

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 25 November 2015

(Extract from book 17)

Internet: www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard

By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

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The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

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Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Mr Drum, Ms Hartland, Mr Herbert, Ms Mikakos, Ms Pulford, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips and Ms Wooldridge.

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

Legislative Council standing committees

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure — Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Morris, Mr Ondarchie and Ms Tierney.

Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning — Ms Bath, #Mr Bourman, Mr Dalla-Riva, Mr Davis, Ms Dunn, #Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, #Mr Purcell, #Mr Ramsay, Ms Shing, Mr Somyurek and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — Ms Fitzherbert, Mr Melhem, Mr Mulino, Mr O'Donohue, Ms Patten, Mrs Peulich, #Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Springle and Ms Symes.

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

Port of Melbourne Select Committee — Mr Barber, Mr Drum, Mr Mulino, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Purcell, Mr Rich-Phillips, Ms Shing and Ms Tierney.

Joint committees

Accountability and Oversight Committee — (*Council*): Ms Bath, Mr Purcell and Ms Symes. (*Assembly*): Mr Angus, Mr Gidley, Mr Staikos and Ms Thomson.

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

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

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

Environment, Natural Resources and Regional Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Ms Halfpenny, Mr McCurdy, Mr Richardson, Mr Tilley and Ms Ward.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards, Ms Kealy, Ms McLeish and Ms Sheed.

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

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

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

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee — (*Council*): Dr Carling-Jenkins, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing. (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O'Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward.

Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee — (*Council*): Ms Bath and Mr Dalla-Riva. (*Assembly*): Ms Blandthorn, Mr J. Bull, Mr Dimopoulos, 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 — Clerk of the Legislative Council: Mr A. Young

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT — FIRST SESSION**

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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
Bath, Ms Melina ²	Eastern Victoria	Nats	Mulino, Mr Daniel	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Bourman, Mr Jeffrey	Eastern Victoria	SFP	O'Brien, Mr Daniel David ¹	Eastern Victoria	Nats
Carling-Jenkins, Dr Rachel	Western Metropolitan	DLP	O'Donohue, Mr Edward John	Eastern Victoria	LP
Crozier, Ms Georgina Mary	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Ondarchie, Mr Craig Philip	Northern Metropolitan	LP
Dalidakis, Mr Philip	Southern Metropolitan	ALP	Patten, Ms Fiona	Northern Metropolitan	ASP
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin	Northern Victoria	Nats	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	V1LJ
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Elasmr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Northern Victoria	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP			

¹ Resigned 25 February 2015

² Appointed 15 April 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 November 2015

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

VICTORIA AGAINST VIOLENCE

The PRESIDENT — Order! This morning a number of members of this house went out on the front steps for a photograph in recognition of the campaign against family violence, and I thank those members who were able to do that.

I advise the house, and this advice has been issued in an email previously, that the Parliament has adopted an accreditation program developed by the White Ribbon organisation. It will be launched next year and aims to ensure that the Parliament recognises and respects the rights of people within Parliament and ensures that this is a safe and open workplace free from bullying and intimidation.

I also remind members that in the Sir Isaac Isaacs Room, which is the north annexe of the library, a condolence book has been provided by the Consul General for France at my request to be situated here to allow members to put a message in that book. That is available again today in the Sir Isaac Isaacs Room.

PETITIONS

Following petitions presented to house:

Commercial fishing licences

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

The petition of certain citizens of the state of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the desire of citizens to continue to enjoy sustainable seafood commercially caught in Port Phillip Bay.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council reject any bill that prohibits commercial harvesting of fish and seafood from Port Phillip Bay.

By Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan)
(967 signatures).

Laid on table.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan).

Melbourne Metro rail project

To the Legislative Council of Victoria:

We, the undersigned citizens of Victoria, call on the Legislative Council of Victoria to note the potential harmful

impacts on the iconic Fawkner Park of the Daniel Andrews Labor government's Melbourne Metro rail project, including having the park alienated for the long duration of tunnelling works for the storage of tunnel spoil and as a staging post for trucks, tractors and heavy earthmoving equipment.

This was confirmed to the Parliament by the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 20 October 2015, when he said: 'There will be some properties procured, and there will also be the requirement for some work staging, as I believe, to occur in Fawkner Park. I certainly know that within the construction and engineering phase of the proposal there may be some impact upon local amenity for some time during the course of construction'.

We therefore call on the Daniel Andrews Labor government to reverse its decision to use Fawkner Park as a spoil dump and staging point for heavy machinery for the tunnelling of the Melbourne Metro rail project and to further guarantee, in particular, that there will be no trees removed from Fawkner Park or otherwise adversely impacted and no restrictions to public access.

By Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan)
(23 signatures).

Laid on table.

**HAZELWOOD MINE FIRE INQUIRY
IMPLEMENTATION MONITOR****Report 2014–15**

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State)
presented report.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be published.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Report on Local Government: 2014–15 Audit Snapshot, November 2015 (*Ordered to be published*).

Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources Department — Minister's report of failure to submit 2014–15 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the Report, 2014–15.

Ombudsman — Investigation of a protected disclosure complaint regarding allegations of improper conduct by councillors associated with political donations, November 2015 (*Ordered to be published*).

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

Building Act 1993 — No. 134.

Charities Act 1978 — No. 131.

City of Melbourne Act 2001 — No. 133.

County Court Act 1958 — Nos. 129 and 130.

Food Act 1984 — No. 132.

Road Safety Act 1986 — No. 135.

Subordinate Legislation Act 1994 — A Legislative Instrument and related documents under section 16B in respect of Ministerial Direction No. 145 — Special Religious Instruction in Government Schools, dated 9 November 2015, under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

Taxi Services Commission — Minister's report of failure to submit 2014–15 report to the Minister within the prescribed period and the Report, 2014–15.

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal — Report, 2014–15.

Mr Davis — On a point of order, President, on the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources report of failure to submit mentioned now, I wonder if the Leader of the Government, as a courtesy, might explain to the Council the reason for that failure.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is not a usual procedure to deal with this. Does the minister wish to make comment at this stage? No.

Ordered that minister's report of failure of Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources to submit report be considered next day on motion of Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan).

NOTICES OF MOTION

Notices of motion given.

Mrs PEULICH having given notices of motion:

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is a vexatious motion and not acceptable in my opinion. I ask Mrs Peulich not to persist with that motion.

Mrs Peulich — I will rephrase the notice of motion, President.

Further notices of motion given.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Drought assistance

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I rise to inform the house of the visit to Victorian drought-affected communities by the Premier, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville, and me last Sunday and Monday and the support package the Andrews Labor government has

put in place for farming communities in the north-western and central northern part of the state.

Over the course of two days we talked with farmers and local communities about issues affecting their businesses and livelihoods — seasonal conditions, drought preparedness, risk management, farmer health and community resilience, among other things. We began in Donald with a briefing from the local water authority and a group of young farmers before heading to the Donald Cup, an event that has brought the local community together for decades. The Premier, Minister Neville and I then attended a community barbecue in Birchip for farmers and community members hosted by the Victorian Farmers Federation.

The Andrews Labor government is taking action to support our farmers and farming communities in need. We are delivering a cross-government drought support package of \$27.3 million to help farmers and communities in Victoria's most drought-affected areas. The package provides a wide range of support, including practical extension services; financial counselling and stock containment grants for farmers; measures to help families with expenses related to keeping kids in school; measures to boost health support, including mental health; business advice services; improving the coordination of government support services; funding for community events; and fast-tracking a number of community infrastructure projects.

At this stage we have targeted the ten worst hit municipalities: Buloke, Yarriambiack, Loddon, Northern Grampians, Horsham, Hindmarsh, Gannawarra, Pyrenees, Central Goldfields and West Wimmera. We understand that the effects of drought do not stop at municipal borders and will continually monitor conditions closely and determine whether eligibility requirements need to be updated. As part of this visit we announced that a \$10 million fund would be established. The money has not been allocated to special measures, and we will be discussing with communities where the areas of greatest need are over the coming months in anticipation of particular pressure points for these people in February.

Regional and rural youth

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Youth Affairs) — I rise to inform the house that last week the Andrews Labor government allocated \$425 000 over two financial years to the rural and regional local government youth engagement program. Last week I was pleased to announce that under round 1 of this new

program seven local governments in rural and regional Victoria will receive grants of up to \$30 000.

The Victorian government recognises that young people from rural and regional Victoria, many in drought-affected areas, and particularly young people who have not been well represented in the community in the past, may face additional challenges to being involved and being heard in local government community decision-making. The rural and regional youth engagement grants allow local governments to develop youth engagement strategies, activities and solutions that better support young people who are not currently well represented in their community to participate in local decision-making and change-making in their community.

Under round 1 the following local governments received funding: Central Goldfields Shire Council, Colac Otway Shire Council, Campaspe Shire Council, Greater Bendigo City Council, Greater Shepparton City Council, Wangaratta Rural City Council and Yarriambiack Shire Council. Each of these councils has put forward creative responses to engage young people in their local communities. For example, the Rural City of Wangaratta, where I launched this program last week, will focus on empowering young people living with a disability to have a voice and to be meaningfully involved in their community through its project. The Yarriambiack Shire Council's local co-design project will support disengaged young people to consult with their peers and plan, design and deliver local community projects, and the Central Goldfields Shire Council will support young people facing barriers to participation to attend local youth forums, vote on change-making projects and form working groups to deliver projects.

I congratulate all the councils which were successful in receiving these grants and advise the house that a further round will be launched sometime next year.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Family violence

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — On this White Ribbon Day we acknowledge the desire of the government to spend the week focusing on what is probably the most important issue in our society right now, and that is family violence. The government is allocating some of tomorrow to learn more about family violence in the Parliament of Victoria, which consists of both houses — the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.

I note the work of the coalition government in the area of family violence, and I particularly note the work of Ms Wooldridge and her stewardship in the allocation of both funding and strategy around this awful disease we have to try to fix — that of family violence. I note that this is important to the whole of the Parliament of Victoria as far as the coalition is concerned, but seemingly not so for the government.

I note that Ms Allan, the Minister for Public Transport, has moved a motion by leave in the Legislative Assembly allocating a number of speakers to come and address the Parliament of Victoria. They are Rosie Batty, Kristy McKellar, Joumanah El Matrah, Muriel Bamblett, Graham Ashton, Annette Gillespie and Rodney Vlasis. They have been invited to address the Parliament about this very important issue of family violence, but Legislative Council members will only get to hear from Rosie Batty because the Legislative Assembly, through the government's initiative, has invited Legislative Council members to only the Rosie Batty address. It seems that family violence is very important to this government as long as it does not get in the way of its own agenda. I do not know why it has not included both houses for all the presentations tomorrow.

Moyne Health Services

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — It gives me great pleasure to rise today to congratulate Moyne Health Services, which was runner-up in the category of small health service of the year at the 2015 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards last Wednesday. Moyne Health Services is a public not-for-profit integrated healthcare service that helps meet community healthcare needs in Port Fairy and surrounding districts in the Moyne shire. Employing more than 190 people, Moyne Health Services operates a 15-bed acute hospital, a 52-place hostel, a 30-place nursing home, acute emergency services, primary and community care services, an adult day centre and allied health services. The health service has been operating for 160 years and is working towards constructing a new urgent care facility in Port Fairy.

Australian Schools Triathlon Challenge

Mr PURCELL — I also congratulate the 700 Warrnambool district primary school students who participated in the Australian Schools Triathlon Challenge in Warrnambool last week. Children from grade 3 to grade 6 swam, ran and rode simply for the pleasure of being involved. The enthusiasm, camaraderie and friendly competition between the schools was excellent to see.

Government financial management

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — In the lead-up to the government's first anniversary in office, it is timely that last week the state accounts for 2014–15 were released. This is the single most important and holistic measure of the performance of the economy, and it is great news that in 2014–15 Victoria's real gross state product increased by 2.5 per cent. Tellingly, this is significantly higher than the result in 2013–14, which was 1.0 per cent revised. In other words, real gross state product — the best single holistic measure of overall economic performance — grew at more than double the rate it had in 2013–14. Importantly, when we put this in some kind of context it is faster growth than in New South Wales, in many ways the most comparable state, for the first time in over four years. That is a very important result both for the overall economy and also for the government's budget and fiscal position.

In terms of the contributions to growth, construction stands out, growing at 9.8 per cent. It was with some pleasure that I attended, with the Treasurer, the Housing Industry Association's president's lunch last week. Construction is an incredibly important business for this state in terms of employment and in terms of providing housing for the many people moving to the state. Accommodation and food services grew by 7.3 per cent, which is critically important for our growing visitor economy. It was a great result, and I am sure it is something we will dwell on more in today's debate about the government's first anniversary.

Community festivals

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — Over the past four to six weeks I have had the pleasure of attending many community festivals supported by their local councils. I have been to the Eltham festival, the Mallahang festival, the Whitehorse festival and the Maroondah Festival. All of them were supported respectively by the Nillumbik, Banyule, Whitehorse and Maroondah councils.

These might seem minor affairs in the scheme of things in terms of the sorts of activities that local government provides, but they actually provide a really important time for families and community to come together, to get to know each other and to participate fully across a range of opportunities in those local areas. They also provide opportunities for families to participate for free, and that is fairly novel in this day and age. Although nothing is for free, those sorts of activities supported by ratepayers are an incredibly valuable part of what local councils do, because the ability to strengthen

community cohesion pays enormous dividends to local councils when they have connected communities.

What I fear in relation to these festivals in the future and community grants programs generally is that we will see a reduction of these sorts of activities due to rate capping. That would be an incredibly poor outcome for those communities.

Run Geelong

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — Last Sunday morning nine-year-old Jeremy and I, with 12 000 other participants, ran in Run Geelong. This year all funds raised from the Cotton On Run Geelong event, presented by GMHBA, will support the redevelopment of the maternity day assessment unit at Barwon Health's University Hospital Geelong. The project also includes redesigning the Baxter maternity services entrance and the main reception and waiting area.

In 2014 more than 4200 pregnant women presented to the maternity day assessment unit for care. Pregnant women can be referred to the unit for a variety of reasons, but most commonly it is due to complications arising during pregnancy. The unit is staffed by midwives and doctors who assess and monitor the health of pregnant women and their unborn babies. The team within the maternity day assessment unit work tirelessly in their small space to treat every woman and their family with compassion and respect.

The community's need for the maternity day assessment unit has grown by 10 per cent in the past five years and continues to do so. A redevelopment of the current service will create a more spacious environment to welcome families into Baxter maternity services and the maternity day assessment unit. The redesign will provide improved comfort for expecting mothers by including recliner chairs for women presenting who do not require their assessment on a bed.

I congratulate all those involved in the Cotton On fun run on Sunday and the organisers on raising an estimated \$362 000. It is very important funding for the maternity day assessment unit at Barwon Health's University Hospital Geelong.

Melbourne Cup

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — What a month it has been for western Victoria in the field of sport. Ballarat-based horse trainer Darren Weir and his team, along with the training support team in Warrnambool, strapper Stevie Payne and of course Melbourne Cup winning jockey Michelle Payne have done the

electorate proud. It is an absolute testimony that this six-year-old gelding, Prince of Penzance, along with the hardworking group of racing professionals and enthusiasts, was able to outdo what the rest of the world had come to do.

Michelle Payne's win is historic, but I particularly look forward to hearing her fresh voice in challenging the racing industry and pursuing gender equality in the sport. May her winning race colours — the colours of the suffragettes — green for hope, white for peace and purple for dignity, continue to hold her in good stead as she continues to break new ground.

Kerryn Manning

Ms TIERNEY — Given the excitement around the Melbourne Cup you could have been forgiven for not noticing another woman, Kerryn Manning, also creating history. She became the first woman to win New Zealand harness racing's premier cup, the New Zealand Trotting Cup (group 1) in Christchurch. Ms Manning hails from Great Western in my electorate, where the welcome sign on the border of the town declares it 'the home town of Kerryn Manning, world champion harness racing driver'.

Kerryn has driven more than 3500 winners and has a habit of making history. This recent win is particularly special, given that she not only drove Arden Rooney to victory but also trained the horse, becoming the first Australian to train the winner of this race since 1987. Congratulations to all involved on securing these significant and important wins.

Racehorses

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — As members would be aware, three-time Melbourne Cup runner-up and Australian crowd favourite Red Cadeaux was euthanised 17 days after sustaining injuries in the Melbourne Cup on 3 November. I have no doubt that those close to the horse and the general public are saddened by his injury and his death, as am I. The injury and death of Red Cadeaux in such a high-profile event has meant there has been a great deal of public attention and concern for the fate of this particular horse. However, it also shines a light on the largely hidden fate of other horses. The Black Caviars and Red Cadeaux of the industry are few and far between. What is the life of a racehorse really like?

Around 31 000 thoroughbreds and a similar number of standardbreds will be in training or racing at any one time in Australia. Many of those are injured on the track or in training. When a horse breaks a leg or a

shoulder, it is often impossible for a vet to repair the bone, and even when recovery is possible, it is unlikely that the horse will ever race again. Studies have found that almost 40 per cent of racehorses leave the industry every year due to illness, injury or other problems. A few lucky ones are saved by caring individuals or horse rescue organisations or are used for other purposes.

We need more transparency and a plan to reduce wastage in the horse racing industry. The Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses has proposed that 1 per cent of all betting turnover be used to establish a retirement plan for horses.

Sister Christiane Samaha

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — My statement today concerns Sister Christiane Samaha, mother coordinator of the Basilian Chouerite Sisters in my electorate. In 2007 Sister Christiane arrived in Australia as a missionary. She has, I understand, now returned home to Lebanon, leaving a lasting legacy that will bring many long-term benefits to the Australian-Lebanese and Middle Eastern community in Australia. Her tireless efforts and achievements in education and social welfare are too numerous to recount, but I can say that she is a wonderful example of high moral values coupled with an extraordinary intellect. She has shone her light on countless children and elderly people who I know will never forget her. I wish her good fortune and good health wherever in the world she decides to go to spread her compassionate caring and teaching skills.

Winton Wetlands

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — I wish to use my members statement today to promote the Winton Wetlands Save Our Sea Eagles project, which has launched an online crowdfunding campaign. Sadly there are only 100 breeding pairs of white-bellied sea eagles in Victoria, making each pair critically important for the species' wider conservation.

The Winton Wetlands has been identified as a significant site on a national scale, and three nests have been identified. The Winton Wetlands aims to permanently conserve the white-bellied sea eagle sites by restricting access within 1 kilometre of the nests and exploring other protection measures to support the successful breeding of the species. A key innovation will be the use of a remote access camera trained on the nesting site. Footage will be transmitted to the information centre in the Mokoan Hub and Cafe.

In a first, the Labor government is partnering with Pozible, Australia's foremost crowdfunding platform, to promote the threatened species conservation campaign. The exciting thing about this project is that the money raised through the site will be matched dollar for dollar by the state government up to a total of \$50 000. I encourage anyone who is passionate about conservation and helping to save our species to get behind the Winton Wetlands campaign.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house condemns the Andrews Labor government on its first year in office, a year of putting politics before people and failing Victorian families as a result of economic mismanagement, infrastructure projects cancelled or stalled, service delivery failing, increased burdens on business, election commitments broken, factional fighting and inappropriate union influence.

Victorians did not get the government they were promised. Prior to the election we saw very clear commitments, promises and spin, and what we have seen since is all talk and no action, no delivery and no outcomes, and Victorian families are feeling it. In the government's first 100 days this house supported a motion that characterised the government in terms of lies, confusion, excuses and spin. This house and the Victorian community, when reflecting on the first year of the Andrews Labor government, can detail so many failures, and areas where the rhetoric has not matched the reality and where Victorian families have been failed as a result of the Andrews Labor government.

This is a government that, when in opposition said a lot to appease and appeal to different communities before the election, and it has consistently failed to deliver since. It is a government that said that every job is worth fighting for and that it will create 100 000 new full-time jobs, yet it is 95 000 behind that target. It is a government that said that there would be no compensation for ripping up the east-west link contract because it was not worth the paper it was written on, but Victorians are now lumped with an \$857 million bill — signed, sealed and delivered by Daniel Andrews and his government.

It is a government that is beholden to the unions, it is a government that has punished small business with two new public holidays and two small business ministers; and it is a government that has cut cancer beds for Victorians needing that vital healthcare treatment. It is a government that has already been caught cooking the books. It is basically failing the tenets of accountability

and transparency while at the same time ministers are flying high, making coffee and prioritising the things that make themselves comfortable in this role. Daniel Andrews leads a government that has disconnected itself from the Victorian community and that is represented by the self-interests of the union movement and the labour movement. This is a problem. and Victorian families are hurting as a result of the inaction of the government, its inability to deliver and the narrow interests it supports.

Let us look at some of the experiences of Victorian families. When it comes to full-time jobs, 5000 full-time jobs have been created in the government's first year when the promise was 100 000 new full-time jobs. The government is now lauding part-time jobs in sharp contrast with what it did in opposition. At the same time funded student training places have declined, so not only are jobs not being created but the pipeline of people with skills and training is diminishing as well.

Our roads are congested and getting worse. I cannot tell you the number of times people say to us that they are feeling the increase in travel times each and every day. In public transport for the first time in a generation we have seen strikes across all the different public transport types. That has meant that families cannot get to their jobs, cannot get to health services and cannot get to the community activities they need, and all because the unions have been flexing their muscle as payback from this government. Victorians have been promised that they will get home safe when the weekend overnight public transport trial starts in the new year, but if you are not a premium station, apparently getting home safe is not a priority for you either.

It is harder to get into care; numbers in our emergency departments are increasing and the wait times are increasing as well. It is taking longer to get an elective surgery operation. People are waiting, the waiting lists are extending and the times on the waiting list are extending. People are having trouble accessing the health services they need.

If you live in rural and regional Victoria, that is just bad luck. The government is slow to respond to issues of concern, it is unable to provide public transport services that deliver on people's needs and there has been a minuscule investment in things like health capital relative to what this city-centric government invests for Melburnians.

Then we have small business families. We heard yesterday from the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade that the new public holidays are

all about families spending time together. But for hundreds of thousands of small business owners, that meant spending time together in their small businesses working because they could not afford to pay their staff. They worked themselves after making the decision to open. The feedback has been comprehensive. They did not want it and they do not want it, but their concerns are falling on the deaf ears of the minister.

This is a government that prior to the election made a rock-solid guarantee that there would be no impact on budget surplus predictions, no increase in net debt, no increase in taxes and no impact on Victoria's coveted AAA credit rating. Now we find that under Daniel Andrews and Treasurer Tim Pallas, Labor is handing down budget deficits and increasing net debt. Victorians have seen new and increased taxes, and Victoria's AAA credit rating must be at risk.

Time and time again the rhetoric beforehand and even now does not match the reality in terms of infrastructure investment, service delivery and performance, and the impact that that is having on a day-to-day basis on Victorian families. I want to spend some time today going through each of those areas so that members can understand some of the examples. I know that some of my colleagues will spend some time on the issues as well.

Labor is the epitome of economic mismanagement, and the east-west link contract is just one very clear, very simple, very public example of that. East-west link compensation has ballooned out to at least \$857 million, and it could still possibly be so much more. For Victorian families that amount of money could have been invested in the areas of vital need. When you think about it, Bendigo Hospital, \$630 million; the Mernda rail line, \$700 million; X'trapolis trains, \$22 million per train; and even a new ambulance station, including land, \$2 million on average in outer suburban areas. These are things that we are forgoing because of \$857 million being paid to not build a road — \$857 million for nothing. It is a real loss for Victorian families, and every day people say to me, 'We know that it must be built; we've just spent a huge amount of money not building it, but that money will have to be spent again for the same things so that ultimately our road network can be what it needs to be'.

In his first state budget the Treasurer handed down budget papers claiming he would deliver a \$900 million surplus, but we have had from the Auditor-General confirmation that in fact for the first time in a generation the budget actually has a \$286 million deficit — the contrast of the rhetoric versus the reality. Before the election the now Treasurer said that all of

Labor's election promises, including the Melbourne Metro rail project, were fully costed, they were affordable and they were achievable. But after the election we once again see the reality of it, with numbers exposed as rubbery and unreliable, with the Metro rail project having a shortfall of just around \$9 billion. How is that fully costed, fully affordable and fully achievable? It is unfunded.

Debt is rising under Labor. Debt of \$1.1 billion since the election has now risen by another \$673 million in just the three months from July — a total of \$1.7 billion since Labor came to power. This is debt gone crazy. This is debt that is consistent with what we see from Labor governments, and the economic vandalism of the Labor Party continues. It is so clearly in their DNA.

A result of all of these economic failures is some damage to our international reputation. I have been told on numerous occasions that sovereign risk is now actively considered in making decisions about investing in Victoria because of the decisions of the Andrews Labor government. Not only is it having an impact for Victoria but it is having ramifications across the country and across the world.

At the heart of not performing on the economic front is not performing in relation to the commitment to jobs: the 100 000 new full-time jobs that were promised. Victoria now finds itself where all historical records would need to be broken to achieve this target of an additional 95 000 jobs in the next 12 months. We have also had a change of rhetoric from the government. Now the government is spouting an increase in part-time employment as a hallmark of success. It was full-time jobs before the election; it is part-time jobs after the election, and we consistently get answers that seek to mask the reality of what is happening with jobs for Victorians.

Daniel Andrews's marquee jobs policy, the Back to Work program, has absolutely failed to fire. In the first three months only 164 Victorians were employed part time or full time under this program, and more money was spent advertising the program than on the grants that were actually awarded families. Most electorates, including the Premier's own electorate, did not have any jobs under this program. Since December 2014, when Daniel Andrews came to office, of the 43 018 jobs Tim Pallas highlights in Victoria, only 4429 have been full-time jobs, yet it was the same Tim Pallas who criticised the coalition in October 2013, stating:

With 80 per cent of newly created jobs being part time ... we are seeing increasingly insecure employment and increasingly less work for those who are employed, which speaks loudly

about an economy that is coming to a grinding halt and rapidly becoming a dead weight on the Australian economy.

That was 80 per cent of the new jobs being part time. If members are wondering what proportion of the jobs under Daniel Andrews are part time, the answer is 89.7 per cent. Those opposite are lauding it as a success when just a couple of short years ago they were saying that basically it is a grind on the economy and a dead weight in terms of our performance. Once again the rhetoric before does not match the rhetoric or the reality afterwards.

We know the Premier continues to push ahead without a mandate for a 70-year monopoly on the port of Melbourne, despite business, industry, community and environmental concerns and despite an election commitment from Labor for the need for a second container port. In his own *Port of Hastings Land Use and Transport Strategy*, Tim Pallas said:

No other port location offers the same overall advantages as Hastings and it holds major economic potential for the state of Victoria.

Daniel Andrews also said a second container port was essential for job creation and growth. Now what we have is a Victorian government seeking a monopoly for 70 years for the sale of the port of Melbourne so that it can maximise the revenue now and basically put a mortgage on our children's economic future. It is bad economically and it is bad politically, but Tim Pallas and Daniel Andrews are just so desperate for money that they are prepared to sacrifice the generations of tomorrow for a quick dollar today.

We know this is part of Labor's DNA. We know that at the heart of it taxpayer dollars are being wasted, as are their opportunities for the future. No matter where we look, infrastructure projects are cancelled or stalled. We see the Minister for Roads and Road Safety asleep at the wheel. The Minister for Public Transport is interested in a great selection of fluoro jackets and hard hats but not action. We have a Minister for Industry who has been absent.

I think Victorians are very frustrated. They are frustrated and angry that this government spent \$857 million not to build a road. They are angry that the West Gate distributor, which was taken to the election as a shovel-ready project, is now on the scrap heap. The western distributor, its replacement, ends in another T-intersection in Melbourne and sits as this government dithers and fails to make decisions about what is needed, and motorists sit in increasingly congested traffic as a result. Many of the 50 level crossings that were promised have now been pushed off into another

term of government. The only action and funding that has happened is that which was largely progressed under the previous coalition government. We see stations like South Yarra, one of the busiest stations, now not part of the Melbourne Metro project.

