary question I raised with the minister refers directly to public policy. Public policy is clearly responsible for the Easter Sunday holiday, and as such it is fully in order as a supplementary question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am prepared to allow the supplementary question to stand, although I had some concern about the fact that the substantive question referred to one industry association and the supplementary question brought in an entirely different organisation and an entirely different matter of public comment. However, I accept that Mr Finn's position was in respect of public policy. I will allow the minister to answer.

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — Can I have that supplementary question again?

Mr FINN — Is the Easter Sunday public holiday just poor public policy, as indicated by the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, or is the minister just catering to union demands, including that of his own union?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I thank the member for his question because it allows me to say this: this public policy is catering to demands of paramedics, nurses, emergency services workers — the people who keep Mr Finn and the rest of our community safe and healthy on Easter Sunday. That is who this public policy is aimed at.

Ministerial responsibility

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. Of the six extraordinary growth industries in Labor's jobs plan, which ones fall within his portfolio responsibility?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — Obviously as far as innovation is concerned, I have a lot to do with medical technology and pharmaceuticals. Because they are all innovative industries, I have a lot to do with all of them. If I can go through them, the purposes of those six industries are targeted at high-growth sectors of the Victorian economy where we believe Victoria has competitive advantages. Therefore we believe Victoria can potentially export. In terms of my trade and innovation portfolio in particular, I will have something to do with most of those six areas.

Supplementary question

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister. Given the minister's wideranging priority sector responsibilities, could he outline to the house what specific initiatives he has taken to ensure job growth in those sectors?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — What hypocrisy on the part of those opposite! How dare opposition members come in here and lecture the Andrews government on jobs creation. For four years they sat idly by, failing to use — —

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, it is clear that the minister is headed off on a tangent of attacking the opposition rather than answering the question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I must say that I will accept a little bit more context, if you like, in the course of an answer to a substantive question where ministers have longer on their feet to provide a response than for a supplementary question where, if it becomes all context and does not address the question, it is then avoiding the question. The minister is aware of my power to request a written response if the answer is not adequate. I suggest that to this point I would not regard the remarks as apposite to the question. The minister might feel satisfied with them, but I direct him to the supplementary question.

Mr SOMYUREK — Let me reinforce the fact that the Andrews government is focused on creating jobs, on boosting productivity and on attracting investment

into this state. The Andrews government will work with and assist the business community in creating jobs. In fact Labor's *Back to Work* plan commits the Andrews government to assisting in the creation of 100 000 jobs. In opposition we promised that the first bill we would bring before this Parliament would be the Back to Work Bill, and that is exactly what we did.

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order, President, I remind the minister of the new sessional orders and ask you to bring him back, perhaps by way of written response, to the question, which is about specific initiatives the minister has undertaken to create job opportunities in those sectors.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The question was specific, and the minister's answer was more general in terms of a whole-of-government response. Therefore I ask that the minister provide a written response to the supplementary question tomorrow.

Local government review

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, who is the representative in this house of the Minister for Local Government. I am reliably informed that of the 79 local governments in Victoria there are nearly 20 which may be classified as dysfunctional, with either councillors or staff not working together, or councillors not functioning effectively. In addition to those 20 councils, there are many more that are regarded as financially unsustainable. Within western Victoria, and very close to my electorate, are both dysfunctional and unsustainable municipalities. I would not be asking the minister to intervene if I did not see the effect that this situation is having on business confidence and jobs growth in western Victoria. There is a situation on the horizon where I believe the dysfunctional nature of a local council will see many hundreds of local jobs leave western Victoria and finish up interstate or overseas. Is the minister willing to undertake a review of local government?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — That is a very specific question on local government. I am happy to pass that on.

Supplementary question

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — Will the minister take the necessary action if Victoria is to lose hundreds of jobs as the result of the actions of a dysfunctional local government?

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — I am not sure if that part of the question was directed to me. I am sure that the first one was directed to the Minister for Local Government, but I need clarification on whether Mr Purcell was referring the question to me as the minister responsible for small business or whether it was directed to the Minister for Local Government. If it is for the minister in the Assembly, I am happy to take it on notice.

The PRESIDENT — Order! My view is that, given that the substantive question was to the Minister for Local Government, then so too must the supplementary be directed in the same way. The minister has taken it on notice. In taking it on notice under the new sessional orders, that would also require a response tomorrow morning from the minister in another place.

Disability services

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to Ms Mikakos as the minister representing the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Mr Foley. In September 2014 the Family and Community Development Committee published its report on its inquiry into social inclusion and Victorians with disability. Recommendation 2.1 of this report calls on the Victorian government to commence a review of the Disability Act 2006 by 2019 to ensure that it aligns with the commonwealth National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 and reflects the Victorian government's future involvement in disability. What is this government's intention regarding the recommended review, and will this government commence the review prior to the anticipated rollout of the full national disability insurance scheme, which is scheduled to begin in July 2016?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question, and I acknowledge her very deep commitment to supporting people with disabilities. I inform the member that the Andrews Labor government is currently considering the recommendations arising from the Family and Community Development Committee's inquiry into social inclusion and Victorians with a disability. As the member noted in her question, this was a report tabled in the Parliament in September last year that the previous government failed to respond to ahead of the election.

The Andrews government is fully committed to the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme. It will be a groundbreaking reform, a true Labor reform across this nation. Under the heads of

agreement with the commonwealth government, the further rollout of the scheme across Victoria is scheduled to occur between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2019, as the member noted. The government expects to finalise an agreement with the commonwealth on full scheme transition arrangements by 30 June this year. Once these arrangements are finalised, the government will consider the appropriate timing of a review of relevant Victorian legislation required as a result of the implementation of the national disability insurance scheme.

The member referred in her question to the parliamentary committee report into social inclusion. I stress the importance, from our government's perspective, of supporting people with disabilities to participate in society in various ways. I note with concern reports in today's *Herald Sun* in respect of the potential implications of the McClure report and that potentially half of all disability support recipients may lose their financial support. The government will be carefully examining the federal government's response to the McClure report to ensure that the federal government is not abandoning vulnerable members of our community.

Supplementary question

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer. I find it encouraging that the government is seeking to grapple with the diverse needs of people with disabilities through the deliberations the minister has just described. I ask the minister to keep me informed of the progress of these transition arrangements, and I also ask her to consider committing to the development of partnerships between the government, community and private sectors as these negotiations develop.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her supplementary question. As the member would know, I am not the minister directly responsible for this portfolio area. However, I will pass on to Minister Foley her request to be kept updated regarding progress.

I point out in respect of the issue of partnerships that not-for-profit organisations and community sector organisations are significant providers in the disability sector, so of course we will work very closely in consultation with them in terms of the national disability insurance scheme reforms and also issues around social inclusion.

Government transparency legislation

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for the Special Minister of State, Mr Jennings. In the last sitting week of the previous Parliament Labor introduced the Transparency in Government Bill 2014. According to a media release dated 15 October 2014, this would have legislated for hospital statements of priorities to be released by 1 November in the year to which the agreement relates and for the quarterly release of hospital performance data and ambulance and fire services response times. At the time it was stated that an Andrews government would reintroduce the bill, as it was rejected by the then Napthine government. Can the Special Minister of State advise whether the Andrews government is proceeding with this bill, and when will the bill be introduced to the Parliament?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I thank Ms Hartland for her question and for her commitment to greater transparency and greater reliability of information that is available in the public domain. I happen to know that this is an issue she is acutely concerned about.

I am very happy to confirm to the house that it is the intention of the government to introduce within this session a bill to give effect to our commitment. I reiterate our commitment according to what the member has outlined. The timing of that piece of legislation is dependent upon the ability of the systems currently in place. That is not necessarily in relation to hospital reporting but to the emergency services aspect of the reporting requirements that would be part of the bill, because our commitment was beyond the scope of data that may be available through Victorian hospital datasets and other health-related data; it incorporated datasets that previously had not existed in the emergency services area of responsibility.

We are working through the earliest implementation time for the information systems that will enable us to cover the whole field within our bill and, at the time of introducing the bill, to tell the Parliament with confidence when the information will be available. I confirm that we will do it this year. The only delay in the introduction of the legislation relates to our ability to complete the emergency services datasets that previously have not existed.

Supplementary question

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — I am making a presumption that one of the blockages to being able to introduce this legislation and set up the

system is the lack of an information technology system that can cope across all the services. Is that one of the things that needs to be addressed by the government before the legislation is brought in, or is it one of the things that may delay it?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — That is a totally appropriate question because I referred to it in my substantive answer. But just to make sure that I am clear to the chamber, it will not be necessary for the information technology system to be in place before the bill is introduced and passed. On behalf of the government I want to provide the Parliament with some certainty that when we introduce a bill that facilitates and creates a head of power to establish that information, in the running of our contributions to debate we will indicate very clearly to the chamber and to the people of Victoria when we expect that system to be in place. It does not have to be in place prior to the bill being passed, but certainly we would like to have a degree of confidence about when the system will be up and running.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Lovell has raised with me a concern about a response that was received from Ms Pulford in line with the sessional order in respect of a question that was asked yesterday. I will give some consideration to the concerns raised by Ms Lovell in respect of the question. However, I note that some of her concerns relate to what I would consider to be a debate or a contest of some of the information in the response. I am advised that there is no provision for a take-note motion, so the only thing that can happen is for me to consider the responsiveness of the answer to the question. I will consider that later this day.

Sitting suspended 1.00 p.m. until 2.04 p.m.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Western Victoria Region

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and it is in relation to the government's election commitment to build a P-12 school at Bannockburn. I was pleased to see Premier Andrews announce the tendering process for the school on 5 February. That is an important step towards the implementation of our election commitment to the Bannockburn community. I would particularly like to know when we could expect an outcome from the tendering process and whether the minister could indicate the stages of the project, the

proposed time line and the proposed completion time for the Bannockburn P-12 school.

Northern Victoria Region

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Regional Development, but it could also be addressed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety or even the Special Minister of State, in relation to the Echuca-Moama bridge. As members would be aware, this issue has been around in the state and certainly in the north of the state for decades. Prior to the election the former Deputy Premier, Peter Ryan, made a \$96 million commitment, being Victoria's share of funding for the proposed new bridge. The communities of Echuca and Moama have for some time been crying out for a new bridge and working out the best route for the new bridge.

Calls made during the entire 11 years of the Labor government, from 1999 to 2010, were unheard, and there were many delays during that period. For the four years the coalition was in government the message was very clear: if the councils on either side of the river could work out a preferred route, the government would find its share of the funding. The culmination was an announcement prior to the recent election. My constituency question is quite simple: will the minister or ministers involved in relation to this significant project continue the funding commitment?

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It is in relation to the duplication of Princes Highway west in lovely western Victoria, in my electorate. A couple of issues have been posed to me by constituents in relation to land acquisition for the duplication of the 37-kilometre stretch between Winchelsea and Colac. In the 2014-15 state budget \$362 million was allocated to duplicate that section of road, yet we have heard nothing from the Andrews government about either its commitment to the funding or the commencement of the construction of that section of highway.

My question to the minister is in two parts: is the government committed financially to the duplication between Winchelsea and Colac, and when will construction commence, given the concerns raised about compulsory acquisitions currently underway?

Northern Victoria Region

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Agriculture, Ms Pulford. Farmers and agribusinesses in the Strathbogie region are in desperate need of local investment to grow their businesses and support local jobs. Can the minister advise how the Andrews Labor government's \$500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will benefit these communities?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Given the tragic death outside the Frankston court precinct on Fletcher Road in late 2014 and community calls for the installation of a pedestrian crossing at this site, will the minister advise when the government will act to ensure the safety of pedestrians in this busy precinct?

Eastern Victoria Region

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Local Government. I ask the minister on behalf of the Cardinia Ratepayers and Residents Association to outline the recent increases in rates in the shire of Cardinia and the benefits of rate capping for Cardinia residents. As a former councillor I know local governments need secure and stable revenue bases, but rate increases also need to be sustainable. Rates cannot indefinitely increase faster than household budgets. There are sustainable and balanced ways to achieve this outcome. The New South Wales economic regulator, the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, has for some time managed an economic regulatory arrangement that has led to sustainable but smaller rate increases over time.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Debate resumed.

Mr DALIDAKIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to talk about Ms Pennicuik's motions and suggest that the house votes against them. I have great sympathy for the motions and indeed the residents of Albert Park who are in the immediate vicinity of the grand prix.

I talk about this from a position of firsthand experience. Whilst I am not a resident of Albert Park, I used to play competitive cricket for a cricket club that is a tenant of the Albert Park precinct. As a result of the grand prix

being held at Albert Park we had to come to the conclusion that should we make finals — I happily say that our cricket club did make finals from year to year — we would never be able to play those matches at home because they coincided with the timing of the race. As I said, I understand this issue from firsthand experience. It is an issue of ongoing tension between users of the park and locals, for whom the event causes disruptions, and the sporting public, tourists and the viewing audience across screens not only in Melbourne and Australia but also around the world.

When we talk about the production of documents in reference to the race contract, we have to do so while taking into consideration a whole range of competing demands. First and foremost of those demands is the commercial-in-confidence nature of the contract, and the commercial-in-confidence nature of this specific contract is without question. I can say that with some authority because in 2013 a hearing in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) looked at the very issues Ms Pennicuik, a fellow member for Southern Metropolitan Region, has raised in her motions.

Ms Pennicuik's motions, which we are debating concurrently, require the Leader of the Government to provide the contract signed by the government of the 57th Parliament in full. She also requests that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation undertake and publish accurate figures of attendances in totality and broken down by date.

Referring to the VCAT judgement, it is very clear that the issues Ms Pennicuik has raised have been dealt with by an effective independent body. The issues before us have been debated at length by legal counsel on behalf of the applicant, which was the anti grand prix campaigning group Save Albert Park, and by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, defending itself as the respondent.

The Save Albert Park group pursued the very issues that Ms Pennicuik does now. It requested the contract in full. It also disputed the attendance figures provided by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and requested that those figures be broken down. For a variety of reasons the decision supported the grand prix corporation's contention that to provide such documents, thereby allowing applicants to view and have access to them, would cause a great deal of commercial harm to the grand prix corporation and also potentially harm the viability of the event going forward.

I want to reflect on what the grand prix provides for the state of Victoria and the people of Melbourne. People often look at attendance figures, the viewing public and a range of other issues, but the predominant and often-forgotten issue that is not discussed is that of jobs. The grand prix provides an opportunity for many people within our skilled and trained sector to undertake upwards of three months worth of labour that they would have little access to otherwise. People undertake a significant number of catering and security jobs on the day. There are also other employment opportunities in areas ranging from safety and security to general merchandising et cetera. A great deal of economic activity surrounds not just attendance at the event but also employment resulting from the event.

I return to the VCAT decision. The decision dealt with the Australian grand prix contracts and the issue of attendance. A range of outcomes were provided, and I will come to them in a moment. There was one particular instance during the VCAT proceedings when the applicants claimed that the figures provided by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation in relation to attendance were somewhat dubious — and I think that is a fair assessment of the claim by Save Albert Park Inc. and the other applicant, Ms Joan Logan — and the response was that the evidence provided by the applicants was not deemed credible. It is important to note that in its decision VCAT also said it would potentially harm the grand prix corporation. Its decision read:

In my view, it is clear from Mr Hough’s evidence, which I accept, that the release of the documents would be likely to disadvantage the corporation in the ways Mr Hough described.

The following is critical:

I need not be certain the release would in fact disadvantage the corporation. It is enough if it is ‘likely’ that it will do so.

It is important that we reflect on the phrase, ‘It is enough if it is likely that it will do so’. While there may be a range of public benefits that arise from this contract being available for public discussion, the clear interpretation and judgement was that even the mere suspicion that it could be disadvantageous was enough to warrant the prevention of its release. I think that is worthy of the chamber’s reflection.

Under cross-examination it was accepted that neither the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office report entitled *State Investment in Major Events — Commissioned studies — 2005 Australian Formula 1 Grand Prix — Evaluation* nor an Ernst & Young economic impact report on the 2011 grand prix relied on the corporation’s attendance methodology in their

calculation of the wider economic benefits. This shows that the grand prix corporation may have its own way of calculating attendance figures. However, other reports that were produced at the behest of the then government to assess the bona fides of the grand prix used calculations that were not reliant upon the grand prix corporation’s calculations and were, in effect, able to support the attendance figures.

In the VCAT decision the claim was that those two aforementioned reports by the Auditor-General and Ernst & Young focused their numbers of unique visitors and attendees derived from their own commissioned surveys. The question of the dubiousness of the attendance figures at the grand prix was subsequently not supported by two external reports, not just by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation. It goes on to say:

Balancing the above factors, I conclude disclosing the documents would be likely to expose the corporation unreasonably to disadvantage.

In so doing the decision talks about the threat of competition from other countries attempting to host the grand prix. In order to do so they would need to find a slot. To find a slot they would be stealing the Australian grand prix from us and potentially taking it overseas. There is the issue of Indonesia looking at a grand prix, plus a range of countries that are floated from time to time that want to establish their own race.

VCAT found that the disadvantage potentially faced by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation overrides the public interest test in this instance. As I said at the outset, I have a great deal of sympathy for Ms Pennicuik’s personal interest in the grand prix, and I reiterate my strong sympathy for the local residents and the users of the park who are inconvenienced by the race.

However, the benefit of the race to the state of Victoria in a range of ways, including tourism, is clear. During the period the race is held Melbourne has an almost 100 per cent occupancy rate for all of its hotels and other accommodation across the city. During that period our rooms and our restaurants are full, our tourism facilities are being visited and the population is engaged with the race, a race that attracts a significant amount of attention globally. The race attracts attention locally, not just from Melbourne and country Victoria but from interstate as well; we receive a great deal of visitors from interstate when the race is held. VCAT has determined that the threat to the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, and the threat to the interests of Victoria, is far greater than the public interest test of providing these documents in the first instance.

I leave members with the thought that if we genuinely believe in the independence of our judiciary, and VCAT is an arm of our judiciary, then at some stage we must look back on that and say that the argument has been made and the argument has been lost — very recently I might add — and as a result we should probably get on with the job of supporting the residents of Albert Park by making sure that as little disruption is caused by the race as possible. We must do what we can to ensure that there is as little disruption to park users as possible, and we must also ensure that the park itself is looked after and returned to its original condition after the race so the benefit of investing in those facilities is shared.

Many people, not just the local residents, but especially the local residents, do in fact benefit from the facilities that are set up in the park for the race, including the pit lane facilities, which are used by sporting clubs and which would not be there otherwise. The community also benefits from the improvement of sporting club facilities around the precinct. Of course the precinct also has the wonderful facility of the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre.

As one of the members representing Southern Metropolitan Region, which takes in the Albert Park precinct and the facilities of the Australian Formula One Grand Prix racetrack, I indicate that the first of these motions should not be agreed to because the exact same matter was taken to VCAT and an independent member of the judiciary on the VCAT judging panel decided the public interest was not best met by the release of these documents.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — We understand that the Greens have been consistent in their demand for various documents and also in their opposition to the Australian Formula One Grand Prix. As Ms Pennicuik has said, this is not necessarily about whether you support the grand prix, it is simply about scrutiny of the figures. There is a larger debate to be had about whether the race is worthwhile, but Ms Pennicuik's second motion goes to the accuracy of the attendance figures.

The coalition has always been very positive and supportive of the grand prix, going right back to the day when we were able to secure the event for Melbourne. While the Greens have always been opposed to it, Labor members have not been sure where they sit in relation to their support or otherwise for the grand prix. A former Deputy Premier drove members of the other house crazy when the race was first secured for Victoria, Melbourne and Albert Park. He opposed the race, ran petitions against the event and tried to drum up

a whole range of opposition to it. Then all of a sudden Labor members found themselves in government and they were forced to change tack.

Ms Pennicuik said there is no danger of the state losing this event, and I do not agree with that. My understanding is that there is significant interest in Asia in this event. Should it ever be lost, should Victoria decide that the cost of staging the event is too much, it would go on the market and it could achieve a far greater price than we currently pay to hold it here.