One of the things that has really cut to the core, particularly for country Victorians, was the cutting of the country roads and bridges program — money that used to go to every single council so that they could repair their roads and bridges and make significant maintenance and upgrade decisions in relation to that infrastructure. It was a \$160 million program over four years, and the funds were paid directly to those councils. Realising that it had made a dramatic mistake, a rushed attempt by way of a \$35.8 million program to strengthen 48 bridges in regional Victoria was announced by the government. It was still a significant cut to the overall program, but was a token gesture to country Victorians. The problem, however, was that when it was analysed — when that money for Victorian roads and bridges was looked at — it was evident that 10 of the bridges were city bridges within the vicinity of the Premier's own electorate.

This is not about investing in country roads and bridges; this is about investing in Melbourne as a priority to the detriment of country areas. This is something I do not believe country Victorians have forgiven Daniel Andrews for and will not forgive him for into the future. This is combined with the rate capping promise of this government, which will limit the capacity of all councils and particularly country councils to fund those infrastructure and maintenance needs. Money has been pulled with one hand and the capacity to raise any income to address the gaps and shortages has been removed with the other.

What we have seen from this government time and time again is rhetoric in one context and reality in another. The Melbourne Metro rail project is another example of exactly that situation. In April the Premier and the minister were saying that planning work had determined that building the tunnel above the city loop at a depth of about 10 metres instead of below it at more than 40 metres was the best option for commuters and that burying the platforms more than 12 storeys underground was impractical for commuters and not safe in the event of an emergency. Then in October we heard that the line will be pushed deeper, with the new CBD South station to sit 28 metres below the street and the CBD North station to sit 37 metres underground. This government has no clue as to what it is doing. One month it is one announcement, the next month it is absolutely the opposite.

I have got to say that nothing could be more symbolic of putting politics ahead of people than the decision by Daniel Andrews and the Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy, to cut 42 beds from the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. Almost 40 per cent of patients at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre are already privately insured. This would have allowed some of them to access the new Peter Mac Private as well as attracting additional clients to these state-of-the-art facilities. In an ideological decision, because it has never been explained, this government decided to just remove the capacity for those 42 beds. It decided to incur the additional cost and to remove the capacity for expanded treatment, expanded clinical research and expanded attractiveness to our researchers in Australia and overseas — just pulled the pin on it. There has been no solution, no proposal and no idea of what to do with that space. Space for things like clinical trials, co-location and for researchers to come on board was already well and truly covered. This was additional expansion space that could have been used for the benefit of Victorians with cancer, but with a stroke of a pen it was ruled out on a purely ideological basis by this Labor government.

The issue at its heart is that Victorian families suffer as a result of the decisions of this government. I want to touch on a few other aspects of this issue. No-one wanted and no-one asked for an additional public holiday on grand final parade day, certainly not Victorian small businesses. But, as we have heard, under the direction of Trades Hall Council this public holiday was committed to and, despite all the evidence contraindicating it, was gazetted and went ahead at a severe economic cost to Victorian small businesses and a severe personal and social cost to the families who work in these small businesses, which had to pay additional costs and may have had to choose to close but still pay as a result of the additional public holiday. It was an absolute tragedy. For some small businesses it was a tragic consequence of a Labor government that is not prepared to listen to the voices, even when that consultation is requested. The request is ignored, and it is the reality of this Labor government that it pretends to undertake processes but they have predetermined outcomes. From the answers given yesterday by the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade it looks like this exact process is happening again.

We have had an attack on special religious instruction in our schools despite a pre-election commitment from the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education not to do so. I am sure my colleague Mr Finn will speak on this, but we have seen the democratic vote to create a new city of Sunbury overturned — the government has overturned the decision of the people to once again

fulfil its political agenda. Homesafe has blown out by over \$33 million before it has even started because of a failure to plan for protective services officers (PSOs) and now, we hear, a failure to put PSOs on many of the stations. Even funding of \$15 million for school uniforms, shoes, books and stationery was cut from the former coalition government's \$42 million program to assist disadvantaged families. We have had riots in our corrections systems. We have had genuine community representatives on water boards sacked to appoint Labor dignitaries. We have community anger — and I am sure my colleague from Ballarat will speak to this — about the failure to deliver Ballarat rail services.

Time and time again promises have been made and not delivered. Ambulance response times have not significantly changed, despite Daniel Andrews' promise to fix them. According to the Minister for Training and Skills' own training market report, silently released online, TAFEs are receiving less funding under Daniel Andrews. The number of government-subsidised enrolments declined by 14 per cent in 2015 compared to the same period in 2014. The Minister for Youth Affairs says she knows nothing about the youth unemployment rate and then tries to cover it up with part-time jobs not full-time jobs, rather than accepting the reality. There was no burn officer on the grand final parade public holiday, which led to an out-of-control fire the next day that put lives at risk and ruined property for so many.

This is a failure of the government to deliver what it promised. It is amazing that we have less police today than we did 12 months ago. This must be one of the first governments ever to not invest in our police force, which does such vital and important work. There has been a reduction in hours at many police stations, leaving them comprehensively closed to the public or not open on a 24-hour basis. What we see on the other hand is those with the IOUs, those who are seeking the election payback, coming in and flexing their muscles at the Premier. The people who handed out those Labor how-to-vote cards are banging down the doors of the ministers, requesting quid pro quo for the work that was done to get this Labor government in place.

Victorians should be concerned. There is a 60 per cent pay rise demand from the United Firefighters Union, meetings between the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and the planning minister's office, significant demands on the table from the Community and Public Sector Union as the public service enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations commence, and claims of undue influence of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association in the Premier's own office by one of his then own ministers. This is a

government that puts the people of Victoria a significant second to the unions and those it needs to pay back for helping it to get elected.

Since December 2014, 14 500 days have been lost in Victoria to industrial disputes. This is more than twice as many days lost to disputes as in New South Wales, and it accounts for one in every 2.5 days lost to disputes in Australia. Victoria is becoming the strike capital because of the payback being asked of this Labor government by the unions. We have a Premier who has been absorbed in dealing with factional Labor Party politics, on the one hand sacrificing a factional leader but on the other hand not dealing with another — very inconsistent. The findings of the royal commission into trade unions are not being dealt with, not being addressed and not being resolved as the Premier once again dithers in the face of significant evidence.

This is Labor. This is what we have consistently had from the Labor government: a failure to deliver, a failure to invest in infrastructure, a failure to actually commence any new initiatives, a failure to manage our economy, a failure to improve on service delivery, increased burdens on business, commitments broken and, behind it all, factional infighting and union influence. It is Labor — it is the Labor we know so well. It means that Victorian families have not been able to appreciate and enjoy an improved quality of life, improved access to services or the ability to get home to their families to spend more time with children and partners because of the congestion on our roads. We know that the Victorian community knows this. We know that they know the government has a focus on itself and on its mates rather than on improving the quality of life for all Victorians.

I urge all members of this chamber to support this motion. Victorians deserve better than what they have experienced over the last year under this Labor government. We do not want three more years of the same. Things need to change for Victorians. Unfortunately the track record of Labor is consistent, and what we have seen in the first year is consistent with what we have seen in the past. This is a motion that deserves the support of this chamber, and I commend it to the house.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I was just reading motion 195, and I think a couple of words have been omitted from its long list of matters. I am not sure if it was an oversight, a typo or — heaven forbid! — an error in transcription in the preparation of the notice paper. Amongst the many failures of the government in its first year across health, education and the economy, I was expecting to come to the words ‘climate change’. I

will not be moving an amendment to this effect, but I will write myself a little note at the bottom that I hope it is not the proposition of the mover that it is okay to get it right on the economy but fail on climate change or vice versa.

I suppose the mover’s difficulty is that her thesis was that the government promised certain things and it has not delivered them, but in the area of global warming the government in effect did not promise anything substantive, so to say it has failed its own test would not really fit with the thrust of the mover’s argument. All members and all modern political parties should understand it is impossible to move forward with an economic agenda without seeking to deal with the biggest and what will be for a long time the most challenging global issue — that is, global warming. We cannot have an economic agenda on a separate track. The two must be integrated, and it is quite notable how this government has failed to articulate how it intends to do that.

This motion writes off the government as a complete failure. I do not know that the ordinary citizen in the street would necessarily agree with that sentiment. My feeling is that what people out there know of the government’s agenda is pretty minimal. It involves the removal of a bunch of level crossings basically and stopping the east–west link. The public seems to be aware that it has done those two things. What it is that they think the government might get on with for the next three years I am not too sure.

But it is hard to describe the government’s efforts on global warming as anything other than a failure. First of all, it has extended the life of various unconventional gas drilling licences and then announced an inquiry into that. It has approved ongoing coal exploration permits and then announced an inquiry into that. It has cut the feed-in tariff paid to a large proportion of solar owners by 20 per cent and then announced an inquiry into that — an inquiry that is in fact being conducted by the Essential Services Commission into the commission’s own decision to cut the solar payment. It has got a review going on into how well the Climate Change Act 2010 is functioning, when in fact the Climate Change Act is not functioning. The Climate Change Act does not have a target in it and therefore it is ineffectual. Nevertheless the government has announced an inquiry — not into what its aspiration on global warming ought to be but into whether its neutered Climate Change Act is in fact functioning.

It has also got underway a process — you could call it an inquiry if you like — into what it ought to be doing about renewable energy. It has announced a 20 per cent

renewable aspirational target. Anybody who understands the energy industry, as green energy market traders such as Ric Brazzale have pointed out, knows that it requires the government to do exactly nothing. It is like writing yourself a to-do list in the morning of things that you have already done, and then with great satisfaction scrubbing them out and giving yourself the rest of the day off. So much for action on renewables, but more fool us who accepted a promise from Premier Dan Andrews, as Leader of the Opposition, that, if elected, he would tell us what his renewable energy policy was. That was the promise. It was not to take action on renewables but, if elected, to develop a policy for renewables.

Mr Drum — Was it an ambitious policy, and optimistic?

Mr BARBER — Mr Drum, one could roll through the list of superlatives and play a political bingo card. It does get a bit wearing after a while for those of us directly engaged in these issues. ‘World-class public transport’ is another one that sends people off their rocker when they are hearing about more signal faults and know that the project to upgrade signals was cancelled. But it is surprising that, with a political party that has had four years in opposition to think about it and 12 months with all the resources of government to do something about it, we do not actually have an agenda on global warming.

The government has, however, done one thing that I applaud. It has increased the Victorian energy efficiency target. Having locked that in, we can now expect to see further examples of the phenomena we have been seeing — that is, either the mothballing, downgrading or in some cases foreclosure of coal-fired power stations connected to the south-east Australian grid.

The government has also got a number of grants it inherited from the previous government, which were offered to various people who have got various wacky, out-there ideas of what to do with coal now that no coal-fired power station is ever going to be built again. The government has had those sitting in its in-tray for 12 months, and at the end of 12 months it has decided what it ought to do is have an inquiry into it. At the same time there is the perpetual idea of allocating coal from the Latrobe Valley peripheral areas where coal is not currently allocated to a coal-fired power station. That expression of interest process was kicked off by the previous government. It has been sitting in the in-tray of the Minister for Energy and Resources over the past 12 months, and last week she announced an inquiry into it.

The government loves talking about what the federal government should do or might do. It loves talking about global action on climate change, and it seems to be revelling in the Paris summit that is going to occur almost immediately. I am not sure whether any state government representatives will be attending the Paris summit or what it is that they might actually take in their state of Victoria show bags that they could distribute.

One thing the government could do immediately, which would certainly get it noticed on the global scale, is protect Victoria’s forests from continued logging and woodchipping. These are the most carbon-dense ecosystems on earth. A cessation of logging in those forests would immediately start to draw down CO₂ from the atmosphere and replenish those carbon banks. Who knows? Greg Hunt, the federal Minister for the Environment, may even put his hand up to buy those resulting carbon credits from the state of Victoria in return for a pledge to permanently protect the forests, so there would be a win-win there. But I am not aware that the government is moving in that direction. In fact the policy it took to the election was that there would be an inquiry into it — or, I should say, a stakeholder working group. Twelve months have gone by, and only just now have the terms of reference for that working group been established.

Amongst all that — take out all the good feelings and great enthusiasm with which they announced the budding-off of numerous reviews into every aspect of the energy market and action on global warming — it has been a completely wasted 12 months on a crisis issue, where there is absolutely no time to waste. At least on that particular aspect of governmental performance that ought to be a standard plank of every single jurisdiction on earth — federal, state and local — the government really has very little to show, except for bits of paper moving around.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — It is with pleasure that I rise to speak on the motion put by those opposite. I will say at the outset that the government will not be supporting this motion.

Having demonstrated so unequivocally during their time in office that they neither knew what good government was, let alone had a clue about how to deliver it, it is not surprising that those opposite are unable to recognise it now when it is staring them in the face. Good government starts with conversation, communication and consultation. It starts long before the writs are issued and the ballot boxes are opened. It starts before being elected to office. We had those conversations right across the state. We listened and we

learned. We developed an understanding of what was vital, what was critical and what was important to Victorians to ensure that they had better lives as a result of our decisions.

From this extensive communication we developed our commitments, and we took those to the election — commitments we have stood by and sought to honour every day since, through the introduction of legislation, through our first budget and through our ongoing interactions with the community. Some of what we had to do was fix the mess left behind by the dysfunctional, ineffectual and deeply flawed former government.

Ending the war on our hardworking paramedics was one of our first acts. I met with a number of paramedics from northern Victoria during the campaign. One of them sat at a cafe with me and the candidate for Euroa in the Assembly and explained that he had only ever voted Liberal his entire life. He said he was so thoroughly disgusted by what was happening to him and his work colleagues across the north not only that he would not only vote Labor for the first time, but would never vote Liberal again.

We listened and understood that our health sector was struggling, so we have invested an extra \$2.1 billion in hospitals, ambulances and health programs. We enshrined nurse-to-patient ratios in law, protecting quality of care now and for future generations. We heard loud and clear that parents of school-age kids were doing it tough, so we introduced funding to help with the costs of uniforms, camps and excursions, because no kid should ever miss out.

Victoria's unemployment rate was at its highest in 13 years, and in particular in northern Victoria where youth unemployment was skyrocketing. As further testament to their not having a clue, what did those opposite do? They decimated the TAFE system, and in doing so denied thousands of country kids a future of opportunity and hope. This was neither good nor effective government. On assuming office, it was but another mess we needed to fix. This came in the form of a \$320 million injection to bring the TAFE system back from the brink.

To further help the communities of northern Victoria get back on their feet, we recently committed \$2 million to establish skills and job centres in Wangaratta, Shepparton and Wodonga. And last week I was happy to join my Northern Victoria Region colleague Steve Herbert, who is the Minister for Training and Skills, to make further announcements of \$8.4 million for GOTAFE and \$3.7 million for Wodonga TAFE to bolster training in these areas.

The new skills and training hubs will be the go-to places for students looking for training, workers wanting to reskill and employers looking to fill vacancies. They were great visits, and the hubs were really welcomed by the TAFEs, the students, the staff and the communities.

We have delivered a \$45 million Ice Action Plan. This was in the first 100 days of forming government. We took decisive action on a crisis that is devastating families. We listened to parents and we listened to the police and to those working in the drug and alcohol sector, and we were left under no illusion; this is a problem that needs a comprehensive and decisive solution. We have acted, and we will continue to do so to bring the tragedy that this drug is wreaking on Victoria to an end.

We will use the \$200 million Agriculture Infrastructure and Jobs Fund to grow the regional economy and invest in the fastest growing industries, including food and fibre and new energy. We are working together to maximise the potential of these industries and to grow their capacity as local employers and successful businesses.

We have introduced no jab, no play legislation, ensuring that children will be fully immunised before their parents can enrol them in child care or kindergarten, because the health of our kids matters more than anything else — you need only ask the parent of a sick child.

We have cracked down on puppy farms and introduced tough new measures to support animal welfare, because puppies belong in a family and certainly not a factory. The angst in our community about animal cruelty was clearly articulated and vehemently expressed, and we listened and we have acted to bring about the end of this cruel and unacceptable practice.

In my electorate of Northern Victoria Region the government has funded \$500 000 for the Euroa saleyards upgrade, along with \$500 000 for the Wangaratta saleyards facilities, which are critical to the towns and regions in which they reside. Locals in both towns highlighted to us just how significant their saleyards are to the local economy, and we listened, we committed and we acted. It was a pleasure to visit the Wangaratta saleyards with the Premier just last week to view the progress of that project.

We have committed \$500 000 over four years for young farmer scholarships. We understand that we absolutely must encourage and support the next generation to ensure the long-term sustainability and

viability of our agricultural sector, the future of which is bright and exciting and filled with potential.

We have established a ministerial wine industry advisory group to help grow this significant local industry across the state, the country and indeed the world. The opportunity for wine growers across the state is enormous. We understand this because we have listened, and we will continue to collaborate with the sector to help it grow and develop.

Something I am particularly passionate about — and of course it is fitting given that we are in the week of White Ribbon Day and I have managed to pull an orange jacket that I do not wear very often out of the wardrobe to recognise the Victoria Against Violence campaign, which starts today and goes over the next 16 days — is family violence. When it comes to family violence we are taking action, including the royal commission into a tragedy that has resulted in at least one woman being killed almost every week in this country and the damning statistic that one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence. Our actions on family violence are extensive and broad ranging. Aside from the royal commission they include \$1.2 million for family violence duty officers at the Magistrates Court and \$500 000 to reduce waiting lists for court-ordered men's behaviour change programs. Good government is about taking on the challenges and issues and finding the solutions that work. That is what we are doing, and that is what we will continue to do until women stop dying and children stop suffering at the hands of partners or former partners.

We established and are actively working with the regional transport advisory group, which I am part of. We are going to continue our dialogue with regional communities about what they need to better develop connectivity and transport solutions that meet their needs. Thousands of people across the state have shared their views with us, making this one of the biggest public consultations ever.

Those opposite who were party to the process that signed us up to a great big extensive road to nowhere with a dodgy side letter, costing Victorians millions, and all without a single conversation with the Victorian people, should take note of how it is supposed to be done. You listen, you learn, you develop policy, you act in the best interests of Victorians and you govern for all Victorians. Good government is not difficult, but it is very hard work and requires ongoing vigilance and diligence. It is not difficult to see why those opposite cannot recognise it, having never been part of it. Good government to them is foreign, unfamiliar and beyond their grasp, hence the absurdity of the motion before us

today. Indeed their experience of government went something like this:

There once was a man named Baillieu,
Who led a team that had not a clue.
Not how to govern, nor how to lead,
Of the voters' voice they took no heed.
So appallingly bad did the situation get,
They replaced him with a country vet.
A man named Shaw was pulling the strings,
Around them all he was running rings.
The work of government was pushed aside,
As they fought and battled about who had lied.
When they finally decided it was time to act,
The voters were ready to have them sacked.
But not deterred, they bulldozed on through,
Signing for a road, costs of which no-one knew.
Election day came, it was time for a slating
Emergency workers, with bats were waiting
History recorded a first-term government lost
When you don't listen, don't do, that is the cost.

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I want to congratulate Ms Wooldridge for bringing this motion to the house, and I wish to address a few issues that are pertinent to me both as a regional member of Parliament and as a member who had responsibility for some portfolios in which I wish to highlight what this government has or has not done in its one year in office.

Firstly, we need to be very clear here that four days before the election the now Premier was on radio, and he said time and time again, 'We will tear up the contracts for the east-west link because it will not cost Victorians 1 cent'. He then said, 'We know about the side letter'. So there is none of this opportunity for the government to say that when Daniel Andrews was elected Premier he did not know about the side letter; four days before the election Daniel Andrews said that he knew all about the side letter. He knew exactly what he was saying. He out and out lied to the people of Victoria when he said to them, 'I'm going to tear up the contracts. I am going to show you the contracts next week, by the way'. That was a promise he also broke, because it took him over six months.

Ms Shing — Side letter.

Mr DRUM — He knew about the side letter. He knew all about it prior to the election, and he said that he would disclose the lot and that he would tear the contracts up.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DRUM — He knew about everything, and he then effectively lied to the people of Victoria, knowing that he was never going to release those contracts and

knowing that when he tore the contracts up he was going to cost Victorians many millions of dollars.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President, I am trying to listen to Mr Drum and his excellent contribution. Ms Shing has said, ‘Side letter’ about nine times, which is just harassment. I ask you to ask her to restrain herself.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Eideh) — Order! There is no point of order.

Mr DRUM — Daniel Andrews knew what he was getting into. He knew what he was saying. He was absolutely lying to Neil Mitchell. He was lying to the radio stations — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Eideh) — Order! I do not think that is an appropriate use of words.

Mr DRUM — Okay. He was not telling the truth on the radio. He was not telling the truth to the radio announcer and not telling the truth to the people of Victoria. He was not telling the truth when he pledged that he was going to be able to tear up these contracts and not cost the Victorian taxpayer 1 cent. It was a decision Daniel Andrews made that ended up costing over \$870 million. It was money that he was quite happy to tear up because he effectively got himself into a situation where he had made these pledges and promises and was then in a situation where he was either going to have to back away and build this project or tear up this money. He knew that what he was saying was wrong, and he knew that what he was saying was a mistruth. Effectively that has now cost us over \$870 million.

Premier Andrews then came to Parliament to trumpet his Back to Work Bill 2014. The first thing this government did with this Back to Work Bill was to legislate for two public holidays, one of them being the Friday before the AFL Grand Final. As Ms Wooldridge said, this is a public holiday that nobody asked for and a public holiday nobody wanted. He again found himself in a position where he had to follow through on this brain fade and follow through on one of the most ridiculous pieces of leadership that state governments have ever seen, while full-time jobs are going down against a target that was supposed to see 200 full-time equivalent jobs introduced in this state. We now have 10 000 less jobs than when Labor took government.

All the government could do was simply bring on board another public holiday — another impost. Ministers who have met with businesspeople have been told face to face how damaging this public holiday is to jobs and

how damaging it is for future employment opportunities, yet they have continued to get in behind the Premier because he is too scared to do what is right for this state. He has been forced to follow through on this ridiculous public holiday that nobody wanted and nobody asked for.

As a regional member of Parliament you cannot get to your feet in this house without reminding Victorians what this government has taken out of regional Victoria. You will not hear it from the government, but it has taken away \$100 million from the Local Government Infrastructure Fund. That is \$100 million that was put into regional councils around Victoria for councils to complete a whole range of smaller projects. It was \$100 million or, roughly spread, about \$2 million for each of the 48 regional councils. It gave Victorians living in the regions an amazing array of small local government projects that were funded by the state government. It was an investment in regional communities.

There was another \$100 million in the Putting Locals First program. This was a combination of state government partnering with local government, which was also partnering with community groups and business. This was another \$100 million that was put into regional Victoria by the coalition government to build projects that had a regional aspect to them. It was again an incredible benefit to the people of regional Victoria.

There was another \$100 million in the four years the coalition government was in power invested in the regions in relation to putting more accessible and cheaper energy into the regions right around Victoria for those places that did not have natural gas. There was a huge impost on communities that did not have access to natural gas. The coalition government invested \$100 million in those regional towns and communities to ensure that into the future businesses and households there would be able to draw on energy at a similar rate as their city cousins. There is also the country roads and bridges program, but I think enough has been said about that.

If you want to total these projects up, it is an amount of \$460 million that has simply been ripped out of regional Victoria. We have members of the government who represent regional electorates, and you never hear them talk about this \$460 million that has been ripped out of regional Victoria. It is an absolute disgrace, and I think regional Victorians need to start to realise that before the government did anything it ripped \$460 million out of regional Victoria simply by not following through on programs that were already in

place. This is not even talking about the potential for a further \$178 million rail upgrade around the state, which was our election pledge. Had the coalition won government there would have been a further \$178 million invested in the regions in relation to regional rail. But we are not talking about potential promises versus what this mob is promising or not promising; we are talking about actual programs that were in place, in operation and already investing in and supporting regional development.

I will quickly go on to my portfolios. In relation to regional development — and I spoke briefly about this yesterday — it is absolutely disgraceful that the government has made this state wait for 12 months before it has released a regional statement. To wait six or seven months for John Brumby to hand down his report was bad enough, but then to sit on that report for four and a half months before the government released a regional statement that says next to nothing is totally disrespectful to the people who have been working in regional offices, in business engagement centres and in Regional Development Victoria offices, where they already have a high level of autonomy. They have already acted with business engagement offices around the state and have been able to connect and work hand-in-glove with business on the basis of the very strong relationship that the Regional Development Victoria offices have with business, with a view to being able to grow jobs in regional Victoria. This is something that has been incredibly important and is why the previous government set up these regional offices and made it an intrinsic part of its business to have very strong relationships with the bigger regional employers. Those employers that had the opportunity to put more Victorians into full-time employment had very strong relationships with Regional Development Victoria and its business engagement centres.

In relation to sport and recreation, the dollars are coming out of regional Victoria to fund sport in regional Victoria. It is a bit of a pea-and-thimble trick that there are some projects that are getting funded out of regional development that should have been funded out of the sports portfolio. There is a reason why they are not, because when you tally up the figures in the sports portfolio for the last four years of the coalition government you find that \$137 million was spent on community sport and regional sporting projects, including the cities. This government has cut that back to \$100 million. Government members have trumpeted a program which has \$100 million for a community infrastructure program. It is a direct cut of \$37 million.

Not only that, after government members cut the \$37 million from what was previously being spent they

then went and allocated \$73 million. If you happen to belong to a sporting club anywhere in Victoria and you have a need for new facilities, then you get the opportunity to share in \$37 million across the entire state for the next three years. That is all that is left of this paltry fund because of — you guessed it — election commitments. This mob has simply burnt the whole sport and recreation portfolio on getting elected, and now that those opposite have allocated \$73 million of the \$100 million, which is already a cut of \$37 million, they find themselves in a situation where they are not going to be able to fund the hundreds of projects that are going to come across their desks in the same way they came across my desk in the latter part of 2014.

I will also touch on sporting events. Whilst sporting events are an important part of major events and tourism in Victoria, they are also a significant part of sport and recreation in this state. In the latter stages of the coalition government it was able to deliver for Victoria a whole raft of events that were going to be held in 2015, the current year. The work in bringing those events to Victoria was done through the coalition era, and I will touch on a few of them. We were able to bring the opening game of the Asian Cup, the biggest soccer tournament that has ever been played in Australia, to Melbourne. We were able to bring the opening ceremony to Melbourne, and the semifinals and quarterfinals were also held in Melbourne.

We brought the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket World Cup opening game and the final to Melbourne. We filled up the MCG with a final between Australia and New Zealand. It was an amazing final, with Australia taking out the world cup. Then in the middle of this year we organised for three soccer teams from Europe — some of the best teams, if not the best three teams in the world — to come to the MCG, and we filled it up three times in one week. It was an amazing event that we organised. We brought it to the MCG and filled it up three times. It was the first time an ICC event had ever been brought to Australia. We delivered it here to Melbourne, and in catering for the people of Victoria and those from interstate who turned up, it certainly returned our investment in spades.

In and amongst all of that we delivered for Victoria game 2 of the State of Origin Rugby League series, another event from outside of this state. We were able to fill the MCG and deliver for the people who love their Rugby League by bringing that game from the northern states to Victoria, where again we filled the MCG.

This is an amazing array of events that is not part of our normal calendar of the Australian Open tennis tournament, the Australian Grand Prix, the Boxing Day Test or the Spring Racing Carnival and other events that we take for granted and that we still invest in each and every year. We put in those other events over and above our usual calendar of events to make sure that we maintain our category as the world's top sporting venue. We are very proud of what we have been able to deliver.

As a comparison, let us use what this government has delivered for Victoria in relation to events from outside. We all come back to one event — that is, cage fighting. Ten days ago government members were standing on their soapboxes absolutely basking in the glory of this event that simply glorified Ronda Rousey having her head kicked in until she was unconscious, lying on the floor, and then her opponent jumped on her and started pummelling her with fists until she was physically restrained by the referee.

Tomorrow Premier Daniel Andrews, Minister Fiona Richardson and Minister Gavin Jennings are going to stand up in this Parliament and bemoan the concept of violence, yet 10 days ago they were basking in the glory of violence that this state has never seen before. They were basking in the glory of having one lady have her head kicked in and then having 55 000 people rant, rave and cheer that this unbridled violence is not just accepted but welcomed and applauded.