It is worth noting that Ms Pennicuik was a little bit light-hearted about the so-called fierce negotiations that took place prior to last year's event. They were hard-fought negotiations, they were drawn out and they did result in a \$6 million saving for the Victorian taxpayer as opposed to what was paid the previous year. The former government made sure that we continue to have the first race of the year, that we continue to have a daytime grand prix and that we have the grand prix for the best price we could possibly negotiate. That is very important, and it must be placed on the record. The grand prix is part of a whole suite of major events we have been able to secure for the city, and it is something that makes this city incredibly special when you compare it to other cities around the world.

We must make it clear that these major events that we sometimes take for granted do not just turn up here. We pay enormous amounts of money for our major event schedule. We pay for the theatre events that play at the Princess Theatre over the road from this place and we pay for the arts exhibitions at the Victorian Arts Centre. We pay for cycling races, and we make a whole range of investments in so many major events strategies. These events form a collective, and they continue to put this city and this state on the world stage. To categorise the success or failure of a particular project or event based solely on the number of people going through the turnstiles does not take in the whole picture of this state's events strategy, which creates a \$1.8 billion industry.

The major events platform generates about 3500 jobs. The Australian Formula One Grand Prix alone generates somewhere between 350 to 410 full-time equivalent jobs. This state had an incredible period of major events starting last year when the Jean Paul Gaultier exhibition opened. Following that opening we had the Asian Cup and then the Australian Open Tennis Championships. The whole strategy is something we need to look at in its entirety.

With respect to the view the Greens have of the grand prix, I do not think we need send out these signals. That does not mean that we should not scrutinise every event or every aspect of every event. I agree that we should, and that is why we will support this motion. We believe in full scrutiny. We believe in having all major events scrutinised and judged; however, we need to look at the intangibles. For instance, what is the grand prix worth to our total tourist market? How many of the 37 000 people who come here for the grand prix also undertake activities that are not associated with motor racing? How many other people are here predominantly for another reason but stay for the grand prix.

It is an enormous industry, and we need to look at it in terms of the totality of its promotion of our city and state, and the value of possibly having the nation's biggest television event in terms of overseas broadcasting. It is very difficult to ascertain and put an exact figure on its value, particularly when some of the key viewer audiences are from burgeoning tourism markets for Australia — namely, Asia, India and Europe.

I support Ms Pennicuik's motions and congratulate her on being consistent in relation to bringing to the house debates around accuracy of turnstile numbers and attendance figures on the various days. However, I also caution that there is a far greater issue here, which is the amazing and absolutely stunning events portfolio that we have been able to build over many years and several governments, and that we should be looking to continue to build this portfolio because it is putting this city on a level beyond any other. Not only do we have some of the greatest sporting facilities here but we also have them on the doorstep of our city, as opposed to being 20, 30 or 40 kilometres away from our CBD.

There are a range of benefits, and it has taken a long time for this state to be in the position it is in at the moment. We need to guard that, and we need to be very careful about what we have built up over the years. We need to make sure that we send all the right messages so we can negotiate as hard as we possibly can to get the best value for our taxpayers when we bring in these major events. But we have to keep in mind that the Cricket World Cup, which just jammed roughly 100 000 Indians and South Africans into the MCG on Sunday evening, did not come cheap.

As I said earlier, these events do not just decide to pick themselves up and present themselves here in Melbourne for us to say thank you. We have to go out there and chase them, we have to be proactive, we have to show initiative and we have to offer the commercial viability for them to come here — in the same way that

we will have to when we host some of the world's best football teams from Europe in the middle of this year. These events do not come cheap, but they continue to set this state and city ahead of every other city in the world when it comes to hosting major events, whether they be sporting, cultural or theatrical, and that is something we need to guard very carefully.

I am happy for these motions to be agreed to. I am happy for the scrutiny that is needed to occur. We concur with the government that there will be a range of commercial issues and factors that will be very sensitive and difficult for the government to work its way through. We support the government in that it will have to look at commercial-in-confidence documents very carefully, because by supporting these motions we are not saying that we are going to break all those traditions. We are supportive of the motions and hope that our major events strategy continues to go from strength to strength.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I take the opportunity to thank Mr Drum and Mr Dalidakis for their contributions to debate on the motions. I will briefly address what Mr Drum has said. He opened his contribution by reiterating that these two motions are about information to be made available to the public and scrutiny of an event which currently receives and has received over the past 20 years a very large amount of public money. They are about making sure that the information provided to the public is accurate, which is not the case at the moment. Mr Drum was correct in saying that the coalition has always been supportive of the grand prix, while there have been differing opinions, let me say, in the ALP regarding the grand prix.

I go to the point about losing the event to Asia, if Victoria decides it costs too much. That begs two questions. What is too much? If you were to ask me, I would say it is already too much — way too much. How much more does it have to be before it becomes too much? I also note the costs of other grand prix events — for example, Canada has paid \$187 million to run an event for 10 years. We are lucky to get three years out of that amount of money. That knowledge is public. The whole argument about commercial-in-confidence issues falls down there.

I promised members that I would not speak for long on these motions, and I will not. I did not bring in the information about all the grand prix around the world, but I know that in most of those places the cost of the events is made known to the public. It is only in Victoria that we are having the argument that the cost has to be kept secret. The cost to the other countries that

host grand prix is made public. We keep saying there are commercial-in-confidence issues, but that particular phrase is used far too much in Victoria, whereas in other parts of the world the cost of events is up on the websites of organisations and governments.

In terms of the major events that Mr Drum has spoken about, I am a great supporter of major events. I have not had the chance to attend a Cricket World Cup match yet, but I attended almost every world cup match in 1992, including the final, and I am intending to go to a couple this time. However, I have been listening to the matches on ABC radio, and as I said in my earlier contribution I note that halfway through the second session the announcers always tell listeners exactly how many people are in the MCG. How do they do that? It is a miracle! How do they know exactly how many people are in there?

As I would say about the grand prix, it has a captive audience — it is fenced off and there are a few entrances — so it is scandalous that we cannot know how many people are in there and how much they paid. If you were to go out on Spring Street and ask people, ‘Is that a good state of affairs?’, firstly, they would say it is laughable, and secondly, they would say it is scandalous that an event that takes so much public money cannot even provide the patrons at the event and the rest of the Victorian public some basic, fundamental information as to what they are actually getting for the millions of dollars that are put into it.

Mr Dalidakis went on and on about how he cares about Albert Park — —

Mr Dalidakis — Sympathetic.

Ms PENNICUIK — He said he is sympathetic about the damage that is done in Albert Park and that we should make sure that does not happen. The park is disrupted for a good half of the year — three months leading up to the event and three months afterwards — and there is usually flotsam and jetsam in the park for ages before and after the event. That continues. I will not go through all the damage that has been done to the park. There have been some so-called benefits, if you see it that way; other people see it as just co-option of parkland for an event that is owned by a private operator and not as a benefit at all.

All these things go to why there needs to be much more openness and scrutiny and why the contract needs to be made public. The benefits of the race are not clear. In fact only economic impact statements have been conducted, and as we all know an economic impact statement is not a cost-benefit analysis. The money that

is spent on the grand prix might well have been spent on something else if the grand prix had not been held on that day. Anybody who trots that one out knows that does not stand up to any scrutiny whatsoever.

Mr Dalidakis went on about the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) case at length. I am familiar with the case. I think Mr Dalidakis sailed close to the wind by casting aspersions on the bona fides of the community group that went to VCAT. Notwithstanding the VCAT decision — whether or not a VCAT member decided that that might pose a disadvantage to the corporation — that does not prevent the Legislative Council of Victoria from calling for documents. Parliament is supreme. The Council can call for the document I am asking for and it can call for other measures of scrutiny. It is well beyond time for this event to get much more scrutiny than it has. I commend my motions to the house.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I remind members that this has been a cognate debate, but the motions need to be put and voted on separately. I will first take motion 29. The question before the house is that motion 29, moved by Ms Pennicuik, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! The question is that motion 55, moved by Ms Pennicuik, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requires the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council to table in the Legislative Council, by 14 April 2015, a copy of —

- (1) the value-for-money evaluation for the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project, required under item 2.4.1 of the Department of Treasury and Finance’s unsolicited proposal guidelines for the purpose of assessing ‘whether value for money is being achieved for government, including that the benefits to government are being maximised’;
- (2) all meeting minutes and other documentation relating to any working group established for the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project in order to complete the stage 2 preliminary assessment under item 2.3 of the Department of Treasury and Finance’s unsolicited proposal guidelines;
- (3) all minutes and other documentation relating to meetings held by the Treasurer, Minister for Public Transport and other relevant portfolio ministers to provide early guidance to the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor

project working group, established under item 2.3 of the Department of Treasury and Finance's unsolicited proposal guidelines, on whether the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project proposal fits with government priorities and policy directions; and

- (4) any reports, data and summaries produced following community consultations undertaken during July and August 2014 by the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure.

The motion calls for a range of documents that should be able to shed light on what is proposed for the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor. We have all known for many years that that particular corridor is becoming more and more crowded in terms of patronage on the train line. At different times a number of different proposals have been put forward to fix it. There is no dispute that this is an urgent and pressing issue. It has been that way for many years now.

What is quite unusual is that the current operator of Melbourne's train system, which only has a few more years to go as operator under the terms of its contract, appears to have taken over the planning and prioritisation process for investment in rail and has put forward its own proposal for what should be done in the corridor with almost no public scrutiny to date. The former government accepted it. It moved the project through the process, and it appeared, at least, that it was imminently about to sign a contract, but it did not do so. We now understand from scant information that the new government is now looking at the whole proposal and which parts it might fund.

I find it bizarre in the extreme that the process for planning and delivery of infrastructure seems to have been completely reversed in this case. One would have thought the public would clamour for a certain project, public servants would develop proposals and ideas for how it could be delivered, politicians would provide the money and then perhaps a private contractor would be asked to tender for a particular specification and deliver it.

Somewhere along the line that process has been completely reversed. The private sector now decides what infrastructure it wants to build — presumably that which offers the greatest commercial returns under some plan that it has cooked up for itself — and then the process is run in reverse until eventually the public is told what it needs. In this case we have little more than a YouTube animation and a couple of press releases to tell us what is actually planned down there.

I know that in opposition the Labor Party raised serious concerns about, at the very least, the probity tests this kind of process might go through. I will not read back

to Labor members their own words because I am sure they remember them, but there is really only one way to get to the bottom of this, and that is to go back through the process — or the Department of Treasury and Finance's unsolicited proposal guidelines — to look at whether they have been followed in the treatment of this project and hopefully at the same time find out that the public benefit of the project has been properly assessed, is reasonable and is something we would expect. Then perhaps the public can be a bit more informed about what the government is proposing to do down there, which is, as far as we can discern, some sort of renegotiation of the scope of the project.

Of all the systems that need good planning and good delivery, the rail system is one of the most sensitive. We cannot afford to have one kind of computer-based signalling system installed on the Dandenong line and trains using it there only to find when we move to put in place a system across the rest of the network — which is an urgent need — that for some reason we have locked ourselves into some private operator's choice of technology.

We are hearing that maybe this government wants to drop the signalling part of the project and just do the level crossings and some of the station upgrades. If that is the case, then we may find that the benefits of the project in terms of being able to run more trains drop away very quickly. This is important information before billions of dollars of public money is committed. For that reason I have selected documents that apply at each of the stages of assessment under the unsolicited proposal guidelines. I put it to the house that these documents should be provided so all members can understand what is being proposed on that particular stretch of train line.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — In my contribution I would like to raise a number of matters in response to this motion. Firstly, I would like to give some context around the transport needs of Melbourne, and in particular those in the Pakenham-Cranbourne area, which is the area that relates to this unsolicited proposal. Secondly, I want to briefly run through some existing government programs that are underway. Again, these programs directly relate to the area under consideration. Finally, I will use those two pieces of information to help set the scene as to what the appropriate course of action is and how the government should resolve its actions in relation to this proposal.

Firstly, I turn to Melbourne's transport needs, and in particular the transport needs of the Pakenham-Cranbourne area. I would like to highlight a few characteristics of Melbourne. One is that it is

large — roughly 4.5 million people and growing. It is not the largest city in the world by any means, but it is definitely in the tranche of large conurbations where transport becomes a very difficult service to provide. Not only is Melbourne's population large but it is also growing very quickly.

I had a look through Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development statistics and found that in comparable countries — such as those in Western Europe, Japan and the US — there are only two cities of more than 4 million people that have grown faster than Melbourne over the last decade. They are Houston and Dallas. That is quite a telling fact. We know that we are growing quickly, but when you look at comparable economies there are only a couple of cities in the world that face comparable transport challenges. Interestingly both of those cities are the scene of very large and innovative rail projects. We have a large city that is growing quickly, and this can be compared to a lot of major cities in other advanced economies which are either stable or declining in population. This is important context.

Another characteristic of Melbourne is its density. We know that some European cities which have very well functioning transport and public transport systems — to which we aspire in some ways — have a much higher density than Melbourne. I could name a number of cities, but for now I will mention Copenhagen, Paris and London. Our city is interesting in that there are pockets of density but there are also pockets of sprawl in which it is quite difficult to provide transport. The density of our city is a challenge despite the fact that there are areas where there is growing density.

In addition to the issue of density there is the issue of spread. We have a very geographically spread city. This is directly relevant to the Cranbourne-Pakenham area, which is the subject of this proposal. Parts of the area in question are approximately 70 kilometres from the CBD. That is a huge distance. People catch express trains near my office that take more than 1 hour to get to the CBD. That is under existing circumstances. We know that train congestion is getting worse and that trains are struggling to cope with capacity.

We have an extremely large city. At the fringes of the city we find many people who are the most transport challenged. In a lot of communities like Cranbourne, Pakenham, Berwick and Clyde we see a disproportionately high number of young families and elderly people who struggle to use public transport not just because of availability but because on occasions it may not necessarily match their particular needs. This is a particularly difficult combination of challenges and needs.

The third characteristic of Melbourne that I think is relevant and important is that a very high proportion of economic activity in our city occurs in the CBD. That is one of the key reasons our transport system has become so radial and why so much of it — particularly rail — ends up focusing on that area. This is a particular challenge given that one of the single most important transport challenges we face is the capacity of the loop. This can be directly compared to a number of other cities, including New York, which has a number of parallel and orthogonal underground lines. The fact that New York has underground public transport lines that basically match its street grid makes it much easier to transport large numbers of people. In both Paris and New York we see intersecting loops, including in their underground systems, where a number of different lines are separate but also interconnected. I will explain this later but this exactly the direction we as a government want to take our public transport system. The radial nature of our public transport system is a particular problem.

Finally, it is worth noting the complex interdependencies of our transport system as a whole. One is the relationship between road and rail. We often think of road as being about private car use, and it is, in part.

It is also important to stress that while private car use is often demonised, it is not an invalid or inappropriate form of transport. For some transport needs it is appropriate, and for some transport needs it is the only solution. It is also fair to say that we cannot allow private car use to grow without limit, because it would simply bring the whole city to a standstill. We need to find a balance between allowing sufficient, affordable private car use to meet people's needs while at the same time supporting alternative transport mechanisms.

Private car use is an important use of the road network, but I want to stress that the road network interacts with our public transport system in important ways. Road is critical for getting people to rail. The massive increase in patronage that we are seeing is only achievable by people driving to park-and-go stations. Most people do not live within walking distance of a rail station, and at this stage the capacity to catch trams or buses to rail stations is not available to most people. Road is clearly critical for the viability of our rail network. Road is also critical for trams; the majority of the tram system is on shared roads. A public transport expert once said to me, 'Road is not a mode', and in saying that had trams in mind. It is critical that we have an effective road system in part so that we can maintain the effectiveness of our tram network.

The bus network is another very important element of our roads. An important transport initiative from the Bracks-Brumby era is the SmartBus initiative, which supplements the radial nature of the rail network with orbital buses. This is an extremely effective and affordable way in which we can get around the inherently radial nature of our rail network. Those interdependencies between road and rail are critically important, and they are particularly important in areas like Pakenham, Cranbourne, Beaconsfield, Berwick and Clyde, some of which are in my electorate. There are also increasingly important areas in the north-west of Melbourne.

This context is very relevant to the project under consideration. We need to have an improved public transport system, but we also need an improved public transport system that dovetails with other transport systems such as the road system. Then there are other elements of the transport system, such as the port and intermodal terminals. These interdependencies all have to be managed as we move forward.

What are the consequences of these characteristics of Melbourne? I have outlined five different characteristics of the city which have consequences. One consequence is that some lines have become so busy that they are at or over technical capacity limits. Some lines are so busy that it will be difficult to maintain capacity in the face of sustained population growth. That is largely a consequence of the population being so large and growing so fast, but it is also a consequence of such a large amount of economic activity occurring in the CBD away from where many people live. The Pakenham and Cranbourne lines in particular are relatively susceptible to operating at very high utilisation rates.

Another consequence is that the interconnectedness of our road and rail networks is not working well in many areas. This raises the issue of level crossings. We know that increased use of the road network when coupled with increased patronage on the rail network is causing bottlenecks that are often alluded to in this place, both when we talk about transport projects and when people talk about constituent concerns. It is a concern for people from many different areas of our city. It is certainly a concern for people in my electorate on the eastern fringes of the city. I made a statement in this place just last night about an intersection at Clyde Road and the Pakenham line, which again is directly relevant to some of the transport issues linked to this project and even more relevant to some of the initiatives the government is championing already early in its term of office.

The first consequence is that a number of rail lines are extremely busy in terms of the number of trains going down the line and their interaction with level crossings. As I said, this reflects both patronage growth on the rail network and growth in usage of the road network.

A second major consequence is that the city loop is full. This is one of those looming transport problems that has been emerging for some time now. It is a theme of the Eddington report, which arose from the Bracks government. The Bracks government commissioned a report to look at the transport needs of our city in a holistic way. Mr Eddington identified loop congestion as a major problem that needs to be addressed. The only way to address that is a bypass tunnel. I think it is fair to say that was his priority recommendation. We need to bypass the tunnel and have a new underground line that is separate from but connects with the loop. This is exactly what we see in other major cities around the world that have larger, more effective underground transport systems. If we look at the London Underground loop or at Paris, we see exactly the kind of arrangement that we would be moving towards with the loop — that is, different, separate underground lines that intersect at key stations.

The consequence of the loop being full affects the whole system. It affects every line. We often think about this as affecting one or two lines in particular when we think about this or that line bypassing the loop, or this or that line being held up in the loop or by the loop. We need to think of the system as a whole. Congestion in the loop is a systemic problem; it affects the entire train network. It is critical that when we bypass the loop, we will benefit the entire train network.

The third consequence is that interconnectedness is not working as it should be. In fact, interconnectedness is becoming a problem rather than a solution. Interconnectedness in our transport system has a lot of potential to get us over some of these problems. The orbital bus routes championed by and funded under the Bracks government are an example of the sort of program that can utilise transport linkages between different modes in a way that gives us massive capacity with low expenditure. However, a situation has developed which has allowed level crossings to get worse and worse and more and more dysfunctional. Allowing that problem to spiral out of control means that our interconnections are becoming a problem rather than a solution. We need to turn that around, and we will find that we will get extremely good value for money if we do so.

In the first part of my contribution I laid out some of Melbourne's characteristics and how they affect

transport, particularly in the outer suburbs. I have now just explained how those characteristics have led to consequences and transport needs. This flows on directly to what the government is doing, which is taking action that directly addresses those needs and does so in a way that positively impacts upon the outer suburbs, particularly Pakenham and Cranbourne.

I will begin by briefly addressing the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel project in particular. It is important that over the last week the government has announced a number of key steps and commitments in relation to this major project. One of the major announcements was that \$40 million in funding has been brought forward for the establishment of the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority, a significant commitment. This authority will take over immediate planning works, complete development of a reference design and undertake detailed site designs. Major infrastructure projects like this have very long lead times, and we find ourselves in the unnecessary and unenviable position of being behind where we should be because in its last budget the previous government tinkered with the design of the Melbourne Metro project to no great effect other than holding up the project. As a matter of urgency, we need to undertake rigorous design works which are underpinned by expert advice, so that is what the authority is going to do, and it will start work on that immediately.