We have a government that is simply basking in the glory of unbridled violence, the like of which we have never seen before in this state, yet tomorrow government members are going to get up and try and tell us that it has nothing to do with domestic violence. They will say, 'The violence that we put on for you last week has to be compartmentalised, and you have to forget about that because last week's message of violence has nothing to do with the message of violence we want you to take into the future'. Government members say, 'It is okay for us to put on an event that had previously been banned, where we will see a lady kick another lady in the head until she is unconscious. Once she is unconscious, we are going to let that other lady jump on her and pummel her senseless until she is physically restrained. We are going to bask in the glory of that decision, yet we will never, ever think that there is going to be any connection of this violent act with domestic violence'. I think that government members are kidding and need to reconsider their stance on this sport. Anyway, that is one for Premier Andrews and his ministers to consider, but they should not try and say one thing to one group of people and then say

something totally different — the total opposite — to another.

We have a government the members of which will say and do anything it takes to stay there. The people who are going to miss out are the people in regional Victoria, the people who love true sport and not cage fighting. Those people love major sporting events that can fill up the MCG and bring world-class sports that we have spent an entire generation building up. We spent \$336 million to lock in the Australian Open at Melbourne Park until 2036, with the three phases of improvements that we are going to put in, with the bridge, the media centre and the redevelopment of Rod Laver Arena. That is a real investment in a sport that will sell out Rod Laver Arena for a bit over two weeks early in every year.

The difference is stark. The government will say and do anything. It will sell mixed messages. It said one thing before the election in relation to full-time jobs, but now it is all about part-time jobs. The Minister for Training and Skills is here. He was incredibly critical of TAFE numbers when in opposition; now he has a range of excuses as to why they are not his fault. We have a whole range of ministers who have simply changed their tune, changed their tack and changed their terminology. This signifies one year in government. I certainly hope they improve their lot.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — I do not claim to be able to match the volume of the previous speaker, but hopefully I can at least match his accuracy and context. In what I must say was a rather shrill contribution, I think Mr Drum really missed the point. Let us go back to the second half of last year, leading up to the election. Let us go back to what the previous government was presiding over. It was presiding over a state that was growing rapidly — one of the fastest growing jurisdictions in the advanced world. It was a state which was facing a number of challenges, a number of macro-economic and broader economic headwinds, uncertainty in the global economy, with a number of our industries under real threat.

What we had was a government that was totally inwardly focused. We had a government that was obsessed with a certain Independent member in the other place, a government that had been in the doldrums for three and half years, a government that had done nothing. Then, after three and a half years of inaction, finally it chose an infrastructure project — an outrageously poor public policy infrastructure project with a 45 cent return on the dollar — and attempted to implement it in the most ham-fisted way, with side

deals, with poor management and with poor process. It was a very poor outcome for taxpayers.

Not only was there inaction for three and a half years but there was a growing series of crises. There were a number of industrial disputes. Perhaps the best known was the ambulance officers industrial crisis, which had been unresolved for years, and entirely unnecessarily so. We had the crisis with the TAFE sector. In a growing economy — in an economy that is meant to be adjusting to changing circumstances — the training sector is vital. This sector had been in crisis for years, and the government was doing nothing. It was fiddling while it did not manage its own affairs.

This was the situation in the lead-up to the last election. Is it any wonder that the people of Victoria said, 'We want something different'? They did get something different. They got a government that right from the start got down to fixing up the mess that it inherited. The ambulance industrial crisis, which had been lingering for years, was dealt with quickly.

When it came to leaders, when it came to a government that could treat workers with respect — could sit down at a table and treat the other side with respect and listen — that situation was resolved. To look at the TAFE crisis, we now have a sector that is getting back onto a solid footing. Lilydale TAFE will be opened next year. It has a great, inspirational plan. We will get an innovative offering from high school all the way through to tertiary education. We have immediately dealt with a number of crises that were festering. That was one of the reasons the previous government was turfed out.

In addition, we have developed a proactive, innovative social agenda. We have moved forward on family violence in a way that is leading the world, I would argue. We have put in place a royal commission that will bring down a much-anticipated report, which the government will develop a broad-ranging and holistic response to. That is something which, I believe, has already shown dividends through raising the profile of this issue. It is fair to say that this is a bipartisan issue in large part, notwithstanding the complete red herring of mixed martial arts raised by Mr Drum. I will not go down that path; I will not dignify it with a response.

It is fair to say that both sides, through their actions today and through what people have said in this place, treat this issue very seriously, and it is fair to say that this issue is much more on the radar now than it has been for a long period, if ever, and that is a good thing. I believe it will be even more on the public policy radar

once we receive the royal commission report. That is a good thing.

There have been a number of other areas where the government has delivered on social policy promises. We can look at education, making this the education state, with a huge investment in new schools and in refurbishing schools. We are talking about doubling the investment in the capital side of schools. It is significant expenditure, and it is necessary given population growth and given the years of inaction. The action on the social agenda is critical. This is something which the previous speaker on this side talked about, and no doubt others will in the remainder of this debate.

Then there is the economy. I want to spend the next 5 minutes or so talking about how we have righted the ship there and are now looking forward to developing further opportunities. As I touched on earlier today, the last state accounts that were released earlier this week were very good news for this state. Those opposite may look through the haystack of good news on the economy and find a couple of tangential needles of bad news or try to misrepresent bits and pieces, but let us look at the big picture on the economy.

Our gross state product is growing at 2.5 per cent. That is a significant increase on the revised figure of 1 per cent that we saw in 2014–15. That is the single most important holistic measure of our economic performance. It is worth noting that this is the first time in over four years that that number has been higher in Victoria than in New South Wales, which would rightly be considered the most comparable state. It is a pace that is much higher than last year's and also higher than the budget estimate of 2.25 per cent. This is a great result.

I think it is also worth noting that Victoria's state final demand of 2.5 per cent in 2014–15 was the second highest in the country, and this is also a very important result. It is being driven by a number of components, including business investment growing at 6.7 per cent and dwelling investment growing at 6.4 per cent. Those overall holistic measures are growing at a faster rate and at a rate that is very favourable when compared to comparable economies.

This is reflected in another oft-reported and important measure of overall economic activity, unemployment. Unemployment rose to as high as 6.9 per cent under the previous government and is now down to 5.6 per cent. It does jump around a bit — we have always acknowledged that — but the trend is down, and notwithstanding the monthly variability it is down by more than a percentage point. Unemployment is a

measure of economic performance, but as so many of us know in this place, it is one of the most important social barometers, if not the most important. It is a critical measure of the wellbeing of individuals and families. People being in work is so important to people's economic and social opportunities, to their happiness and to their fulfilment. It is so important to the capacity of families to provide opportunities to the next generation. Unemployment coming down and already having dropped by more than a percentage point is critically important.

Let us look at some other measures of where the economy is and where it is heading. The ANZ Stateometer shows that we have moved from fifth to second amongst the states in under a year — again, another reflection of these broader measures. The CommSec *State of the States* confirms this result. Let us look at some measures of confidence. Consumer sentiment is up 8.6 per cent, which is double the national average and the highest of all the states, and 16 per cent higher than it was a year ago under the previous government. Consumer sentiment is up, and this is reflected in the fact that retail trade is improving and is up 4.8 per cent over the year. Business investment is also up. All these measures of economic activity are improving, and it is right across a number of sectors and right across a number of aspects of the economy. It is therefore not surprising that we have seen more than 73 000 jobs created since we came to government. That is a huge number.

I want to dwell on another aspect of economic performance that also has a social dimension, and that is our infrastructure program. We can compare what we are doing on infrastructure with what the previous government did. As I have already alluded to, the previous government put all its eggs in one basket after three years of inaction; we suddenly had the east–west link project put in front of us, signed at the very last minute and signed with a side deal that none of us knew the details of until it was well too late. It was an outrageous example of how not to implement a major project — a major project, I might add, that had a benefit-cost ratio of 0.45 when the state was looking at various competing projects. Even when it was inflated with various strange measures that might be considered, it still did not get to higher than 1.

Contrast that with this government's infrastructure program of removing 50 of the worst level crossings. That is going to be critically important for the public transport system, because it will allow us to run more frequent services without having a totally clogged road system, and it will also allow for faster travel times on the roads, which is critical for economic efficiency and

also for people to get home faster to spend more time with their families. It is not just that we are planning these things; we are not handing out fake tickets to some airport link at Southern Cross station to tell people about the dreams we have for 2026. These are projects we are actually delivering. We have contracts for 10 level crossings already awarded.

In package 1 we have Burke Road, North Road, Centre Road and McKinnon Road; in package 2 we have Main Road in St Albans, a critically important one, Furlong Road, Blackburn Road and Heatherdale Road; and then we have the Bayswater package. We also have two bidders short-listed for the nine level crossings on the Cranbourne-Pakenham line, which is a critically important package of projects for people in my electorate, like the people in Pakenham who spend over an hour to get to the city if they work in the CBD. I know from talking to many people in my electorate that they are very keen to see this package of level crossing projects delivered. We have also had the fantastic announcement that the eight crossings on the southern end of the Frankston line will be removed as part of a package of work starting in 2018.

Here we have a very significant package of works that will deliver thousands of jobs. We are actually delivering these projects. At the end of this term we will be able to point to a significant number of projects having been delivered or with shovels in the ground. That is really significant. Then of course there is Melbourne Metro, a transformational project for the city. As a city we have known for a long time that we need this. The Eddington report from over a decade or so ago pointed to the critical need for Melbourne Metro to remove the bottleneck in the city loop. The Melbourne Metro project will improve the effective capacity of our overall train system significantly — some say in the order of a third.

This one project is going to have a transformational impact on Melbourne's public transport capacity. We have already invested significantly in this project, we have already taken a number of concrete steps in its planning and delivery and we are going to start delivering this project in terms of putting shovels in the ground before the end of this term. That is a significant achievement the government has already delivered significantly on and will be able to point to at the end of this term with a great deal of pride. This is possibly one of the most important and high-priority infrastructure projects on the government's agenda.

I have mentioned a number of policy achievements from right across the spectrum — across social policy, across service delivery in education and health and

across economic infrastructure. In all of these areas the government is delivering, and I think it is worth noting also that the government is very clearly delivering on what it said it would do. There is widespread acknowledgement that this government, unlike some previous governments in Australia at the federal and state levels, has put great emphasis on doing what it said it would do. In its first year we can point to fully or partially funding in the first budget a huge proportion of our election commitments, and we will deal with the rest in subsequent budgets.

We are delivering on all the promises we made in the lead-up to the last election. That is of critical importance in terms of our government dealing in an appropriate way with the trust that has been placed in us by the people of Victoria. So it is with a lot of pride that I look back on this first year. It has been a year of considerable achievement. There is obviously a lot more to be done, but given all that this government has achieved, the people of Victoria should have great confidence that things will continue to improve.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am happy to follow my colleague Mr Mulino, who made a great contribution that outlined quite clearly an agenda that has been achieved in 12 months. Even as a government member I am pleasantly surprised that that amount of work has been achieved in such a short time. Obviously with the machinations of government when there is a change of government there is a lot to put together to be able to move forward in any way in the initial stages. The government should be commended for the expedient way that it got its act together and rolled out a number of election commitments. Not only that, but the government has actually governed. When issues have arisen, such as the conditions pertaining to drought in some of our regional areas, only recently people saw the Premier and a number of key ministers — and also at one stage the whole cabinet — go to those affected areas, speak to people who are affected, and implement not only comprehensive but initial measures to assist Victorians who find themselves in a difficult situation.

It has been a year of delivering on election commitments. Not only that but, as I said, it has been a year of governing. Even today there has been an announcement by the Premier about the task force set up to ensure our security, which has been requested by the Chief Commissioner of Police. Increasing funding for the task force and addressing an issue that has been brought to its attention shows that this is a government that actually governs and takes seriously the role that it was lucky enough to be given in last year's general election.

I must say that when I got home after last night's sitting I found my wife less chatty than she usually is when I get home, but I found it very hard to sleep because I was excited at the prospect of being able to speak on this motion. I see the motion that has been put forward by the opposition as basically a full toss — that is, it is nowhere near hitting the pitch when you think of the achievements that have been made. The fact is that on the programs that the government is rolling out, such as the level crossing removals and the funding for school capital works, one indication of the level of achievement is the degree of excitement of opposition MPs wanting to buy in on those programs.

Mr Mulino interjected.

Mr LEANE — That is a good point, Mr Mulino. After the Lilydale TAFE campus was closed through funding cuts by the previous government, there was excitement around a new government coming in and addressing that issue. Even Christine Fyffe, the member for Evelyn in the Assembly, who is a member of the opposition, was swept up in that excitement. She turned up and celebrated that campus being reopened.

From travelling to schools that have capital works funding so that they can get on with capital works programs that they have looked forward to for a number of years, I know that a number of opposition MPs are excited about that. They are meeting with the school communities and talking about this government's capital works program, and buying themselves in, which is good. We want excitement out there. We want opposition MPs to be excited about what is happening in their electorates and being delivered by this government.

With the level crossing removals program there is a lot of excitement among all members of this chamber. I have seen the excitement firsthand.

Mr Mulino — A great program.

Mr LEANE — Yes, it is a great program — and it is being delivered. I accept that people can be wary of a government promising such an aggressive program before it comes to government and actually delivering on that program. Everyone I have spoken to is delighted to see at a number of the level crossings that the government promised to remove there are men and women in overalls, red vests and hard hats. They are digging up the ground and removing route-diverting cables, they are diverting services and they are working on the signalling along the line to allow the separation of the rail and the road in whatever form it takes. People are seeing that, and they are thinking, 'That's

fantastic'. Along with the Melbourne Metro project, it is obviously quite an ambitious and aggressive project.

As I stated before, the reality is similar to the level crossings. Quite significant funding is being released, and we have the same thing — men and women in overalls, boots and hard hats. They are out there diverting the services that need to be diverted to be able to afford this project and for a tunnel to go from one end of town to the other, increasing the number of CBD stations at which people can alight in the future. They are also increasing the internal capacity, which obviously means a lot to the whole train network in terms of ambitions for extra spurs and extra services coming into the CBD, along with improved bus services, encouraging more people to use public transport. The order placed in recent days for new trams will supply work for a number of people in Dandenong. The list goes on.

We are actually seeing people working on these projects. For a period of time the previous government had what it saw as a jewel in the crown — a project it was very proud of — but it did not actually start. We did not see any activity around it. There was a lot of activity from the previous Premier, who said there was a project that was going to be a game changer. To this day I do not understand what that was supposed to mean. There were a lot of jazz hands and that sort of activity by the previous government and the previous Premier, Premier Napthine. I did not understand it, but Premier Napthine was popular to some degree so I will not rule it out altogether as something that may be embraced by a future government. There was a lot of that going on, but we did not see a lot of builders' sheds or men and women actually digging holes, building things, erecting things and engaging in that sort of activity. Now we see it. In the short period of time this government has been in office, I think it has been a fantastic effort.

As I said, this motion is probably bowling a full toss to this side of the chamber, because we are happy to speak about all these issues and what future rollouts we will have in health. Obviously there are some health projects already ongoing.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr LEANE — There are health projects about to start. I know Mr Finn will be excited about the Joan Kirner hospital, the extension to that and the works coming up in the west. The Monash Children's hospital is ongoing, and there are a number of capital works programs in health.

I spoke about education, but I should reinforce my comments about the amount of work that has been rolled out in relation to TAFE. It is great to see that there is a provider on the Lilydale site, which had been vacated. There has been work done on legislation. The work that has been done on legalising medicinal cannabis is important. Support of whooping cough vaccines for families, particular parents, was taken away by the previous government but has been reinstated by this government. There has been work done on sporting stadiums. The Geelong stadium upgrade is about to begin. Work at the Eureka Stadium in Ballarat is about to start.

All these projects mean jobs, and I am a big believer in the idea that one of the roles of government should be to create employment. Governments should have aggressive capital works programs that actually generate jobs for the jurisdictions they govern. Speaking to old friends who are still tradies —

Mrs Peulich — Name them.

Mr LEANE — There are not many, Mrs Peulich. I might be misleading the house. I know from speaking to old acquaintances who are still tradies and working in the construction industry that they are actually all occupied and are looking forward to future projects and the continuation of current projects. I thank Ms Wooldridge for bringing this motion to the house. I appreciate the opportunity given to government members to speak on the first year of great activity that they have embarked on. Now that we are an established government, I am only looking forward to what we can do in the second year.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Could I just say, Acting President, that you look sprightly considering the time at which we adjourned last night? I also thank Ms Wooldridge for bringing this motion forward and giving us all an opportunity to reflect on the first year of office of the Andrews Labor government. On the government's 100-day anniversary I recall the Premier, Daniel Andrews, saying, 'Not a minute has been wasted'. One year later — I have not done the calculations; I am not sure how many minutes there are in a year — he has certainly wasted a hell of a lot of them.

The reason why he has wasted a hell of a lot of minutes is that the Labor Party, under the leadership of the now Premier, Daniel Andrews, left no stone unturned in its attempts to win the state election at all costs. I must concede that I was wrong. I was wrong, and we were wrong, to say that Dan had no plan. He did have a plan; it was the Red Army plan. It was the rort that saw him

snatch the election with the use of public money. Indeed we were wrong; he had a plan. Some side deals have been revealed through the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. Ms Shing is very keen on the term 'side deals'. These side deals made a lucrative amount of money available to the unions and their political arm, the Labor Party, for campaigning. Sometimes it is campaigning inside the Labor Party, and sometimes it is campaigning against the real foes, but nonetheless their money — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — The Labor Party takes money from the public purse, and it takes money from the business community without ever having disclosed it. Indeed the Labor Party made a lot of promises, which it is totally unable to deliver. I am going to quickly remind people of a wonderful DL which says, 'Victorians are still paying for Labor's mistakes'. That was a reflection on the previous Labor government. The bungled pokies option, the myki budget blowout, Labor's desalination plant disaster — —

Ms Shing — On a point of order, Acting President, I am concerned that there may be a prop being used in the house. I ask Mrs Peulich to come back to her contribution without the use of ancillary items.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Acting President, I note with interest Ms Shing's concern. I think she has a right to be concerned, but not with what Mrs Peulich was doing or indeed what she is reading from. Mrs Peulich is reading from a document.

Ms Shing — She is brandishing.

Mr Finn — She is not brandishing it about; she is just holding it in front of her. Where else would you hold it if you were going to read something? You hold it in front of you; that is what she is doing. There clearly is no point of order.

Mrs PEULICH — On the point of order, Acting President, it is all a bit opaque today after getting to bed at 5 o'clock this morning after a very long debate, given that the Labor government kept us sitting until 4 o'clock in the morning despite promising to reform democracy. My point of order is this: I am more than happy to table this document for inclusion in *Hansard*, with your permission and with the agreement of the house — in fact, two copies.

Ms Shing — You're not using a prop?

Mrs PEULICH — No, it is not a prop; it is a document. It has been fully sourced, and I am happy to provide it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order! In relation to the point of order I am very comfortable that Mrs Peulich reads off that document, but I would ask that she does not waive it around in the chamber, because it might be perceived as a prop if she does so. I am more than happy for her to read from it.

Mr Herbert — Who produced it? Who authorised it?

Mrs PEULICH — It is authorised by G. Phillips, 1 Butler Court, Cheltenham and printed by PrintHouse Graphics, Main Street, Mordialloc. It is a very good document.

I was placing into context the first year of the Labor government by referring to the legacy that we are still paying for, which includes — to continue my list — \$750 million plus \$500 million on maintenance wasted on the unused north-south pipeline, which we now understand is being considered to pump water up north, even though it might be a bit of an uphill battle and the government needs substantially more millions of dollars in order to make it suitable. I am not sure whether it is, but indeed this may justify the pipeline. I suspect the Labor Party also wants to justify its building of the desalination plant, because if the government can turn on the taps, if it can pump the water, somehow it can justify the desalination disaster.

There are also the \$1.1 billion smart meter blowout, the budget blowout on the regional rail link, the budget blowout on roads such as the M1 upgrade, the budget blowout on the federally funded Building the Education Revolution program, the budget blowout for Labor's IT projects such as HealthSMART and the schools ultranet, the backlog of school maintenance and the list goes on and on. I am going to update this list for every anniversary of the Labor government. One thing that I would add to it immediately is the \$1.5 billion budget error, putting the state budget into deficit for the first time in 20 years. That is another first for the Labor Party.

We heard the Premier, as Leader of the Opposition, talking about shovel-ready and fully funded projects. We know that was a big lie. A lack of shovel-ready projects has led to job losses. Despite promising that it had shovel-ready projects, the government's projects are not ready. It has cancelled the projects that were ready, meaning Victoria is not creating as many jobs as it should.

There has also been \$857 million blown to not build a road. This is the greatest achievement of the Labor government — yet another great achievement. Despite saying, ‘To rip up contracts is to send a message to the world that we’re closed for business’, Daniel Andrews ripped up the east–west link contracts, and job losses and congestion were aggravated.

Two new public holidays will cost Victoria \$1 billion. More holidays mean less jobs and less income for casuals. Grand final day eve shut down Melbourne when there were plenty of tourists, and it cost the average business \$14 000.

There was alleged roting of public funds to pay for election staff. I would say it is more than alleged. It will be interesting to see what progress the police have made in the investigation, and perhaps the Ombudsman’s referral, without anticipating the motion, may prompt them into faster action. I understand that police are investigating senior government MPs, although I am not aware of any having been interviewed. They certainly need to be, as well as all of those electorate officers who were sourced as organisers and paid to work in distant electorates that were in many cases unrelated to the member who signed the invoices and timesheets. They were doing work that was certainly outside the duties specified for electorate officers, as outlined on the Parliament’s intranet site.

Government waste of course continues to build. The government paid \$857 million not to build a road. It has a \$100 million jobs plan that created 164 jobs. The government took money from TAFEs. It paid \$20 million for a new state logo — an absolute disaster. Year 8 or 9 students could have done a better job. The Minister for Training and Skills spent \$16 000 on private jet flights. The government cancelled the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail corridor upgrade. It scrapped 42 beds at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. It has set up more than 20 reviews and there will be more.

The government recently asked for a \$2475 payment for businesses to gain access to the Minister for Finance, Robin Scott, on 4 or 5 November. That was proudly advertised. What is important to find out is whether a departmental note taker would be present at those meetings to ensure that any potential conflicts of interest or undue influence on the minister could be mitigated or prevented.

The impact on the South Eastern Metropolitan region is substantial. Frankston line trains will again become sardine tins at Caulfield as they collect all Pakenham

and Cranbourne line passengers going through the loop connecting Flinders Street, Southern Cross, Richmond and South Yarra stations under the Melbourne Metro rail project. The Frankston line chaos will continue. Can members imagine the government doing all those level crossings without actually having done the Mornington Peninsula Freeway extension to connect with the Dingley bypass? There will be no alternative route for commuters from Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula travelling into work. It was a disaster when the government simply tried to rebuild the Mordialloc bridge, let alone a number of level crossings simultaneously. I suspect that the south-east will be crippled. As I said, the Mornington Peninsula Freeway northern extension would have been necessary in order to avoid the problems that will occur on the Nepean Highway.

Frankston Basketball Stadium is in limbo, with the Andrews government refusing to match the previous government’s \$2.5 million investment. Public housing waiting lists in Frankston are growing. There are no protective services officers for the 24-hour public transport trial, which affects Seaford and Chelsea stations. Crime across the south-east is a problem. In the City of Kingston it is up by 6.6 per cent, with a worrying 39.2 per cent increase in drug dealing, 30.6 per cent in drug use and 24.5 per cent in robbery, yet the government has proposed no new police officers and recently Chelsea police station was closed at 3.00 p.m.

As I mentioned, the Mornington Peninsula Freeway northern extension has been scrapped by the government, meaning that the gridlock on White Street, Wells Road, Nepean Highway and surrounds will only get worse over the coming years. We are looking forward to the opening of the Dingley bypass, which we designed, we funded and hopefully will be delivered to lift some of that congestion, but it will stall thereafter.

I have outlined my concerns about the Frankston line. There has been mismanagement of the green wedge, with the Kingston green wedge continuing to be designated as the waste hub for the south-east. This is only 25 kilometres from the CBD. It is unacceptable. Patterson Lakes residents raised issues in relation to the stopping of a bore water trial costing \$40 000 a year. The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water was adamant that it was to end. Now the government has reneged, following a number of questions being asked here in the chamber. The government is going to reinstate that, which it should have without causing angst in the community.

In the City of Casey there is the matter of Thompsons Road. No works are budgeted for the duplication until 2019–22. The intersections are not on the plan at all. Again, the loop connecting Flinders Street, Southern Cross, Richmond and South Yarra stations will be removed from the Cranbourne-Pakenham rail line as part of the Melbourne Metro rail project. Crime is up an alarming 20 per cent in Casey, with a 39.1 per cent jump in robberies, a 33.9 per cent rise in sexual assaults, a 33 per cent rise in homicides, a 32.2 per cent rise in stalking and a 24.9 per cent increase in drug crime. Again, the Labor government has proposed no new police officers or police stations. The Hallam level crossing has been dumped from the government's budget for the next four years. Casey still has a \$1.3 billion backlog in roadworks, despite the previous government's huge investment in Hallam Road, Narre Warren-Cranbourne Road and others. Imagine how many of these roads could have been completed with the \$857 million, and growing, wasted on scrapping the east-west link?

The major local multicultural event in Casey is at risk because local state government MPs, including Assembly members Judith Graley, the member for Narre Warren South, and Jude Perera, the member for Cranbourne, promised to deliver \$120 000 for the festival but have failed to deliver a cent to date. Casey libraries have suffered a cut under this state government. The \$162.8 million upgrade of Casey Hospital is only funded for \$400 000 this year, and of course the neglect continues.

It is a similar story in the City of Monash, where crime is up 7.1 per cent, with a disturbing 60.6 per cent jump in weapons offences, a 36.3 per cent rise in drug use and a 26.9 per cent rise in stalking. Again, there are no new police officers proposed. Westall Road needs to be connected to the Dingley bypass, and the next stage of the Dingley bypass needs to be planned and funded to connect it to the South Gippsland Highway and the freeway. No thought has been given to this.

Waverley Park powerlines have been a long and vexed issue. Waverley Park is actually in the Premier's electorate, yet he has refused to meet with local constituents, and he has refused to enforce the conditions of the Mirvac development, which is to put the lines underground. A very hardworking group of residents have pursued this matter, and I commend them for their efforts.

In terms of multicultural affairs, it has been a very slow start. We saw a number of multicultural affairs commissioners whose terms expired, and I would like to thank them for their dedicated work and attendance

at multicultural events. Wherever I went, they were in attendance. I thought they were treated fairly shabbily, as was the previous chairman, Chin Tan, who certainly was everywhere. We have now had some new appointments — and I congratulate them and look forward to working with them — but for two months there were six fewer multicultural commissioners on the ground. We have a new chairperson, and the grants have been restructured along the lines of the suggestions put forward by the previous government. That is welcomed — it is streamlined — but it has been very long in the making. No-one knows what the hell is going on and when those grants will be available, and there do not appear to have been any allocations from the grants program in this financial year.

Clearly the government has dropped the ball. It was very slow in establishing the machinery for the social cohesion and resilience fund, which has been allocated \$25 million over four years. It is slowly populating an advisory committee, but no short-term projects have been funded to address issues such as ISIL using social media to recruit. There are a lot of projects out there that could help in removing some of that online hate material that is targeting both the Jewish community and the Islamic community, and it is disappointing that it has taken so long.

It is also disappointing that the government did not play a more proactive role in managing the situation in relation to the building of the mosque in Bendigo. We see a similar scenario occurring elsewhere. The government simply needs to make sure that it is more proactive in attempting to defuse the violence that unfortunately occurs when you have left-wing and right-wing extremists facing off against each other. I would like to commend the police, who have turned out in large numbers to quell and diminish the likelihood of violent protests. But the protesters' behaviour is not acceptable. Violence of that nature is unacceptable in any context and cannot be justified by any reason.

There will be speakers tomorrow in the lower house in the debate on the motion on family violence. I am disappointed that this chamber is not reflecting that and that we do not have an opportunity to make comments on family violence and in particular bring a perspective that is perhaps a little different. I was disappointed that the government did not ask the royal commission to investigate causes. The answer from the minister was that we all understand the causes. I do not believe that is the case at all.

Ms Shing — Read the international literature. Read the research.

Mrs PEULICH — Ms Shing, who fancies herself as a bit of an academic, says, ‘Read the literature’. I asked 25 individuals in a vox pop on William Street recently what they thought.

Ms Shing — Oh, right!