This project will have a number of benefits. The key direct benefit in terms of its impact on the transport system is that it will increase the capacity of the whole system so more trains can run more often. That increased capacity will be found on every line and not just the lines that will benefit from the tunnel directly. The project's impact will not be limited to the lines that pass through the tunnel. Because the tunnel will improve the functioning of the loop, it will improve the system as a whole. Estimates are that a well-designed metro project could increase capacity on the system as a whole by around 30 per cent, which is a huge increase — a step increase — in the capacity of our rail system. We need that kind of step increase to deal with the massive population increase that we know is in the pipeline.

This project will also provide for the extension of much-needed train lines in growth areas. We all know where the growth of Melbourne is going to be; there will be substantial growth in the Pakenham, Cranbourne, Berwick and Clyde areas. For example, the population of the city of Casey will increase from around 250 000 to something in the order of 430 000, and there will be even more population growth in the north-west of Melbourne. Knowing that, we need to design a system ahead of time so that it can cope with

all of the additional lines that will be needed. Together, these benefits will transform our system into a modern, world-class, best-practice metro system in which people do not need to worry about timetables and know that the system can handle the massive increase in patronage that is in the pipeline.

In addition, this project will create 3500 jobs during peak construction, which will provide a significant and much-needed boost to the economy. We spent a lot of yesterday, and we will spend tomorrow, discussing the Back to Work Bill 2014, which will provide for a significant contribution to jobs creation in this state, but we also need other elements of Labor's overall job creation plan, one of which is its suite of infrastructure projects, and the Melbourne Metro project is extremely important in that. The Melbourne Metro project has been given fast-tracked funding and is on track, and the government will be in a position to move forward with that project and fully expects to commence construction in 2018.

The other major project the government has commenced which directly addresses the needs to which I have referred is the establishment of the Level Crossings Removal Authority. As I said, we are finding that some roads and some rail lines are at or over capacity, a situation which is being exacerbated by interconnectedness problems. As I said, interconnectedness can be a solution if leveraged the right way so that we can use our different transport systems to benefit each other; however, we need to leverage our system better to get more out of our assets. We are finding that not paying attention to detail and not making relatively small investments at our blockage points mean that the system as a whole is grinding to a halt. Those problems will be directly addressed by removing our 50 worst level crossings.

Last week the government announced that it is fast-tracking \$100 million of funding to progress planning works and to establish an authority to deal with the 50 most dangerous level crossings. This project will deliver a number of high-level benefits. I want to go back for a moment and note that there are some particular reasons for this project being very important in Melbourne.

I have raised the interconnectedness issues, but it is also important to note that the number of level crossings in Melbourne is particularly high against comparable cities. That reflects underinvestment in infrastructure over a very long period of time. This government is now going to reverse that process. The number of level crossings is unusually high, and a number of comparable cities have funded the removal of theirs at much higher rates over decades. It is important to note

that level crossings constitute half of the RACV's worst traffic spots in the metropolitan area. That is in addition to the congestion and associated problems to which I have already referred. There are significant safety issues.

In removing the 50 worst level crossings we are going to generate significant improvements in the system as a whole, much as we will with our Melbourne Metro project. Like Melbourne Metro, this project will be part of the suite of projects that will kickstart our economy and generate significant job growth. Our removal of 50 level crossings will generate something in the order of 4500 jobs. We can expect around 100 extra jobs for the life of each level crossing, and that could peak at 300 for each level crossing during the peak of construction.

These two major transport initiatives will address the transport problems I outlined earlier: train lines and roads are getting busier, the loop is full and interconnectedness in our system is a problem and not a solution. An additional project is currently under consideration. As with previous motions, this motion requests us to release every document under the sun to the public at the whim of the mover of the motion. The detail of the request makes it clear that it would not be possible to undertake a sensible evaluation if this range of documents were to be released right in the middle of the evaluation process. The request includes a comprehensive list of meeting minutes and any associated documentation at all stages of a process which has not even been completed. It is an extremely broad request for documentation even from the stages of early guidance and interactions with stakeholders. That is not workable.

This project relates to significant transport needs in an area which is growing quickly. We need to evaluate this project rigorously, and this has consequences for more than just this project. If we do not evaluate this project properly, what consequences would that have for the unsolicited bids process as a whole? What message would that send to anybody else wanting to submit a proposal? Moreover, what signal would that send about how the government interacts with the private sector in general? We have to undertake this process in a way that is responsible and respects taxpayers interests.

We have already had a number of discussions in this sitting week and the preceding one about the release of documents and how important it is to balance various interests. We have talked about how we need to balance considerations such as full and frank discussion and the rigorous development and evaluation of policy. We need to balance interests such as transparency and taxpayers commercial interests. To release such a broad

sweep of documents at such a sensitive time would not be in the interests of taxpayers for this particular evaluation and transaction, and it would certainly not be in the interests of taxpayers over the longer run. It would set a very damaging precedent that would imperil the capacity of the government to interact in the future with the private sector, whether it be in relation to unsolicited bids or matters more generally.

As a general comment, I suspect that the mover of the motion would agree with many of the government's priorities when it comes to the transport needs of our city. I imagine the mover of the motion would agree with many of the major projects we have now started. I imagine the mover of the motion would agree with the change in emphasis since we came to government — an emphasis that is now much more on public transport and on looking at transport as an integrated system, compared to ad hoc projects for individual elements of the system. I imagine the mover of the motion is sympathetic to that. But I do not think the mover of the motion has put forward something that will end up promoting the government's capacity to achieve those broader objectives.

I finish by saying that when it comes to Melbourne's outer suburbs, Melbourne as a whole and Victoria as a whole, this government has changed the emphasis of the transport program. It has looked at the transport system as a whole — as a network with interdependent components across all the different modes of transport — and it is taking action on prioritising projects and programs that are critical to addressing the key systemic problems in the transport network.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to speak on behalf of the opposition in relation to Mr Barber's notice of motion 57. The opposition will not be opposing Mr Barber's motion, consistent with the approach we had in government and with the approach we have now taken, back in opposition, on motions regarding the tabling of documents.

In that context Mr Mulino seemed to be suggesting that the government will be opposing the motion, which will be quite an interesting development if that is the case. He seemed to be saying that consideration has been given to the documents that have been requested and that the government will be opposing the motion. That is a significant change in approach to these motions. It is not in the interests of transparency, and I am surprised by the position articulated by Mr Mulino.

This is only a documents motion so I do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of the policy issues and considerations canvassed by Mr Mulino on behalf of the government. However, I will respond to a few

things he said. He said that Melbourne's population is growing faster than that of almost any comparable city in the Western world, except for Houston and Dallas. That is a vindication of the strong policies and financial management of the coalition government during the last four years. People do not move to Victoria, emigrate here or have their families here unless there are opportunities here and unless there are strong reasons to do so. The population growth we are seeing through natural increase, through intrastate migration and through overseas migration is a vindication of our policies over the last four years.

Mr Mulino also spoke in favour of the Eddington report, which advocates for the east-west link. The report advocates for the Melbourne Metro tunnel — or whatever name or description you wish to give it — the project to give additional capacity over and above that provided by the loop, but it also advocates for the east-west link. It is interesting that Mr Mulino cited the Eddington report favourably in relation to this matter.

Mr Mulino talked about sovereign risk issues, acting in the interests of taxpayers, providing predictability and clarity for investment, and providing clarity for businesses that wish to make investments in Victoria. Surely the actions of the government in relation to the east-west link contradict the statements he made.

The Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project is very important. The corridor is growing strongly and it is important that services are improved to keep pace with population growth. The project proposed by the former government would have seen, and will see if it is continued by the government, 25 next generation trains, 21st century high-capacity signalling, the removal of four level crossings, newly rebuilt stations at Carnegie, Murrumbeena and Clayton, and — importantly for my constituents and those of Mr Mulino — a new train maintenance depot at Pakenham East. One of the great challenges in the outer south-east, in the Casey and Cardinia corridors, is providing employment for the growing number of local residents. People do not want to sit on the Monash Freeway and they would prefer not to get a train into the city; they would rather work locally. This project would have generated a significant number of additional jobs in relation to the new train maintenance depot.

Mr Mulino said that in isolation the project would not deliver significant advantages for the overall system. I put it to him that that is not a view shared by the Public Transport Users Association. In a media release in March 2014 its president Dr Tony Morton is quoted as saying:

This is a big dose of good news for transport in the south-east of Melbourne and in Gippsland ... It's a major growth

corridor and it will now have the room to grow with the rail service it needs.

High-capacity signalling together with grade separation of the worst level crossings means that instead of being limited to 16 trains per hour in the peaks, we think there will be room for 25 plus. That means more room for trains in peak hour, and more room to provide trains to Monash University and Rowville in the future ...

He goes on to say, which directly rebuts what the government has been saying:

What's important about this too, is that none of the planned measures are dependent on the Metro rail tunnel. In fact, these measures do more for the Dandenong line than the Metro tunnel would do by itself ...

The opposition believes this is an important project. As a local member representing part of the Cranbourne-Pakenham corridor I know that the local jobs the project will generate will be important for the local economy, and the additional capacity on the system will be important for the growing number of public transport users in that corridor. I encourage the government, as has the shadow Minister for Public Transport, the member for Croydon in the Assembly, to continue the project that was started by the former government, to put political posturing aside and to embrace the project and to get on with it.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In speaking on Mr Barber's motion I accept that he has been consistent in his goal to bring transparency and probity to a lot of the dealings and projects and resources that governments of both flavours utilise. On most occasions when there is a call for paperwork the government's position will be pretty clear. Despite the limitations governments face in releasing certain documents, the government will vote for a call for documents. But in this case, because of the nature of the project and because the government is at a point when it is deciding whether the project will be part of its transport agenda, the reality is that the documents are part of a live tender and, taking into account Mr Barber's zeal for probity, we think it would be improper to release them. That is why we cannot support the call for paperwork in this case, because we are in a live tender situation.

That is why the government is surprised that the opposition would support the release of documents in a live tender situation on a project which, in fairness to the opposition, it initiated and the government, when in opposition, championed. As I said, the government is deciding whether this project will be part of the public transport agenda it wants to go forward.

I hope Mr Barber will be pleased that we are not standing still in this space. As members of the chamber

would recognise, in recent weeks the Premier and the Minister for Public Transport have been out announcing the development of the Level Crossings Removal Authority, which will preside over and work with the government in removing 50 of the most dangerous and congested level crossings in Melbourne. We hope to bring forward a large amount of funds so that the authority can plan for the removal of all those level crossings in the next couple of years and complete the job over eight years.

Work in this space in public transport has been stalled. To reinforce what I said about the government not standing still in this space, I refer to the Premier's announcement that the government is also bringing forward funds for the planning of the Melbourne Metro rail project — that is, the real Melbourne Metro and not the bogus one flagged by the previous government. It is the Melbourne Metro as it was originally planned. That project will include introducing five new CBD stations, duplicating the city loop and getting to a point where we can run trains without a timetable.

This government has an ambitious program of public transport projects ahead. There is also \$100 million to bring the Flinders Street station back to the great state it used to be in so that we are able to utilise the whole station, including the ballroom and other facilities that have been closed for quite some time. There is a lot on the agenda for this government. We cannot be in a position to commit to vote in this house for Mr Barber's motion because we are in a live tender situation. I am surprised the opposition — considering this is a project it initiated — would vote to call for paperwork in a live tender situation, which goes against everything that it argued for when it was in government only a few months ago.

Motion agreed to.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That in accordance with standing order 11.01, there be tabled in the Council, by 12 noon on Wednesday, 11 March 2015, a copy of the report prepared for the Minister for Planning by the Residential Zones Standing Advisory Committee concerning draft amendment C125 relating to the city of Bayside.

I will make a brief contribution, first complimenting the Minister for Planning at the time, who is in the gallery today, for the work he did on residential zones, protecting metropolitan Melbourne and protecting key neighbourhood areas of metropolitan Melbourne. I put on the record my fear that the new government will unwind some of those significant protections that were

put in place. Notwithstanding that, this is a very narrow motion which seeks the documents that came from the panel. That panel looked at the C125 proposals and sought to examine them. There were public submissions, including submissions from the City of Bayside, and those proposals were the subject of hearings and ultimately the subject of a report. That report has not been released, and I believe it should be in the public domain.

I put on the record at this point some concerns that I have regarding aspects of C125. Briefly, for the edification of members, it is to be noted that at the council meeting on 18 November, council resolved to write to people — members of the government, opposition, other parties and all relevant local candidates in the upcoming state election — to seek their support not to proceed with draft amendment C125 and the application of the residential growth zone in that particular region; to seek their support to introduce the changes to the Bayside planning scheme as specified in part 3 of the resolution; and to request that a response be provided prior to the state election.

I note that the member for Sandringham in the other place, Murray Thompson, made significant commentary at that time and pointed to difficulties around C125. I think it is important to note that amendment C125 affected a number of specific areas in Sandringham and Bayside and the Bentleigh lower house electorate, and there were certainly a number of key aspects to note with respect to the existing structure plan. Reading from the Bayside City Council website:

Existing structure plans for the areas around Sandringham, Hampton, Middle Brighton and North Brighton stations allow for development of up to three storeys (11 metres) on residential land around the train stations, and preferred building heights of between three and six storeys for land within the commercial strips. This is as high or higher than building heights proposed by draft amendment C125. These planning controls have been in place since 2013, and continue to apply.

Those controls were put in place by the previous Minister for Planning. This gives some idea of the issues here. This is about the shape of our suburbs. This about residential amenity. I put on the record my belief as a general principle that there is great scope for transit-orientated developments with a focus on higher density in and around transport nodes, but it must be done in a way that brings the community with the proposals. It needs to have full community consultation, and councils and the community need to be working in harmony to see developments like that accepted and brought forward. They must be designed in a way that is sympathetic to the community.

This motion is a narrow one. It seeks to make public that report by the panel. I can indicate that the opposition will make some further decisions when it sees the report, but it is clear that amendment C125 and the proposals around it need some significant further work. The panel report is a key document that should be in the public domain to inform public debate, and for that reason this motion is in the public interest.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — In short, the Greens support this motion. We support open and transparent government and of course we support the release of the planning panel report in relation to amendment C125 to the Bayside planning scheme. What is important in relation to this is what the community thinks about the nature and shape of their suburbs. It involves the character, amenity and built form of the area, and certainly planning scheme amendments provide ample opportunity for those matters to be picked up through design and development overlays and schedules attached to the planning scheme.

The planning panel report will provide an opportunity to see how those consultations went. It will be interesting to understand the length and breadth of the contributions and how many people had an opportunity to participate. The reality is that this is about the shape and nature of our suburbs and of Melbourne, so it is important that communities share that journey when we are talking about matters as important as planning scheme amendments and the difference between general residential zones and residential growth zones. The Greens support the release of this planning panel report, and we look forward to seeing what is contained within it.

Mr SOMYUREK (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — The Residential Zones Standing Advisory Committee has prepared its report on amendment C125 to the Bayside planning scheme and has submitted it to the department for assessment. The Minister for Planning will shortly be briefed on the recommendations of the independent committee for his review. Once a decision has been made by the Minister for Planning the report will be released. It is in no-one's interests to prolong the debate, but the minister requires suitable time to assess the independent committee's recommendations without interference. If the committee report is released prior to a decision being made, proponents and the community will continue to make submissions on the substantive matter and the panel report. This does not add to the quality or timeliness of the decision-making.

There is a clear and transparent process for the consideration of these proposed amendments, and it is important that this process is honoured. While the decision on whether to release the committee report is at the minister's discretion, I can confirm that the minister will release the report once he has been briefed and a decision has been made.

This government is committed to clear and transparent decision-making that takes into account the views of the community. We were very concerned about the mismanagement of the process for the rollout of the new zones, and we will be undertaking a full review.

Motion agreed to.

POLICE RESOURCES

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I move:

That this house notes that —

- (1) prior to the 2014 election, Labor failed to commit to provide any additional police officers if it won government;
- (2) Labor has discontinued crime prevention as a portfolio;
- (3) Deputy Premier, Mr James Merlino, MP, denigrated the protective services officers during the last Parliament by referring to them as 'plastic police'; and
- (4) prior to the 2014 election the former coalition government committed to —
 - (a) provide 700 additional frontline police;
 - (b) provide 250 specialists to tackle issues such as e-crime and fraud, counterterrorism, forensics and special investigations;
 - (c) recruit and deploy a 50-strong protective services officer strike force; and
 - (d) continue to expand the successful crime prevention portfolio;

and calls on the Premier, Mr Daniel Andrews, MP, and the Minister for Police, Mr Wade Noonan, MP, to explain to the Victorian community what Labor's plans are to deliver more police resources and to articulate to the Victorian community its plans for community safety in Victoria.

The motion has a number of limbs to it. It goes to the failure of the then opposition to make any significant or substantial commitment to community safety initiatives prior to the last election. That, coupled with the commentary that has been coming from the government since the election, gives rise to genuine concern about where the government is going when it comes to the extremely important issue of community

safety, appropriate sentencing and other matters associated with the justice system.

To recap, during its term in government the coalition delivered the largest single expansion of Victoria Police numbers in history, adding over 1900 sworn officers during its four years in power. We also reformed sentencing to better reflect community expectations. The Rob Hulls policies of home detention and suspended sentences were abolished. There were significant reforms to better reflect community expectations.

In the portfolio of corrections, which I held for a period, we legislated with regard to parole to make community safety the no.1 priority in parole-making decisions. We more than doubled the budget of the Adult Parole Board of Victoria during our four years in government. Through the \$84 million package attached to the Callinan reform process — the process undertaken by former High Court judge Mr Ian Callinan — significant legislative reform was undertaken to make parole in Victoria the toughest in Australia. That was in the interests of community safety. Members of this house would be all too familiar with some of the tragedies that have occurred in years past and in relatively recent times at the hands of parolees.

We also had a very ambitious program to deploy protective services officers (PSOs) at our railway stations. It is easy to forget that this policy that we took to the 2010 election was supported by few of the so-called experts and was criticised by Labor. The now Deputy Premier, Mr Merlino, made reference in the other place to PSOs being akin to plastic police. It was an extremely derogatory attack on the hardworking PSOs who look after us. They look after our safety here at the Parliament of Victoria and at the courts. Earlier this week we saw some of the challenges they face from time to time. Now they also look after us at our railway stations.

I believe Mr Merlino has not apologised for those comments, but time has gone on and the policy we had prior to the 2010 election is now seen as a significant advancement in community safety and a significant advancement for women in terms of their access to the rail network at night. Members of the community know they can now go to a show in town, get the train back and be walked to their cars by a PSO. People who work late now know they can leave the city when it is dark and get — —

Ms Symes interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note the mocking from Ms Symes.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr O'DONOHUE — This is a very important matter. The coalition takes matters of community safety extremely seriously. The policy of deploying PSOs at our railway stations — mocked by the now Deputy Premier, mocked by Labor and not endorsed by many at the time — is now seen as a significant success. It is seen as a significant policy advancement in the interests of community safety and in making our public transport system safe and accessible for all, particularly at night.

The previous government also had a clear agenda when it came to crime prevention. We understood that tougher sentences were important, that providing additional capacity to the prison system was important and that it was also important to try to prevent crime and to work with communities. We understood that communities often had the answers or the best solutions when it came to issues of crime and perceptions of crime. That is why literally hundreds of projects were funded right across Victoria under the crime prevention portfolio. They ranged in size and included relatively small scale grants for community halls and public facilities to upgrade the lighting, security systems, locks and fences so that Probus, the RSL, the Lions Club and other hardworking community groups could feel safe having a meeting at night and would be encouraged to continue their good work.

A significant number of CCTV camera projects were funded and deployed right across Victoria. This rollout had the endorsement of the then Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, who said that CCTV was a way to not only prevent crime but also save police resources in helping to solve crime by providing evidence after the event. We also know that in court proceedings CCTV is a very effective way of producing evidence, and it can often expedite court proceedings.

A range of other projects and programs were undertaken, including the graffiti removal program, which involved the funding of local governments, in partnership with community organisations, to come up with locally based solutions to the scourge of graffiti.