Mrs PEULICH — Yes, absolutely — it was the ordinary man or woman in the street. I asked 25 people what they thought were the causes of family violence, and I received 35 different answers. One of the answers that I received was — —

Ms Shing — Twenty-five people and 35 answers? How many different questions did you ask?

Mrs PEULICH — Twenty-five different people and 35 different answers, Ms Shing — yes. They were not reading from your script, Ms Shing. You may have a script, but it is very hard. You may try to quell freedom of speech and freedom of religion through your various social policies that you bring forward, but it does not work with the man in the street. They see right through you. Socialism does affect the DNA. It means that those freedoms that the rest of us value deeply, and that we do not take for granted because we were born in and came from places that did not afford them, we actually treasure and want to defend. We want to defend them from socialists like you, Ms Shing, because clearly they are not important to you. They are important to me, and they are important to most people in Victoria, particularly multicultural communities.

I have heard the line that it is all about gender inequality. Whilst I accept that the majority of victims — 75 per cent of victims — are female, it is a gross oversimplification to ignore the fact that there is elder abuse and abuse involving adult children who stay on at home for probably longer than they should, often as a result of economics, mental health issues or drug addiction. In same-sex relationships where there is family violence, you cannot say it is gender inequality. Where there are, unfortunately, children involved, you cannot always say it is gender inequality, and I look at the tragic case of Luke Batty — —

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Warby-Ovens National Park

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — My question today is to the Leader of the Government in his capacity representing the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. What was the total cost of

management programs for invasive species in the Warby-Ovens National Park for the past 12 months?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I think Mr Young had telegraphed to one of my colleagues, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, his interest in this matter, and as I was walking into the chamber I was provided with some information that relates to pest management issues across the park. I am reminded that the Warby-Ovens National Park is actually something that I was associated with, so I am very happy in terms of the river red gum protection that was provided for in 2010. But notwithstanding the creation of that park, there have been significant pest animals that have needed to be dealt with, which include incursions of foxes, rabbits, cats, pigs and goats, with the foxes and cats in particular posing the greatest threats to fauna in the park.

There was an aerial shooting program undertaken as recently as 2013 to eradicate goats close to Corryong, and the total of that program was \$50 000, with the Warby-Ovens component being half of that, so \$25 000. Prior to that aerial shooting program there had been a partnering arrangement with the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia that had been undertaken for a number of years. That program had obviously overridden, perhaps, some of the community engagement programs that had been embarked upon by the Sporting Shooters Association. Currently the situation is being monitored in relation to the prevalence of goats in the park, with some consideration of what further efforts may be required.

In terms of the expenditure on fox control within the parks in the area, I am advised that somewhere between \$10 000 and \$20 000 is spent annually, primarily through fox-baiting programs in the area.

I will make a guess that Mr Young would be interested in a collaborative approach between the Sporting Shooters Association and the parks system. At the moment there is an arrangement in the Barmah forest, but it does not apply to Warby-Ovens. I would anticipate that Mr Young may be interested in that model being perhaps explored in the future in this basket of issues, but that is getting a bit ahead of where the logic of his question was taking me, so I will give him an opportunity to ask me a supplementary.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — I thank the minister for his answer. We have recently seen a partnership program between Parks Victoria, the Game

Management Authority and recreational hunters take place on Wilsons Promontory to target hog deer populations. We understand that in high-traffic areas such as the Prom, this sort of strategic program is accepted but comes at a cost. I ask the minister: what are the reasons for not allowing recreational shooters to hunt deer and other invasive species in low-traffic parks such as the Warby-Ovens National Park as they do in state forests at a cost of zero to the state?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I was worried that I was running out of time and I was also thinking of the opportunity for Mr Young to follow up with his supplementary, but I note here in the notes provided to me that deer are not in large numbers but they are identified as a growing population and may be of concern in this park. That may warrant some consideration and examination about the best way to manage those deer. They have not been identified as yet as a first-order pest problem within the park, but the member is correct to identify that it is an emerging issue that the park service is mindful of.

Consistent with models that have been adopted that the member has referred to in other locations — I referred to Barmah and the member referred to Wilsons Promontory — my ministerial colleague and her supporting organisations will have a look at the appropriate methods to engage with those issues.

Public transport regional network

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Regional Development representing the Minister for Public Transport. Recently Public Transport Victoria engaged with stakeholders in Warrnambool, Colac and Portland as part of the regional network development plan. Feedback from these towns identified the need for improved frequency of train services to and from Warrnambool, simpler fares and ticketing, the need for more bus services to and from Warrnambool and Portland, improved security at the bus stops, and improved customer experiences on the train — toilets, food, security of luggage and disability access. The Public Transport Victoria website says:

The community workshops have now been completed and survey is now closed. We are currently collating and analysing all the responses received.

My question is: when will the government take action on this feedback and implement improved rail services to south-west Victoria?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Purcell for his question and his long-term

interest in the availability of public transport services and the accessibility of those public transport services for people in our electorate of Western Victoria Region and specifically in relation to the south-west.

The government has been working on the development of a regional network development plan, and community consultation has been a really important part of this. It is really the key to developing Victoria's first ever long-term strategy for regional public transport. That community consultation has now finished. It has been underway since June, and workshops were held in south-west Victoria as well as in many other regions across the state. We have been heartened by the response and the level of interest and input into this across the community. More than 1400 people have attended workshops and shared their vision for public transport in their regions with us. There have also been 1700 surveys completed. This is the first time there has been a long-term plan for public transport in regional Victoria, and it is a genuine exercise to listen to communities to better understand their needs with a view to developing a long-term plan.

On the specific matter that Mr Purcell raised, that is something on which I will seek a detailed response from the Minister for Public Transport. I provide that to the member as soon as possible.

Supplementary question

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — I thank the minister for her response. From those workshops one of the most common themes was the need for more train services past Geelong to help people access jobs, medical facilities, educational opportunities and shops. Almost half of the comments and responses received related to issues of service frequency, capacity and geographic reach. Therefore my question to the minister is: will the government commit to a date by which it will have implemented a fourth rail service to Warrnambool?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Purcell for his supplementary question. The frequency of the Warrnambool rail service is an issue that has been much discussed in the south-west for many years. The current service is a three-times-a-day service. It is a long journey. It is not the same kind of service that other regional centres have enjoyed in terms of frequency or even style of carriage and travel. I am certainly conscious of that. I know that the local community has for a long time sought a fifth service and in particular more urgently a fourth service. I am not in a position to provide an answer on that date, but I

will refer the member's question to Minister Allan for a response.

Child protection

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Families and Children. Under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services has guardianship or custody over children in out-of-home care. However, in her answers to several questions on notice dated 6 October the minister confirmed that the Department of Health and Human Services has no idea how many children in relation to whom it has guardianship or custodial responsibilities are currently receiving therapeutic counselling services. This is despite the rollout of the department's health and education assessment initiative in 2012 following the Victorian Auditor-General's findings that 57 per cent of children in residential care had not had a mental health assessment. My question is: why is the secretary not required to keep records as to how many of the children in the department's care are accessing therapeutic counselling services?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Springle for her question, and I note that she has referred to a number of questions on notice that she has received answers to from me in response to these matters. That is Ms Springle's interpretation of my responses to her. I have made a point in my responses of trying to provide some context to the types of supports that the department provides to children in out-of-home care. Essentially, if the member is asking around the types of supports that we provide or the department provides in relation to mental health services — —

Ms Springle interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — You referred in your question to both mental health services as well as therapeutic counselling, and they are slightly different issues.

Ms Springle — On a point of order, President, I was asking about record keeping, not about support.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister still has almost 3 minutes to complete her answer, so at this point I do not intend to direct the minister in any way as to how she should answer the question.

Ms MIKAKOS — I am just trying to seek some clarity around the exact nature of Ms Springle's question, because her preamble was quite wideranging. In the absence of the precise details of the question on notice, it is very difficult to be able to respond directly

to the matter at hand, in terms of the response that she is referring to, but what I can say is that the department does require community sector organisations that are funded by the department to provide a whole range of details to the department around performance indicators.

The issues that Ms Springle raised in the question on notice, I am surmising, relate to record-keeping measures, which are difficult to respond directly to her about, because they may well relate to matters that would require an analysis of each individual case. It is very difficult to know exactly which question on notice Ms Springle was referring to in the way that she posed that question, but I can assure her that the Department of Health and Human Services does require community sector organisations to report to us on a range of performance measures.

She has asked for a whole range of information, some of which has been provided to her and some of which I have indicated to her would require the department to spend a voluminous amount of time in going through each individual young person's file in order to be able to adequately respond to her query.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer. However, my question was really pertaining to simple data collection, which was around how many children are accessing therapeutic counselling services. It was not talking about supports in any way. It certainly was not asking for any private information of each individual case. It is a simple matter of data collection. I would like to ask the minister if she would commit to requiring the department to collect and collate information that records the number of children currently in out-of-home care who see a therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist or counsellor at least once a month. It is a simple matter of figures.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Springle for her further question, and she is now seeking to elaborate further on the nature of her substantive question. I can assure the member that vulnerable young people in the state's care do receive the appropriate supports that they need. Obviously regard is given to the particular circumstances and the needs of the young person or the child involved. Those matters are included in the young person's file. Therefore there is the ability for the department to determine the types of services that the young person is receiving. That is a different issue to the matter that the member is now raising, which is one

of being able to collate that information in such a way as to be able to provide her with a response to her question on notice to her satisfaction. Just because the department is unable to provide her with a level of detail that she may be seeking through her question on notice, it does not mean that the services are not being provided to the young person.

Minister for Agriculture questions on notice

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Deputy Leader of the Government. On 12 November in response to questions on notice regarding her expenditure on chartered international and domestic commercial flights, she provided a written answer to the house which said:

Compiling this information is voluminous and will take more than the 30-day response time afforded under the standing orders of the Legislative Council.

Yet on 30 October, almost two weeks earlier, her department had already released details of her flight expenditure under FOI. Given that her answer to the question on notice claiming that the information was voluminous was in fact identical to answers provided by her other ministerial colleagues in relation to similar questions, I ask: who instructed her to submit that misleading template answer?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank the member for his question. I have a series of questions on this matter from the opposition: a question on notice from Mrs Peulich seeking information for the period 4 December to 15 September; an FOI request seeking information from December 2014 to the end of June 2015; and Mr Finn's question yesterday seeking information on the period since December 2014. I am very keen to provide the house with a fulsome answer on this, and I am in the process of reconciling this information with my department, but I can confirm to the house that certainly there were no international charter flights.

I have had one international flight — series of flights — which has been reported, and the information on that visit, which I have spoken about in the house on a number of occasions before, is the subject of a report on the Premier's website, as is the ordinary course. I have, as I indicated yesterday, used a number of charter flights over the course of this year in acquitting my duties, and these have been in circumstances where there was no other alternative available. As I am sure all members would appreciate, my portfolios both necessitate a great deal of travel in regional Victoria.

Supplementary question

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her response. It is clear that the template answer given by the minister, in view of the documents which had already been released, and contradicting the documents that had already been released under FOI, was misleading, so I ask: will the minister now provide a personal explanation to the house as to why she misled the house with that answer to a question on notice?

Mr Jennings — On a point of order, President, yesterday and today the opposition has said that the minister has misled the house, and I do not believe that that is the case, and I would seek your consideration of these matters. The minister's answer may appear to be inconsistent with the public release of information. However, in the minister's most recent substantive answer she indicated that she has received multiple requests for information covering different time frames, and she received those requests simultaneously. On that basis there may have been an answer that was prepared to cover the entire field of those interlocking issues.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr Jennings — I am talking about the accusation of misleading the house, and I am speaking on that matter.

Ms Wooldridge — What is the point of order?

Mr Jennings — The point of order is that the minister has not misled the house, as was in the supplementary question by way of allegation, because the minister has provided an explanation that reconciles the multiple requests she received and the public release of information that has occurred, and they are not mutually exclusive propositions. They have to take into account the totality of facts, which may selectively be chosen to accuse of misleading the house but are not a prima facie case of misleading the house. That is a very significant issue — a substantive issue — that has been bandied about by interjection and by questioning, and I do not believe that it should be allowed.

Mr Rich-Phillips — On the point of order, President, I would submit that that is not a point of order. The supplementary question invited the minister to provide a personal explanation as to why the answer she gave on notice in the house on 12 November was contradicted by the information her department had released two weeks earlier under FOI.

Mrs Peulich — On the same point of order, President, the nature of personal explanations is, typically, when a member becomes aware that there is a

need to set the house straight in relation to information that has been given and that the member must do so at the first available opportunity. I do not believe that the minister has exercised that opportunity, and the only reason why we have a personal explanation being mooted now is that it has not occurred and the information provided to the house has been inaccurate.

Mr Davis — On the point of order, President, it is plainly open to Mr Rich-Phillips to seek that personal explanation where the explanations provided and the material provided to the house are plainly inconsistent. I think that is the case, and for that reason he seeks it, so there is no point of order.

The PRESIDENT — Order! in respect of Mr Jennings's point of order, certainly if there were a point of order there, he went much further than I would have expected in terms of presenting the actual point of order where there had been a transgression of the standing orders; indeed it was more an explanation or a framework, if you like, to explain what might have happened. But clearly Mr Jennings is not the minister involved, and therefore the information he has put might well be relevant but is not necessarily the position that the house would be obliged to accept.

The supplementary question in particular does afford the minister an opportunity to provide an explanation, and there has been by some interjection and indeed by Mr Jennings's remarks an indication that, apart from anything else, there is the possibility of different time frames being involved in assembling information, not just in terms of what has been provided but indeed the actual periods that are covered by the question, which could lead to a perception of an inconsistent answer. The supplementary question, as I said, I believe does give the minister a chance to provide an explanation, a comment or an answer that might well clear up the matter at any rate, so I invite the minister to answer.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — Thank you, President, for the opportunity to clarify these matters. I certainly am in no way defensive about the flights that I have taken in the course of my duty and have no concerns whatsoever with providing this information in full.

Mr O'Donohue — Exactly. Answer the question.

Ms PULFORD — The opposition wants me to answer the question, but the opposition cannot answer the question about which set of dates it is that it is actually seeking an answer on. As I indicated in my substantive answer, the FOI request was for the period December 2014 till the end of June 2015. The question

on notice was for the period 4 December 2014 to 15 November 2015. Mr Finn yesterday asked about the period since December 2014. I have indicated both to the President and to Mr Finn that I am confirming and reconciling this with a view to providing this information in excruciating detail to the house, and I was unable to fully satisfy myself about the accuracy of this information prior to the quarter to 12 deadline, so I indicated to both the President and to Mr Finn before question time that I will make every endeavour to provide that information before question time tomorrow.

Ordered that answers be considered next day on motion of Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan).

Ministerial staff

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. Is Ms Paul, the former chief of staff to former Minister Somyurek, still employed by the Andrews government?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I believe the answer, in terms of being employed by the executive — the ministerial side of the Andrews government — is no. Ms Paul has left the employ of the public service, to my knowledge, and is employed outside the public service.

Supplementary question

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for his answer. Can the minister inform the house of the total amount of lump sum payments paid by the government to Ms Paul since he last updated the house on 3 September?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — The other times I referred to the circumstances of Ms Paul or anybody else who has been in the employ of the government I have always referred to their accrued entitlements. In terms of anybody whom I have been asked a question of, they have left the service of the government in accordance with the terms of their agreement — in terms of their accrued entitlements — and they have not received additional lump sum elements beyond the scope of what is in their standard conditions.

Ministerial staff

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Leader of the Government. How many ministerial staff have left the employ of the Andrews government since 4 December 2014?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I am not able to provide the member with that answer. Indeed the information is not part of my responsibilities. If there is a suggestion that I actually follow this up to provide the chamber with an answer, I am not quite sure what the chamber would do with that answer even if it were in possession of it.

Ms Wooldridge — We would then know what it was.

Mr JENNINGS — Yes, but for what public benefit? What public interest is actually met by such a question or consideration?

An honourable member interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — I am reflecting on that issue in relation to what is the public interest in this regard. If there was a suggestion that there has in fact been a continual churn of ministerial officers as a trend, I clearly know that that has not occurred. In fact there has been what you would normally expect — that is, a regularised and reasonable rate of people joining the ministers' offices within the Andrews government and leaving them to pursue outside interests. That would occur under normal circumstances in terms of the employment engagement. You would expect that to occur across the entire public service — somewhere in the order of 5 per cent to 10 per cent — and I would anticipate that that would be something that we may have actually experienced. It is certainly nothing out of kilter with what would be the normal patterns of engagement across the public service more broadly. So if in fact there are any implied allegations that this is in question — —

An honourable member interjected.

Mr JENNINGS — The issue is that this information may be compiled, not by me but by other parts of government, and indeed we would be able to provide an answer, but in the time that is available to me in the Parliament I am talking about what would be a normal, reasonable expectation of a staffing profile in terms of workforce management and what the chamber may reflect on if and when this information is made available.

Supplementary question

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My supplementary question is: what is the total value of lump sum payments or redundancy payments made to former ministerial staff upon their leaving the employ of the Andrews government?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — As a workforce we are not considering issues of redundancy. We are talking about accrued entitlements, and we are talking about what would have been the expectations of the employment engagement upon the separation of any individual who has left the employ of the government. There has not been evidence that many, if any, redundancies have occurred during the course of this first year of office.

East–west link

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Leader of the Government. I refer to the minister's written response to my question of 11 November regarding the debt facility that the government has taken over after cancelling the east–west link. I ask: what is the cost of the 'arrangement fees for each bondage issuance', as referred to in the minister's written answer?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — In terms of Ms Fitzherbert's follow-up question, I am a bit surprised that this issue has a long tail, as the debt facility may have a long tail. In fact we are talking about incremental costs that are associated with fees that are a part of the normal maintenance of financial transactions that take places across the core operations of Treasury and the Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV), and indeed the facility the member is actually talking about.

The last time the chamber discussed this issue we were talking about the value of maintaining the swaps that were associated with the debt facility, and indeed there was a lot of misunderstanding, it seemed to me, on the other side of the chamber that those swaps that were generated by the previous government cost somewhere in the order of \$200 million to establish. And now the value of those swaps is \$217 million to the state of Victoria on the basis of the variation in the value of the dollar that has occurred during the course of the last year. The opposition last sitting week was trying to make great mileage about the quantum of those swaps as if they were costs incurred by the Andrews government, when they were not. They were an exposure that was incurred by the previous government in relation to the debt facility.

Ms Fitzherbert — On a point of order, President, I asked a very specific question about the cost of the arrangement fees for each bond issuance. I was not referring to the swaps that were the subject of my question in the last sitting week. In the response I was provided by the minister, he says:

The fees are comparable with those payable for any normal TCV bond issuance.

Given that he can say they are comparable, I ask you to refer him back to my question, which is: what is the cost?

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister does in fact have a bit over 2 minutes to continue, and I think that he has provided some information. Just from my point of view, on these matters he might well not be able to provide a precise figure as Ms Fitzherbert seeks because these arrangements would be variable depending upon market conditions and when there is a maturation of bonds or new arrangements entered into. Nonetheless, I think the minister might well be able to provide an indicative situation on current expectations or costs. If so, he has 2 minutes in which to provide that sort of information to the house.

Mr JENNINGS — I have to say to you, President, that when I did provide Ms Fitzherbert with the answer that had been provided to me by my friends in Treasury, I thought to myself, ‘Even though we are talking about comparatively small beer, the nature of the way in which the answer was written may have invited a further question’, and here it has come. I think the people in Treasury are the people best placed to provide the answer, and I will encourage them to furnish the member with the answer in a level of detail that would satisfy her interest.

Supplementary question

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) — The written response refers to the government negotiating greater flexibility in relation to bond issuance. Can the minister confirm that the government will pay a premium in the arrangement fees for this greater flexibility?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — When Ms Fitzherbert took her point of order in relation to my substantive answer, she was indicating that I was talking about something that is completely different to the matter in hand. Now she has returned to the issue that I was talking about in her supplementary, so I think I was totally apposite to what the nature of her line of inquiry was. In fact I was talking about the issue in question. In terms of any technical detailed matter that may satisfy her current interest, I think Treasury is best placed to provide that.

Timber industry

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. I refer to the

government’s statement in the *Age* last week that it has decided not to provide an indemnity to VicForests in respect of the new timber contracts. Was the minister aware of this decision when she answered a question in this house about VicForests contracts two weeks ago?

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — Mr Dalidakis was with us in spirit on Friday night, in response to Ms Lovell’s interjection.

The government is working, as members are well aware, in supporting the establishment of a timber industry task force, which is a group representing non-government environment organisations, representatives of the Victorian forestry industry and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, as well as many other interested parties, to explore areas where there may be a consensus to make recommendations to government around changes to the industry with a view to making the industry more sustainable as well as protecting our natural assets. In particular there is an interest in this issue, as Ms Dunn and I frequently discuss in this place, in the recovery efforts that we are all interested in for the Leadbeater’s possum.

On the question of specific commercial arrangements and indemnities, I will proceed with a bit of caution. A lot of these are commercial-in-confidence arrangements, so with your forbearance, President, I might take the specific nature of the indemnities issue that Mr Drum is seeking an answer to on notice so that I do not offend any of those commercial-in-confidence arrangements.

Mr Rich-Phillips — On a point of order, President, the substantive question asked by Mr Drum was: was the minister aware that the government had made its decision on indemnity? I do not see how the minister can take that on notice.

The PRESIDENT — Order! From my point of view, the minister is in a position to answer a question in any way that she believes satisfies that question. It may well not satisfy the member who has asked the question or indeed other members of the house. In this case the minister has indicated that she is prepared to provide further information which will be apposite to the question, because the question will certainly be available for the minister’s staff and the minister to prepare an answer, and that will come on the next day of meeting. From my point of view that is sufficient not to require a further comment now.

Mr Drum — Further to Mr Rich-Phillips's point of order, President, the government has made a decision, and the question is: was the minister aware of that decision when she answered a question in the house last week or not? There is either a yes or a no here.

The PRESIDENT — Order! My problem is that I cannot make the minister answer one way or the other, and the minister has indicated that she will provide a response.

Supplementary question

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — I have a pre-prepared supplementary question. One of my supplementaries says: if she answers yes, I am going to go in this direction.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr DRUM — I was reading a quote over the weekend, and it just kept bringing me back to Mr Dalidakis. It was something along the lines of: 'When you're dead, you don't know you're dead, so the pain is borne by everybody around you'. The part of the quote that brought me back to Mr Dalidakis was: 'It's the same when you're stupid'.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I ask Mr Drum to withdraw the remark.

Mr DRUM — But it was a good quote, wasn't it?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Is Mr Drum withdrawing the remark?

Mr DRUM — I withdraw the remark, and I will rub out the photo of Mr Dalidakis that was sitting next to the quote as well. Anyway, I will ask — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! The real danger of contesting this matter is that Mr Drum has now lost his time.

Mr DRUM — President, it was worth it.

TAFE staffing

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Training and Skills. I refer the minister to his statement to this house yesterday that he had asked TAFEs to 'not have wholesale ... redundancy programs'. How many contracts need to lapse at a TAFE before it constitutes a wholesale redundancy program?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I thank the member for her question. I think I made the point yesterday that TAFEs, like all organisations, need some renewal, just like political parties need renewal now and then, but they do not need to be gutted. I do not have a specific figure. Each TAFE has different staffing profiles. I think the question was in relation to contract staff, quite frankly, and contract staff are contract staff.

Supplementary question

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — To put perhaps a little more flesh on the question by means of supplementary, can the minister guarantee that no money the Andrews government has provided in its so-called rescue plans has been spent on retraining staff in 2015 only to be sacked in 2016?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — Can I guarantee it? I think Mrs Peulich is talking about the \$20 million brought forward out of the TAFE rescue plan. I think it is highly unlikely. However, I have to say that as staff change their profile I would certainly prefer them to give staff who have a lower workload because of different teaching requirements the opportunity to retrain and keep their jobs. Can I guarantee it? I could not guarantee that — it is changing every year — but I would certainly say that I think it is a much better process for staff, rather than simply sacking their staff, to have a look at giving them an opportunity to retrain in another area where there is demand.

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I have written answers to the following questions on notice: 571–72, 688–89, 733–34, 773, 868, 872, 1114, 1424–31, 1999–2000, 2470, 2482–83, 2496–98, 2505–06, 2533–35, 2561–64, 2566–72, 2575, 2607, 3307–10, 3315–26, 3679–3718, 3785, 4008–19, 4023, 4025–28, 4030–42.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! I first indicate that there are three answers that I would have expected today that are not available. In two cases in fact

ministers have indicated to me that there was a difficulty in meeting that deadline and that they are in the process of obtaining the information to provide an answer to the house.

In the case of Mr Jennings's answer to a supplementary question posed yesterday by Ms Wooldridge in regard to the Somyurek investigation costs, Mr Jennings has indicated to me that he is working on that answer but was unable to furnish it today in accordance with my direction. In a moment I will seek from Mr Jennings an indication of whether that might be available tomorrow or whether he is seeking the courtesy of the house for a longer period, in which case Ms Wooldridge may wish to respond to that in some procedural manner.

Ms Pulford has also indicated that she is reviewing some information to provide an accurate answer to the house in respect of travel arrangements, as posed by the question by Mr Finn yesterday. She has referred today to the compilation of that matter and the fact that she did raise with me that she was not in a position to furnish that today.

The words 'personal explanation' were bandied around in part of that discussion today. I indicate that where there is a personal explanation to be made, it is incumbent upon the member to allow me to understand exactly what explanation they are going to make. There is a procedure in the standing orders for the provision of a personal explanation. I am not sure that members were necessarily expecting that procedure to be followed in full; rather, they were seeking an apposite response from the minister. As I understand it, the minister is pursuing that response, and this was also raised in question time today. I might get an indication from Minister Pulford as well on when she might expect that that material will be available.

The third one relates to the response to both the substantive and supplementary questions asked by Mr Young to Mr Herbert for the Minister for Police yesterday in regard to handgun licence applications. Certainly I have not sighted that answer.

I ask each of the ministers to give me some sort of indication on where we are at with those matters.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — As I indicated to you privately before question time, President, and indeed to Mr Finn, it is very much my intention to provide that information before question time tomorrow.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — Thank you, President, for recognising that I did raise my inability to deliver what I was hoping to provide the

house today. Members would all be aware that most of us, including myself, have been in the Parliament for 20 of the last 24 hours. With regard to my ability to ensure that the information is provided to me, not only within my responsibilities but within the responsibilities across government and in particular on an issue that I had already foreshadowed had not been resolved, I took measures yesterday to try to get that issue resolved so I could provide the house with a complete, furnished assessment of the costs. That was a first-order issue I had sought from the public service in terms of providing that outcome that would then facilitate the information being shared.

During the running of the Parliament this morning, I did not receive a consolidation of that information in a form that I was able to share with the house. I had a returned call — unfortunately during the course of question time — that might have provided me with a complete answer, but I have not spoken directly to the relevant officers to learn when that answer may be provided. I will use my best endeavours to provide the information in either an incomplete form or a complete form, which should be available shortly.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I inform Mr Herbert that the question I referred to was from the last sitting week, not yesterday.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — If those answers have not been provided, I apologise to Mr Young. I thought we had done them all, but I will check with the Minister for Police and get back to Mr Young as soon as I can with an answer to that.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In respect of today's matters, I indicate that as the questions that Mr Rich-Phillips posed to Ms Pulford relate to matters that she is already pursuing, I dare say that she can take up the matters raised by Mr Rich-Phillips as part of the answer she provides. I think they go to the same substance, essentially. Both the question yesterday, to my recall, and Mr Rich-Phillips's questions go to the time sequence as to why a set of information was provided on a certain date, which I think was 30 October, and why the minister was unable to provide similar information — or the same information, one would expect — on a subsequent date, given that an answer to an FOI request had already been prepared. The minister has indicated to us that we are talking about some other time frames involved with the travel and she wants to provide a complete and accurate answer, so without necessarily having to instruct on this one, I think the minister will take into account

Mr Rich-Phillips's questions today as part of the process that she is involved with.

In terms of Ms Lovell's questions, I am a little perplexed inasmuch as, as with the Leader of the Government, I am not sure what the benefit of these answers would be in a public interest sense, but it is not my position to determine whether or not these questions ought to stand in that respect.