The crime prevention portfolio also worked with and helped to fund Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers. We know Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers do a fantastic job in the community. Neighbourhood Watch engages with the local community, and Crime Stoppers is trusted and respected, particularly by some community members

who are new to Australia. Their experience with local police may be different to the experience of most Victorians, who are lucky to have a trusted, respected police force. Other places do not necessarily have the same thing. In some new communities there may be apprehension about dealing with police, and Crime Stoppers has been a great way to engage with those communities. Crime Stoppers has done a terrific job. A project funded by the crime prevention portfolio enabled Crime Stoppers to upgrade its website and translate its communications into languages other than English. That very important measure has broadened the reach of this service to other communities.

The coalition went to the election with a number of policies. It aimed to build on and expand its programs of providing additional police; respond to the blue paper by providing 250 specialists to tackle issues such as e-crime and fraud, counterterrorism and forensic and special investigations; recruit and deploy a new 50-strong PSO strike force; and, importantly, continue the crime prevention portfolio. As I said, crime prevention is a very important issue in a holistic approach to issues of justice. That is why the former government had a dedicated portfolio of crime prevention.

The coalition government had a commitment to re-fund and build on crime prevention initiatives, including a \$2 million grant scheme to partner with local communities to respond to the scourge of ice. Regrettably one of the first actions of the new Labor government was to axe that program. As I have mentioned in the house before, the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee that Mr Ramsay chaired tabled an excellent bipartisan report into the scourge of ice. That report recommended greater and deeper engagement with local communities. Often local communities will have the solutions to local crime issues, including the issue of the supply and use of ice. The examples of Mildura and Geelong demonstrate that where communities come together there can be good local responses to this terribly challenging issue in the community. Unfortunately the \$2 million grant round that was opened before the election has been axed by the government and those funds have been withdrawn.

Of course an election has taken place, and Labor has been elected. What did Labor members say before the election in relation to community safety? They said very little indeed. When the former government announced its commitment to recruit, train and deploy additional police, to turn over the management of police cells to the private sector, as already occurs at the Melbourne Custody Centre underneath the Magistrates Court in the city, the question was put to members of

the opposition: what will you do? On 23 November, just before the election, Mr Pakula was quoted in the *Age* as having said on behalf of Labor:

We will sit down with the chief commissioner straight after the election, if we are successful, and talk about what resources are important to him. We think Ken Lay knows more about his policing requirements than Denis Napthine does ...

The secretary of Police Association Victoria, Ron Iddles — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I take up the interjection by government members. They have described favourably the quote attributed to Mr Pakula, where he said:

We will sit down with the chief commissioner straight after the election ... and talk about what resources are important to him.

Let us go to the point of what resources the government has made available to the Chief Commissioner of Police, or in our current situation, the Acting Chief Commissioner of Police. Now Labor has formed government, presumably the Minister for Police, Mr Noonan, and other members of the government have had briefings with the acting chief commissioner of police.

An article published in the *Age* of 9 February reports that Mr Noonan confirmed that the government would not commit to increases in officer numbers until the budget, despite the demands of the Police Association. In an *Age* article from 23 November Ron Iddles, the secretary of the Police Association, is quoted as having said that Labor's lack of commitment to numbers is 'very disappointing'.

The coalition provided a great framework for crime prevention on which to build. We provided more police resources, the PSOs, reforms to parole, reforms to sentencing and a crime prevention focus with a dedicated portfolio. We partnered with local communities to tackle the issues of crime and perceptions of crime across Victoria. When Labor came to power, it sacked the crime prevention portfolio, and it made no commitment to the crime prevention initiatives the coalition had started. On 19 December 2013, I think it was, the then Labor opposition, in a reshuffle, removed the portfolio of crime prevention from its shadow ministry.

Before the election the government said nothing about additional police resources, and now it says there will be no additional police officers until the May budget is released. The government has made no commitment to

grow our police force despite the significant population growth Victoria is experiencing on a weekly basis, which the previous speaker for the government, Mr Mulino, spoke about in his contribution on the preceding motion.

I raise this take-note motion for the attention of the house, because although we are only three months into this government, there are some causes for concern in relation to a number of issues. I refer to the government's lack of commitment to a crime prevention agenda, to its lack of commitment to increasing police numbers, and to the commentary from the Minister for Police, who is also the Minister for Corrections, and commentary from other members of the government and government supporters about changes to sentencing laws and initiatives that the former government introduced in the interests of community safety and in order to better reflect community expectations.

Ms Symes interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I note the interjection of Ms Symes about locking people up. Perhaps she could clarify her comments in her contribution. As an adviser to former Attorney-General Rob Hulls I trust she will have something to say on this matter, and perhaps she can clarify the meaning of the coded messages from Mr Noonan and other members of the government about the government's agenda when it comes to the reintroduction of home detention, suspended sentences and other changes that were initiated and delivered by the coalition government. Perhaps Ms Symes can tell us what the government's agenda will be in relation to these issues.

Prior to the election Labor said very little and made very few commitments in the justice space, except to sack the crime prevention portfolio. Now Labor is in government we have heard some worrying commentary and we have seen that it is providing very little support for more police and for the reforms that the coalition delivered. This take-note motion is an opportunity for Ms Symes and members of the government to clarify whether Labor plans to reintroduce home detention, whether it plans to reintroduce suspended sentences, whether it plans to change the parole reforms that were delivered by the coalition government, whether it plans to increase police numbers and what those increased police numbers will be, whether it stands by statements made by the Deputy Premier when he was in opposition when he said that protective services officers are plastic police, and whether it will support the PSOs, retain them at our railway stations and look at supporting them into the future.

The coalition government left the Andrews government with a strong basis and a strong foundation to build on, and I would encourage the Andrews government to build on that basis and not tear it down. This motion provides an opportunity for members of the government to articulate to the house in a very clear and precise manner exactly what their intentions are, because before the election and since the election they have had precious little to say about community safety or justice-related issues. This is their opportunity to clarify for the house and the Victorian community exactly what they plan to do.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I am pleased to speak on this motion. We on this side will not be lectured by those opposite on what we should or should not do, will or will not say or contribute or not contribute. When in government they absolutely failed in the crime and crime prevention arenas in this state. This is an appalling motion. It is an absolutely disgraceful piece of rhetoric that bears no resemblance to reality. In terms of what we have heard in the debate today, it is all fiction over fact. They think their rhetoric and words will get to the media, but they bear no resemblance to the facts and what happened.

To be clear, Labor has inherited quite a mess from the coalition government when it comes to the areas of policing and crime prevention in this state. It is a disgraceful inheritance. Crime is up, more people are in prison and more people are returning to prison. If you look at some particular cohorts of our community, you will see more people are going back to jail — for instance, when you look at the Indigenous population, you see that what happened under the coalition government is a disgrace in terms of the numbers jailed and recidivism. There are no solutions to the problems.

The truth is that Victoria is less safe than it was four years ago. The truth is that crime has risen every single year under the previous government. Victoria is a far less safe place for people to live, raise a family or feel free and secure than it was four years ago. That is compared to what happened in the previous 10 years under the Labor government. These are facts — it is not fiction, it is not rhetoric. They are absolute facts. Crime fell every single year in the 10 years under the Labor government. Every single year under Labor crime went down. Under the coalition government crime went up every single year. These are indisputable facts despite the rhetoric, the beating of the chest and the law and order bandwagon. In less than four years crime in Victoria has increased over 20 per cent, with crimes against the person up by nearly a third and drug crimes up by 75 per cent.

I am looking at the chart in front of me which contains a statewide summary of offences in Victoria. In 2009–10 there were a bit more than 45 000 crimes against the person. In the 12 months to September 2014 there were more than 60 000 — that is a 32 per cent increase. The numbers did not decrease; crimes against the person increased. In 2009–10 there were 260 000 crimes against property. There were 271 000 crimes against property in the 12 months to September 2014. There was a huge increase in drug offences, going from 14 583 in 2009–10 to 25 594 during the years of the coalition government. Drug offences ruin people's lives, destroy families, destroy hope and destroy opportunities for so many people in our community. It is disgraceful. Other crimes also went up by more than double. When you look at it, what you see on all the serious crime parameters in this state is a massive rise under failed policies of the coalition government.

A couple of months later the opposition brings this motion to this chamber. We have heard a fair bit of chest beating and slogans out there about protective services officers (PSO). My kids love PSOs on railway stations. I am happy to say that. PSOs are not the issue, it was how the program was rolled out and the lack of coordination between transport and police when it was rolled out. There was an absolute lack of coordination.

I refer to a specific example in my former lower house electorate of Eltham. The sleepy village of Montmorency — a lovely little community with a small station — got a couple of PSOs. People were surprised as it was hardly the crime capital of Melbourne, but that is okay, they got a couple of PSOs. Here is a station that has undercover seating for two people. There are no toilets whatsoever. There are no staff. It is a little station, a bit like some of the smaller country stations. Along come the PSOs and up comes the PSO pod. Fantastic! People thought that maybe they were going to be able to use the toilets; maybe there would be a bit of a verandah to keep them dry in winter and keep the sun off them in summer. But that did not happen because there was a disconnect between the police and the public transport. None of that was going to happen.

While they might have thought of making improvements for commuters when it came to putting up the PSO pod, none of that happened. There was total inflexibility. People were outraged that the only people who could use the toilet at Montmorency station were the two PSOs. I wrote to the Minister for Public Transport pointing out that a lot of constituents were asking why the station could not be adapted so that they could use toilets and have a bit of a shelter out the front. It would have cost virtually nothing. The answer back

was that they could catch a train to Greensborough station, use the toilet and then come back to Diamond Creek or wherever they were going. I do not know if members know about the services on the Hurstbridge line, but they are still pretty poor. They are improving — —

Mr Finn — You should have done something about it.

Mr HERBERT — I should have done something about it, and I did. Unfortunately the extra services that were promised and paid for by the former Labor government prior to the election of the coalition were never delivered; the coalition refused to put them on.

The minister's view was that instead of building a PSO pod that could be used by the public, passengers should travel up the line, go to a toilet at another station and then travel back so that they could get to their destination. Yes, PSOs are popular, but it was a shocking implementation. It should have been done far more efficiently.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr HERBERT — Those opposite do not like to hear the truth — that was one of the reasons why the coalition government was not re-elected last November — but that is the truth. My government has a different viewpoint. We believe in having all the facts. Before we go on to what we are going to do, let us have a look at what the former Chief Commissioner of Police, Ken Lay, said about this very issue — the agenda of beating the law and order drum as the solution to crime in this state. He said:

We have spent the past four years being tough on crime. Perhaps it is time that we changed the debate to get smart on crime.

He said of the 2010 election that it:

... turned into a Dutch auction on police numbers. First it was 1500, then it was 1600, then 1700 and 940 protective services officers. But not once did anyone come to police command and ask what was best for the organisation.

Yet we still see the same thing coming from those opposite in this motion. Do they never learn? It seems that is the case. We are not interested in rhetoric; we are interested in working with the police, and we are interested in real solutions to the problems we have.

To take just one of our commitments, the Andrews government has committed to \$148.6 million to transition the management of police cells to new custody officers. I would have thought those opposite would be putting that in a motion. At any one time

there are 400 police officers babysitting prisoners in police cells. That is 400 police who ought to be on the beat, out there keeping our community safe, but they are babysitting prisoners in police cells instead of tackling crime. What is the solution? The solution is to get other people — custody officers — to do that and get those 400 police out on the beat where they can do most in terms of protecting people in the community.

We have also, importantly, addressed some of the root causes of crime. One of the most high-profile areas and one of the most common sorts of crime is domestic violence or family violence, which is a massive issue in this state. The need to do something to address family violence is one thing for which there is genuine bipartisan support. As everyone here would know, the government has appointed Victoria's first-ever Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence to show leadership and address these heinous crimes. During 2013–14 Victoria Police attended over 65 000 reported family violence incidents. That is real crime, and they are real figures that need to be addressed.

We know family violence constitutes about a massive 40 per cent of all police work. We know it is a leading contributor to death and disability in Australian women aged 15 to 44. We know three-quarters of all assaults against women happen in the home. These are facts. This is factual information that should be addressed if we are genuinely talking about what we can do to prevent crime. Approximately one woman is murdered by a current or former partner every week in Australia. That is not sustainable. We need to do something, and on this front we are taking the highest action by initiating a royal commission and taking genuine action to stop this massive crime against women and other people in Victoria.

On crime prevention, we have heard those opposite talk about how when they were in government they had a special Minister for Crime Prevention. That position seemed to be pretty good. Pamphlets were put out and media releases were issued; a lot of chest beating was done. But when you genuinely talk about crime prevention, you have to address the root causes of crime. You have to address the underlying issues in terms of crime. Those underlying issues are not addressed by putting a pamphlet out in the community. Family violence has to be addressed. We have to address poor education, because education is how people elevate themselves in life and raise their hopes and aspirations. If you pull \$2 billion out of the education system, with \$1.2 billion gone from TAFE — so that kids who might want an apprenticeship or traineeship do not get it — and more

from schools, that reduces hope and opportunity and ultimately adds to crime.

If you talk about unemployment, the scourge of unemployment with which this state has been inflicted, we have one of the worst unemployment rates in Australia. I think it was 6.8 per cent when we took office and is about 6.5 per cent or 6.6 per cent now, with massive youth unemployment, in the 20 per cent range, in most communities — teenage unemployment, at least. If you are unemployed for a long time, you give up hope of getting a better life. That is a cause of crime. It leads people to drugs and all sorts of antisocial activity that none of us wants to see happen. It is about loss of hope in rural and regional communities. Because they are under the pump, because they are losing jobs and industries, whole generations feel that when they leave school, or even while they are in school, there will be nothing for them in the future. That is a root cause of crime. If you are talking about young people getting into a bit of strife, as many young people do, and if you slash youth services and youth support, then guess what? That is a cause of crime.

When those opposite talk about us not having a crime prevention minister, I say to them: addressing crime prevention is far more complex than that. It requires a whole-of-government approach and a more sophisticated approach than simply putting out a few pamphlets and media releases. That is what my government stands for; we stand for a whole-of-government approach. We stand for looking at and addressing the real issues and not simply producing simplistic slogans about law and order and beating the drum and saying, 'Let's get tough on crime'. Those things do not work, they have never worked and they will never work. I am pleased to speak on this motion because, quite frankly, it reiterates the failed policies of the previous government when it comes to crime prevention in this state.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to make some very brief remarks on Mr O'Donohue's motion, which talks about crime prevention, police resources and calls on the government, via the Premier and the Minister for Police, to explain to the Victorian community what Labor's plans are to deliver police resources and to articulate to the Victorian community its plans for community safety in Victoria. I think that is quite a moderate request of this government. Indeed every government should follow it.

I read through Mr O'Donohue's motion again this afternoon in anticipation of this debate; I was not sure whether it would come on. Paragraphs 1 to 4 of

Mr O'Donohue's motion seem to me to be — and I take this as an article of faith, seeing as they have been put on the notice paper by Mr O'Donohue — accurate and correct. My experience of Mr O'Donohue over two terms of Parliament is that he is pretty thorough, so I take it that these points are accurate and correct.

This is not to say that I always agree with Mr O'Donohue. We have stood opposite each other in the chamber for a long time and had quite robust disagreements over matters of principle and policy, as I am sure he would agree. But I have never disagreed with him on a point of accuracy and fact, whether or not I agree with its substance.

The first paragraph in Mr O'Donohue's motion asks the house to note that prior to the 2014 election Labor failed to commit to provide any additional police officers if it won government. I assume that is correct. In fact in a quick run through of ALP media releases, I could not see anything to that effect, so I assume that is the case.

The second paragraph states that Labor has discontinued crime prevention as a portfolio. That is again a statement of fact, and we are also asked to note it. I have two points to make on this. Firstly, it is probably a good thing to have a crime prevention portfolio, particularly if it focuses on the major source of crime that is rife within the Victorian and Australian community — that is, family violence.

My second point is that that portfolio should actually focus on prevention. I must say that during the previous government the crime prevention portfolio focused more on penalties and corrections than it did prevention. Even though it was named crime prevention, my view is that it did not focus on it. Instead the focus was more on what happens once an offence has been committed.

Mr O'Donohue and members of the previous government would remember that the Greens opposed a great many of their measures in the Parliament, including the abolition of suspended sentences, the abolition of home detention and the summary offences laws. I note that this government will be bringing in legislation to repeal those laws. Many of the punitive measures brought in by the previous government under the crime prevention portfolio were not about prevention but about penalties and increasing those penalties beyond what was necessary. They were certainly not in the spirit of rehabilitation or preventing recidivism amongst offenders. There was also not a lot of money going into programs in prison or for offenders on their release. More needs to be put into that area if

we are to prevent crime. The Greens certainly had a lot of differences with the previous government in that respect.

During the last Parliament I questioned the then Minister for Crime Prevention about the effects of some of the provisions put in place in the corrections system, such as less use of community corrections orders and tougher action on breaches of parole. I made the point that while the community was very closely behind the government — as in fact were the Greens — in terms of tightening up parole for serious violent offenders, the government's legislation had the effect of applying to all parolees, even those who were not serious violent offenders. It applied equally to those offenders who had been incarcerated for quite short amounts of time and those who were re-incarcerated for very minor breaches of parole.

I asked the minister what percentage of the growth in the prison population was due to breaches of parole and he answered 47 per cent. So the rise in the prison population was due to breaches of parole, many of which — in fact the majority of which — were minor breaches by non-violent offenders. That is not what you want to be doing. You want to make sure that people who have been released on parole are supervised while they are on parole and are offered programs to prevent them from reoffending. That is the situation and the direction in which we should be going rather than putting people back into the prison system where they are not really getting the benefit of programs. It is also no benefit to the community for that to happen.

The third paragraph in Mr O'Donohue's motion refers to a remark made by the now Deputy Premier with regard to protective services officers (PSOs). I am assuming that Mr O'Donohue is correct in asserting that the Deputy Premier made this remark. Again we are asked to note it. It probably was not a helpful remark. On reflection the Deputy Premier might well have rechosen his words.

Protective services officers look after us here in the Parliament. They have traditionally provided security at the courts and the Shrine of Remembrance. Under the previous government their remit was expanded and they are now present at railway stations and at other places throughout the community.

Certainly the Greens were very concerned about the previous government's policy of putting protective service officers at every single railway station from 6.00 p.m. to midnight. I notice that the railway station closest to my electorate office, North Brighton, still does not have protective services officers. I am not sure

they are needed at North Brighton station, or in fact at many others. At the time the legislation was brought in I made the point that the evidence — which is what we should base policies on — was that there were about 10 or 12 stations where there was a need for more security. They were particularly well known. Just those 10 to 12 stations were responsible for around 80 per cent of the incidents. A lot of those incidents occurred outside the hours of 6.00 p.m. to 12.00 p.m. In fact some of them occurred during the day.

Ms Shing — Before the PSOs come on duty?

Ms PENNICUIK — That is right, so there have been a lot of issues with the deployment of protective services officers. I also made the point that no government should be suggesting where police or protective services officers are to be deployed, which is the job of the Chief Commissioner of Police. The chief commissioner should have the say based on the evidence in front of him or her as to where police and protective services officers are best deployed on any given day of the week, week of the year or month of the year. It should not be up to the government of the day to decide where police and protective services officers should be deployed. That is a separation of the government from the operational aspects of the police. In the committee stage on that bill the then minister in charge of the bill, who is now the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Mr Guy, conceded that it was the job of the chief commissioner to decide where police and protective services officers should be deployed.

We also raised the issue of protective services officers, who have far less training than police, being able to effectively undertake all the duties of police. We advocated for more training for protective services officers if they were going to be asked to take on the responsibilities that police do.

I presume paragraph (4) is a factual account of what the coalition promised prior to the election with regard to additional police, specialist police and a protective services officer strike force. I remember at the time wondering what exactly such a strike force meant, and perhaps the shadow minister could explain that in his summing up if he wishes to.

The Greens are not opposed to this motion because it asks us to note some articles of fact and then calls on us to ask the Premier and Minister for Police to explain to the community what the government's plans are to deliver more police resources and articulate to the community its plans for community safety in Victoria. We would not disagree with the government doing that,

either right now or as part of an ongoing process. It should be doing that in an open and transparent way.