I think that question time, where answers are sought from ministers, is the domain of members and that I should not intrude or seek to have judgement on those questions. I certainly think that the turnover of staff in a ministerial office provided as an answer could well have all sorts of explanations, including the fact that it is a new government and that some people might have been taken on for a brief period of time to get the files sorted out, get the photocopier working and so forth and then left the employ. What relevance that has in terms of this issue, I am not sure.

However, the question has been asked and there was not an answer as such, so I invite Mr Jennings to provide a response to both the substantive and the supplementary question, recognising that in the supplementary question there is a very big difference between paying out normal entitlements of accrued holiday pay and so forth and redundancy payments, which would suggest a termination situation as distinct from a resignation. The questions are difficult for the minister to address, but nonetheless, as I said, it is not my position to actually pass judgement on the questions as such in this circumstance. I invite the minister to provide a response.

Mr Drum's supplementary question was a cracker.

An honourable member interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Two days on that matter, thank you!

In terms of Mr Drum's substantive question, which was about the minister's awareness of a decision not to provide an indemnity to VicForests in respect of new timber contracts, which was apparently an indemnity announced prior to a question that was put to the minister about those contracts, I think that it is fair that the minister be invited to provide a response as to awareness of that indemnity position. As that is within her portfolio, I ask that that response be returned within a day.

Ms Fitzherbert posed a question about the fees associated with rollovers in both her substantive and supplementary questions. Mr Jennings undertook to

obtain some information to respond to those questions from Treasury. Again, given it is another department, I give two days for that response.

In responding to a supplementary question from Mr Purcell, Ms Pulford indicated that she would obtain some information from the Minister for Public Transport to satisfy the supplementary question in regard to rail services. I give two days for that response.

Ms Springle asked a question of Ms Mikakos. In respect of her supplementary question, it was essentially: if the government is not already collecting the statistics, would the government consider collecting the statistics on essentially — and I use the term to cover many aspects of service she referred to — counselling services to these young people? That was the supplementary question, and I think that was not actually responded to directly as to a government intention, yay or nay.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — The way Ms Springle posed her question was that she included a range of issues in the preamble, which made a little bit unclear the exact nature of the question. I have since had the opportunity to review some of the questions on notice that related to this matter. As I have made clear in both responding to those questions on notice and also in responding to the questions from Ms Springle today, a manual review of every client record would be required to provide the information that Ms Springle is seeking. That is the advice that I gave her in response to the question on notice, and that is in fact the advice I gave in response to the question earlier. I have therefore made it clear to the house that it is very difficult for the department to collate the data that Ms Springle is seeking, because it would require a manual examination of every file.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is a more fulsome response and a more apposite response, I have to say, in terms of the specific question about data collection. I appreciate the minister's comments in that respect. To a large extent it actually does go to explaining the government's intention in respect of effectively not collecting the information because it is too difficult to do it. Perhaps I could still have a written response from the minister that might well reflect the information she has provided verbally to the house and any further information directly on the supplementary question. I appreciate the remarks she made, which go some way to responding to Ms Springle.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, with regard to my supplementary question in relation to the total lump sum payments by the government, I do

not believe that the Leader of the Government responded to that question. While he made some general statements in relation to them being consistent with entitlements, there is no transparency in relation to what those entitlements may be and there is no transparency about the terms of contracts in these sorts of situations. I ask you therefore to reinstate and ask for a written response to my supplementary question about what is the total amount of lump sum payments made by the government to Ms Paul.

The PRESIDENT — I am thinking about that.

Ms Hartland — On a point of order, President, in relation to the question I asked yesterday about the fire service review, Mr Jennings was going to take it on notice. I understand his reasoning for it not being available today, but I would like an idea of a time when it will be available.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I would have given a two-day instruction on that, so I would be expecting a response to that question tomorrow.

In respect of Ms Wooldridge's supplementary question to the Leader of the Government on the total amount of the lump sum payments paid by the government to Ms Paul since the house was updated on 3 September, I am obviously not in a position to know whether there were any further payments, or whether in fact they were simply the accrued entitlements that any employee would have had or whether there were any additional payments that might have been made. On the basis of allowing the house to have some transparency in what was a difficult matter, I ask the minister if it is possible to provide that response to the supplementary question, and that would be a two-day response.

Sitting suspended 1.04 p.m. until 2.09 p.m.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — Deputy President, in response to the matter raised by the President just prior to the lunch break regarding the non-tabling of an answer to a question asked by Mr Young on 12 November, at the start of the lunch break I asked my office about it. I thought we had not gotten an answer from the police department, and I just want to clarify the record in terms of this. In fact a draft response from the Minister for Police came into my office on Friday, and a relatively new member of my office did not pick it up. I apologise for that. I take responsibility; it certainly was not the police minister. It has now been lodged, and hopefully it satisfies the requirements.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I thank the minister for that clarification.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — You are looking quite fresh, Deputy President, given the lateness of the hour at which we concluded last night. My constituency question is for the attention of the Special Minister of State, who is not here. I hope more ministers will be arriving shortly.

Mr Herbert — I'm here.

Mrs PEULICH — Have we only got one minister?

Mr Herbert — I'm on duty. I am happy to do my duty for the Parliament.

Mrs PEULICH — We do not have a spill, do we? The question that I ask has been raised with me by multicultural constituents in the south-east in relation to a fundraiser organised by Progressive Business involving Robin Scott, the Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. It was hosted by Deloitte, and the price was \$2475 per non-member ticket. I ask if the minister can provide information as to what safeguards, such as note takers from the minister's own private office or the department, were present to ensure that no perception of access for influence occurred — —

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

Western Metropolitan Region

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Training and Skills, who is the representative in this house of the Minister for Education. This morning I was alerted to an issue by parents regarding Footscray Primary School. The school has one oval which is the only green space in the school ground. The oval has now been closed due to building rubble and possibly asbestos that is buried under the oval coming to the surface due to erosion and drought conditions over recent years. The situation is a hazard to the children's health as they have nowhere to play. Apparently the government has known about this issue since 2011 when building works occurred at the school and the issue was discovered, yet nothing has been done about it so far. My question for the minister is: will the government urgently deal with the situation — the possible asbestos and the rubble — so that Footscray Primary School children can once again play on their oval?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport, who is responsible for the removal of level crossings. On Monday evening traders and small business owners met to speak with the Level Crossing Removal Authority about their concerns relating to the level crossing removal at North Road, Ormond. At the meeting traders expressed their frustrations and concerns about the very real possibility of facing financial hardship as a result of the impact the removal is having on their businesses. Many are angry and disappointed about the continual changes in plans for the removal of the level crossing and the lack of communication from the government and authorities.

The government continues to deviate from the schedule, with the changes not being communicated to those who will be affected. In addition, night works have been introduced, but no information has been provided on the dates the night works will cause disruption. The call centre does not have up-to-date information on the plans. The whole communication plan, or lack thereof, on the project is a mess. Will the minister immediately review the project to ensure that correct and accurate information is provided to traders so that they can plan and manage their ability to conduct business during this time?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is addressed to the Treasurer, the Honourable Tim Pallas, and it relates to the employment and economic growth performance of the western suburbs. I note the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures on state demand and employment which show that Victoria's is now the fastest growing economy in Australia. This is in contrast to the six months of contraction, or recession, that Victoria suffered in 2012 under the coalition government. With statewide unemployment down from 6.8 per cent under the previous government to 6.1 per cent under the current government, I ask the Treasurer to provide an update on how Victoria's improvement in employment and economic performance has affected Western Metropolitan Region and, in particular, to provide an update on the rise in employment and growth in my electorate since the government was elected.

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills, Mr Herbert. I hope he is listening. I am glad to see he is in the

chamber. My question is: what is the minister doing with Glenormiston agricultural college? I have had deputations from industries both within and outside Australia wanting to utilise this facility. We know South West TAFE did not renew its lease on the college and the campus has been in limbo for about two years now. I know parts of it are being used by different stakeholders, but I have had deputations from people who want to use it for drug rehabilitation purposes. They could use the college to accommodate 200 people on site. I have had deputations from Chinese parties that want to use it for processing and education and training for their plant operators, and I have had deputations from service delivery providers who want to use it for educational purposes. The minister has an external consultancy, Sweet, that is examining a whole range of expressions of interest for the college, but I have heard nothing from the government — —

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

Northern Victoria Region

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Public Transport, and it concerns the discrepancy between the City of Greater Shepparton and other regional cities in regard to weekend public transport services. A constituent has raised with me his concern that he is unable to travel between Shepparton and Mooroopna on Saturday afternoons or Sundays. This limits his ability to shop and to attend church and family functions. On a recent trip to Warrnambool my constituent noticed that town buses there run on Sundays. He then looked up other timetables and found that Sunday bus services are available in many other regional centres. Those centres not only include obvious cities such as Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong but also other cities such as Traralgon and Mildura. Greater Shepparton has a larger population than Warrnambool, Traralgon and Mildura, but it does not have the same access to public bus services. My constituents are fed up with being treated like they do not matter by the Andrews Labor government. My question to the minister is: will the minister guarantee additional public transport services for Greater Shepparton on Saturday afternoons and Sundays?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport, and it relates to the minister's media release of 24 November which states that early works on the Melbourne Metro rail project in 2017 will include the relocation of trees and other road features to

enable construction sites to be established. My question to the Minister for Public Transport is: will this work include relocating trees in Fawkner Park, in my constituency, to facilitate it becoming a staging point for heavy and earthmoving machinery, a storage area for tunnel spoil and the egress point for tunnel-boring machinery? If so, how many trees will be relocated, and to where will they be relocated?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water. The minister may be aware of the avalanche of outrage following the release of a draft metropolitan waste and resource recovery implementation plan. If she is not aware, she should check her inbox. Locals are furious that this plan recommends that all of Melbourne's future landfill waste should go to the western or northern suburbs. Given the difficulties already experienced with landfill waste, specifically at Ravenhall and Bulla, and the failure of the Environment Protection Authority Victoria to protect residents, will the minister reassure my constituents that Melbourne's west will not in future be the dumping ground for millions of tonnes of stinking waste?

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Many of my constituents and a local community group from the suburb of Montmorency, about 20 kilometres north-east of Melbourne, are concerned about the decline of sugar gliders in the area. Once abundant through the suburb, the sugar glider is a small possum which glides through the air from tree to tree, up to a distance of 50 metres. Montmorency is a beautiful area on the fringe of Melbourne which once boasted a great deal of native vegetation and wildlife. But as the large old trees make way for residential and industrial developments there are fewer and fewer trees. This has had an impact on sugar gliders as it means they cannot glide from tree to tree to forage, nest and mate. The Labor government has committed to an upgrade of Bolton Street, which is a significant part of the sugar glider range. Can the minister advise if the Bolton Street upgrade will result in the loss of any habitat, and if so, how this will be offset? In relation to the movement of arboreal animals, will the minister consider the construction of rope bridges, which are a proven and effective way for wildlife — —

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

Northern Victoria Region

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My constituency question goes to the Bendigo tennis project, which was funded to the tune of \$2.4 million under the state coalition government. However, in the days leading up to the election, the Labor Party reprioritised the funding for that program and put it back into consolidated revenue. Labor members of Parliament who represented Bendigo were very supportive of this project when they were in opposition and were very keen for it to be funded. It is worth noting that the Bendigo Tennis Association won a major national award at the recent Newcombe Medal. The money that was previously allocated to the project and reprioritised for the Bendigo Aquatic Centre at the Kangaroo Flat Swimming Pool, which is in the same pool of funding, has now reappeared and been put back on the books. I am now wondering what has happened to the \$2.4 million that was reprioritised for the Bendigo tennis club project and whether it can be put back on the books.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I was talking about the Royal Commission into Family Violence and expressing my concerns that there was no requirement on the royal commission to analyse the causes, yet it is expected to come up with some solutions and recommendations. It seems to me you cannot come up with insightful and effective resolutions and recommendations if you are not required to analyse the causes. You can spend multiple millions of dollars as a response, but you will not know that it is doing what it needs to do. When it comes to multicultural communities in particular, I think there are serious issues.

I was aware of one woman from Sudan who was, regrettably, a victim of violence at her husband's hands. She was reluctant to make a report to the police. Over a period of time she was convinced to do so, and within 24 hours she became persona non grata in her own family and her community. That was due in part to the failure to understand the embedded cultural practices. For example, in Sudan it is not unusual for an entire village to put resources such as livestock — say, cows — into the dowry to facilitate a marriage. When this marriage fell apart, all those who had contributed to the dowry knocked on the door of the poor woman and demanded the return of their livestock. Within 24 hours she became persona non grata in her own community.

The failure to understand these things is a missed opportunity — a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

As I said before, you cannot explain everything merely by talking about it being a product of gender inequality. Gender inequality does not explain same-sex violence. It does not explain violence such as elder abuse. It does not explain family violence between siblings, which is not unusual. I was speaking to a policeman in the Frankston area who told me that some of their common call-outs were from two sisters who regularly belted the bejesus out of each other. The last time the police were required to call on them was over a hairbrush which, to most people, seems like an extraordinary reason for a punch-up between two sisters. Unfortunately it does happen.

Obviously violence occurs between husbands, wives, spouses or partners and also children. To me this is a primary motivator. It is very sad that children often are victims and used as pawns in difficult relationships. There are all too many who become victims in those types of relationships. A lot of those children are not female; some of them are male. Luke Batty was not a girl; he was a boy. Sadly his life was lost in the most tragic circumstances — circumstances that no-one could possibly conceive, having died at the hands of his father.

The sort of bland, easy and conflated explanation that it is all as a result of gender inequality is, as I said, a gross oversimplification which does not do justice to a very important issue, particularly when it comes to understanding the cultural practices where domestic violence is often embedded in the community, and that relates to my portfolio as shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

I am looking forward to the debate. I certainly hope it will not be just about platitudes but that it will be a constructive debate resulting in some insights. Likewise, with the social cohesion and resilience fund that I referred to earlier, I hope some of those short-term priorities or funding opportunities move forward to combat racism, whether it is Islamophobia or anti-Jewish sentiment. Parents are petrified that their children are going to be recruited by evil causes such as ISIS. It is a monumental battle to remove stuff from the net, but there are ways of training people and community organisations to do that, therefore magnifying the resource that can be directed to fund these organisations to help remove some of that hate material from the net.

Local government is another area where I think this government has failed in its first year. There was a

golden opportunity with the Local Government Amendment (Improved Governance) Bill 2015 to address a significant issue which we are going to see play out next year — that is, the local council elections. In most councils we will see huge fields of people we have never heard of before. There will be fields of 25 and 30 candidates who are totally unknown to us. The reason they are running is to manipulate the voting system and to feed in a series of preferences towards a main candidate. This is facilitated by having how-to-vote cards in the mail packs of all but 10 of the councils in the state of Victoria. It would not have cost a darn thing — in fact it probably would have cost less — to remove those how-to-vote cards so that genuine candidates who want to get themselves elected can pay for their own distribution of material and the voter can have greater confidence in the integrity of the system.

I could talk on this topic ad nauseam, but I have tried to cover my portfolios and my region in saying that the first year of the Andrews government has been a huge disappointment. The Premier began at the 100th day to say not a minute had been wasted. I have not worked out how many minutes there are in a whole year, but in many of these areas this government has wasted that time. In just one year of the Andrews government the state budget is back in deficit for the first time in 20 years. More projects are being cancelled than started, jobs are being lost, crime is soaring and unions are striking. The state government is unsettled by the police investigations and the internal divisions, the electoral rorts, its \$1.5 billion budget bungle, and spiralling unemployment and crime. Sacking ministers and replacing them with others who are themselves underperformers is all a distraction for the government from its core purpose, which is to serve the needs of the community.

I hope year 2 is better, but year 1 has been a huge blow and a huge disappointment to South Eastern Metropolitan Region. I commend Ms Wooldridge for bringing this motion before the house giving us an opportunity to make representations on behalf of our communities.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I also want to start by congratulating Ms Wooldridge on bringing this motion to the house and allowing us to highlight what a lacklustre year 2015 has been for the state of Victoria and importantly for the regions we represent. In other contributions today, many members will talk about the government's failure to deliver on election commitments that Labor made to electorates during the election campaign. The government might find my contribution quite refreshing because for the electorate

that I wish to speak about today — the Assembly electorate of Shepparton — the Andrews government has delivered on every election-specific commitment it made. That is because Labor promised nothing for the seat of Shepparton, and true to its word Labor has delivered nothing that is specifically for the Shepparton electorate.

In fact on 27 November 2014, two days before the state election, the *Shepparton News* compared the promises to the seat of Shepparton from the Liberal-Nationals coalition and the Labor Party. Under the Labor Party's column it says, 'No direct commitments'. The quote from the Labor Party candidate is quite amusing. The *Shepparton News* started out by saying:

Only two days out from the election Labor has still not made a single funding commitment to the region.

The Labor candidate for Shepparton, Rod Higgins, is then quoted as having said, 'I'll advocate vigorously once we're in'. I had not heard him advocate for anything at this point in time, but he continued, 'I haven't promised anything I can't deliver' — what an understatement that is; he had not promised anything so of course he could deliver nothing — and he finished by saying, 'I don't want to turn around after the election ... and say I can't do that now because priorities have changed'. That shows that Labor does not intend to deliver on all of the election commitments it made in other electorates.

During the election campaign Labor demonstrated to the people of Shepparton that it was not interested in their needs, the services they needed or the infrastructure they needed. It did this, firstly, by failing to make a single Shepparton-specific election commitment. Secondly, it refused to participate in a public forum that was organised by the Committee for Greater Shepparton. The committee had a forum with the coalition. It then wanted to run a public one with Labor, but Labor could not find the time to turn up and front the public of Shepparton at a forum. Thirdly, Labor ran dead in the campaign to assist the Independent candidate in that seat.

Fourthly — and this is a doozy — Labor incorrectly spelt Shepparton on its how-to-vote cards. Instead of spelling it S-h-e-p-p-a-r-t-o-n, it spelt it S-h-a-p-p-a-r-t-o-n. Even though this was discovered during the prepoll period two weeks out from the election date, Labor continued to hand out that card all the way through. It did not have enough respect for the people of the Shepparton electorate to spell the electorate name right on its how-to-vote card.

Fifthly, Labor leader Daniel Andrews did not visit the electorate during the election campaign. I do not think he even made a single visit during the whole of the 2014 election year. The last time I can remember him being in Shepparton was when he turned up in July 2013 promising additional trains, which we have not seen in Shepparton — surprise, surprise.

Shepparton is an electorate that needs investment and support. It is an electorate that has significant levels of disadvantage, high numbers of new settlers, is significantly under stress in the agricultural sector and has high youth unemployment. Yet Labor did not and still does not have Shepparton on its radar. For 11 years from 1999 to the end of 2010 the Bracks and Brumby governments largely ignored the Shepparton electorate. They only took an interest in the area when they came up with a plan to strip the irrigators in northern Victoria of water and pipe it to Melbourne.

The then Treasurer, John Lenders, actually told the Municipal Association of Victoria that his government would only invest in infrastructure in northern Victoria if there was a direct benefit for Melbourne. That was an absolutely shameful statement. Obviously the Andrews government is following in the footsteps of John Brumby and John Lenders, because Premier Daniel Andrews and Treasurer Tim Pallas are also not interested in investing in the infrastructure that the Shepparton electorate so desperately needs.

In contrast, during only four years in government the Liberals invested heavily in the Shepparton electorate: \$75 million for a new courthouse, \$18.3 million for a new Numurkah hospital and an additional \$2.5 million for a new ambulance station, \$7.5 million for the Doyles Road roundabout, \$22 million to save SPC Ardmona, \$1.25 million to allow Pactum Dairy Group to establish, \$5 million in the Goulburn Valley Industry and Infrastructure Fund, \$900 000 to expand Unilever at Tatura, \$500 000 to bring Scorpio Foods to the region, \$1.5 million for Murray Dairy, \$1.375 million for the Ryan Meat expansion at Nathalia, \$1.2 million to expand the Tatura Abattoirs, \$30 000 for Toolamba Fresh Produce, \$90 000 for both the Barolli and Boubis orchards, \$125 000 for a feasibility study for our new art museum and a \$125 000 feasibility study to relocate the aerodrome, as well as \$700 000 towards the Vaughan Street redevelopment.

Seven kindergartens were funded in the area. A brand-new Toolamba Kindergarten was provided by myself as the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development with funding of \$450 000, because the old one had burnt down and the Bracks government had not provided funding to re-establish it.

The Gowrie Street kindergarten had \$300 000 to expand, Kialla Park had \$276 000, Nathalia had \$101 000, Numurkah had \$300 000, Knight Street had \$205 000 and St Mel's had \$105 000, and in August 2014 seven kindergartens shared in \$40 000 worth of small grants and IT equipment. We invested very heavily in the Shepparton electorate, and that is just to name a few of the things that were funded there during our four years.

We went on. We kept going during the election campaign. We committed \$75 million with a promise we would commence stage 1 of Goulburn Valley Health. We promised additional train services: an extra train service daily from Melbourne to Shepparton and an extra return service on Saturday and Sunday, and that was just the start of the short, medium and long-term priorities for train services in Shepparton that had been identified by the review of the Shepparton line conducted by Jeanette Powell.

During the election campaign we also promised \$1 million for the planning of a staged approach to the Shepparton bypass, \$2.5 million for the next stage of the CBD redevelopment and an additional \$5 million for the Goulburn Valley Infrastructure and Investment Fund to create jobs in Shepparton, which is something that is desperately needed. However, Labor promised nothing and, true to its word, has delivered nothing. None of these things we have identified as being important to the people of Shepparton have been picked up by the government.

The former Treasurer, Michael O'Brien, the member for Malvern in the other place, had locked \$75 million for the Goulburn Valley Health redevelopment into the forward estimates of the budget. But it did not appear in this year's budget because Labor reprioritised it. That money was redirected, and it is not hard to work out where it went. Labor said that its last budget was about funding its election commitments. But one hospital was funded that was not part of an election commitment. Werribee Mercy Hospital received \$85 million, so it is not hard to see where the \$75 million for the Shepparton hospital went. Werribee Mercy Hospital just happens to be located on the border of the Assembly electorates of Werribee and Altona. The Werribee electorate is represented by the Treasurer, Tim Pallas, and the Altona electorate is represented by the Minister for Health, Jill Hennessy. It is certainly not hard to see where our money was redirected to.

Shepparton has been ignored by the Andrews government. It is time for the Andrews government to start to govern for all Victorians. It is also time for it to start to fund the infrastructure and services that are

needed by the people in the Shepparton electorate. That includes far more than just Shepparton itself. There is Tatura, Dookie, Numurkah, Nathalia, Strathmerton and a whole range of little areas like Waaia, Wunghnu, Toolamba and other places in that electorate. These people need and deserve these services. They do not deserve to be ignored by Daniel Andrews and Labor.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — In rising to speak on Ms Wooldridge's motion, I want to make a couple of comments about what she said in her opening statement. She said that Victoria did not get the government it deserved when it elected a Labor government and that the government is all talk and no action. For a minute I thought she was talking about the 2010 election, when Victoria voted in the coalition government. That is exactly the description that can be given to the last government, the coalition government. For four years there was talk, talk and no action. In fact earlier I was reading a review on why the Liberal Party lost the election. The review clearly acknowledges that one of Liberals biggest failures was that it was too slow to start. Apparently the reason is that it was not ready for government because it did not think it was going to win.

The coalition government was too slow to start. It then decided it was going to do something — it sacked the Premier and got a brand new Premier. After that it decided it had better do something, so in its third year — —

Mr Herbert — They sacked the chief commissioner.

Mr MELHEM — They have done a lot of useless stuff. Then the coalition government decided it needed to come up with something, so it went and talked to a focus group. That resulted in the decision to do the east-west link project, but it decided that it would not do it in that term of government but would do it in the next term. But it was doing something. For two years the former government talked about doing something.

Then four weeks out from the election the coalition signed a contract, instead of waiting. The coalition had known for four years that Victorians had made a mistake in electing it. The polls showed month in and month out that the coalition was behind Labor and that more than likely there would be a change of government. Nonetheless, the coalition decided to sign that contract and the side deal.

Ms Wooldridge said that Labor was reckless. Who was reckless there? It was not Labor. It was the former Treasurer Michael O'Brien; it was the previous

government. It knew the east–west contract had no business case behind it. To make things worse, it spent over \$300 million just on advertising — not on doing things but on advertising. The Napthine government spent \$4.9 million on the east–west project. Even though it had gone, it still managed to spend nearly \$5 million on that. Talking about reckless, that is what is reckless.

I go to the current figures. The unemployment figures came out recently. They speak for themselves. For September the figure was 6 per cent; it is now down to 5.6 per cent for the last quarter.

Mr Herbert — Incredible!

Mr MELHEM — That is right. It is pretty good. At least this government is doing things.

The coalition talked about the sale of the port. It said it was its policy and that we copied it. It said it wanted to do it, that it was not our idea, but then it said it did not want to help us in doing that. It is making sure that they frighten everyone. It has said they will not support legislation to sell the port, even though it was its policy.

The coalition has talked about the Ballarat rail line and the regional rail link, another Labor project. But for four years they forgot one thing. They forgot to order any trains. There is no point having a new regional rail project costing \$3 billion if you then do not order any stock to provide the services to the people in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and so forth. The first thing we did when we got into government was order 20 new trains.

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mr MELHEM — You would reckon it was common sense, would you not? I mean, it is the same thing. At last we have got another 20 trams to make sure that we are planning ahead so we do not get caught short, because more and more people are using public transport.

I will go back. It is like Christmas again; it is like saying there are 365 days to Christmas. It is 365 days since we were elected to government, and I want to talk about what we have done in 365 days.

When Dan the Man, the Premier, came into office, on the first day he said he would start the process of removing 50 level crossings. And guess what? It is happening. The first team has been contracted, work has started, and it is happening. On his second day he said he would end the war on the paramedics. That is a tick. And on the third day — I have got 362 to go — he said we would commence the Melbourne Metro rail

project, and \$4.5 billion was put aside. A few days ago the contract went out to start the preliminary work. That is going to happen. That is something the opposition should have done when it was in government.

Infrastructure Australia had things ready to go, but again it was another idea that was shelved. Then in the last year of its term in office the coalition decided it had better wake up and do something. It decided it needed to do the things it had said it would do. However, it changed the metro rail project to something else.

On the fourth day we acted on legalising medical cannabis, which we said we would. That is already happening.

Mrs Peulich — That will make someone very happy.

Mr MELHEM — That will help a lot of sick children. It has actually been proven, through science, that that is the only medication that will help them. Mrs Peulich should be careful about criticising that. The former Minister for Health is standing behind me; he is in support of that as well, so it is a bipartisan thing. To make that cheap comment is, I think, uncalled for.

What day was I on? I think I am on the fifth day now, and I refer to the TAFE Rescue Fund, which comes under the responsibility of the Minister for Training and Skills, Mr Herbert, who is in the chamber. That saw \$320 million reinvested back into TAFE. What a wonderful thing that is. It is happening. It is not about going to do something; it is actually happening. It has actually been implemented. We are getting the benefit, and it is going.

On the sixth day we established the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Again I think this is the first state and the first government in Australia to establish such a commission, and that will set the benchmark nationally. Today is White Ribbon Day. In answer to the accusation that this government is not doing much, I am only up to the sixth day; there are another three hundred and something to go.

On the seventh day, with action on the ice crisis again, \$45 million was promised to be put in place within 100 days of forming government to take action to address the ice problem in Victoria. There was over \$200 million put into the Regional Development Fund to assist the regional economy and invest in our fastest growing industries, including food and fibre, and new energies.

On the 10th day we made the announcement about upgrading Eureka Stadium in Ballarat, and that is a great project. It will benefit my Western Bulldogs team.

It is a great project and a great investment for Ballarat. That will bring a lot of business to Ballarat, where people can go and watch a couple of AFL games. That is a good investment. Another policy, on the 11th day, was 'No jab, no play', and that has become our policy. We are also cracking down on puppy farms. The list goes on. Another policy, on the 13th day, was the police regional radio upgrade. People have talked about it; we actually did it.

There is further work on railway level crossings in relation to Blackburn Road and Heatherdale Road. That is already out to tender and construction is expected to start next year. Major construction has started on the Burke Road, Glen Iris, level crossing. Also, further construction works are starting on the Centre Road, Bentleigh, level crossing, and the Centre Road, Clayton, level crossing project is out to tender with construction to start next year. The Chandler Road, Noble Park, level crossing has also gone out to tender with construction to start next year, and the Clayton Road, Clayton, level crossing project is out to tender with construction to start next year. The list goes on.