I note that in his contribution to the debate Mr Herbert talked about crime going up and the community becoming less safe. I am really looking forward to when the independent crime statistics body starts releasing the statistics on crime in Victoria and analysing them on behalf of the community, rather than either the police doing that, as has been the case in the past, or any political party doing that. We might get less heat and more light on what the situation is with crime statistics and community safety in Victoria.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — It gives me a great deal of pleasure to rise to support the motion moved so ably and capably by my friend and colleague Mr O'Donohue, because he is a man with considerable experience in this area. I am delighted he was able to share that experience with us this afternoon, and I have no doubt he will be able to share his experience with us for many years to come.

While I applaud Mr O'Donohue's contribution, I have to say that Mr Herbert's contribution was a little bit confusing. I understand there was something about toilets on the Hurstbridge line and people dashing up and down the Hurstbridge line to get to the toilet, but I am going to have to wait until I read *Daily Hansard* tomorrow to get the full gist of exactly what he was talking about. Given Mr Herbert's contribution to toilets on the Hurstbridge line over a long period of time, I am sure it will be worth reading about it tomorrow. That will give me a reason to get out of bed in the morning, let me assure members of that. That is something I am particularly looking forward to.

As members of this house who have been around here for a while would know, I have enormous respect for the police. I know that without police — and this is not a belief but knowledge — our society would be uncivilised and barbaric. Those who have no conscience and no respect for others would be let loose to do whatever they would do. I thank God for the members of Victoria Police, the men and women on the thin blue line, who do a magnificent job and have been doing a magnificent job for a very long time.

It has been my view for many years that Victoria has the best police force in Australia. I have no hesitation in saying that. Despite what some have said over the last few years, Victoria Police really should hold its head high and its members should hold their heads high as they are our protectors. They make an enormous contribution to our way of life and make our way of life possible. I place on the record here today my very deep

gratitude to each and every member of Victoria Police for the work they do in keeping us safe and in protecting us from people who would otherwise do us harm.

While I have enormous respect for the police, that respect is not always shared. Mr Herbert spoke earlier about having a bipartisan approach to the matter. Unfortunately, respect for law and order and respect for police are not bipartisan matters in this state. I do not think it ever has been a bipartisan matter. The left faction in this state has shown total contempt for the — —

Mr Herbert — On a point of order, Acting President, I know Mr Finn did not hear all of my speech, but he has just verbalised me. I am not sure what the crime is, but I did say there was bipartisan support on eradicating family violence.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, I appreciate what Mr Herbert has said. There is no way I would suggest that there is a bipartisan approach to respect for police and law and order, because those on this side of the house have respect for police and law and order, but those on the other side perhaps have less. That is something I would never suggest, because in my experience that is not the case. I hope Mr Herbert does not take me the wrong way. Everybody is aware that the left of politics does not respect the police.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! Mr Finn, to continue.

Mr FINN — I am very glad that Mr Herbert raised the point of order to make that position very clear. I did not think Mr Herbert would go out of his way to help me in the way that he just has — that is, by making it very clear to all and sundry that respect for our police and respect for law and order is not a bipartisan matter in this Parliament or in this state. But let me say that those of us on this side of the house dip our lids to members of Victoria Police and all associated with Victoria Police because the — —

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, I note that Mr Finn's contribution has gone from what would appear to have been an acknowledgement of Mr Herbert's concerns at the outset to a further misrepresentation of the statements Mr Herbert made earlier in relation to family violence and law and order more broadly. I seek that, if nothing else, Mr Finn at least rein in his comments.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, that is clearly not a point of order; that is a debating point.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! Ms Shing, I understand what Mr Finn has just said, and I ask him to continue. I again ask Mr Finn to continue, and I do not uphold the other point of order.

Mr FINN — Thank you, Acting President. You are a great Australian. I can say to you, Acting President, that those on the other side of the house — and I include our friends from the Greens — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr FINN — We have a coalition government in this state. Let us not mince our words here. We have a coalition in this state. They hate each other with a deep embedded passion, but the Labor-Greens coalition is one that governs this state. On this particular issue they have in common a total and entire disrespect for the police and indeed a total disrespect for law and order.

This is not new. It has been going on for years. If we look back through the 1960s and 1970s, well before I knew exactly what was going on in the world, we can see when the left in this country showed disrespect for the police, for authority and for law and order, and unfortunately it is continuing today. We just have to have a look at what Mr Merlino — the then shadow police minister, now education minister and Deputy Premier — had to say about the protective services officers (PSOs). It has to be said that, of the Baillieu government's many initiatives, clearly the PSO initiative was an outstanding success. Everybody would agree on that, and I note that members of the Labor Party went from condemning the PSO initiative to almost claiming the idea as their own, as they are wont to do from time to time. In opposition Mr Merlino referred to the PSOs as 'plastic police' — this coming from a bloke who is known around the place as Lord Farquaad. To refer to the PSOs as plastic police is — —

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn's reference to the Deputy Premier is, at its highest, uncharitable and, at its more realistic, absolutely insulting and beneath him. I ask that he withdraw that comment.

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmr) — Order! There is to be no conversation. The point of order has been raised. I ask Mr Finn to come back to the motion.

Mr FINN — The now Deputy Premier referred to the PSOs as ‘plastic police’. What disrespect he showed for those people who are out there on our railway stations every night doing a brilliant and magnificent job. Right across the suburban network and in the country areas, through Ballarat, Bendigo and right through Victoria, the PSOs are doing a brilliant job. But true to form, members of the Labor Party were slapping them down, which did not come as a surprise to me and should not come as a surprise to anybody who has taken even a passing interest in how the Labor Party treats police in this state.

We just have to go back to the early days of the Bracks government. The year 2000 — a space odyssey — I think it was at that point when we had a situation where a police commissioner was forced out through various means that I do not have time to go into at the moment, and a new police commissioner was appointed. The new police commissioner was not so much a police chief commissioner as a social warrior. She led the experiment that, as she said, would destroy the fabric of the Victorian police force. She came into this state from New South Wales, which undoubtedly had the most corrupt police force in Australia, and she made it clear — I think in one of her very first speeches — that her belief at that time was that Victoria Police was as corrupt as the police force of the state from which she came. That is just an outrage. Those opposite talk about insults, but that was the greatest insult a Chief Commissioner of Police could offer the men and women under her command.

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — She was out to dinner, and we will get to that a bit later on. The police under her command were offered the most despicable and dishonest insult — smear — I have ever heard. Is it any wonder so many police in Victoria got out? I think at one stage in the space of one month under Christine Nixon over 1000 years of experience walked out the door. They said, ‘No more. We are out of here’. That is the way the ALP treated the police. The ALP was not interested in policing, it was not interested in law enforcement and it was not interested in crime prevention; it was interested in putting one of its own in as chief commissioner as some sort of weird and wild social experiment.

Ms Tierney — On a point of order, Acting President, I believe the member needs to be drawn back to the motion. The last 7 minutes of his contribution have moved far beyond the realms of the motion before the house.

Mr O’Donohue — On the point of order, Acting President, it is clear that the Minister for Training and Skills significantly expanded the scope of the debate with his extensive contribution about the Hurstbridge train line, as Mr Finn referred to. This is quite a broad debate, in accordance with the very nature of the motion I moved. It canvasses a number of justice-related issues. Minister Herbert sought to expand that into the realms of public transport and other areas of public policy. I note he did not actually say he has fixed those problems since he has been in government — that is a separate issue. Mr Finn is still addressing issues of community safety that are justice related — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! I think the member is debating now. I listened to Minister Herbert’s contribution and I am now listening to Mr Finn. I think the point of order has some merit, and I ask Mr Finn again to come back to the motion.

Mr FINN — I fully appreciate what you are saying, Acting President. I believe this motion is widely concerned with the attitudes of the opposition and the government toward policing and law and order in this state. They were certainly areas that I was addressing. If we are going to debate this matter properly, we have to look at what Labor did last time it was in government — the 11 years of the Bracks and Brumby governments, the last time Labor occupied the Treasury bench in the state. Unfortunately the police force suffered very badly under Labor. It is no secret that as a result of Labor’s appointment of Christine Nixon as chief commissioner and the further appointment of Simon Overland, who perhaps knew even less about policing than Christine Nixon, Victoria Police suffered significantly. Indeed the police force is still suffering.

Ken Lay faced this situation, a major challenge, head-on. I think Ken Lay was doing a superb job as chief commissioner. I was saddened that he left the job when he did and for the reason he did. I wish him and his wife, Chris, all the very best for their retirements, and I wish Chris a full recovery as quickly as possible. There is no doubt that when Ken Lay left the chief commissioner’s job we lost a top cop. We lost a very good police officer and somebody who was really committed to law and order and protecting the community, particularly in terms of family violence. He turned attention on family violence in a way that no other chief commissioner had done before. For that he should be commended and congratulated, and we should be very grateful that he held that position.

Ken Lay was in a very difficult position as chief commissioner because in this state — and I do not think

it is revealing any secrets to discuss this in the house — there are two police forces. There are those police officers who I think you would call genuine police officers, committed to law and order and to protecting the community. Then there are the Christine Nixon police, who are more into social engineering, pushing a political barrow and many of the unfortunate aspects of policing that we came to see under Christine Nixon.

I had hoped that that would fade out in time, but with Ken Lay's retirement the government will undoubtedly appoint somebody who reflects its political perspective and I assume we will see a renewal of what we have seen before. It worries me a great deal, and it might even scare me a little bit, to think that Labor is going to appoint a new chief commissioner after the last two it appointed. All I can say is God help Victoria Police, because with Labor calling the shots Victoria Police will be in more strife than the early settlers. It is something that none of us will be pleased to see. I wish each and every member of Victoria Police well as they come to grips with life under Labor, because it is no secret that the Labor Party does not like police or law and order.

I could talk about the move-on legislation and about a whole range of other things, but that might be pre-empting debate on that legislation. I would hate to do that, so I might just leave it alone at the moment. It goes without saying that Labor, the Greens and the left in general are not keen on authority or law and order, and they are certainly not keen on the police.

In my view the police anywhere, but particularly the police in this state because it is our responsibility, need two things to do their jobs properly, and I have said this over a number of years. They need the resources — they need the manpower or the woman power, the police stations, the cars, the mace, the handcuffs and the whole kit and caboodle — to do their jobs. They also need the authority to do their jobs. If they are out on the streets protecting us and they are being undermined by a government that is not giving them the authority to do their jobs, they will fail. They will not protect us, and they will not be able to do the job we want them to do, and that has worried me for a very long time. I have seen police spat on, I have seen police hit —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr FINN — Horses punched, indeed. I have seen some dreadful things done to police, and they do not do anything about it because their view is that the courts will not back them. If they drag somebody into court for assaulting or abusing them, their view is that the judges will not back them up. That is the big problem

we have in this area. If the police feel they do not have the authority to do their jobs, then we are all in a great deal of trouble. The Parliament, but certainly the government, should look at that very closely. This has happened after 11 years of Rob Hulls as Attorney-General stacking the bench. Talk about branch stacking; this is bench stacking. That is what he did for 11 years.

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn has inadvertently reflected on the judiciary. If he is saying that the bench was stacked, he is suggesting that members of the judiciary have a particular ideological bent or a particular view of the world. I ask you to ask him to withdraw any such insinuation.

Mr FINN — On the point of order, Acting President, the standing orders are very clear — that is, that no member can refer to or reflect on an individual judge or member of the judiciary, and I certainly did not and would never do that. The point of order taken by Ms Mikakos is a nonsense.

Ms Mikakos — Further on the point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn referred to every member of the judiciary who was appointed by a previous Attorney-General, Rob Hulls. In effect he has identified a number of individuals who are and were very capable and credible individuals appointed as members of the judiciary.

Mr FINN — Further on the point of order, Acting President, Ms Mikakos is drawing a very long bow here, and she knows it. You can tell by the smile on her face that she knows it. I am very hopeful that you, Acting President, will not be sucked in by Ms Mikakos on this matter. I did not say at all what she is suggesting, and if you wish to have a look at *Hansard*, you will see that I did not say it.

Mr Melhem — On the point of order, Acting President, Mr Finn was very clear when he said that a former Attorney-General stacked the bench. I understand him to be referring to those people. If Mr Finn did not mean it, he should simply withdraw his comments and that will be the end of the matter.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! I will not take any further points of order. I understand where everyone is coming from. Mr Finn has already indicated to the house that he did not mean anything by his comments. While there is merit to the points of order, I will accept Mr Finn's word, but I ask him to come back to the motion.

Mr FINN — Thank you, Acting President. It is essential to make the point that the authority of the police force and members of the police is very important so that they are allowed to do their jobs. Without that authority, both from government and the judiciary, they are put in an extraordinarily difficult position, and we are all put in a very unsafe situation. I believe that is something that should be addressed.

It is sad that Labor had done away with the crime prevention portfolio, because it was a great success of the previous government. One bloke who I have worked with very closely out in the western suburbs, and somebody who works with a great number of young people, is Sir Les Twentyman, the youth worker. Yes, Les got a knighthood. Over many years Les Twentyman has done a great deal of work. I have seen the contributions he has made to ensuring that young people in the west are kept out of trouble. From this point on I suggest that Les Twentyman is consulted on any crime prevention moves. He has hands-on knowledge, the ability and the experience to make a difference in young people's lives.

We have heard from Mr Herbert about unemployment and about the need for training for youth workers and a whole range of things, but here is somebody who with the 20th Man Fund does a brilliant job in setting young people's lives right. My view is very clear. If something is working, you should adopt it. It is important that we recognise that what is happening out in the western suburbs with the 20th Man Fund and Les Twentyman is working and has been working for a very long time, and we should expand it. There are a number of groups around, some with high and mighty titles and with plentiful funding from government, but they do not do anywhere near the good work that the 20th Man Fund does in the west. As I said, I suggest that the government might like to consult with Les Twentyman on any crime prevention strategy to deal with young people, and I am hopeful it will do that.

I conclude my comments on that note. I offer my support, respect and total admiration for members of Victoria Police. I hope at every opportunity members of Parliament show members of the police force that we admire them and that they have our respect and support. That is something they will appreciate. It will help them to do their jobs much better, and it will benefit the future safety and law and order of Victoria. I close with those few comments, and I hope the motion moved by Mr O'Donohue will be passed. It is regrettable that Mr O'Donohue no longer has the position that he had because he was an excellent minister. I have no doubt that the time will come when he will be an excellent

minister once more, and I, for one, very much look forward to that.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

Mr O'Brien

The PRESIDENT — Order! I advise the house that I have received two letters, one from the Governor of Victoria and the other, accompanying that letter, from Danny O'Brien. Members would be aware that last night Mr O'Brien advised the house that he intended to visit the Governor today to formally tender his resignation from his seat in this place in order to contest a by-election for a seat in the other place.

Mr O'Brien wrote to His Excellency the Governor of Victoria and conveyed this letter, dated today, to him this morning. It states:

I hereby submit my resignation as a member for Eastern Victoria Region in the Legislative Council, effective immediately.

It has been a pleasure to serve the people of the region and I hope to have the opportunity to serve our state again in future.

That letter was forwarded to me by the Governor with an accompanying letter which states:

I write to advise that today Mr Danny O'Brien, MP, handed me his letter of resignation as member for Eastern Victoria Region. A copy of that letter is enclosed for your records, as is copy of my response.

I have advised the Speaker and Premier in substantially like terms.

As you know, upon Mr O'Brien's resignation, his seat in the Legislative Council became vacant. In the circumstances, a joint sitting of the Council and Assembly is required to fill this vacancy in accordance with section 27A of the Constitution Act 1975. I assume that you and the Speaker will arrange for that to take place.

As members would be aware, we will have a nomination of a preferred candidate from Mr O'Brien's party, The Nationals, and that nomination will be put to a joint sitting in due course.

I also indicate at this point that it is likely that at that joint sitting representatives of the Parliament will be appointed to the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation — VicHealth — and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority: report 2013–14

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) annual report for 2013–14. Speaking on this report gives me great pleasure. One of the hallmarks of my time as the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development was improving quality in programs and improving quality in facilities. We worked very closely with ACECQA, once it was set up, on that quality agenda for Victoria and indeed more broadly around Australia.

The national quality framework commenced on 1 January 2012 in all states and territories except Western Australia, where it commenced on 1 August 2012. The national quality framework replaced existing state and territory licensing and national quality assurance processes for most long day care, kindergarten, family day care and outside-school-hours care services nationally. In Victoria it meant a change from the state-based Children's Services Act 1996 to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 as the legislative framework for the regulation of the majority of children's services in Victoria.

One of my first acts as minister was to oversee the development of the regulations under the new law. They were drafted by the very talented team in what was then the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and adopted by the ministerial council during my time as chair of that body. ACECQA is the new national body set up to implement the new system and to ensure consistency of approach nationally of the national law. ACECQA is governed by a board of 13 members, and they are appointed by the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood. Eight members are appointed from nominations from each state and territory by their ministers and four members are appointed by the commonwealth. The chair is appointed independently by the standing council and the deputy chair is appointed from the 12 members.

I thank the Victorians who served on that board during my term as minister. In particular I single out Professor Collette Tayler and June McLoughlin, who are two of Victoria's treasures when it comes to passion for and knowledge of early childhood education. I put on the record my respect for the chair, Rachel Hunter, and the CEO, Karen Curtis, and record how much I enjoyed working with them to improve quality in early

childhood education and care. Victoria has excelled as services around the nation have been assessed and rated against the national quality standards. Page 61 of the report shows that as at 1 July 2014, 78 per cent of our services assessed had either met or exceeded the national quality standards, and that was compared with only around 62 per cent meeting or exceeding the standard nationally.

I will mention briefly the four Victorian services that achieved an excellent rating, the highest rating under the new national quality standards. The first of those was the Children's Protection Society Children's Centre in Heidelberg West. It was particularly pleasing because it is a centre that services some of the most vulnerable children in this state. These were not parents who were getting the highest quality education and care for their children because they could afford to pay for it but children from families where they would benefit the most from that high-quality care. It is a fantastic centre that I visited when I was in opposition. The society could not get the previous Labor government to fund that centre, and it lobbied us to ensure that the centre was supported. Both the former Minister for Community Services, Mary Wooldridge, and me were very supportive of that centre.

An excellent rating was awarded to the Wesley College Early Childhood Learning Centre. It also has some excellent programs in that centre. The Jindi Woraback Children's Centre achieved an excellent rating. It has an Indigenous program that is part of the everyday practice of the centre. They have had a number of antibullying projects as part of their centre, and some really fantastic work has gone on there.

The fourth was Doveton College and Early Learning Centre, which achieved an excellent rating. June McLoughlin works and runs the centre, which works with more than 15 agencies to implement key programs and support families in the Doveton community. It does excellent work.

Auditor-General: *Additional School Costs for Families*

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General report *Additional School Costs for Families*, which was released this month. The report paints a concerning picture. There appears to be little coordination or uniformity between schools and the Department of Education and Training (DET) in terms of what parents are actually expected to pay for. The report states:

... parents payments vary significantly from school to school and in some cases, parents are being charged for items that should be free.

Meanwhile:

... parent payments have become critical to the operation of government schools, DET has little understanding of what an efficient and economical school looks like.

That is a damning indictment of the mismanagement of the bureaucracy under the last government.

While free and compulsory education dates back to the 19th century, there has been a creeping rise in the cost to parents of public school kids as over time schools and governments have increased their expectations of what school supplies and services parents should pay for. School camps, school textbooks, pens, pencils and other stationery — it all adds up, especially for families doing it tough financially like many of the families in my electorate in Melbourne's west. In just four years parent payments to schools increased by 29 per cent, from \$240 million in 2009 to \$310 million in 2013. This does not even include school uniforms.

Exclusion is also an issue. There is the question of access and exclusivity for parents who cannot afford to send their children to school camps. They worry about what effect it might have on their children's ability to fit in. Many of us have friends and relatives who know what it was like going to school in oversized hand-me-down clothes or school uniforms and what it is like for kids who are the odd ones out in tattered old school shoes. This is why it was so important that the Daniel Andrews Labor government pledged during the last election to help low-income families pay for the cost of school shoes, uniforms and glasses. That policy was ridiculed by those opposite in the dying days of their government, the same members of the coalition who cut the education maintenance allowance and the School Start bonus — and the list goes on.

The impact of these cuts on parents and schools has been great. In 2012 Victorian primary schools received \$205 000 each on average in family payments. The Auditor-General report notes that schools are collecting nearly as much income in family payments as they are in taxpayer funding from the Victorian state government. In the 2013–14 financial year schools collected \$626 million in family payments compared to the \$771 million they received in direct cash payments from the Department of Education and Training.

To understand how schools are funded in Victoria we can compare them to schools in other states. The Auditor-General found that Victorian public schools receive the lowest amount of funding on a per student

basis compared to any other state in the nation.

Victorian primary schools received 14.4 per cent less funding on a per student basis than the national average. The only other state with funding below the national average for primary schools per student is Queensland, which is 3.2 per cent below the national average.

It is clear that the state government must continue to apply pressure on the Abbott federal government — or the Turnbull federal government, depending on who will be the Prime Minister next week or the week after that — over the Gonski funding commitment so that schools have a little less pressure on their bottom lines and can rely on family payments in the future. Pressure must also be applied to the federal government to wind back the cruel \$30 billion cut it made in its last budget to state school funding over the next decade.

I also make reference to the seven recommendations made by the Auditor-General in his summary on page xii. I will not go through them because they are all in the report, but they are things we should be taking note of to ensure that we deliver more and improve our services to the very people who will take over from us to be the leaders of this nation. They are our kids. They are our future, and they deserve a decent education. Their parents do not deserve to go through hardship and to beg just so their kids can go to school and get a decent education.

Partnerships Victoria: Ravenhall prison project

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am very pleased this evening to make a statement on the project summary for the Ravenhall prison project tabled in the last sitting week. This is a most important project for Melbourne's west, for the corrections system and for community safety initiatives in Victoria. There is a bit of background to this project, which should have been built and opened by now. That is what the Auditor-General found in his report *Prison Capacity Planning*, which was tabled in November 2012. In that report the Auditor-General said that the effectiveness of the prison facilities master plan 2007, which was developed by the Department of Justice and Regulation and put to the then government, was compromised by delays in the construction of the Hopkins Correctional Centre, which was a result of Labor's botched Ararat prison project. That was later rescued by Premier Baillieu and the Minister for Corrections at the time, Mr McIntosh, and is now back on track and virtually complete.

The report goes on to say that the master plan was also compromised because the new prison was not being

funded until 2012–13 and that these construction delays resulted in additional capacity pressures.

The new prison referred to by the Auditor-General is the Ravenhall prison project, a project that the previous Labor government was told in three separate budget cycles it must commit to because of the need for additional prisons to respond to population growth and the rising number of prisoners. It took the coalition to commit to that project, initially as a new 500-bed prison and ultimately as a new 1000-bed prison that this project summary provides an overview of.

There are some key features of this project that will be a significant advantage to the corrections system. I will run through some of those in the short time I have. The new prison will accommodate 1000 prisoners but will have the capacity to accommodate 1300, should this be required in the future. That capacity for 300 extra prisoners can be added at short notice. This is a lesson from the changes we saw to parole. Where significant policy change leads to an increase in the number of prisoners in a short period of time the system needs some built-in extra capacity to respond to that challenge. There will no doubt be some challenges in the future which may lead to a rise in the number of prisoners. This project will provide that additional capacity.

Peak construction of the prison will create 700 jobs, and there will be more than 600 ongoing jobs created. The consortium comprises a number of important partners, including Kangan Institute, the YMCA, the Western Suburbs Indigenous Gathering Place Association and Melbourne Citymission. The prison will have 75 mental health beds — the first significant addition of mental health beds to the system since the Kennett government — and it will also provide assistance for 100 outpatients. It is a very important addition to the corrections system as a whole.

I draw the attention of members to page 14 of the project summary. This full public-private partnership went through an extensive procurement process and tested the market extensively. The value to the taxpayer can be seen in table 4, which is a comparison of the cost of GEO Consortium's proposal against the public sector comparator (PSC). The PSC is detailed at \$3.225 billion, compared with GEO's winning proposal of \$2.529 billion. This represents a saving to the taxpayer of \$696 million.

Not only does this important project add much-needed capacity to the corrections system, provide incentives to reduce and tackle recidivism and engage in a wide

diversity of partners, but according to the PSC it also saves the taxpayer nearly \$700 million.

Auditor-General: *Additional School Costs for Families*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's report *Additional School Costs for Families*, tabled on 11 February 2015. I read this report with concern and alarm because, as a long-serving member of the parliamentary Education and Training Committee, the issue of education has always been close to my heart. It is my strong conviction that all children deserve a decent education, no matter their background.

The poorer or less affluent parents in our community believe state-run schools are free. However, the introduction of so-called 'voluntary' parent payments has put increasing pressure on families that are hard pressed to get by. They can ill afford to pay additional moneys to their children's state school. The consequences of parents' inability to pay these school fees are often borne by the children. They may be left out of school activities or made to feel inferior because their parents cannot afford to buy them school uniforms. If they look different, they will be treated differently by their classmates. Clearly this is not acceptable.

The removal of the Victorian education maintenance allowance has placed some parents in the humiliating position of having to seek waivers from their school principals. There are too many parents living in this state who cannot afford to contribute financially to the education of their children. It used to be that school councils raised additional funds for extracurricular activities. However, some of the projects now being approved are far beyond the financial capacity of many families, highlighting once again the inequity of the current system. The report states:

The findings of this audit show that DET —

the Department of Education and Training —

has shifted responsibility onto school principals and councils without ensuring that the required checks and balances are in place and are effective. This is a fundamental failure in DET's internal controls.

This is an appalling indictment of the Department of Education and Training. This really is the tail wagging the dog. It would appear that parent payments were once necessary to the financial operation of our state schools and to the provision of education. In real terms parents are being charged for items and activities that should be free under legislation and policy. School

principals point the finger at the DET for inadequate funding, and the DET has not a clue about financial governance of schools. They are both stumbling about, trying to manage within a system that is in chaos.

The report contains seven recommendations. Each and every one of them should be adopted and implemented as a matter of urgency. There must be transparent checks and balances in place to keep schools accountable.

Budget update: report 2014–15

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Today I wish to talk about the Victorian budget update for 2014–15, incorporating the quarterly financial report, and the Auditor-General's report tabled today titled *Public Hospitals — Results of the 2013–14 Audits*. I will incidentally also make mention of the Auditor-General's report titled *Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services — High-value Equipment*. As a former Minister for Health I am particularly pleased to see in the audits of the public hospitals the steady improvement that has occurred since 2010 and the underlying position of many of our major hospitals. The Auditor-General's summation of this important report tabled today makes this clear.

I draw members' attention to pages 68 to 78. In those 10 pages there are a number of metrics indicating financial results between 2010 and 2014 for major and small hospitals across the state. For example, figure D4, a table outlining underlying results, indicates that for many of our metropolitan hospitals, which are our largest hospitals, there was an improvement over the period. In figure D4 the results of many of these hospitals are marked with a green symbol indicating an upward trend. In figures D5 and D6, tables indicating liquidity and the average number of days cash available, orange symbols indicate that many hospitals were stable and had no change over that period. The tables throughout that section of the report show no deterioration in any of the metrics at all or in terms of the aggregate metrics — those provided by either the major hospitals, the regional hospitals or the rural hospitals.

However, a number of metrics in the report show significant improvement. I draw the attention of the chamber to the fact that an improvement can be seen across that period. For example, figure D13, a table indicating capital replacement in our hospitals, shows an improvement in our regional hospitals from 0.92 to 1.78. These are significant changes through that period.

I note that page 87 of the report provides a response from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. He very clearly states that there was an improvement in the financial position over the period in question. He says:

It should be noted that the financial result of a surplus of \$235 million is a significant improvement on the \$4 million deficit in 2012–13 and the \$43 million deficit in 2011–12. It should be further noted that results can be volatile from year to year depending on government capital funding allocations.

The key point here is that there has been a significant financial improvement. Without in any way quibbling about the need for the maximum in terms of a robust financial position for our self-governing health services, the task is to have a centrally run and controlled bureaucracy that enables health services to find their own paths and to do that within reasonable financial parameters. There is a case for greater strength in the decision-making of our health services, and that will only be helped by having greater financial security.

The Auditor-General's report titled *Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services — High-value Equipment* is also a valuable audit. It points to a number of steps taken by the previous government to better manage the computerised tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scanners that are very much a part of our hospital system now. This is an area in which there is significant interplay between our federal and state colleagues, and the challenge for state governments is to ensure that we get a good distribution of scanners across the state, both MRI and CT scanners. However, the Auditor-General's report points to a way forward where greater financial self-sufficiency can be achieved by hospitals. The report indicates that hospitals can find better ways to run their scanners and that they can get better use of them, and it outlines better billing practices. In that sense I particularly welcome this report. It points to an area of activity for the department in the future.

It is with some regret that I note certain comments made by the Minister for Health, which were reported by the Australian Associated Press recently. The minister seemed to miss the fact that these reports relate to the whole financial year. She seemed to have the idea that this was an end of financial year thing alone. The robustness of the position of our health services is significant, and the Baillieu and Napthine governments greatly increased funding to health care, providing an increase of more than \$3 billion over that period. The former government put our hospitals in a more sound financial position while delivering the maximum in elective surgery and lower waiting lists than those

experienced under Labor. This is a great outcome in terms of the community, but I welcome — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! The member's time has expired.

Auditor-General: *Additional School Costs for Families*

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a second contribution on the Victorian Auditor-General's report entitled *Additional School Costs for Families*, which was tabled in the Parliament in the last sitting week. As I said in my statement in the last sitting week, the report indicates the enormous cuts the previous government made to Victoria's education system. These cuts left the system dramatically under-resourced, and indeed the effects of that under-resourcing have been felt by students and staff across the state. Before my time expired in the last sitting week I cited the example of Bellarine Secondary College, which went into deficit to cover the cuts the Napthine government made, in this instance, to its Victorian certificate of applied learning (VCAL) funding.

Under the previous government funding for capital works was cut — it was actually halved. We had a situation where students could not go into a number of buildings across the state because essentially they were in a dangerous condition. The report tells us that under the previous government Victoria invested less funding per student than any other state or territory in this country, and the government also cut, as we know, the Reading Recovery program, literacy and numeracy and technological tutors, and of course the government slashed funding for VCAL. We had a situation where school administrators were reeling from the fact that they had a number of priorities to meet within their schools and all they got from the former government was a wrecking ball. The former government did not support the initiatives the administrators wanted to implement in their schools.

As a result of the report, the Minister for Education has been very proactive. He has started with a full independent review of parent payment policies, and that is incredibly important. We will fix the damage and neglect inflicted upon Victoria's education system by the previous government, and we are very serious about investing in education and the future of our children. We are not in the business of slashing and cutting education funding and then trying to tell Victorians that record amounts are being invested, which is what the previous government did, and we are not in the

business of leaving families who are in need of assistance on their own so their children miss out.

That is why the Labor government will invest \$150 million into a Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to cover increasing costs and ease pressure on family budgets. We will also partner with State Schools Relief to provide uniforms and eyeglasses to children who need them and whose parents cannot afford them. We will provide 25 000 free breakfasts per day through our plan to establish breakfast clubs at disadvantaged schools across the state. These initiatives are on top of the increased capital works funding we have announced, because we believe that each and every Victorian child deserves a first-class education and first-class facilities.

The Auditor-General's report, along with Productivity Commission reports released recently, reveals a widening gap between how much funding Victorian students receive compared to the rest of the country. A Productivity Commission report revealed that in 2013, under the Napthine government, Victoria spent just \$9.36 per hour on vocational training. This is the lowest of any state or territory, and it is down from \$11.36 in 2011. Labor has already taken steps to restore Victoria's education system from the neglect it suffered under the four years of the previous government, and we will continue to do so.

I commend the report to the house, and I welcome the minister's request for a full and extensive independent review of parent payment policies.

Budget update: report 2014–15

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise this evening to speak to the *2014–15 Victorian Budget Update*, which incorporates the quarterly financial report 1 and has been presented by the Treasurer, the Honourable Tim Pallas. I do so because it is an important document that has comments that I would like to address, and I would like to raise some concerns about some of the issues the report raises. I note in chapter 1, under the heading 'Economic and fiscal overview', the report focuses on a number of areas about the economy and says:

The government is acting immediately to implement its election commitments to rebuild a strong economy, improve economic growth and create jobs.

The report goes on to say:

Urgent action is required to address these challenges.

The government is doing this by focusing on creating the right environment and using initiatives such as its

Back to Work Bill 2014. We have heard about the Back to Work Bill. It is a shell of a bill, and that has been clearly pointed out by a number of coalition members who have highlighted their concerns. I note that other members have also had their concerns about that particular piece of legislation, and we are continuing to debate it. Nevertheless, it goes to the heart of what we are talking about here. When the coalition was elected to government in 2010 it was clear that the Victorian budget was at risk, the Victorian economy was at risk and expenditure was outstripping the income that was coming into the state. Quite clearly the budget position would have been unsustainable if that were to continue.

The coalition government, of which I was very proud to be a member at a time when Treasurer Wells, and later Treasurer O'Brien, really set this state up. They achieved a AAA credit rating and put into place a number of initiatives to ensure that good economic management could occur. We now see government putting all of that at risk. The report goes on to say that the government wants to maintain:

... a strong budget position and net debt at a level consistent with the triple-A credit rating;

getting Victorians back to work with policies that support jobs growth and —

as I have said —

additional economic activity.

We are hearing day in and day out about the ripping up of the contracts for the east–west link. Nothing could do more to sap confidence in business investment than ripping up such significant contracts. This is what economists and investors, both here in Australia and internationally, will be looking at very closely. It is my understanding that a number of international businesses are absolutely aghast with what is occurring under this government, and I think Victorians are aghast that we have a Premier who said one thing prior to the election and is doing something else post-election.

Our budgetary position is extremely important. We need to have a strong budget position to deliver on the services that Victorians need, particularly in the area for which I had responsibility. Some of the most vulnerable members of our community require a range of services, and if we do not have the ability to deliver those services, those people are going to suffer. That is why I have great concerns about where this government is going.

I note that the coalition government undertook a number of initiatives to ensure that there was ongoing economic activity and prosperity, including the

delegations and free-trade initiatives that the coalition set up with the likes of China, which will reap great benefits for our state. That will flow through and hopefully sooner rather than later. That will be good for all Victorians. But we need the infrastructure and we need other initiatives as well. We need a range of services that can support, as I said, our most vulnerable members of the Victorian community. That is what good government is about. It is about sustaining a good fiscal position, about being true to your word, and about governing for all Victorians, not just a select group.

This report has a number of other areas that I would like to address in future contributions because it is important that we highlight our concerns about it to the Victorian community. I note that since the government has been in office — just 87 days — over 6000 jobs have been lost in the state. We need to continue to watch that situation, and I will have further to say on this report at another time.

Budget update: report 2014–15

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My contribution is based on the *2014–15 Victorian Budget Update*. This item was put forward by the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade today when he in effect said that the initial funding paper put forward prior to the election had been superseded by this document. The document sets out that Labor purports to be able to manage our books, but we never find out the truth about Labor's financial capabilities until 12 months after the budget. In the 11 years from 1999 to 2010 the Labor Party handed down 11 budgets setting out its expenditure for the upcoming 12 months. In each of those 11 years it was unable to deliver the expenditure that was laid out within its budget. We will have to wait to see how on earth Labor will stick to its expenditure projections. We will not know until this year's May budget is handed down. But as I said, we will not really know until 12 months from then if this government has kept its spending to allocated amounts.

In the report there are a couple of paragraphs on what the government plans to do with the east–west link. It will abandon the east–west link project immediately, which it obviously has done. The report also discusses what this government will do with the Tullamarine Freeway widening project, which is going to be reconsidered. Ultimately this government is yet to make up its mind on the Tullamarine widening project. It is worth noting that that Tullamarine widening project was not going to cost the state anything because the consortium that was going to do the work was going to add an additional year to receiving tolls on the freeway and would effectively get the work done on a

cash-positive basis. We would have certainly appreciated having the extra lanes on the Tullamarine Freeway to address congestion.

The government has also said that it will reserve its position on the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor project — a project worth over \$2 billion that Ed O'Donohue has been speaking about in the house this afternoon. That project is up in the air, waiting for the government to make its mind up.

On the abandonment of the east–west link, it is all about Premier Andrews being unable to keep the promises he made four days before the election. Daniel Andrews told Neil Mitchell, in effect, that their conversation on the east–west link was about a moot point because in four days time, if Labor were lucky enough to be given the great honour of running this state, it would open the books, make public the contracts, including the side deal, and show Victorians that the contract was not worth the paper it is written on. Time and again the now Premier promised Victorians that there would be no compensation paid because he believed that the contract had been entered into illegally. Now we find that the Labor Party is trying to distance itself from those promises. That is the issue that causes most conjecture around this project.

But my issue is about what the Labor Party will do about the daily congestion that is absolutely gridlocking this city. There is not an individual in the world outside the Labor Party who believes that reducing some congestion around rail crossings will ease congestion on the Monash Freeway, the Tullamarine Freeway, the West Gate Bridge or the Eastern Freeway. To think that —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! The member's time has expired.

BACK TO WORK BILL 2014

Second reading

Debate resumed from 24 February; motion of Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State).

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — It gives me great delight to rise to speak on this bill. Any initiatives that promote employment and assist businesses to employ people are absolutely welcomed in this state. Unfortunately, despite being called the Back to Work Bill 2014, this bill does not fall into that category, because it is a complete and utter hoax. It is an empty shell and a return to the type of legislation — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I ask Ms Lovell to wait a moment. There is a level of conversation around the place that we can do without. If members are intent on having conversations, I ask that they do so outside the chamber.

Ms LOVELL — As I was saying, this is an empty shell of a bill. It is a return to the type of legislation we saw so much of under the Brumby government that it became its hallmark — that is, enabling legislation. That is legislation that enables things to happen but does not actually contain any detail. No detail in the bill means that the detail will be determined later by regulation. The sting in the tail with this particular bill is that those regulations will not be disallowable by Parliament. As we all know, and as with everything, the devil is in the detail. However, with this bill and with other pieces of enabling legislation, we do not get to see that detail at the time we debate the legislation in this house.

Even government members have been confused about this bill because of the lack of detail in it. When the bill was debated in the Assembly the Minister for Industry said it did not apply to mothers returning to work, but the member for Bundoora claimed that mothers returning to work were eligible. If members of the government that drafted the legislation are confused about it, how are the employers and the unemployed who should benefit from this bill going to understand it?

One thing we know for certain is that if you make something too complicated, no-one will benefit, and this bill is quite complicated. The scheme is complicated because no-one knows who will be able to benefit from it as there is no detail in the bill about the types of workers who will benefit. It is complicated because of the criteria for employers to claim incentives. The incentive is actually claimed after the employee has been employed for three months, at which point the employer may find that the employee is not eligible. It is complicated because the scheme comes into effect after three months of employment but the unfair dismissal regime comes into effect after six months of employment. After someone is employed for three months the employer may claim the full incentive and then dismiss the employee. If that happens, the employee would have no access to the unfair dismissal laws. In addition, there would be no actual employment gained from the payment the state government made.

One area where this bill will create work is in administering the regulations under the burden of red tape it will create. Red tape is the very thing that employers hate, so this shows how little Labor

governments know about running a business and employing people. Most business operators are entrepreneurial. They want governments to stay out of their way so that they can do what they do best — that is, grow their business and in turn grow employment opportunities in Victoria.

Lower taxes help businesses to do this, and good businesses that benefit from lower taxes actually pour their profits back into their own businesses in order to grow them. It is quite simple: if you pay less tax, you can put more back into the business, which helps the business grow. The government ends up getting the same amount of tax in the end because of the growth in the business, but employment in that business and the business itself also grow.