Last but not least I will mention the work that has already commenced on the level crossing at Main Road and Furlong Road in St Albans. That is out to tender. It is a wonderful thing that is long overdue. So many people have lost their lives at that level crossing, and construction has commenced to remove that. I will not go through the rest — —

Mr Herbert — \$12 million boost to education — the biggest in the state. Parents will be able to drive their kids to school easier.

Mr MELHEM — We are getting to education, Mr Herbert. You have to be patient. I have a fair way to go; I have another 330 things to talk about. But maybe I will stop talking about level crossings and roads because there are so many of them. They are all happening.

Where was the previous government, really? I cannot name a single major project it did in its own right. I cannot name one. If someone could help me to name one, I would be grateful.

Mr Finn — We fixed the St Albans level crossing.

Mr MELHEM — Did you now?

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr MELHEM — I know they talked about it!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! Through the Chair!

Mr MELHEM — The Tullamarine rail was a gunna-do project. It is a bit like the Doncaster one — it was all 'gunna do'. That is why they called it the gunna-do government, and those opposite have the cheek to come in here today and move a motion criticising the Andrews Labor government for what it has done in 12 months! Christ almighty! We have done a hell of a lot in 12 months. It is far more than what those opposite did in four years, which was not much at all.

Mr Herbert said we should talk about education. I think it is a good idea to talk about education. There is \$780 million of expenditure in school and kindergarten capital projects — the biggest ever capital expenditure in relation to education. I talked about the \$320 million injection into the TAFE system. Some examples of investment in schools are things like building a new school for Morwell, upgrading Sunshine College — —

Mr Finn — We did that, and you know it.

Mr MELHEM — You said you were gunna do it; we actually did it. You talked about it, but you never did it.

Mr Finn — No, we allocated the money.

Mr MELHEM — You did not. That was one of the gunna-do things. There is Parkhill Primary School. We upgraded Lyndale Secondary College and Dandenong High College. The list goes on. We upgraded Brunswick Secondary College and replaced school portables at Emerald Secondary College. The list goes on and on about various school upgrades. Williamstown High School is on the list, and it keeps going. We also ended HIV discrimination in the Crimes Act 1958. That is action 124.

Let us talk about the port of Melbourne, because I mentioned that earlier. Coalition members should bury their heads in shame because both sides announced a policy to lease the port. They lost government, so they could not sell it themselves. We want to go and do the right thing and lease the port so that we can get some capital to invest and do all these projects we said we were going to do, which were all ticked off and endorsed by the Victorian voters, and those opposite are playing politics. They teamed up with the Greens party to refer the lease of the port of Melbourne to a committee to delay it and to try to block it.

I say this to the opposition: be fair dinkum. Do the right thing by Victorians who actually voted. We went

to an election. We said that we were going to lease out the port. Whether people agree with it or disagree with it, that is the platform we took to the election. Those opposite took exactly the same platform to the election and said that they were going to lease it. But when we put forward proposed legislation to make sure we had certainty for the people who are likely to need support, to make sure we maximise the benefit for Victorian taxpayers and to make sure they get the highest possible price tag for the port — which is doing the right thing by our constituents and taxpayers — instead of supporting the project those opposite are sabotaging the whole process. They did the same thing with the east–west link. They talk about it costing \$860 million, but they only have themselves to blame. They are doing it again and again. So I say to them: ‘Do the right thing. Be fair dinkum and pass the port bill so we can get on with business, lease the port and get the right price for it so we can remove the 50 level crossings and invest in education and projects’.

Another announcement we made last week was an investment of \$400 million to upgrade the Monash Freeway. We also have the West Gate distributor.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr MELHEM — That is the thing. We are up for the challenge. When 2018 comes there will be a scorecard — and guess what? Daniel Andrews will be out there shining, saying, ‘I have delivered on every single promise I have made to the Victorian people’, unlike the former two premiers. The former two premiers cannot say the same thing because they failed to implement the things they said they would implement. I know Premier Andrews will be the smiling Premier. He will be able to look people in the eye and say, ‘I said I was going to deliver on all these things — and guess what? I have delivered’. This is because we are a government that is about delivering things and doing the right thing by Victorians. If we say we are going to deliver something, we will go out and do it.

Let us talk about health. Those opposite made sure they stripped the whole system. They went really quiet when Tony Abbott stripped billions of dollars out of the health system in Victoria going forward. They did not do much about it. On day one, as I said earlier, we declared an end to the Liberal war on paramedics, and we are now working with paramedics to fix the ambulance system, which the coalition failed to do anything about. In fact it drove the system to the wall. We have the former health minister here, so he can take a bit of credit for that.

We have provided \$561.3 million for acute health capital and infrastructure in the fastest growing areas, of which my electorate, Western Metropolitan Region, will get \$200 million for Sunshine Hospital and \$85 million for the Werribee Mercy Hospital. Another very important thing that will no longer be an issue to argue about and that nurses will not have to argue about every time there is a coalition government in Victoria is the nurse-to-patient ratio. The nurse-to-patient ratio is now enshrined in law, protecting our quality of care. It will no longer be a political football to be played by the coalition every time it gets into office.

In the last budget we invested an extra \$2.1 billion in hospitals, ambulances and various health programs. The list goes on and on.

Mr Finn — Have you been to Sunbury?

Mr MELHEM — Sunbury is coming. Sunbury will actually be better off under what we are proposing.

Mr Finn — Have you been to Sunbury lately?

Mr MELHEM — I have. Another achievement of this government that is going to become reality shortly is 24-hour public transport on weekends. It will take effect on 1 January 2016, which is another tick. That was number 242, so I am jumping a bit because otherwise I think I will be here all day. Further investments will be made in sport, as Victoria is a sports capital of the world. We are investing another \$70 million in Simonds Stadium. We are doing some upgrades there to make sure we can attract more events to Geelong and to other regional areas.

On social issues, on day 244 adoption equality became reality, which we said we would make happen. Something I am very proud of is that my friend in the other house, Natalie Hutchins, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, has done a lot of good work in achieving greater recognition of Victoria’s traditional owners. We are so moved when the President in his opening address every sitting week acknowledges the traditional owners and the Aboriginal people, who are the First Australians. It represents the great work done by Minister Hutchins, the Premier and the whole cabinet. It is something we should have done a long time ago.

Going back to projects, the contract has been awarded for the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway, and construction has started. That has become reality. Going back to education, we have breakfast clubs, which happened on day 240. We said:

No child should miss out on the most important meal of the day. Our \$13.5 million plan will provide breakfast for 25 000 children across Victoria.

That is another project. A lot of us take these things for granted, but there are a lot of children who go without breakfast in our public schools. I think that particular project is a worthwhile project. In a state like ours, in a country like ours, I do not think we should tolerate these sorts of things or allow these sorts of things to happen. We should be looking after these people. That particular project will take care of that so that no child will go without breakfast in our public school system.

Another very important achievement is Infrastructure Victoria, which has become a reality after a promise was made by the Andrews Labor government. Infrastructure Victoria will go down in history as one of the major achievements of this government, because now we will have an independent body that is above politics. It was a breath of fresh air to listen to the CEO of Infrastructure Victoria the other day on the Jon Faine program. We will have an authority, independent from government, which will put out a 30-year plan that will outline to Victorians and to governments the infrastructure needs of this state. Sure, the decisions are still going to be left to government, whatever the government is — coalition, Labor or whatever colour — but at least Victoria will have an independent body — —

Mr Barber — A green government?

Mr MELHEM — I think that is a long way off, but there is nothing wrong with dreaming about it. You never know, but it is probably a long way off. But whatever the colour of government — a green government — at least an independent body will put out a plan and say, ‘These are our infrastructure needs for the next 30 years’, and then governments will be able to make a decision about prioritising these projects.

Opposition members can do the same thing at election time. They can go to the files of Infrastructure Victoria and say, ‘What is on offer for the next 30 years?’. Then these projects will be taken to the voters, and that will be how a government can make some long-term decisions instead of making short-term decisions. I think that one of the problems that we have been faced with in Victoria over the years is short-term governing.

Let us be up-front about it: voters are not as forgiving as they probably were in the past. They are not afraid of changing a government after one term. A body such as Infrastructure Victoria will give some certainty to investment to make sure that we have the right infrastructure to cope with population growth and

demand in the state of Victoria. That is another major achievement of the Andrews Labor government, and the list goes on. There is more to come.

Just last week some 22 V/LOCITY trains were ordered, which I think is a very welcome investment. In addition, Bendigo metro rail will shortly become a reality. The government has committed to that project.

Mr Finn — Lovely.

Mr MELHEM — What was that?

Mr Finn — While you are at it you might like to give Sunbury back the V/Line services, the ones that you promised you wouldn’t scrap. Remember those?

Mr MELHEM — If that is the only thing Mr Finn is concerned about, it is good to see he has got his priorities right.

I turn to climate change, which Mr Barber talked about in his contribution. This government has put climate change back on the radar, whereas the former government would not commit much to that.

Mr Finn — A waste of time and a waste of money.

Mr MELHEM — Mr Finn is saying ‘a waste of time’. He is living in la-la land. He is in denial.

Mr Finn — Let’s build another desal plant, shall we?

Mr MELHEM — I am glad Mr Finn has raised the desal plant. When we talk to farmers in northern Victoria, we learn that water storages in some areas are at less than 28 per cent capacity, so I think the desal plant will be quite handy to supply our farmers and make sure that we might not only be able to waterproof Melbourne — because that has been the focus — but be able to waterproof the state. That is not a bad thing; it is not a bad investment. As we speak the government is looking at how we can make sure we can help our farmers who will likely face some major drought problems at some time, perhaps this year and probably in the years to come.

Using existing infrastructure we could get water from regional Victoria to make sure that Melbourne does not go without water, which is why the desal plant was built. Now we have that resource ready for Melbourne, how can we Melburnians, as people living in the metro regions, assist our fellow citizens in regional Victoria? That project is on its way, and there is a business case being put together just to talk about that and to make

sure we come up with a plan to make sure we are there to assist farmers.

The New Energy Jobs Fund has been created and will turbocharge investment in renewables, help preserve our environment, reduce bills and create new jobs. That is another commitment that has been implemented by this government.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MELHEM — Go back to the Dark Ages and pretend the world is perfect. Let me give Mr Finn the bad news: it is not perfect.

Mr Finn — Are you going to Paris too, are you?

Mr MELHEM — Exactly right.

Mr Finn — That would be more frequent flyer points where you are seated. You would have quite a collection now.

Mr MELHEM — I can borrow some off Mr Finn if he is offering.

We have also invested more in CFA trucks, and we are providing the CFA with 70 new fire trucks featuring the latest safety equipment and firefighting technology to keep everyone safe. I have got some more to talk about, but I think I had better leave some for my other colleagues, because they need to talk about that.

If members look at *365 Days of Getting on With It*, they will see that 365 commitments have been delivered to Victorians, which is something those opposite could not say. For four years they could not show much at all. They cut some ribbons for all the projects members of this government commissioned before we left office in 2010, but that is about it.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, Acting President, there has been extensive quoting from the member in relation to that document. I wonder if he would be prepared to table it for the benefit of the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Is Mr Melhem prepared to table the document?

Mr MELHEM — I am using it.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Is Mr Melhem prepared to make it available to the house?

Mr MELHEM — How many copies would you like?

Ms Wooldridge — Just one for the house.

Mr MELHEM — Absolutely. You can have my copy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Thank you, Mr Melhem.

Mr MELHEM — It is a public document. I will finish off by talking about the last three commitments, including number 363, which is the Hospital Beds Rescue Fund. We invested \$200 million to open hospital beds and theatres so more people can get the treatment they need. I have talked about the \$250 million Regional Infrastructure Fund, which will invest in job-creating projects to make our regional cities and communities even more liveable.

Mr Leane spoke earlier, but I am not sure that he mentioned that this government has saved Lilydale TAFE, which was closed by the former government. We promised to reopen the Lilydale campus site for TAFE and higher education, and we delivered. Kids in the outer east should be able to get the skills they want to choose the job they want. We said we were going to do it, we got criticised about it but — guess what? — we have delivered that.

I think the Andrews Labor government has a very proud record. I think we should be proud of what we have achieved in 365 days. We have another three years to go, and we have got more hard work to do. At the end of that period we will have put the former government to shame. We will be able to look Victorians in the eye and say, 'We have delivered what we said we would deliver when we came to government', something which the other side could not do at the last election. With those words, let me say that obviously I will be voting against the motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

ELECTORATE OFFICE STAFF

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, pursuant to section 16 of the Ombudsman Act 1973, this house refers the following matter to the Ombudsman for investigation and report:

- (1) allegations that ALP members of the Victorian Parliament misused members' staff budget entitlements, against the provisions of the Parliament of Victoria *Members Guide*, that is, 'Electorate officers are employees of the Parliament of Victoria, and are directly accountable to the member in whose electorate office

they work ... These positions are provided to support the member in their parliamentary and electorate duties. The Parliament does not fund positions to support the member's political or party duties'; and

- (2) any other breach of applicable policies, laws or codes in relation to these allegations.

This motion requires the Ombudsman to investigate and report back to the Parliament on a matter that has swirled around for some time in the political domain. It relates to an allegation that ALP members of the last Parliament misused their staff budgets in contravention of the guidelines that were then contained within the *Members Guide*. I am dismayed that this matter has swirled around for as long as it has. When allegations are made in relation to the misuse of entitlements, we know how damaging that can be to the public trust. It has occurred all too often in other jurisdictions. It occurred in this jurisdiction in relation to the former member for Frankston in the other place, Geoff Shaw. Frankly, the detail is generally lost on the public; the public simply forms the view that all politicians are rorters.

The government may have reasons for wanting to avoid a definitive investigation into this; likewise, the opposition may very well have its reasons for wanting to let this controversy go on. But in order to restore confidence in the Victorian Parliament, I believe this matter should be resolved and resolved quickly. This has been the first opportunity and the best mechanism available to me in order to do that. I hope once the investigation is underway, if this motion were to be successful, that we could all then wait for that investigation to bring down its results.

In terms of the particular mechanism that I am proposing here, it is the provision within the Ombudsman Act 1973 that allows either house of Parliament to direct the Ombudsman to investigate a particular matter.

In relation to entitlements in the matter of Mr Shaw, the Ombudsman in that case did investigate and made findings as to the facts and also as to the Ombudsman's view on whether Mr Shaw had breached the rules regarding entitlements. It then became a question for the Privileges Committee of the lower house to decide what, if any, remedy needed to be applied, based on those findings. At the end of the day it is only politicians who can enforce the rules of parliamentary privilege and parliamentary entitlements upon themselves, and that is what we ought to be doing for the greater good of the public's confidence in our system.

I know the opposition has attempted to refer this matter off to Victoria Police, which may be investigating some matters or interviewing some persons. The problem with that is that the police will only be looking at issues of fraud and criminality. I make no judgement on that, but I am yet to see any indication that that is what has gone on here. The problem is that the police, after concluding their investigation, may never report back to the Parliament or the public as to what they concluded and why. It may simply be that nothing arises out of that investigation, whereas in the case of Mr Shaw, as I said, we had a bit of a furrow to follow in terms of the Ombudsman's capacity not only to gather the necessary evidence but also to connect that to the *Members Guide* entitlements and even the code of conduct for MPs.

The interlocking powers of these various bodies — from the Ombudsman to IBAC to the police and the rest of it — does create some gaps and possibly some overlap, but I believe the saving grace is the specific provision in section 16 that allows the Parliament to direct the Ombudsman to make this investigation. That means, first and foremost, that we are agreeing to participate in the investigation as a Parliament because we are the ones ordering it, and, secondly, that all the various necessary powers that the Ombudsman holds to conduct investigations are enlivened by the very fact that this investigation has been triggered by this specific provision and agreed to by the Legislative Council.

I do not want to labour this issue. I hope this matter can be resolved as quickly as possible. I should say that in setting out the matter for investigation I have attempted to keep it as narrow as possible and to relate it to the specifics of the allegation. This is not an investigation into the Labor Party generally; it is not an investigation into the election campaign. It is an investigation into the allegation that has been aired publicly. I have narrowed down the terms to deal specifically with that matter, allowing only that if the Ombudsman were to uncover other breaches of applicable policies, laws or codes in relation to the same allegation, the Ombudsman could also make findings on that matter. I hope that the house will support this motion.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to speak briefly to the motion moved by Mr Barber and indicate that the coalition will support it. As Mr Barber has outlined in his remarks, we have seen previous instances where the Ombudsman has investigated allegations that have been made in respect of members of Parliament, with a subsequent report on those matters back to the relevant house of Parliament. The Ombudsman Act 1973 provides, by virtue of section 16, for either house of Parliament — or indeed a committee of either house of

Parliament — to make a referral to the Ombudsman's office on matters that it sees as appropriate for investigation by the Ombudsman pursuant to the general provisions of the Ombudsman Act. This is a mechanism that has been used previously by the Legislative Council and by its committees where the Council has deemed the Ombudsman to be the best or the most appropriate investigative body to undertake the investigation of matters that the Council is seeking clarification on.

Mr Barber indicated in his concluding comments that the matters this resolution seeks the Ombudsman's investigation of have been framed quite narrowly. They relate to matters that have been widely canvassed in the public domain over the course of the last two to three months, but they have been widely canvassed without resolution. Mr Barber referred to a potential Victoria Police investigation into this matter and highlighted that, depending on the outcome of any investigation by Victoria Police, that may or may not result in a report or an outcome as to what has occurred in relation to the allegations that have been made. It is appropriate that this resolution go forward and that the Ombudsman be asked to undertake this investigation, noting that it will result in a report coming back to the house in due course on the matters which are picked up in the terms of reference (1) and (2) of the resolution.

It is in the public interest that these matters are investigated, that the people who have raised allegations have the opportunity for those allegations to be tested, that the people who have had allegations made against them have the opportunity for those allegations to be tested and that disclosure of the resulting findings from such an investigation come to this house and ultimately be reported to the public. The coalition will support this resolution proposed by Mr Barber. We have confidence in the work the Ombudsman will undertake. This is the type of work the Ombudsman has undertaken on previous occasions, and we believe that this is a reasonable way forward for these allegations, which have been in the public domain for some time, to be appropriately addressed.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — I too propose to make a relatively brief contribution on Mr Barber's motion. This is the motion that attempts to use the Parliament and indeed the Legislative Council to refer a matter to the Ombudsman, specifically allegations that have been in the public domain for many months relating to the so-called misuse of staff budgets and whether or not there have been any breaches of the Parliament of Victoria's *Members Guide*.

As members are aware, these matters have been referred to Victoria Police for consideration, and it is incumbent on all Victorians to cooperate with Victoria Police. It is of course inappropriate to provide detailed commentary on these matters, and I remind the house of the words of the President on 6 October when he confirmed to members that police had been in contact with the Speaker and him to advise that they were inquiring into this matter and when he said that he would be taking a cautious approach towards question time in terms of the scope of questions that would be allowed.

In that vein, I do not propose to go over the subject matter; it is more the process I wish to focus on. However, I would like to reiterate the public comments of my colleagues that pool staff arrangements have been in place in the Victorian Parliament for almost 20 years amongst all political parties and have been overseen by presiding officers from both sides of politics.

Mr Barber — Not my side.

Ms SYMES — I just said both — government and former government. I apologise to Mr Barber; I did not mean to cause offence.

My previous role in the Labor opposition was as the legal and justice adviser to the Leader of the Opposition. I held this role for almost all of the four years we were in opposition, except for a few stints out for maternity leave. I am very familiar with the consideration of referring probity and allegations of some sort to integrity law enforcement and appropriate bodies. Through that experience I can say with confidence that no-one should be taking lectures on probity from those opposite. Matters that occupied my consideration include such allegations as interference with police command, inappropriate firearm storage, using a parliamentary vehicle for private business use, dodgy Ventnor dealings, breach of Privileges Committee and a porn ring operation running out of a former Premier's office. In fact I can probably say that I reviewed the Crimes Act 1958 and common-law offences more times in opposition than I did while studying for my law degree.

In debating this motion it is important to break it down and consider what is being asked and how the matter would progress in practice. It is obviously a proposal for the Legislative Council to refer allegations against ALP MPs relating to electorate office staff budget entitlements to the Ombudsman for investigation. That referral is sought to be made pursuant to section 16(1) of the Ombudsman Act 1973, which states:

At any time —

- (a) the Legislative Council or a committee of the Legislative Council;
- (b) the Legislative Assembly or a committee of the Legislative Assembly; or
- (c) a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament —

may refer —

and I would just like to focus on the word ‘refer’ because I would like to correct Mr Barber, who said that we have the capacity to order, but it is not an order we can make, but we have the capacity to refer —

to the Ombudsman for investigation and report any matter, other than a matter concerning a judicial proceeding, which that House or committee considers should be investigated by him.

It should be ‘him or her’, but in the case of the Ombudsman Act, it is ‘him’. Section 16(2) states:

Where a matter is referred to him pursuant to subsection (1), the Ombudsman shall, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this Act —

I repeat: notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this act —

forthwith investigate that matter and report thereon.

On a cursory reading this is a particularly broad power. It may be read as providing that the Parliament may refer essentially any matter to the Ombudsman for investigation — of course that would be quite convenient for the purpose of this motion — but I will explain why it is not actually that broad.

It is vital that the proposed referral be considered in the context of the whole act and how it may proceed in the event that a formal referral is made. It is an indisputable fact that any investigation undertaken by the Ombudsman must necessarily be subject to constraint by the functions and powers granted to the office by part III of the act, which is headed ‘Functions and jurisdiction of the Ombudsman’ and covers things such as protected disclosure. This is where some people might be a bit confused, thinking that we can use the matter of the referral of the former member for Frankston, Geoff Shaw, to the Ombudsman as a precedent. We cannot do so, because the way it got to the Ombudsman and the way it was able to be investigated and reported on by the Ombudsman was because it was in effect delivered to the Ombudsman via a protected disclosure from the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. A protected disclosure is treated very differently from a resolution of the house. I would just like to put that to one side. That matter cannot be

used as a precedent because the act does not actually allow that.

The motion is either hopelessly and embarrassingly misconceived or an act of calculated duplicity. It seeks to compel the Ombudsman to conduct an investigation that the Ombudsman is not empowered to make a determination on. It is in fact irrelevant to the functions of that office. Part III of the Ombudsman Act reflects that the office of the Ombudsman was established to investigate only those matters and things which are properly within his — I like to say her — powers and intended functions. Properly understood, these relate to complaints regarding the administrative functions of an authority. It is certainly not possible in this instance to see how the proposed referral in any way fits within these parameters.

In relation to the motion before us, no administrative action is identified within the terms of the referral, there is no identification of an authority and nor is there a protected disclosure — as there was in the Shaw case, as I explained. The only possible authority relevant to the referral is the Department of Parliamentary Services. Schedule 2 is a list of exempt persons and bodies. I will run through some of the people over whom the Ombudsman has no jurisdiction. They are: judges, associate judges, acting judges, magistrates and judicial registrars. The list includes the Office of the Governor, the official secretary within the meaning of the Public Administration Act 2004, IBAC, the Victorian Inspectorate, the Public Interest Monitor and police personnel. There are not many people it excludes, but it does exclude ‘a department of the Parliament’. The knockout blow to Mr Barber’s motion is paragraph 18 of schedule 2. To the extent that the referral proposes an investigation beyond the scope of the intended remit of the Ombudsman, it is likely to be an exercise in futility, arguably a misuse of the powers of this house and therefore disrespectful of the institution that we all should — and I certainly do — hold in high regard.

If the Ombudsman became seized of a referral to investigate subject matter outside the functions and power of her enabling legislation, I consider that this would also be disrespectful to her position and her office. It is entirely foreseeable that the immediate consequence of this referral would be that the Ombudsman herself would then have to explore the possibility of making an application to the Supreme Court pursuant to section 27 of the act, which I will read for the purposes of *Hansard*. It provides:

Where in the course of an investigation under this Act the question arises as to whether the Ombudsman has jurisdiction

to conduct the investigation, the Ombudsman or the party subject to the investigation, may make an application —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) —

Order! I am sorry to interrupt, Ms Symes. Could Mr Dalla-Riva please remain quiet while he is in the upper gallery?

Ms SYMES — I was reading section 27 of the Ombudsman Act, which details what is the likely occurrence in the event of the Ombudsman having to seek advice from the Supreme Court in relation to whether she has jurisdiction. I will read it from the top:

Where in the course of an investigation under this Act the question arises as to whether the Ombudsman has jurisdiction to conduct the investigation, the Ombudsman or the party subject to the investigation, may make an application to the Supreme Court for a determination of that question, and on the application the Court may make such order as it considers proper.

Having gone through the act, I am very confident. Members of the house have a power to refer, of course. That is indisputable. When you go through what will happen if we do this, you see that it would be a waste of the Ombudsman's time and our time. It may in fact be a very expensive exercise that results in what I am already telling members right now — that is, it will come back to the house. So, weeks or months down the track, at significant expense, the Ombudsman will come back to the Parliament telling us that the whole proposed process is a contrived nonsense. The government will not support a motion that has a path such as the one I have just set out.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I will speak very briefly on this motion because, while I have not spoken specifically on the referral to the Ombudsman, I spoke on this matter when the house debated this motion previously. I think this is an appropriate course of action. Notwithstanding the police investigation, which may be done in parallel and may intersect with it, I think this is a safeguard to ensure that all the avenues that are available are considered.

The house of course has all the powers. Ultimately it is the house that decides. To say that somehow the Ombudsman does not have powers to do this or that — the Ombudsman knows her powers. She knows the act and the framework that the Ombudsman operates in, and she will do so in compliance with that. Where those powers do not exist, I am sure we will learn by that.

The exposé of staff being used as political organisers, including them working in electorates beyond that of their employer without their direct supervision and on

duties that are outside those outlined in the *Members Guide* and on the intranet in terms of electorate office duties, is too serious to ignore.

I believe that in terms of the investigation the police may well be constrained. I hope not. I hope they are doing their job as robustly and thoroughly as possible. I have been contacted by a number of people associated with this particular investigation who tell me that many of the people who they would have expected to have already been interviewed have not been interviewed. I do not know whether it is a question of resourcing. It is certainly not attempting to second-guess, but I think there is some clear understanding about where the investigation could have started and where there could have been interviews of members of Parliament and those who are known to have worked as political organisers as part of the red army. They should have been interviewed in order to furnish greater evidence for that investigation to be completed.

I think the Ombudsman knows her powers. The house has the power to make this referral. We need people to be compelled to give evidence. I think many people who may have inadvertently been caught up in this do not want to lie. There may be coercion. We know that many of these people have been lawyered up through the Labor Party. I would hope that there is no contrivance — no rehearsal — of the stories, because I think the futures of many of these young people rest on them being exonerated. Many of them believed what they were doing was indeed legal. Many of them have not sighted the policies that make it clear as to how electorate officers must function, to whom they are accountable and how they are employed. Many of them are victims of a scheme that has obviously been designed by a number of key operatives within the Labor Party. At the end of the day the responsibility has got to rest with the head — the then Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Daniel Andrews, who is now the Premier. At the end of the day he is the one who gave the say-so and the approval to this grand plan.

As I mentioned today, I was wrong. I thought Daniel Andrews did not have a plan, but he did. This was a plan. We need to understand how this plan operated, who conceived it, who was involved and how much money was misappropriated. Where charges deserve to be laid because of fraud, they should be laid. Where policies need to be tightened, they should be tightened. Where laws need to be changed, we will consider that as well. Where codes are inadequate or grey, we have work to do. It is not just about fraud. A whole suite of measures need to be taken because the public expects

us to use its funds responsibly, accountably and without benefiting our own self-serving political interests.

There are small examples where members do fall foul of the rules because those rules are grey, and I have raised some of those matters here. I remember that when I was first elected as a member of Parliament we used to have to submit things for approval before they actually went to the printer. I am not suggesting that we return to that, but all of these measures can be considered by the Ombudsman. Where she has the power the Ombudsman will decide to make recommendations where there are actions to be taken by other parties, including the police. I would expect those recommendations to be contained in that report. Whether they are recommendations for the Department of Parliamentary Services, members of Parliament or any other stakeholder, we expect that to move forward.