I am very proud of the fact that when the coalition was in government we delivered real results for businesses to assist them to grow. We did this through things like a permanent cut to payroll tax equal to \$234 million over four years. That cut was ongoing after those four years, unlike this bill where the employer will have to start paying payroll tax again after two years. Our cut of \$234 million over four years was much better than this temporary scheme, which cuts \$50 million per year for a maximum of two years.

In addition we cut WorkCover premiums twice during our four years in government. Usually the word 'cut' is not a good word to associate with governments, but in the case where you are actually cutting costs to businesses so they can grow their employment base, it is a very good word. Cutting costs allows them to put more money back into their businesses and grow employment in the state.

We also made significant reductions in red tape. We worked with businesses to ensure that they were able to grow their employment base. In contrast the Andrews Labor government has already proven to Victoria that it is antibusiness and pro-union. The Premier's decision to tear up the contracts for the east-west link shows just how little this government knows about running business. The decision to tear up the east-west link contracts alone has cost the state 3700 jobs. That is 3700 opportunities denied to Victorians because the Premier is so stubborn that he decides to tear up a contract. Goodness knows what this will do to our reputation nationally and internationally and the damage it will do long term when companies no longer choose to do business with Victoria.

The Premier's decision to scrap the move-on laws, as he is proposing to do, will also not help business. This is just another overture to his union mates. Any

disruption that deters people from a business can have an enormous impact on it. I would like to give members a very small example of an impact on a business. I refer to an incident in Yan Yean during the pre-poll period before the 2014 election where Labor's union mates were out in force. For every single Liberal volunteer there would have been five or six Labor or union representatives manning that booth. Quite late in the second week — in fact I think it was on the Thursday — when the unions were out in force, a member of the Country Fire Authority decided that he would hand out a letter that disputed — —

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, Acting President, I am aware that we are on the Back to Work Bill 2014. The member is talking about pre-poll activities during the election campaign, and I cannot see the relevance of that to the bill that we are debating. I ask that the member come back to the bill in question.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I am waiting to hear the relevance. I think the member was heading down that path. I would advise her to hurry down it, because my patience is not what it used to be. There is no point of order.

Ms LOVELL — I am just trying to demonstrate how move-on laws actually help businesses, but having union activity outside businesses do not. As I was saying, that Country Fire Authority volunteer was handing out a letter that disputed union claims, and several union heavies from various groups circled him and started to yell at him. I was just about to go over and intervene when the business owner came out to speak to those people. He was absolutely sick of the carrying on at that pre-polling booth — —

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, Acting President, the member referred to the move-on powers in explaining to members the tenuous connection of this story to the bill before the house. This is the Back to Work Bill 2014. It is not about move-on powers, so I do not see the relevance of the matters the member is addressing at the moment. I ask that she come back to debating the bill before the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I suggest to the Minister for Families and Children that the member has taken about three or four further steps down the path I spoke of earlier since the minister last took a point of order. I urge the member to continue down that path so that we can discover where it might lead us. Perhaps then the minister might have something on which to raise a point of order. There is no point of order.

Ms LOVELL — Just as I was about to go over and speak to this group of people, the business owner actually came out himself. He said he was sick of the carryings on at that pre-polling booth. It had impacted on his business, it had driven customers away for two weeks and he did not need the scene that was being created by the union heavies out front. This is quite a minor incident compared to the long-term blockades that many unions create outside businesses in this state. This is the type of activity that the Labor Party supports, an activity that impacts on businesses — —

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, Acting President, again I ask that you draw the member back to the bill. This is a bill that is about creating jobs in this state; it is the Back to Work Bill 2014. It is not about employee-union relations or anything to do with the union movement, so I really cannot see the relevance of the matters to which the member is referring at the moment.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I can see a connection, and I do not uphold the point of order. However, I do ask the member to return to the substance of the bill before the house.

Ms LOVELL — I am trying to demonstrate that while this government has this shell of a bill, this hollow hoax of a bill that pretends to be about returning people to work, it is actually working against creating jobs for Victorians. In fact its activities cost jobs in many businesses. We on this side of the chamber know that the best way to assist a business to grow is to reduce tax and red tape and let it get on with the job of growing its business and employing people.

Introducing more red tape, as this bill will do, and additional public holidays that will add enormous costs to businesses through penalty rates and tearing up contracts is not in the best interests of growing business and employment opportunities in this state, yet that is what this government is about. The government is about creating more red tape for businesses; it is about creating higher penalty rates and more public holidays that will impact on business; and it is about reducing the ability of businesses to grow employment opportunities in this state.

The people of Victoria deserve better from the government than this bill delivers. The government crowded for months that it had a jobs plan ready to go, but all we have seen so far is a government that has torn up contracts for the east–west link at a cost to Victoria of 3700 jobs. This is a hollow bill that has all the penalties in it but no details as to who will benefit. Even

government members are confused about who will benefit from the bill.

I am concerned about what we might see when the regulations are developed. Why has the government not provided the regulations at the same time as the bill? Why are those regulations not disallowable? What does this government have to hide? Is it that it intends to make the criteria so tight that very few Victorians will be able to benefit from the scheme? Is it because the bill will be another golden handshake for Labor's union mates by ensuring that only trade union members can benefit from the bill or that employers must pass on to the union movement the details of anyone employed under this act? Will the bill allow unions to have unfettered access to the workplaces of those people employed under this legislation? Labor is so secretive about this scheme that it has not been prepared to allow us to see it in full. Why is Labor so secretive about the bill? There has to be a sting in the tail. The devil is in the detail, but we are not able to see the detail as we debate this bill today.

I support moves that reduce costs to businesses, reduce taxation and allow employment to grow. Unfortunately I do not think this bill has been drafted in that spirit. This bill is a cruel hoax on those Victorians who trusted that Labor had a jobs plan for Victoria. I am terribly disappointed in this bill.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — The Back to Work Bill 2014 is beautifully named and perfectly presented by this government at the right time, as soon as it could possibly do it — it is the first bill — to try to give the perception to the Victorian people that the government is actively doing something.

When you look at the bill in conjunction with some of the government's other first actions, such as to grant the Victorian workforce two more public holidays, you start to realise a lot of this work is simply an attack on business. When you see that absolutely no work has gone into the legislation itself, you realise this is a popularity stunt. This government has started using the term 'fast-track'. It has used the term in relation to the Murray Basin rail project, but it has actually slowed down the project. Stage 1 of the Murray Basin rail project from Hopetoun to Ouyen has already been done; \$40 million-odd has already been injected into this project. That work has already been done, and there is further work awaiting the completion of the business case.

While this government says, 'We are quickly getting back to work and are going to fast-track this project', it has stopped the project while it has another look. We

have seen the same thing with the Tullamarine Freeway widening project. The government is going to wait and see what it is going to do, whereas simply doing nothing and leaving our schedule in place would have had that project already underway.

Ms Lovell just spoke about the 3700 jobs that have effectively been given the boot, which means 3700 Victorians are no longer going to have the tenure of work they were looking at under contracts that were already signed to build both the east-west link, with a second river crossing being an integral part of this city's operational safety. We are yet to see a serious accident or threat to this city from something going wrong on the West Gate Bridge, but when that happens — and it will happen — we will all look across the chamber to those members who said this city has no need for a second river crossing.

I want to see how communities in the suburbs of Werribee, Tarneit and Wyndham Vale and the metropolises of Geelong and Ballarat react on the day that something goes wrong with the West Gate Bridge. This government is in effect saying we have no need or desire at all for a second river crossing. For it to make that decision is absolutely staggering.

What we have to debate now is this shell of a bill, which says the government is going to introduce 100 000 jobs into Victoria with a \$100 million program. That is just wishful thinking. I like the concept that we are going to give an incentive to employers to take on the long-term unemployed. That is a laudable policy, and I would like to think it is going to yield anywhere near the result that the Labor Party is forecasting. I spent much of the last term in government assisting the former Deputy Premier with regional development issues.

A large chunk of the Regional Growth Fund, which represented a \$500 million investment in the regions, was directed towards business engagement. Of that \$500 million, \$100 million was for local government. That local government infrastructure fund assisted local governments in the regions to get on with the smaller projects they would normally have had to fund themselves but for which they simply did not have the money. We saw toilet blocks being built, footpaths being created and a whole range of other small council projects for which they otherwise would not quite have had the money. There was a regional benefit, and we gave those councils the money to do those projects with that \$100 million. Local people were employed around the state to spend that money. It was always ramped up with additional money from local government, so we got great leverage from that. That \$100 million

employed a truckload of people around regional Victoria.

Another \$100 million was set aside for the Putting Locals First Fund. Similarly this part of the Regional Growth Fund enabled local people around regional Victoria to be employed in a whole range of projects that had serious regional aspects to them. With those projects there was even greater leverage and greater buy-in from community groups, local councils and major entities like Bendigo Bank. That \$100 million from the Putting Locals First Fund that generated those projects was another phenomenal regional employer.

On top of that we had the Energy for the Regions project. This government is going to finish off the work under the contracts the former government signed, and another 14 or 15 communities will now receive natural gas. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. Some \$100 million was put into the Energy for the Regions program to investigate different ways of getting better energy outcomes for regional Victoria. That money has the capacity to generate real employment. But that project is going to be scrapped, with an addendum to that statement being that the government is going to follow through on the contracts that the former coalition government signed with the smaller towns, but not all small towns, because Swan Hill is part of that as well.

The former government's \$160 million country roads and bridges program again speaks for itself. That money was spent on roads and bridges in places where local councils simply would not have had the money to make alterations and improvements or to perform maintenance work. This funding has provided more employment opportunities in the regions. The work was done at a local level, and not just as an employer and employment driver but also as a tremendous boost to road safety in regional Victoria. If money had not been spent on these bridges, heavy carriers would have been forced to make 10, 20, 30, 40 or even 50-kilometre detours to get their produce to where it needed to go.

These are the drivers in the economic area of government which have come from the Regional Growth Fund, but they also come down to the former government's business engagement work. All the economic activity and employment opportunities are being driven by the former government's connection with local government. In effect the former government's business engagement arm poured hundreds of millions of dollars into other partnerships with businesses right around regional Victoria. This assistance from the former government's investment in those companies was normally completed at the end of some pretty serious negotiations, and in nearly every

case the government contribution was minuscule when compared to the amount of money that the individual businesses were committing to their own upgrades.

I refer to the \$38 million invested by the Hazeldene family at Lockwood, just outside Bendigo. Hazelden's Chicken Farm employs about 600 people in its factory. The former government's contribution of \$2 million was a serious contribution from the state taxpayer. However, it was small when compared to what that family business invested in its upgrades.

That was also the case with Cotton On in Geelong, a business that came to us under real threat of being poached by other jurisdictions around the world, including Singapore. The company was also offered incredible inducements to go to Silicon Valley to set up its headquarters. A company like Cotton On can locate its headquarters wherever it wants to, because its business is buying garments from Third World countries and selling them in 60 countries around the world. The location of its headquarters is irrelevant, so the former government wanted to maintain that company's head office location in Geelong. Our investment of roughly \$8 million in a \$50 million build secured that business being in Geelong for the next 20 or 30 years. Thank goodness we did that work, because — on the back of the closure of Shell and Alcoa and a whole range of other industries and businesses that were struggling under manufacturing issues — we needed to be able to secure those jobs and create an additional 500 jobs. Cotton On was able to fly through this process because its business is doing very well.

Assistance from the former government also helped secure jobs at Olam International almond processing facility in the Sunraysia-Mildura area. Assistance from the former government also helped secure Trufoods operations in Maryborough; indeed Trufoods was one of the first businesses that we were able to relocate out of Melbourne into Maryborough. It is an amazing business, and it took about 200 highly paid workers into the Maryborough region. That initiative gave the town an incredible boost, because with that company we were able to bring to that area some high-end jobs. Trufoods set up its business in Maryborough and took it from strength to strength by introducing new lines of product. The company was and still is a stunning success for the town of Maryborough, all thanks to the work that the former government was able to generate through engagement and driving employment within the Regional Growth Fund.

Carbon Nexus in Geelong was also able to jump onto the income stream bandwagon that the former

government used to assist local business. That funding enabled Carbon Nexus to grow its business, as was the case with Hardwicks meatworks at Kyneton — a family-owned company which employs between 300 and 400 people directly. Those companies were able to benefit from having a direct relationship with a state government that was involved in capital expenditure for new lines that they were putting in. That is how the previous government was able to create significant employment throughout regional Victoria.

Yesterday we heard the speeches of people like the Minister for Training and Skills, Mr Herbert, who, off the cuff, glossed over a whole heap of figures. He said that the project to get rid of 50 level crossings is going to create 4500 jobs. Hang on a second! This project is going to take 10 years, and I think in this government's first term there are plans to complete the removal of 20 crossings. I do not know how long a grade separation takes, but the two that the former government did in Anderson Street, Sunshine, took about four months. If this government wanted to, these grade separations could be done concurrently. We do not have to wait until one is finished before starting the next one.

If the government is serious, firstly, there is no way known that this project to get rid of 20 dangerous level crossings in its first term of government will generate 4500 full-time-equivalent jobs. There is another nice question that we will be able to put to Minister Herbert at some time. We will ask him to explain how he has done his figures. We will just have to wait and see, because that does not make sense.

One of the greatest successes the former government had in relation to employment in the regions was the \$22.5 million it put into SPC Ardmona in Shepparton. Having seen the federal government walk away from its commitment to this regional business, then Premier Denis Naphthine and Deputy Premier Peter Ryan were able to negotiate an investment in SPC by Coca-Cola Amatil that effectively saw 500 jobs secured. I think the people of Shepparton will reflect upon that over time.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time.

Ordered to be committed next day.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I move:

That the house do now adjourn.

Port Campbell rifle range

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. The Port Campbell rifle range has been operating for over 60 years and is currently run by the Colac Rifle Club. The range was initially a defence department range for training diggers to shoot and is now a recreational rifle range designed to cater for local shooters. It is also part of the annual marathon shoot, which is a target shooting competition that progresses through the coastal rifle ranges in the area and is of significant economic benefit to the local community. The range is also an effective firebreak and can be used as an emergency landing strip in the event of an aircraft being in distress.

Currently there is a feasibility study underway to redevelop the range site for use as an extensive tourist accommodation facility in the form of a geothermal spa and wellness facility. My complaint to the minister is that there was no consultation with the Colac Rifle Club, which runs the range, and that it only found out about the study through the media. The action I seek is that the minister immediately suspend any proposed development of the Port Campbell rifle range until full consultation has occurred.

Sunshine Hospital

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I direct my adjournment matter to the Minister for Health, the Honourable Jill Hennessy. During the 2014 election period the then opposition, now the Andrews Labor government, made some much-needed commitments to people born in Melbourne's western suburbs. This was a great relief to my constituents, who frequently visited my office to voice their concern about the lack of support they were receiving from the previous government on issues which affected the community. During the election period the then opposition committed to the upgrading of the St Albans, Furlong Road and Melton Highway level crossings, which was met with great relief.

Victorians and Australians across the country see that each time Labor is given the honour of governing it puts people's health high on the priority list. Labor has committed to opening a dedicated women's and children's centre at Sunshine Hospital. The women's

and children's hospital will have 237 beds, 39 special care nursery cots, 4 theatres and additional outpatient clinics.

Sunshine Hospital has been the first choice for mothers in the west for some time, and this development will ensure that the hospital can continue to offer specialised and dedicated care for patients in the west, which is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. Around 5500 babies were born at Sunshine last year, and this number is expected to reach 7500 in 2025. This centre will allow for an additional 2000 births per year. The children's ward will be modelled on Labor's last health legacy, the redeveloped Royal Children's Hospital, which has changed the lives of so many children undergoing treatment.

Those receiving health care from the dedicated staff at Sunshine will not be the only beneficiaries of this commitment. A total of 2000 jobs will be created during the construction phase and 500 jobs will be created in the hospital, which shows the people of Victoria that the Andrews Labor government is dedicated to creating employment for Victorians. I ask the Minister for Health when construction on the women's and children's centre at Sunshine Hospital will commence.

Kingswood Golf Club site

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter I wish to raise is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, who I understand is represented in this chamber by the Special Minister of State. The matter also has implications for the Minister for Planning and, potentially, the Attorney-General. Let me say from the outset —

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, I am reluctant to interrupt the member during her contribution to the adjournment debate, but it is not clear to me which minister the member is directing her adjournment matter to as she mentioned several of them.

Mrs PEULICH — I did say that strictly speaking it is under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. However, it has also implications for a couple of other portfolio areas, so the minister may need to consult —

Ms Mikakos — So, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation?

Mrs PEULICH — Yes, absolutely. It is in relation to the merger — many in the Dingley Village area

would call it a takeover — of the Kingswood Golf Club by the Peninsula Country Golf Club. We all know the sand belt is an area rich in golf clubs, and there are many such clubs around the state. I think the precedent that has emerged from this takeover has potential to cause a substantial loss of open space across Victoria and in particular across the area that I represent.

I will not reflect on the decision that was made by the courts, which expressed some serious concerns about the manner in which the merger took place and their inability to unscramble the egg, but the nub of the problem is that the merger proceeded with a simple majority vote rather than with a two-thirds majority of the members. The merger decision was actually outside the constitution of the club. If this is allowed to proceed — and I am not calling for intervention on that score — and the issue remains of constitutions not being observed and enforced and decisions being too difficult to unscramble, it may lead to the hostile takeover and merger of a range of golf clubs across the sand belt. The beneficiary in this case is a superannuation fund which has purchased the site in anticipation of being able to subdivide and rezone it for residential development in the medium to longer term. This could happen right across the state of Victoria.

I am asking the minister to investigate what action can be and needs to be taken to prevent other golf clubs taking their lead from what I think is an appalling state of affairs involving the merger of the Kingswood and Peninsula golf clubs and from emulating the template of this takeover, causing the loss of open space and manipulating the system and the rules which are there but are not being enforced.

It is a very serious matter. It certainly has implications for planning, for the loss of open space and for the whole community. It would be a travesty if this hostile approach to takeovers and mergers were able to be continued without any recourse to the courts. I ask the minister to review the matter and to investigate what action can be taken in order to send a very loud message to other golf clubs that they cannot pillage and hijack land for the purposes of making a profit by manipulating or disregarding the rules and engaging in these hostile tactics of takeovers of valuable open space at our golf clubs.

Princess Mary Club

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning. I ask him to intervene and to issue a refusal for the application for a permit for the Wesley Church complex at 118–148 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, which is the

site of the Princess Mary Club. The demolition of this beautiful heritage building would be a disaster for Melbourne. It has great historical, architectural and social significance for women — and for everyone — because of the role it played in the early development of Victoria when single women came from country areas to Victoria, and to Melbourne in particular, after World War I to start work. The club was built in 1926 as a home away from home for young women coming to the city for work. It was described as a ‘fence built at the top to prevent the unwary from falling’. It was to stop women from falling when they moved to Melbourne. It is anyone’s guess what ‘falling’ meant in those days.

The demolition of the building would be an outrage. This is a very rare piece of women’s history in Melbourne. There are very few buildings that recognise and reflect the history of women, particularly women in the workplace, in Melbourne and probably in Australia. It has social significance in showing the emerging role of women in early Australian society. Its demolition would be sad and would mark the end of an era in women’s history. If it was a football club, there would be no question of it being demolished; we would be protecting it. What is particularly sad is that it is a heritage building. The church has neglected it, and now it is saying, ‘Because we have not done anything it has fallen into disrepair, and it should be demolished’. I do not think we should reward the church for neglecting a heritage building.

An earlier permit for the demolition of the building was submitted in 2011. It was an almost identical proposal, and the then Labor Minister for Planning, the Honourable Justin Madden, refused it. It may be noted that the current application is not only for the demolition of the building but for the erection of a 57-storey office building on the site, which is nearly twice as big as the original 2011 application that was refused. I ask the minister to stop this inappropriate development so we can hold on to this rare piece of women’s history.

Echuca-Moama bridge

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — The matter I raise today is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it concerns the much-needed second bridge at Echuca-Moama. The action I seek is for the minister to commit to providing the \$96 million funding, which is Victoria’s contribution to build the bridge.