I believe \$1.5 million is probably only a proportion of the funds that may have been diverted inappropriately. But it is not just about that; it is about making sure that funds cannot be creamed off for inappropriate, party political purposes. Fundraising with the support of our political parties is how we pay for election campaigns, not via the public purse, save the money that each vote earns when it is cast — that money returns to the political party after an election.

With those few words, all I want to say is that I think this motion has been well conceived and well worded. I think we have a responsibility to support it. I do not see it as duplicating the investigations by the police. Perhaps it might provide a greater impetus for them to more robustly investigate the matters that need to be investigated and undertake the interviews that need to be undertaken. There is a whole range of other areas where clearly change needs to occur. Those who are responsible need to be dealt with. We need to make sure that those who are inadvertently caught up are not destroyed or thrown under the political bus in the process. That can all be subject to a debate. With those few words, I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — On behalf of the government I want to make it very clear that in relation to the issues of content and substance in whatever concerns may have led Mr Barber, the community or the media to be interested in matters relating to the appropriate use of electorate office resources and the work profile and terms of engagement of electorate office staff, the government has been very relaxed about the scrutiny that is going to be applied by any relevant agency. Whether that be the scrutiny of the audit committee, the Parliament under

the stewardship of the Presiding Officers, the police — we understand there may have been a referral made to the police for consideration — IBAC or the Ombudsman, if there is scope and opportunity for an investigation to examine these issues within the jurisdictional responsibilities of these agencies, the government is totally prepared to deal with the consequences of that appropriate scrutiny.

We are not defensive or anxious about scrutiny by those relevant statutory office-holders or indeed the procedures of the Parliament. The government is confident that the issues in question will withstand that scrutiny and that the government's position on these matters, which is that there has not been inappropriate use of parliamentary resources, will be shown to be the case. Having said that and made it crystal clear to the chamber that we are totally relaxed about the scrutiny of any relevant agency, the government is not mindful to support Mr Barber's motion for a number of reasons.

Primarily the government believes, based on legal advice, that the Ombudsman would have the ability to look at certain matters if they were subject to protected disclosures that led to an own-motion investigation or a motion that followed a protected disclosure which arrives at the Ombudsman's office or which arrives at IBAC and is subsequently referred to the Ombudsman. That would be a pathway of investigation, and there would be the potential for the Ombudsman to scrutinise these matters. But this resolution of the chamber, whether it passes or fails today, would be insufficient to commence that investigatory pathway. Indeed if this resolution is passed by the house today, at best it will provide a degree of procedural and jurisdictional questioning in the office of the Ombudsman in terms of whether jurisdictional cover is allowed for within the Ombudsman Act 1976. In the view of the government it is not a totally satisfactory situation for the Parliament to be creating a degree of difficulty for the Ombudsman to make such a determination.

It is not beyond the wit and wherewithal of the Ombudsman to seek legal advice, whether that be from the Supreme Court or through other forms of legal advice, to resolve this jurisdictional question and then take this referral and pursue it in accordance with the aspirations of Mr Barber, who has been a proponent of the resolution today. However, even if the Ombudsman, on the basis of that legal advice and that determination, finds that there is an interest in these matters, I am certain that the Ombudsman would be mindful of the position of the Parliament itself. I think the Presiding Officers and the Parliament itself may also seek legal advice about the appropriateness of scrutiny by the Ombudsman in this case. This leads to

an interesting question about whether the Parliament itself would seek that advice.

The next stage of the issue is the Ombudsman's responsibility in terms of members of Parliament whose actions and decisions may be exempt from scrutiny — either ministers or other parliamentary office-holders. The view of the government is that the scrutiny of the Ombudsman would be limited to administrative decisions and actions. This may preclude the Ombudsman from completing any investigation, even if her office finds that there is a potential jurisdictional cover to embark upon the investigation.

The net effect of this resolution is decidedly inconclusive in terms of jurisdictional cover under the Ombudsman Act, because even if the Ombudsman has jurisdictional cover to consider these issues, it is not clear whether they would be subject to the scrutiny of the Ombudsman. The government is not prejudging the Ombudsman's arriving at a determination in relation to this matter, but clearly the government has a view on it. We are advised that it would create a jurisdictional question mark at the very least for the Ombudsman. It would not be a satisfactory inquiry in terms of her ability to reach a conclusion in the way that Mr Barber seeks.

While I do not necessarily want to attribute these to any specific members of the Parliament, I have had discussions with the Presiding Officers and members of the crossbench and the opposition about these matters. From these conversations, there is no-one who confidently asserts that the Ombudsman has jurisdictional cover in relation to this reference. No-one confidently asserts that the Ombudsman is in a position in a watertight way to accept this referral and act on it. That is one of the reasons why the government believes the reference is deficient and will be voting against it.

In my conclusion I will go back to where I began my contribution today. If the Ombudsman decides to accept a referral in this form, I am confident that the issues at hand will be assessed by the Ombudsman, by IBAC, by the police, by the Presiding Officers or by the audit committee in a way that will not demonstrate that there has been an inappropriate use of resources or a breach of parliamentary standards and rules. The government is open to that scrutiny. We do not shy away from it, even though we will be voting against this motion. That is because we do not believe there is jurisdictional cover or ability of the Ombudsman to complete the investigation in the terms being sought by Mr Barber.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I would like to thank all members for their contributions, and I

note that the chamber has been almost dead silent during this debate. I think all members have been keen to hear the arguments and propositions put forward by other members so as to fully understand the issues at play. That in itself is a good sign.

However, I particularly want to discuss the arguments made by my learned friend Ms Symes, which I think should be ticked off briefly before we conclude this matter. Ms Symes started off by outlining her résumé, which includes recently working for the former Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, as his legal adviser. Ms Symes stated that in the Leader of the Opposition's quest to clean up Victorian politics she had pursued a number of matters against the then government.

Ms Symes did not give us the whole of her résumé, though. I believe she also previously worked for the Attorney-General in government, and therefore she may well have been advising the then Attorney-General Rob Hulls when he had to engage with the powers of the Ombudsman in relation to the inquiry into the Windsor Hotel decision. I was part of the committee that referred that matter to the Ombudsman. If Ms Symes was not advising the Attorney-General directly on that matter, she may well have been sitting at a desk next to the person who was.

The correspondence and the arguments put by the Attorney-General at that time as to the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman then formed part of the Ombudsman's reports. All members should read the report into the Windsor matter in order to further understand the context in which we are operating. The star witness of that matter, Peta Duke, never appeared. Effectively the Attorney-General advised her not to attend, and perhaps therefore Ms Symes was, in effect, her lawyer. However, I do not fully know the background of that matter. If the Leader of the Government and Ms Symes want to argue that our integrity system has been cobbled together over many years, I will certainly concede that point. Not only within these integrity bodies but between them there are some areas yet to be mapped out. Who knows — there may even be some areas that could be clarified.

I think Ms Symes's argument started from a discussion about how the Geoff Shaw matter got to the Ombudsman. The way it got to the Ombudsman is the way she described it — it was via a protected disclosure. A protected disclosure is certainly one way for a matter to get to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman Act 1973 does not clearly lay out the steps, the form of the investigation or anything else that the Ombudsman has to do. Likewise I would argue that I would not be one of the people who would concede in

the form that Mr Jennings suggested. I am the mover of the motion, so I clearly believe it has legs.

Mr Jennings — But you are not very confident.

Mr BARBER — I ask Mr Jennings if I look confident from where he is sitting, opposite me. I will proceed a few more steps, and then he can see how confident he thinks I am.

In the same way, section 16 of the act provides another way for a matter to get to the Ombudsman, and once it gets to the Ombudsman it is for the Ombudsman to investigate it in the way they decide. The way a matter gets to the Ombudsman, the way it arrives in their inbox, does not determine where the investigation goes next. The point is that it does arrive, and it is therefore a matter that they are able to investigate. Ms Symes talked about the remit and the way it arrives.

Mr Jennings talked about the pathway. The point is that the pathway is that it ends up in the in-tray of the Ombudsman.

In relation to a couple of other matters, we understand that the police investigation is underway. The Ombudsman Act says that the Ombudsman should not investigate in a way that would prejudice a police investigation or a matter that is before the courts. I do not believe this investigation will in any way prejudice any police investigation. They may well be looking at the very same material and interviewing the same people, but that is all out in the open now. They are simply asking different questions — one about aspects of criminal law and the other about aspects of the administration of these allowances.

As Ms Symes said, it comes down to administrative functions and administrative actions. The question will be: was an MP, who is not specifically excluded under schedule 2 from being the subject of one of these investigations, engaged in an administrative action when they signed the timesheet, directed the staff member and a whole range of other matters I am not aware of that may have led up to these staff being allocated certain tasks? To be clear, MPs are not exempt under schedule 2 of the act. It is perhaps novel that we would be investigating MPs in relation to their administrative actions. For the most part, they have MP duties rather than administrative duties.

Ms Symes even used the word 'disrespectful'. She said it would be disrespectful to foist onto the Ombudsman a question of jurisdiction. As Ms Symes noted, there is a provision within the act for either the Ombudsman or the parties to the investigation to seek clarification from the Magistrates Court as to jurisdiction.

Ms Symes — The Supreme Court.

Mr BARBER — Sorry, the Supreme Court. I have my level wrong there.

In the case of the Windsor inquiry it was very simple. The Ombudsman simply suggested to the Attorney-General by correspondence that the Attorney-General could take it to the Supreme Court if there was any doubt about jurisdiction. It is not that we are forcing the Ombudsman to go off to the Supreme Court. They can simply assert their jurisdiction, as Ombudsman Brouwer did, and it would be up to the parties to make an application to the Supreme Court if they do not like it. That is where the government makes a leap of logic and suggests that the Parliament and the Department of Parliamentary Services would want to join in with this action. The Presiding Officers and the Parliament are not parties to it. They are not the ones being investigated. I have not suggested that somehow the Parliament has failed in its administrative actions here. That is not what this is about.

Here today we have the Parliament, or at least one house of it, with our own Presiding Officer instructing that the Ombudsman should get into this investigation posthaste. Of course what we would expect is that MPs, Presiding Officers, the government and Parliamentary Services would assist the Ombudsman with the investigation, including with the necessary access to facts and personnel records if necessary, but that does not necessarily make them a party to the matter.

In any case I do not believe it is a waste of time or in any way disrespectful to the Ombudsman to have these matters tested. If it is the case that there is a gaping hole in the integrity system, it is probably better that we and the public know that as soon as we possibly can. I cannot imagine a better mechanism than this chamber setting up and instructing an investigatory body. I suppose it would be possible to do that, but this body, the Ombudsman, comes with its own set of statutes and its own experience in this area. The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Parliament, and here it is: the Parliament is asking the Ombudsman to investigate on its behalf. I am sure we can all have great confidence in the Ombudsman's work and the Ombudsman's findings. The government has not even suggested otherwise. In fact it has been very explicit in saying that if this investigation comes to life, it will cooperate with it and, hopefully, not even suggest that the Ombudsman ought to go off to court and prove their jurisdiction. However, we know that last time Labor was in government that is exactly what the then Attorney-General was trying to do.

If it makes Mr Jennings's day any better, I am in fact feeling quite confident that the Ombudsman will be able to deal with this matter. I think I have been as fair in my assessment of the legal matters and as forthcoming as I think both Mr Jennings and Ms Symes were. I certainly hope that the outcome of this motion passing today is that we get more confidence in the ability of the Parliament as an entity and our integrity system to ensure that any breaches of any applicable codes or rules can be independently investigated, reported upon and dealt with appropriately.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 22

Atkinson, Mr	Hartland, Ms
Barber, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Bath, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)	Morris, Mr
Carling-Jenkins, Dr	O'Donohue, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Crozier, Ms	Ondarchie, Mr
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Pennicuik, Ms
Davis, Mr	Peulich, Ms
Drum, Mr	Ramsay, Mr
Dunn, Ms	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Finn, Mr	Springle, Ms
Fitzherbert, Ms	Wooldridge, Ms

Noes, 18

Bourman, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Mulino, Mr
Dalidakis, Mr	Patten, Ms
Eideh, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Pulford, Ms
Elasmar, Mr	Purcell, Mr
Herbert, Mr	Shing, Ms
Jennings, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Leane, Mr	Symes, Ms
Melhem, Mr	Tierney, Ms
Mikakos, Ms	Young, Mr

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

Minister for Energy and Resources

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house requests that the Legislative Assembly grant leave to the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Lily D'Ambrosio, MP, to appear before the Legislative Council Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning to give evidence and answer questions in relation to the committee's inquiry into unconventional gas.

This is an important request. It is a very large inquiry. It is important to put on the record that this inquiry is a government reference; it is not a reference that came from other sources. The government made an election promise on this reference and put the reference to the chamber. The reference was passed, so it is the government that is seeking the work of the environment

and planning committee on this matter. The minister would be able to provide the committee with more information and the government's views on a number of areas here.

It is important to realise that this has been a very significant inquiry, and I pay tribute to Keir Delaney and the staff of the committee for the enormous work that has been done. There have been 1834 submissions to date plus transcripts of evidence on top of that, so there has been very significant activity. The committee has seen significant parts of the state and taken significant evidence. The government provided a submission to the committee, which we are thankful for. There are a number of questions about that submission, not least that the committee would seek to see the additional information that was provided by individual departments prior to the production of a whole-of-government submission, but the committee would also seek the views of the minister as opposed to the government and as opposed to a whole-of-government position. How can the committee come to the best outcome for the community and provide a result that will fit with the minister's particular focus on these points?

It is the case that committees are able to request the presence of a minister from an alternate chamber. It is somewhat customary, although in my view not required, for chambers to request these visits, but ministers could appear at those committees if they chose to do so themselves. Nonetheless, this house has a standing order that suggests such a reference should come either via a committee or via the house or both. In this case the committee has voted to request that the Minister for Energy and Resources, Ms D'Ambrosio, attend the committee to give evidence. Therefore we are seeking the support of the chamber for that process.

Some have sought to suggest that ministers of one house are not able to present and give evidence to a committee of the other house. That is not the case, and there are a number of such cases historically. I draw the house's attention to just one of those occasions. On Thursday, 6 December 2007, Mr Robinson, the then Minister for Consumer Affairs and a member of the Legislative Assembly, provided evidence to a Legislative Council committee looking at the Liquor Control Reform Amendment Bill 2007. That is a very clear example of where evidence has been provided to a committee by a member of the other chamber.

Let us not hear from anyone that that cannot occur: it can occur. It is contemplated by the standing orders. The committee has resolved to indicate its intent to ask the minister. The motion has been placed on the notice

paper, and today I am seeking the support of the chamber for it. I need to indicate that the time period for the committee to have the benefit of this additional evidence is short and that we would seek to pass this motion and send a message to the Legislative Assembly today to provide an opportunity for the Minister for Energy and Resources to attend the environment and planning committee of the Legislative Council.

In essence it is a very simple point: a motion from the committee, a motion from the chamber, a standing order that covers this point and the ability of the minister — on the matter of a government reference, that she gave to the committee — to provide additional information to the committee to clarify certain matters, indicate matters around the government position and do so under oath at the committee.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Government members will not be supporting this motion. I start from where Mr Davis's contribution ended. He said that where the minister's attendance would assist is by giving the government's position on the reference the Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning is looking into. What Mr Davis probably should grasp is that the government will form a position from the work the committee has done. The government is awaiting the committee's report.

I appreciate that the coalition parties came out with a position on this reference just before two by-elections were held between them. I appreciate that the coalition in opposition did do that, but the government is very keen to keep the commitments it made to the electorate before the election result achieved by the Andrews government. Its position to form government included a commitment to give a particular reference to a committee. The minister fulfilled that commitment. The committee has been availed of a record number of submissions, including a government submission, which the minister would be relying on as far as collating government department facts as it sees them around this issue.

Government members of this chamber have no appetite to ignore hundreds of years of the Westminster system where there is no right for one chamber to call a person from another house to appear before it. That is set also in our Senate, where the Senate may not summon a member from the House of Representatives. It has been set in the Westminster system, as I said, for hundreds of years. One of my favourite references on the Westminster system, John Hatsell, said:

The leading principle ... between the two houses of Parliament is that ... they shall be, in every respect, totally independent of the other. From hence it is, that neither house

can claim, much less exercise, any authority over a member of the other.

This is quite clear and it is a system that has worked well. It is a system that this state has adopted, and we have no appetite for change in this case when we are talking about a committee reference that has garnered, as I said, a record number of submissions. The committee's work is accelerating as we speak, and I cannot see why the member is moving this motion to ask the minister for a government position tomorrow when the government has stated that it is waiting for the outcome of this committee report to assist in making its decision on this issue going forward.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to Mr Davis's motion in relation to the Minister for Energy and Resources attending the Legislative Council Standing Committee on the Environment and Planning to give evidence and answer questions in relation to the committee's inquiry into unconventional gas. From the Greens point of view, we have always believed in open and transparent government and will continue to support motions that seek to achieve open and transparent government. We believe it would be very useful to hear the views of the minister in relation to this inquiry. As Mr Davis has pointed out, rightfully, it is a government reference to the committee, and that reference is:

... to inquire into and consider matters relating to the exploration, extraction, production and rehabilitation for onshore unconventional gas and present an interim report no later than 1 September 2015 and a final report no later than 1 December 2015 ...

The submissions so far, as we have heard, have been extensive, in the order of over 1800, with a broad range of views from the community, industry, peak bodies and environment groups. However, the minister's views have not been part of evidence provided to the committee, and I think the minister appearing before the committee would certainly broaden the understanding of the committee as it seeks to inquire into what is a very complex matter, which grows in its complexity with each hearing of the committee.

We believe this is a reasonable request. Mr Davis has already talked about a precedent set in past inquiries in relation to having ministers present evidence to parliamentary inquiries. Certainly there is the issue that we have a deadline looming for the final report in relation to this inquiry — the reality is that it is the next sitting week of Parliament — but I believe that in terms of the programming of the committee, there is certainly scope for the committee to meet and take evidence from the minister. It would be useful to hear from the minister.

The Greens will be supporting this motion. I hope the minister sees value in attending a committee hearing and giving evidence as part of its inquiry. In terms of openness and transparency and getting a broader understanding, that would be a very useful part of our deliberations.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I will be very brief in reply. I thank members for their contributions. I thank the Greens for their support on this matter. I think it does improve the openness and transparency of the inquiry. I note that there was unanimous support, I think I can say, at the committee for this motion to be moved. Equally I would say that there is capacity to hold another brief hearing in this sitting period, and if this motion is carried, I would seek that the secretary, Mr Keir Delaney, make contact as swiftly as possible so that diaries can be harmonised to enable such an appearance to occur.

In terms of the points made by Mr Leane, this in no way infringes on the sovereignty of the two houses. There is precedent for a mechanism for this to occur, and hence there is a standing order that allows it to occur. It is not only contemplated; it has actually been done, repeatedly, and I have quoted one recent example that people in the chamber will understand, where a minister from the other chamber came to a committee and provided evidence on a matter of relevance to our chamber. In that circumstance I seek to have the support of the house on this important motion.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 26

Atkinson, Mr	Lovell, Ms
Barber, Mr	Morris, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Bath, Ms	O'Donohue, Mr
Bourman, Mr	Ondarchie, Mr
Carling-Jenkins, Dr	Patten, Ms
Crozier, Ms	Pennicuik, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Davis, Mr	Purcell, Mr
Drum, Mr	Ramsay, Mr
Dunn, Ms	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Finn, Mr	Springle, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Fitzherbert, Ms	Wooldridge, Ms
Hartland, Ms	Young, Mr

Noes, 14

Dalidakis, Mr	Mikakos, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Mulino, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Elasmar, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Herbert, Mr	Shing, Ms (<i>Teller</i>)
Jennings, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Leane, Mr	Symes, Ms
Melhem, Mr	Tierney, Ms

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed from earlier this day; motion of Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan):

That this house condemns the Andrews Labor government on its first year in office, a year of putting politics before people and failing Victorian families as a result of economic mismanagement, infrastructure projects cancelled or stalled, service delivery failing, increased burdens on business, election commitments broken, factional fighting and inappropriate union influence.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — As most people in this house would know, I love football. I am very fond of the Australian brand of football and am very much looking forward to the season next year to see the Tiges in action. It is great to have a Rioli back at Tigerland, I should very quickly hasten to add; it is very exciting to have a Rioli back at Tigerland.

Putting that aside, I want to make a football analogy. Here in Victoria it is almost quarter time. The siren is about to sound for quarter time, and we have a government that is yet to score. In my experience if you do not score in the first quarter of any game, you are struggling; if you do not score in the first quarter of a big game, you are gone. That is what the story is, and this government is yet to score. That is the basic problem. That would be a big enough problem for any government, and of course it is an even larger problem for the people of Victoria, because we have a government that is a total dud. It has nothing going for it at all.

We heard from Mr Mulino — and I am sorry if Mr Somyurek comes racing back in when he hears the name 'Merlino', but it is Daniel Mulino, not James Merlino I am referring to. I make that distinction for Mr Somyurek, because I know he gets excited about these things. Mr Mulino earlier was saying that when people voted last November, they voted for a government that was different. I have to agree with Mr Mulino, because this time a year ago we had a government that was responsible and visionary. It had an agenda. It knew where it was going. It had plans for Victoria's future.

We now have a government that is very different. We have a government that is wasteful, incompetent and riddled with personal hatreds and factional brawling. It is impossible to believe, but it is true, that this mob have actually plunged Victoria, in less than 12 months, back into debt without spending money on anything to hang out on. It is extraordinary. Then they tell us that in fact the Auditor-General does not know what he is talking about — that the Auditor-General is wrong when he says that Victoria is in debt.

The Treasurer of the state has another title. He is not just the Treasurer; he is the head chef, because he is over there furiously cooking the books. That is exactly what he is doing. They are unbelievable, this crowd. There will say anything. They will do anything. They do not really care. I have seen governments with no shame before, but honestly I have never seen a government that has taken it to these extremes.

I will dwell for a moment on the east–west link. If Mr Jennings wants to come into the chamber and listen to what I have to say, I am sure he will be illuminated, as indeed he should be. The east–west link is a proposal that was put forward by the previous government. It is a project that is very much needed, not just in Melbourne but across Victoria. It is needed for Gippsland, it is needed for Ballarat, it is needed for Geelong, it is needed for Bendigo and it is needed right down in the Western District. It is certainly needed for the western suburbs and the eastern suburbs. It is a road which would enable the crossing of Melbourne to be a possibility again, and in doing that you would not have to rip your hair out.

I am speaking from personal experience because, as I mentioned yesterday — I think it was yesterday; the days seem to have rolled one into another this week — my own experience of travelling across the city just last week was extraordinary. I was on my way to Morwell for a meeting and public hearing of the Family and Community Development Committee. I left my home in Bulla, which is near the airport, at 7.30 a.m. I heard on the radio that the Tullamarine Freeway was in a pretty bad way. Basically, it was stuffed. As I pointed out yesterday, that is not at all unusual. Rarely does a day go by when the Tullamarine Freeway is not in that situation, and I should not claim any special deals there, because of course the West Gate Freeway is exactly the same. The Calder Freeway is often the same, the Eastern Freeway is pretty much the same, from what I understand, and certainly the Monash Freeway is a basket case and has been for many a long year.

On this particular occasion I heard on the radio that the Tullamarine Freeway was inoperative, basically. I thought to myself, ‘That is not going to work’. One thing that really does get my goat is having to sit in traffic and just wait in the hope that something might give at some stage.

Mr Drum — You should be used to it.

Mr FINN — I should be used to it, but I am not. I am very impatient when it comes to that sort of thing, Mr Drum. It gets up my snout and makes me very agitated. So I decided I would do what I used to do

years ago when I was working in Wantirna for the then federal parliamentary secretary to the Treasurer, Chris Pearce. I would travel from my then home in Sunbury to Wantirna every day, which is a fair hike. When I first started taking that journey, it started off as 1½ hours. Two years later it was 2½ hours. But with the journey last week down the Western Ring Road through Heidelberg and onto the Eastern Freeway I was absolutely staggered to find that it took me 2 hours just to get to the Eastern Freeway. How bad does it have to be before this government realises we have a major problem?

Ms Fitzherbert — Terrible.

Mr FINN — It is. Ms Fitzherbert, let me assure you it is terrible. Terrible is an extraordinary understatement of my experience just last week.

Ms Fitzherbert — Disastrous?

Mr FINN — Disastrous would be a fair description.

Ms Fitzherbert — Catastrophic?

Mr FINN — Catastrophic is not a bad word either, I have to say. I feel very sorry for those people who in the course of their business have to traverse Melbourne on a daily basis, maybe once, twice or three times. It must be extraordinarily frustrating and extraordinarily annoying for them — and of course extraordinarily expensive, particularly if they are running their own business. It must be extraordinarily expensive. That is something that this government just refuses to take into consideration at all.

Here we have a situation where Melbourne for most of the day, I have to say, is in gridlock. It used to be during peak hour. Peak hour is growing longer and longer every day, to the point where now on the Tulla peak hour usually begins at about 3.00 p.m. and finishes quite often at 7.30 p.m. On the West Gate Freeway it is not a lot different. In fact on the West Gate peak hour might actually start at around 6.30 a.m. in the morning these days.

Mr Ramsay — It is piling up at 5.00 a.m. in the morning.

Mr FINN — Did you say 5.00 a.m., Mr Ramsay? Five o’clock in the morning. That tells you what a real problem we have. When peak hour begins at 5.00 a.m. on the West Gate, we have a major issue.

So what did the Premier of this state do to solve this problem? What did this Premier of this state do in order to allow traffic in the state to travel freely from one side

of Melbourne to the other? What did he do? He scrapped the only road that was going to make any difference — and a major difference at that. He scrapped it. Not only did he scrap it, he spent — we are still adding all this up; the head chef tells us that the costs could still be increasing, but we are told we are looking at somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 billion — close to 1000 million dollars of taxpayers money to stop a road that we desperately need. If that makes sense to anybody, please put your hand up, because the more I think about it, the more stunned I am at the rank stupidity of that decision. It is outrageous in the extreme.

This government deserves to be turfed out at the first opportunity on the basis of that decision alone. If they do nothing else wrong — and they are doing their fair share of things wrong — solely on the basis of this decision to scrap the east–west link and spend close to \$1 billion in order to do it, they deserve to be turfed out. I would hazard a guess that it is the most appalling decision by a government in the history of Victoria.

Ms Fitzherbert — That is a big call.

Mr FINN — It is a big call, but I have to say I am really scratching. I am going back through the Kirner years, the Cain years and even the Bracks and Brumby years, with the north–south pipeline, the desal plant and all the nonsense that has gone on in Labor governments gone by, but I think the scrapping of the east–west link at the cost of \$1 billion is something that nobody can hope to match. It is something that we all hope will never be matched in the history of this state. It is truly an amazing decision, particularly when you remember that previously this was a project that had the support of the Labor Party. It was the then opposition leader, the now Premier, who woke up one morning and said, ‘I’ve had a chat with a few of my mates in the Socialist Left in the inner suburbs’, and then announced it without consulting anybody.

Ms Fitzherbert — A rush of blood to the head?

Mr FINN — Perhaps, Ms Fitzherbert, the ultimate rush of blood to the head. He just announced that, if he became Premier, he would scrap the east–west link. I feel for people like Mr Melhem, who up to that point had been very strong supporters of the east–west link. They were put in a situation where they had to do a complete 180-degree U-turn. We had people who were going full steam ahead, with all the arguments, saying, ‘Let’s build the thing; let’s get the jobs’. You would have thought it was Mr Melhem channelling Denis Napthine. But all of a sudden we had a situation in which people who perhaps had a fair idea of what was

good for the state had to do an Olympic-style backflip, because the leader of the day — the then opposition leader, now Premier — wanted to look after a few mates.

Ms Fitzherbert — A backflip with a double pike?

Mr FINN — Triple pike, possibly a quadruple pike, which is something you do not have to see.

Ms Fitzherbert interjected.

Mr FINN — I do not know. I think he may have mounted, and there is a fair bit of that still going on. Wherever I go, whether it be here in Victoria or interstate, one thing that is bound to get a laugh, particularly interstate — not so much in Victoria it has to be said — is to mention the east–west link. As a result of that decision, Victoria is the laughing-stock of Australia. Daniel Andrews has made Victoria the laughing-stock of Australia, and he did it in the first six months of his premiership. That is hard to beat.

Ms Fitzherbert — It’s special.

Mr FINN — My word it is special, and it is an extraordinary way to go about it.