A second Murray River crossing at Echuca has been on the drawing board for many years. The community has been lobbying for a new bridge since the 1960s, and in 1973 it featured in the maiden speech of then member

for Rodney, Eddy Hann. The current Echuca-Moama bridge was built in 1879, prior to Federation. It is the oldest remaining river crossing on the Murray River. In 1998 as part of Federation funding the Howard federal government provided funding for three river crossings on the Murray River, including the Echuca-Moama bridge. Construction of two of the bridges was managed by the New South Wales government. Those two bridges have long been completed. Only the Echuca-Moama bridge was to be managed by the Victorian government. However, after 11 years of Labor government in this state, funding had not been committed; it had not even decided on a location for the bridge.

The bridge was a priority for the coalition when it formed government in 2010, and it worked towards finding a site. In mid-2014 the coalition government announced the first investment of \$4.5 million for stage 1 of the project, which included a defined route and a new roundabout. During the election campaign the coalition promised a further \$96 million as the Victorian government's share to complete the project. Unfortunately for the Echuca community the Labor Party failed to make a single election commitment for the electorate of Murray Plains, and in January, the Premier, Daniel Andrews, said he would not fund the second Echuca-Moama bridge.

The New South Wales government, which has \$60 million ready to go for the project, is impatiently waiting for the Victorian government to commit the state's share of the investment. The coalition government's commitment of \$96 million for a second bridge for Echuca-Moama was fully costed and submitted to Treasury prior to the election in order to lock it into its budget future estimates. The money is there and ready to be spent on this vital infrastructure for the Echuca-Moama and wider communities. If Labor chooses not to deliver the bridge, then the Andrews Labor government will be taking funding from Echuca and prioritising it in Labor electorates, once again demonstrating to the people of this region that Labor does not care about their road and transport needs.

The action I seek is for the minister to commit to providing the \$96 million in funding needed as Victoria's share to build the bridge.

Kindergarten funding

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, and I am glad she is in the chamber. Yesterday the minister

spoke about the release of the Productivity Commission's report into child care and the importance of securing ongoing commonwealth funding beyond the end of 2015 for 15 hours of kindergarten a week. I was pleased to hear that the Productivity Commission has made a clear recommendation about the value of 15 hours of kindergarten as well as the value of the federal government continuing to invest in it. I am very concerned that the Abbott federal government has failed to guarantee funding beyond the end of 2015, and I know this is of significant concern to many kindergartens and parents in my electorate.

While funding is confirmed until the end of this year, kindergarten providers need to plan, set fees, offer places to parents and get things ready for the three-year-olds who will be attending four-year-old kinder next year. The uncertainty regarding federal funding is already having a real impact on local kinders and parents in my electorate. The action I seek is for the minister to advise me of what she is doing to advocate to the federal government to provide certainty regarding future funding for 15 hours of kinder so that kindergartens and parents in my electorate can plan for the future and ensure that Victorian children continue to have access to 15 hours of kinder, which is an important developmental and educational milestone in their lives.

Puffing Billy

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — The matter I raise this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Tourism and Major Events, and it relates to Puffing Billy. Puffing Billy is one of the great tourist icons of my electorate, and indeed of all Victoria. I understand it carried more than 300 000 domestic and international passengers in 2013–14. It is a significant economic driver for Victoria and particularly for the Dandenongs, for Belgrave, Gembrook, Emerald and other places in the broader Dandenong Ranges-Yarra Valley area.

Travelling on Puffing Billy is a beautiful experience, and there are a number of remarkable volunteers who donate their time, week in and week out, maintaining the engines, carriages and the tracks. They remove blackberries along the Puffing Billy route, perform maintenance on the sheds, act as conductors and the like, and they are a significant part of the tourism offer for Victoria and for that area in general.

Prior to the election, the then coalition government committed to provide \$2.15 million to the operation of Puffing Billy's food and beverage facility to cater for the high numbers of local and international visitors and

also to assist Puffing Billy to be financially sustainable into the future. In providing a better offer to visitors, it was hoped that they would be more inclined to open their wallets and therefore ensure that Puffing Billy would be sustainable into the future. The \$2.15 million committed to by the coalition was in addition to the \$4.9 million that has been provided to Puffing Billy since 2011 for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance works.

Puffing Billy has enjoyed the support of governments of both political persuasions over its history. The action I seek from Minister Eren is that he likewise supports Puffing Billy, recognises the important place it occupies in Victoria's tourism offer and commits the \$2.15 million that the coalition committed to prior to the election so that the upgrade to the food and beverage facilities can take place. I ask that he work with Puffing Billy into the future.

Mental health support

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Mental Health. Ahead of the transition to the national disability insurance scheme, the previous government restructured the mental health community support service sector. That led to a simplified system with fewer organisations providing centralised services and one access point for all services in each region. While there are likely to be some benefits from this new approach, there have also been some downsides.

Many community agencies that provide mental health support in a welcoming, non-clinical environment have lost their funding. That type of non-clinical, drop-in centre support is particularly important for women who do not identify as having a mental illness and thus are unlikely to access traditional, appointment-based services. Many of those agencies have people coming in to receive other support, such as housing or material aid, but they are quickly identified as needing mental health support as well.

During the election the Labor Party committed to restoring funding to three such small organisations: St Mary's House of Welcome, St Kilda Engagement Hub and Jesuit Social Services Artful Dodgers Studios and Connexions programs, as Labor recognised the value of those services. Labor also recognised the importance of addressing family violence and the need to expand support services. So I was quite surprised that Labor did not also commit to restoring funding to any women's agencies providing community mental health support services. Women need safe spaces to receive support and care that recognises their different life

experiences and is tailored to their needs. They need a safe space to escape violence and abuse from partners. Women go to women's services for housing and family violence support but also need mental health care due to the trauma they have endured.

Because of the coalition's recommissioning, there are no longer any women's agencies in Victoria that are funded to provide mental health community support services. Agencies like McAuley Community Services for Women, Bethlehem Community and Women's Information Support and Housing in the North, or WISHIN, provide essential housing, refuge, drop-in services and support for women escaping violence, but they have now lost their mental health workers and programs. That creates a massive gap in support being offered to women who desperately need mental health support. Those agencies are also achieving great things on a small funding allocation, so funding them would certainly not break the bank. In fact it would be about \$340 000 for those three agencies.

I ask the minister: will the government, in the forthcoming budget, restore the mental health community support funding to the women-specific agencies that were defunded?

Rail freight

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It concerns yet another good program that the Labor government has seen fit to discontinue funding for. The mode shift incentive scheme, a little-known program that is highly effective, was introduced as part of the Napthine government's policy of growing freight on rail. It was a key initiative of the freight strategy entitled Victoria — the Freight State and was introduced in 2012–13 to replace the former Brumby government's failed freight rate subsidy scheme. The latter was a maladministered cash transfer to freight companies to carry containers on rail.

I am sorry Mr Barber is not in the house tonight because he would be delighted at the fact that I am raising this matter and asking for action from the minister that will provide an incentive for transport operators to carry freight on rail. It was not a subsidy, it was an incentive. In fact in the budget there was an allocation of \$5 million per year to the mode shift incentive scheme. In 2013–14 the scheme brought about the transport of 49 000, 20-foot-equivalent unit containers on that rail rather than road. It was up from 33 500 in previous years.

I have been scratching my head all week with concern about all these good little programs losing their funding — like the country roads and bridges program, with \$160 million of funds that go directly to local government to support local government roads and bridges; like the Murray Basin rail standardisation project where the Labor government has only committed \$30 million of previously allocated funding from the then coalition government and is not committing to the full \$220 million required for full standardisation; like WestLink, which was the second river crossing part of the east–west project — and we have heard today that the government is looking at a quasi-West Gate distributor that will do nothing to remove congestion off the bridge and provide a second alternative; and like the Princes Highway west duplication between Winchelsea and Colac for which the government has not committed funding. It has scrapped the Regional Growth Fund, which was providing important funding for local communities, and called it something else. It is this little project that is taking freight off the road and putting it onto rail with an incentive of \$15 million over three years that the state government is looking to scrap.

The action I seek from the minister is that he review that decision and look at the successful impact the mode shift incentive scheme has had in relation to moving more containers onto rail, putting fewer trucks on the road and making small and medium size enterprises more efficient in the use of the transport systems we have. It just beggars belief that the government would cut a program that is doing so much good in removing congestion from our roads by putting more freight on rail.

Ambulance officers

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Ambulance Services, Ms Hennessy. The recently released Ambulance Victoria data regarding violence against ambulance officers highlights that more can be done to support the heroic work of our paramedics. The figures released by Ambulance Victoria show that 314 paramedics were threatened or assaulted in 2013–14, including 22 cases involving weapons and 18 incidents of physical assault. Victorian paramedics are being punched, kicked, spat on, threatened with knives and worse. In my electorate there have been reports in the *Sunraysia Daily* that Mildura paramedics have been confronted with violence, threats and unpredictable aggression when attending calls for assistance in their community.

Victorian paramedics and communities have been treated with disdain for four years. Ambulances failed to meet code 1 response times in every one of Victoria's 79 local council areas. This is the damning conclusion of a secret backlog of ambulance data stretching back to 2013. The data was buried for two years by the coalition but was released under the Andrews Labor government upon being elected. The government will be working with paramedics by supporting them, paying them a fair wage and working towards saving the seconds that save lives. I request that the Minister for Ambulance Services join me in meeting with those concerned Mildura paramedics reported on in the *Sunraysia Daily* to discuss their concerns and issues so we as a government can give them the further support they need and deserve.

Mornington Peninsula planning scheme

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My matter for the adjournment debate tonight is for the attention of the Minister for Planning and concerns a decision made by Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. I have had direct representations from a young girl named Tayla and her family. Tayla was given a miniature horse for Christmas. The sad thing about the story of Tayla and her horse Rosie is that the Mornington Peninsula council, through what I think is an excessive enforcement of local arrangements, is going to separate Tayla from her miniature horse.

In New South Wales a way forward has been found with this sort of situation, but such flexibility has not been found in Victoria. The fact is that there are sections of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 — and I draw the minister's attention particularly to section 20(4) — which enable a particular power for the minister to provide site-specific exemptions through amendments to schedules of the planning scheme. If the minister were prepared to take such a step, he would enable Tayla and Rosie to remain united. I have spoken to both Tayla and her family at some length, and I know there are many thousands of people in the Mornington Peninsula area who have joined a campaign with Tayla's family.

I seek from the minister his assistance in finding a way forward to resolve this matter. It could be done by talking to the council to find a better way forward, taking the New South Wales example where some flexibility has been found in these circumstances, or through the use of section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987. This is a sad case of a young girl and her beloved miniature horse. I believe many people in the community believe we should find a way through this and should not allow the excessive

imposition of rules to prevent a young girl from staying with her miniature horse.

Debate interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT — Order! I inform the house that we have in the gallery this evening a former minister and member for Warrandyte in the Assembly, the Honourable Phil Honeywood. Welcome to the chamber.

ADJOURNMENT

Debate resumed.

South West TAFE

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Training and Skills, Steve Herbert, and is in relation to South West TAFE. A couple of weeks ago the minister and I were fortunate enough to meet with industry leaders at the Warrnambool campus of South West TAFE to talk about their skill and training needs and the alignment of TAFE courses to those needs. We then spoke with the board of South West TAFE and covered a variety of subjects. The following week I was very pleased to see an announcement from the minister that \$4 million is to be provided to the TAFE in an attempt to rescue it from the immediate financial crisis it is facing as a result of the previous government's policy and lack of respect for TAFE.

South West TAFE has a number of campuses, including one in Hamilton and one in Portland. Therefore I believe it is appropriate for the minister to make arrangements to visit those campuses and meet with those communities, staff and students to look at the courses they run and the facilities that exist and whether there is scope to also engage local businesses and industry in aligning their training and skill needs with what those campuses can offer.

It is a platform of this government to provide the best quality post-school education. It is important to do that in our regional towns, whether they be regional centres like Warrnambool or towns like Portland and Hamilton. It is imperative that we keep our youth in our regional towns for as long as we can. It is imperative that we ensure that we have the capacity to provide local people for local jobs in our regional towns.

Graffiti

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police. The matter I wish to raise is a scourge of many parts of Australia, particularly the western suburbs of Melbourne. The matter is graffiti. I have driven around the western suburbs a great deal over the years, and I am constantly angered by new pieces of infrastructure that have been ruined by mindless hoons who have painted meaningless messages or garbled images on them. The suburb of St Albans is particularly afflicted by this problem.

I have been contacted by business owners and residents alike who have begged me to come up with a solution. I have offered as much of a solution as I can — some of it perhaps not entirely legal, but that is by the by. Programs were put in place by the previous government, including by Mr O'Donohue when he was a minister, to financially support local governments in the removal of graffiti and also to have offenders on community corrections orders remove graffiti.

I am very keen to know whether the minister is going to ensure the continuation of these programs, and if so whether he will allow these programs to have effect in St Albans. I believe we need a blitz — a war — on graffiti in St Albans. Given the frustration, annoyance and plain anger of so many people who live and work in St Albans, I am hopeful that the minister will come up with a strategy, now or in the future, to tackle this blight on the streetscape. Graffiti makes what can be a very nice place a very ugly place. It needs to be addressed. I ask the minister to provide a strategy to tackle this problem so we can prevent new graffiti and remove the graffiti that is already there.

Bacchus Marsh traffic

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I wish to raise a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The action I seek is that the minister provide an update on the Bacchus Marsh traffic improvement package and detail when works will commence at Halletts Way.

Following community consultation, work on the Bacchus Marsh traffic improvement package commenced in August 2014 with safety improvements at Hopetoun Park Road and the Western Freeway exit ramp. There is strong community support for the next stage of the project — the new connections at Halletts Way — as this will help relieve congestion in Bacchus Marsh. The improvements will make it easier to enter and exit the Western Freeway and will help to improve access and safety for pedestrians and cyclists. The

project is also important to support development in Bacchus Marsh and western Victoria.

Under the coalition government expressions of interest were released for the Halletts Way connection in October 2014. Since the 2014 election there has been no community update on this project. I therefore call upon the minister to update the community on the Halletts Way ramps and to detail what action has been taken to advance this project since the election.

Responses

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I will refer to a number of matters this evening and might do so collectively, if I may.

Mr Bourman raised a matter for the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

Mr Eideh raised a matter for the Minister for Health.

Mrs Peulich raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation.

Ms Patten raised a matter for the Minister for Planning.

Ms Lovell raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Minister for Tourism and Major Events.

Ms Hartland raised a matter for the Minister for Mental Health.

Mr Ramsay raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

Ms Symes raised a matter for the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services.

Mr Davis raised a matter for the Minister for Planning.

Ms Tierney raised a matter for the Minister for Training and Skills.

Mr Finn raised a matter for the Minister for Police.

Mr Morris raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety.

I will refer all those matters to the relevant ministers. They will respond to the members in due course.

As a way of discharging it I propose to respond to Mr Elasmars' matter that was directed to me. The member referred to the Productivity Commission report tabled in federal Parliament on Friday. He specifically

referred to that report recommending that the federal government have an ongoing funding role in the provision of 15 hours of kindergarten per week for preschool children. He referred to the Abbott federal government's failure to commit to funding for 15 hours of kindergarten beyond December of this year.

The member referred to the fact that there is a great deal of uncertainty amongst kindergartens in his electorate which wish to plan for next year's enrolments. Obviously this is having an impact on parents, staff, the committees of management and the cluster managers in the various kindergartens in Mr Elasmars' electorate. I know Mr Elasmars is very concerned about these matters. I know he has had discussions with kindergartens in his electorate and that he is very passionate about ensuring that young children in Northern Metropolitan Region continue to benefit from this provision of 15 hours of kindergarten.

I can assure the member that the Andrews Labor government is committed to quality early childhood services in our state. The member asked that I advise him on what I am doing to advocate to the federal government for ongoing funding for the 15 hours of kindergarten. I can assure the member that I am taking a number of measures to advocate to the federal government around this issue, including writing to the relevant ministers. I am also seeking to secure a meeting, and that is in process at the moment, with the federal Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education and Training, Scott Ryan. I am disappointed that Mr Pyne, the federal Minister for Education and Training, has not offered to make himself available, but I will continue to seek to have direct discussions with him.

I will be reminding the federal government that when the national agreement was originally envisaged the idea was there would be ongoing funding and an ongoing commitment from the federal government in respect of the 15 hours. The Productivity Commission thinks it is a good idea that the federal government continue to play a role in funding early childhood services, particularly in our preschools, and so does this government. We will continue to make the case at every opportunity that Victoria's children deserve the federal government making a direct commitment to them.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.54 p.m.

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Responses have been incorporated in the form supplied to Hansard.

Fruit fly

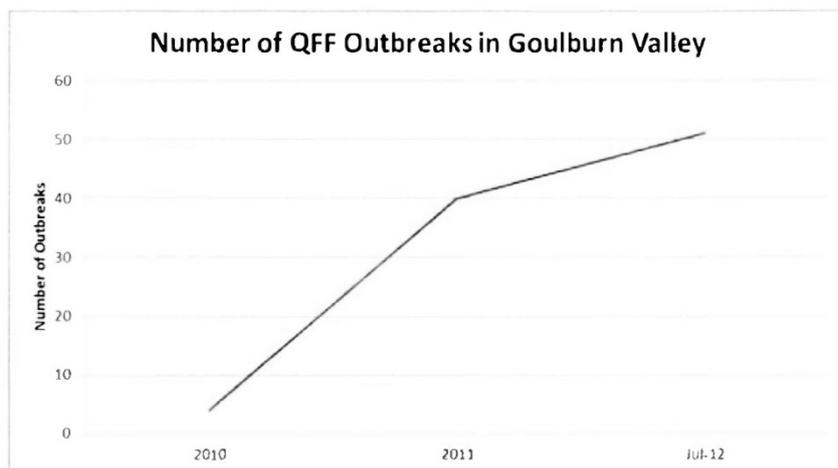
Question asked by: Ms Lovell
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture
Asked on: 24 February 2015

RESPONSE:

Queensland fruit fly (QFF) has been considered established in eastern Victoria since 1949.

In 2011 the QFF situation in key fruit production regions such as the Goulburn Valley and north east Victoria significantly increased with large numbers of wild flies trapped on a regular basis. A number of areas were in outbreak for several years.

In 2012, QFF was established in most NSW production areas and Victoria had over 120 outbreaks.



Goulburn Valley growers have been dealing with this increase for four years. It is worth noting that during the 57th Parliament, while the Member sat at the Cabinet table, at no time did she mention fruit fly in the Parliament. I note the Member is now only interested in the Victorian Government's response over two months.

In June 2013, Ms Lovell's government determined that eradication of QFF from the Goulburn Valley and north east Victoria region was no longer feasible or economically viable and consequently ceased further funding for eradication.

Despite the massive increase in QFF infestation, the previous government failed to commission any studies to understand the economic cost of QFF.

The Department advises that the lack of baseline studies makes it impossible to estimate the economic costs of the 2013 withdrawal of funding, or the broad economic cost of any particular fruit fly outbreak to the Goulburn Valley region, with any level of confidence.

Taxi and hire car industry

Question asked by: Ms Patten
Directed to: Minister for Agriculture (for Minister for Public Transport)
Asked on: 24 February 2015

RESPONSE:

I can advise the following;

The Andrews Government will establish a Taxi and Hire Car Industry Ministerial Forum to bring together regulators, industry participants, consumers and government to consider ongoing industry reforms, reducing red tape, delivering a first-rate Multi-Purpose Taxi Program and wheelchair accessible taxis, and other matters.

The terms of reference for the Forum are currently being drafted. We will then invite representatives for the first meeting which will be scheduled later this year. The Minister for Public Transport looks forward to receiving advice from the Forum about how to build a stronger, safer and sustainable commercial passenger vehicle industry in Victoria.

We recognise ride-share services like Uber are an emerging service and are awaiting further advice from the TSC on ride-share services in Victoria.

I can further advise that the Government will invest \$4 million in a Taxi Reform Hardship Fund to address the significant financial aftershocks endured by some licence holders after the Liberals' taxi reforms. Licence holders who can demonstrate severe financial distress as a consequence of the reforms will be eligible.