Of course we are still waiting for a decision on whatever it is called. Is it the West Gate distributor, the western distributor or the western diversion? What the hell is he calling it this week? All these plans with squiggles on maps are floating around. Perhaps it is a major project; perhaps it is not a major project. We do not quite know what it is, because nobody will tell us.

I find it quite staggering that one year into its term we have a government which does not have a major project. We have a city and a state that are in desperate need of some major transport infrastructure. Under normal circumstances members of the government would also think that that was quite staggering, but apparently they do not; they are quite proud of it.

Mr Melhem showed us earlier today what the government’s major project is. He pulled a 47 000-page glossy pamphlet out of his back pocket. He told us about what the government apparently had done and claimed credit for a great number of things that the previous government had done, but that is beside the point.

Do you know what they say in the Labor Party? Never let the facts get in the way of a good story. The truth and the Labor Party are like Perth and Sydney — on opposite sides of the country. They are so far removed from each other that it is just not funny. If anyone wants

the truth, they should keep away from the ALP; they will never find it there. It has this major project in a big glossy 2015 Christmas brochure. Perhaps it is a Christmas catalogue. I do not know; I have not had a chance to have a look at it yet, but Mr Melhem seems to relish it. Obviously somebody gave it to him this morning, and he is like a kid with a new toy. It was absolutely magnificent to see the excitement in his eyes.

Ms Fitzherbert interjected.

Mr FINN — It was heartwarming. It gave me a deep inner glow to see Mr Melhem in what I think was a state of extreme excitement. He was clearly excited, which is a good thing. I can only hope that when Santa visits Mr Melhem, he might get some of the things that are in the brochure.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FINN — Why do we ask indeed. I mentioned earlier that we in this state desperately need some major transport infrastructure, so you would think that any government worth its salt would be furiously promoting an airport rail link.

Ms Fitzherbert — It makes sense.

Mr FINN — It does make sense; it does. As Sam Kekovich would say, you know it makes sense. Absolutely he would say that, and we all do.

We remember Steve Bracks, he of the red helicopter. Way before Bronwyn Bishop found it, Steve Bracks had his own red helicopter. He was elected back in 1999, and one of the promises that he made in the lead-up to that election was that, as Premier, he would build a rail link to the airport. He said that back in 1999, and what is it now? It is 2015, some 16 years later, and the Labor Party has scrapped it again. It scrapped it back then. I may have mentioned this in passing to the house before, but that broken promise of Steve Bracks was made back in 1999, just weeks after the election that saw Bracksie take over as Premier. Labor pulled the plug on it. They said it was not going to happen after all.

The Napthine coalition government had indicated its very strong support, desire and intention to build the airport rail link, but this year the Labor Party killed that project for the second time. That is incredibly sad. I go to Sydney and Brisbane, which both have rail links, and the Sydney one works very well.

Ms Fitzherbert interjected.

Mr FINN — I do not go overseas much, but Mr Melhem tells me, because he spends a lot more time overseas than I do. In fact I was in a discussion the other day, and it became quite — —

Mr Melhem interjected.

Mr FINN — He is getting excited again over there. It became quite heated, because we were debating what would be of greater value: Mr Melhem's frequent flyer points or Craig Thomson's credit card. That was the debate that went on. I am not sure if we came to a satisfactory conclusion, but that is something that we might continue to discuss at some stage. As Ms Fitzherbert has pointed out, an airport rail link is pretty much a standard feature in many major cities.

Ms Fitzherbert — Everyone has one except us.

Mr FINN — Just about everyone does have one, except us and Adelaide, but then again Adelaide does not count. That is pretty much par for the course.

We have a government in this state that has killed off a major road to link one side of Melbourne with the other, indeed link one side of Victoria with the other. It has also killed off the airport rail link that everybody has been waiting for for decades. Dodgy Dan says, 'No way, it is not happening', so that is the end of that.

Then we move on to the Melbourne Metro rail project. That seems like a good idea. You are tunnelling away and putting in railway stations and putting down lines and all that sort of thing. It is a bit like promising to put a Mercedes in every garage. It is a great idea; if only we had the money to do it. Government members are talking about \$11 billion. I think they said they have \$2 billion. They probably made that up.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr FINN — Is that from the feds? They have got some state money. We have these people carrying on once again, rabbiting on about these fictitious major projects that they have. This metro project is a ripper. I will leave it to Mr Davis to tell us exactly where that is going to go, but we do know that it is not funded and that if it goes much further, the money will run out. Just yesterday the Minister for Public Transport, Ms Allan, went on the record as starting to talk up the Metro 2 project. If you do not have the money for Metro 1, why the hell would you start talking about Metro 2? These people are living in a fantasy world; they are not on the same planet as the rest of us. It is astounding. I know it is a truism to say Labor does not know how to handle money, but those opposite honestly believe that if they spend it, more will magically appear.

An honourable member — From the federal government.

Mr FINN — From the federal government, from the taxpayer — it could be anybody. They do not particularly care where the money comes from, and indeed when it runs out they just keep spending it anyway, until the creditors say no. We have seen Labor governments do that before. This government will be even worse than we have seen, in my view.

In the few minutes that I have left, I want to talk for a couple of minutes about Sunbury. The dodgester has told us that he has kept every promise that he has made. I beg to differ. It was only 12 months ago that we heard from the Labor Party that it would respect the will of the people of Sunbury and respect the will of the people of Hume. The then Minister for Local Government in the coalition government, Tim Bull, gazetted that new council, which was to begin operation on 1 July this year. We heard that from Dick Wynne, the Minister for Planning, who was then the shadow Minister for Local Government, and we heard it from Josh Bull, who I understand is the member for Sunbury in the Assembly.

Mr Drum has a quizzical look on his face, and understandably so. If you are talking about Mr Bull, you have to say, 'Tim Bull, good; Josh Bull, bad'. That is the truth of the matter. In fact I feel a bit sorry for the poor little swine, because the government keeps dumping him into it. It found a dirty great drum of a most unfortunate substance, and it dropped him from a very great height, not just on the Sunbury out of Hume issue but also on the V/Line issue.

The people of Sunbury were told by a Labor government when the electrification process started that, yes, they would have V/Line and they would have electric services — they would have the best of both worlds. It has to be pointed out that the people of Sunbury were never actually asked about electrification, because if they had been asked they would have made it very clear that they did not want electrification; they just wanted a few more V/Line trains. It would have been a far cheaper proposition, it has to be said, but they were not asked. When they did raise the issue with the then government they were told by the then member for Macedon, Joanne Duncan — and didn't she make a big splash! — 'Yes, you will have both — not a problem. That's done and dusted; the deal is done'.

Here we have a government — Jacinta Allan, Josh Bull and all the rest of them — which has told the people of Sunbury that as of 1 January next year, if anybody in Sunbury dares to board a V/Line train and park their tail

on an empty seat, they will be fined \$438. In a lot of places you do not get that much for murder! It is just extraordinary that this mob is not only ripping the V/Line services away from the people of Sunbury but slugging the good people of Sunbury \$438 every time they get on the train.

If there is a government anywhere that is showing contempt for any of its people the way this government is showing contempt for the people of Sunbury, I would like to know where it is. Clearly the Labor government is at war with the people of Sunbury. I would like that war to stop. Enough. Cease. Finish.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Tourism Victoria: report 2014–15

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to speak this afternoon on the Tourism Victoria 2014–15 annual report, which outlines some of the organisation's achievements for the year ending June 2015. It was positive to read that Tourism Victoria has achieved another solid year of results, with visitors to and within Victoria spending a total of \$21.2 billion during the year ending 2014, which equates to a little under 23 per cent of tourism expenditure across Australia. Spending by international visitors to Victoria reached an all-time high of \$5 billion, and domestic overnight expenditure increased by 14 per cent to \$11.5 billion.

Among other pleasing news was that nights spent and expenditure by international visitors in regional Victoria grew to record levels in the year ending December 2014. The numbers of international visitors from both the east and traditional western markets increased. These figures go to show that Victoria is attracting visitors from high-end Asian markets. They are choosing to stay overnight in regional destinations such as in my electorate in Gippsland. I was particularly pleased to read that domestic overnight visitors to Gippsland increased by 11.4 per cent to 13.1 million visitors in the year ending December 2014. Daytrips to regional Victoria also increased to approximately 28 million for the year ending 2014, with daytrip expenditure in regional Victoria increasing at a greater rate than key competitors and the national average.

Those fantastic results for the year ending December 2014, when the coalition was in government, can be partially attributed to the Liberal-Nationals spending on tourism in the state. Tourism in my Gippsland electorate in particular received some decent wins

during that time. In the 2014–15 budget the coalition allocated \$14 million for regional tourism marketing to increase visitors to my area. The Gippsland Lakes is a beautiful area and a tourist drawcard in my electorate, and in 2012 the coalition established the Gippsland Lakes Ministerial Advisory Committee to develop and implement an environmental strategy for the lakes and provided an initial \$10 million for the Gippsland Lakes Environmental Fund to deliver that strategy. Many projects have received investment to ensure that the Gippsland Lakes can continue to be protected and enhanced so they can be enjoyed by the many who live in and visit the region.

In Paynesville in East Gippsland in September this year more than \$2 million of capital works projects were opened by my Nationals colleague and the member for Gippsland East in the Legislative Assembly, Mr Tim Bull. Tourism is very important to the economy of East Gippsland, and these works will help to attract more visitors by improving facilities. East Gippsland was also the beneficiary of \$346 000 allocated by the former government for upgrades to the visitor information centre and an additional \$19 500 to develop cycling in the region. Tourism in regional Victoria and particularly in Gippsland experienced a boost from the coalition's significant additional funds for our beautiful rail trails. Victoria has many rail trails renowned for their adventure and scenery, and the popularity of cycling, walking and horseriding is increasing significantly.

As a member for Eastern Victoria Region I have some absolutely magnificent tourist attractions in my patch, which I have no doubt have contributed greatly to the success of the state's tourism figures. In his foreword to the report the chief executive, Leigh Harry, talks about the Andrews government implementing a number of reviews. We hear of many reviews being undertaken by this Labor government, and I can only hope that all this reviewing will turn into action. When the coalition was in government it provided significant tourism dollars to improve the regional tourism industry and ensure that regional Victoria was not left behind. I can only hope that the positive results tourism experienced under the coalition government can continue under this one.

**Auditor-General: *Public Hospitals* — 2014–15
*Audit Snapshot***

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Auditor-General's report entitled *Public Hospitals — 2014–15 Audit Snapshot*, which was tabled in November 2015. I read the report with disbelief until I remembered that the federal Liberal government slashed the Victorian health budget

allocation by over \$1 billion. It would seem our public hospitals are broke. If any of them were a business or even a not for profit, any sane operator would declare bankruptcy. Our public hospital system is an open mouth screaming for more funding and additional resources. The rapid growth in population has only increased the burden on our already overloaded system.

It is useless to say that hospitals do a splendid job looking after their patients. We all know they do, but these are just words, and words count for little when our hospital administrators are confronted with invoices they do not have the funds to pay. Something has to give, and when it comes to seriously ill patients, it could mean that lives are lost. According to the report, public hospitals have generated a net deficit from operations of more than \$700 million annually in the past five financial years and are facing short and long-term financial sustainability issues. This is a direct result of the federal government slashing and burning when it came to Victoria's last health budget allocation. I am sorry to say that members of the federal government should hang their heads in shame.

The Auditor-General has made some recommendations which really only address the public hospital fiscal problems in the short term. I am confident that Victoria will continue to fight for a fair health budget allocation from Canberra. Victorian lives and livelihoods depend on it. The Auditor-General's report recommends:

That the Department of Health and Human Services reviews and sets a commercially accepted target for the terms of trade with creditors and debtors in line with state government policy.

The report further recommends that public hospitals:

review their debtor collection policy and processes, and follow up on debtors that are overdue —

and —

use restricted funds only for their intended purpose.

I foresee that trying to follow up on debtors may be a lot tougher than it sounds, but the recommendations start with trying to rein in ballooning debts in our public hospital system. We run the very real risk of losing our best and brightest health professionals to overseas medical providers. I endorse the recommendations contained in the Auditor-General's report and fully support their intent.

Ombudsman: allegations of improper conduct by councillors associated with political donations

Mr DRUM (Northern Victoria) — My contribution today is on the Victorian Ombudsman report entitled *Investigation of a Protected Disclosure Complaint Regarding Allegations of Improper Conduct by Councillors Associated with Political Donations*. Political donations are quite a contentious issue because during elections and sometimes after elections we get situations where a whole range of allegations fly around about the conduct of various candidates and where they supposedly got their financial backing from.

A similar allegation in this report had to do with the City of Casey. The allegation was put forward that a councillor was offering what you might call favourable planning outcomes in exchange for financial donations from relevant property developers and that he was then using those donations to fund his campaign in the state election. Not only was he doing this, but also other councillors were implicated. As it turns out, the Ombudsman conducted a lengthy inquiry. She wrote to the Minister for Local Government at that stage, who was Tim Bull, the member for Gippsland East in the other place, and let him know of her intention to effectively conduct this investigation. It seems very clear that throughout the investigation the Ombudsman found that none of the allegations had any substance; they were not substantiated.

However, in the report the Ombudsman says that there are some issues that need some attention. She believes that a range of processes need to be put in place to ensure that we do not end up with some of the corrupt activities that go on in other states. The Ombudsman talks about how important this issue is. There is reference to the growing population of the City of Casey and to the fact that it is growing at over 7300 people per annum, which is very important.

The Ombudsman mentions in the report the practice of donating to the Liberal Party. It is interesting to read that the money that comes into the Liberal Party actually goes into a central fund, which takes away a lot of the potential opportunity to be able to influence candidates in one particular seat or another. It then becomes a matter for the discretion of the party as to where those funds are spent. I think that system has real merit because it takes away the opportunity for any potential developer wanting to influence voting in a particular seat by making a donation and effectively having some sort of control over a particular candidate. Given what is in this Ombudsman's report of the investigation, the Liberal Party could be quite proud of

the way it has set up its political donation structure, which effectively ensures that it does not get itself tied up in any such problems in future.

There are some comparisons made with some of the other states. It is mentioned that New South Wales has had a range of problems with this particular issue and that we need to take heed of those experiences we have seen in New South Wales. The Ombudsman states that we need to reform the current legislation. That was probably needed many years ago, but we need to continue to work hard in this area and ensure that the recommendations that are put forward are discussed. One issue to consider is whether we should have restrictions on donations to candidates and political parties by property developers. Secondly, there is the issue of whether details of all donations to a candidate or political party should be required to be published on a publicly available register within 30 days of the relevant election.

It is important that when the Ombudsman is given a role she is able to go in and make full and frank investigations — —

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

Auditor-General: Public Hospitals — 2014–15 Audit Snapshot

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Auditor-General's 2014–15 audit snapshot of public hospitals. From this snapshot it is quite clear that Victorian public hospitals have suffered gravely under coalition-led state governments and continue to do so under the current federal government. In the past five financial years, when excluding capital revenue, public hospitals have generated a net deficit from operations of more than \$700 million annually. To be exact, the sector suffered a net deficit of \$775 million in the 2014–15 financial year. This is absolutely appalling.

As a result, public hospitals face short and long-term financial sustainability issues, with 48 public hospitals having been rated as having a medium or high liquidity risk. At the moment the sector is suffering operational losses and is struggling to generate sufficient funds to cover current financial obligations. In the long term, this will mean that the sector will be unable to either generate surpluses or fund future asset renewal and replacement. All of this ultimately means that the level and variety of services that public hospitals can offer will be reduced in the near future. This simply cannot be allowed to happen.

I point to the simple fact that our hospitals today would not be suffering if it were not for the Abbott and now Turnbull government's decision to cut \$50 billion from Australia's public hospitals. Be that as it may, the Auditor-General's report contains a series of recommendations for tackling this issue. It is with pleasure that I can say that the state Labor government has accepted most of these recommendations, which include: that public hospital governing boards and their management implement appropriate governance and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that all audit findings are addressed on a timely basis; that public hospitals comply with the requirements of the Minister for Finance's standing direction 4.5.6, supplementing the Financial Management Act 1994; and that public hospitals review their debtor collection policies and processes and use restricted funds only for their intended purpose. A partially accepted recommendation is that the Department of Health and Human Services review and set a commercially accepted target for the terms of trade with creditors and debtors.

The acceptance of these recommendations paints a clear picture. Unlike the former state government, the new Andrews Labor government is committed to supporting and looking after our state's public hospitals and patients. With that, I commend the report to the house.

Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE: report 2014

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise tonight to speak on the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE annual report of 2014. In the Hume region we have two major TAFE providers: GOTAFE, which provides services throughout Seymour, Shepparton and Wangaratta; and Wodonga TAFE. GOTAFE is a particularly good TAFE. I remember several years ago when I was a new member of Parliament there was a great debate in Shepparton in which our local council particularly was involved. It was around making Shepparton a university city. What was left out of that strategy and what was ignored was the fact that we had an extremely good TAFE.

We still have an extremely good TAFE, and I am very proud of our TAFE. It is run extremely well by the board of management, headed up by Michael Tehan, along with CEO Paul Culpin, who is absolutely amazing. TAFE is a great outcome for many students in Shepparton because unfortunately, with the levels of disadvantage we have, many of our students are never going to go to university. TAFE can put them onto a path towards building better lives for themselves through education and training and getting them into

the right area of study that suits them for the career they want.

At the Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE they have more than 19 000 students enrolled in more than 300 programs. In 2014 they won state and national awards, including the Victorian Koorie Student of the Year Award and the Victorian School-based Apprentice of the Year Award at the Victorian Training Awards. GOTAFE was also formally recognised at the Wurreker Awards as the state's best Victorian TAFE institute providing Koori vocational education and training. GOTAFE is continuing to invest in the future through the development and upgrade of facilities and information technology capacity, the redevelopment of the Wangaratta rural industries campus in partnership with Charles Sturt University and continuing professional development of staff to meet the current and future needs of industry students.

TAFE has partnered in two major projects in Greater Shepparton, and the first of those is a partnership it formed with me when I was the Minister for Housing to deliver the Shepparton Education First Youth Foyer, which is being built opposite TAFE at the moment. Unfortunately the construction of that has fallen behind under the current, useless Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing. It was started during the election campaign and should have been finished in August of this year. It is now not due for completion until July next year. That facility will provide 40 young people with the opportunity to live in it as a residential facility and to study at TAFE. TAFE is a very important partner in that particular project.

At international conferences on youth foyers they are now talking about the model that I set up in this state. The Education First Youth Foyer is the prime model for youth foyers throughout the world. The way that they put it was that the Victorian model is leading the world because of its strong education component.

TAFE is also a partner in the Better Together alliance, which is a collaborative venture that brings together key government secondary schools in Greater Shepparton, TAFE and La Trobe University to support young people and contribute to their education and their needs.

Unfortunately what we have seen from this year's Victorian Training Market half-yearly report is that TAFE enrolments in the Hume region have actually dropped under Labor. Enrolments in government-subsidised training have dropped by 19 per cent in the Hume region. There are now 3645 fewer government-subsidised enrolments. The report shows that TAFEs are receiving less funding under the

Andrews government. Under Labor, TAFEs are receiving less funding for training, not more. Labor promised \$1.2 billion for TAFEs to create 100 000 new jobs, but this has not happened. Instead Victoria is going backwards, and that means that fewer local students are getting the training they need for the career they want.

That is a great disappointment to us in Greater Shepparton, where we have disadvantage and want to see young people involved in education and training. We have a great TAFE that is attempting to do that, but with a government spending less and providing less government-subsidised training opportunities for students, it is detrimental to the future education of students in Greater Shepparton, the Rural City of Wangaratta and Seymour.

Young Farmers Finance Council: report 2015

Ms TIERNEY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to make a statement on the *Young Farmers Finance Council — Annual Report 2015*. The Young Farmers Finance Council was created to encourage the establishment of young people in farming. It assists young people who have demonstrated an interest in farming, and it advises and assists the minister on the development of schemes for the purchase of farming land or improvements by the council to enable young people to become established in farming.

The council's reports are not particularly lengthy, so I have had the opportunity to read not just the current annual report but also previous reports. The report of 2013 talked about a decade of drought in irrigation areas. We are now two years down the track, and things have not gotten any better. Dams are still low, and rain is scarce. All indications are that we are facing a record El Nino, and that generally means less rain for Australia. The Andrews government is not standing idly by whilst this is happening. The deterioration in weather conditions is having a significant impact on our farming families.

Farming provides \$11 billion to the Victorian economy. The Andrews government has provided \$1.1 million for new standpipes and firefighting tanks in the western parts of Victoria. Fourteen standpipes will be installed to ease the burden on families being forced to travel long distances to cart their water for stock and domestic use. They will be put into communities including Ararat, Stawell, Great Western, Edenhope, Apsley and Kaniva. There will also be nine firefighting tanks installed near existing standpipes along the Wimmera–Mallee pipeline. This is an important measure to keep rural

communities and farmers safe in what is shaping as a long and hard fire season.

Despite the difficulties associated with life on the land, when facing the uncertainties of drought and climate change the Young Farmers Finance Council is relevant and important. Young people still want a life on the land, and we need them to want that as food security is a fundamental requirement of living in a developed nation.

The Young Farmers Finance Council has three main streams of loans. These are for purchase of stock and equipment, land purchase and the One 2 Grow scheme, which is aimed at helping aspiring farmers purchase their first block of land.

The Andrews Labor government believes that it is vital to support our farmers through these difficult times. That is why we refunded the National Farmers Health Centre for another \$4 million. I note that the National Farmers Health Centre is located in Hamilton, smack bang in the south-west where our farmers are doing it tough.

We have also established a new support package that delivers mental health first aid in 10 drought-affected areas, and we have put on additional Rural Finance Counsellors.

We have added to the State Schools Relief program and put nearly a million dollars into kindergarten support in drought-affected communities. We have established a million-dollar program for drought-affected farmers and farm workers to enable them to work on environmental projects. There has been a \$1.5 million drought extension program to help farmers with necessary decisions like destocking, feed budgeting and land management, to name a few.

These are the hardest times for drought-affected families. The stresses are palpable. That is why we have put \$5.8 million into the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund to ensure that kids from drought-affected areas do not miss out on these educational experiences. They will be the farmers of the future. Like the young farmers who took advantage of the Young Farmers Finance Council loans in this report, they too will have a role to play in our regional economy.

Drought will always be part of nature's cycle. Here in government, though, we will do all we can to support our farmers, young and old, through these difficult and tough times. I commend this report to the house.

Commission for Children and Young People: report 2014–15

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today to speak on the Commission for Children and Young People annual report 2014–15. I wish to begin by thanking all of the commission staff and volunteers who have worked tirelessly throughout the year. In particular, I thank the principal commissioner, Mr Bernie Geary, and the commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people, Mr Andrew Jackomos, for their hard work and being so proactive in advocating for the needs of the state's most vulnerable children.

This report was not easy to read; in fact it was very difficult. It was difficult because vulnerable and innocent children should not be exposed to vulgar violations such as physical and sexual violence when living in their family homes or when they are placed in the state's care. Approximately 7000 Victorian children and young people are living in out-of-home care every night, which is funded and regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The commissioner notes that in 2014 the Commission for Children and Young People began work on its own initiated inquiry into the adequacy of the provision of residential care services to Victorian children and young people who have been subject to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation whilst residing in residential care, whose report is entitled "... *as a good parent would ...*". The investigation has demonstrated that children and young people are still being sexually abused and exploited in state care. The commissioner notes that the commission continues to conduct inquiries into the deaths of children who have been in contact with child protection services. This is of particular importance to gauge an insight into how other professionals and service systems do or do not work together to enhance safety, ensure protection and work in the best interests of Victoria's vulnerable children.

The report also highlights the commission's important work with Koori children and, most importantly, how significant attachment is to their culture and identity. This attachment resonates with knowing who they are with respect to their family, community and ancestors. I note the important work of Taskforce 1000, which seeks to continue to improve the circumstances of Koori children in out-of-home care. The report states:

... in the year to 30 June 2014, there was a 42 per cent growth in the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and the primary factors leading to their removal were family violence, parental alcohol and substance abuse, neglect and mental illness.

These contributors to state intervention are by no means only experienced within the Indigenous community. They are the major factor for interventions across the state, regardless of cultural background.

On this point I would like to raise a final issue. In recent years various investigations and inquiries have shed an important light on abuse that Victorian children and young people have and are being exposed to. I thank the current Labor government for finally bringing the issue of domestic family violence to the forefront through a royal commission. I also acknowledge other recent investigations: the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and, in Victoria, the Family and Community Development Committee's *Betrayal of Trust* report.

Following the Commission for Children and Young People report, important recommendations relating to criminal and civil laws have already been put into effect. On the issue of family violence I would like to read an excerpt from the report that outlines the effect family violence has on children. This excerpt highlights how important our government's inquiry is:

Children who witness family violence are victims of family violence. Living with family violence causes harm to children's development and their emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing.

Domestic violence is a state emergency; in fact it is a nationwide emergency. I hope state governments across the country and the federal government will take a stand to address this problem. Once again I thank all those who contributed to this report and the commission for its hard work throughout the year.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2015–16

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise and make some comments on the state budget 2015–16. I am particularly drawn to the issue of Fishermans Bend and many of the aspects surrounding it, given the population projections in the budget, which show that up to 100 000 people a year are coming to Victoria — that is, around 2000 people per week — which is very significant growth for Victoria.

Melbourne is a growing city. Fishermans Bend is a visionary urban renewal project that is about new jobs and accommodating population growth. Either Labor supports the new jobs and keeping population pressures away from the middle suburbs, or it opposes the new jobs and supports more than 100 000 people being placed in apartments in the middle suburbs. The fact is that you cannot have it both ways. We know that

construction jobs are of significant benefit. Fishermans Bend is projected to have 80 000 residents in at least 40 000 apartments. Conservatively it will have well over \$10 billion worth of construction value and tens of thousands of construction jobs. By reducing or opposing the development of Fishermans Bend, Labor and the Premier, Daniel Andrews, are cutting the number of jobs that will be available at a time when the government is having huge trouble meeting the projections in the budget for jobs and growth more broadly.

Fishermans Bend is a significant addition to the central city. No other Australian city has an expanded renewal opportunity of similar scale and importance. Barangaroo, which is in Sydney and which I have looked at closely, is 22 hectares in size, but Fishermans Bend is over 200 hectares. The Fishermans Bend development would have significantly reduced development pressure on Melbourne's middle suburbs. If we do not allow significant density and growth through that Fishermans Bend area, that pressure will come to the middle suburbs.

As I say, Fishermans Bend has a significant role to play. Labor has claimed that developers will benefit from this because it was rezoned without warning. It is important to get the fact on the record that the coalition's plans for Fishermans Bend were made clear in the media as early as October 2010. That was before the election.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Mr Dalidakis should know that to wave props around in the house is highly inappropriate. He should not do it again.

Mr DAVIS — After the election, through 2011 and 2012, before the rezoning, there were numerous public announcements and public discussions. Over 200 hectares were rezoned and there were dozens, if not hundreds, of landowners there. Some landowners will play a significant role.

That the Liberals did not provide for public infrastructure is one claim, and that is quite untrue. The government lost out. The fact is every apartment at Fishermans Bend will pay a developer contribution of \$15 900, the highest ever contribution required —

Mr Mulino — A developer contribution? Is that what it's called?

Mr DAVIS — A development contribution. It is as high as is available anywhere else. The precinct already

hosts large parks, a fire station and access to local shops and tram routes. The J. J. Murphy Reserve on Williamstown Road is another good example — ovals, a baseball diamond and others. Let us face it: the Liberal Party was going to build a railway station on that site but Daniel Andrews is a station stripper, someone who has stripped a station out of a development and left the development without the station that is integral to what is needed there. Public transport is a very important aspect that has been diminished by Daniel Andrews and the new planning minister.

The middle suburbs are a significant target for Labor. Suburbs in that middle ring are going to have pressures like they have never seen before as this government has closed off so much development in the central city and is closing off options in Fishermans Bend with complex delays and a complex administrative and management structure that will not see the developments that should occur in Fishermans Bend. I say Labor has botched Fishermans Bend. It has stripped the station out. Daniel Andrews, as I say, is a station stripper, ripping a station from a major new development that should have given Victoria a historic advantage.

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

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Maiden Gully Primary School

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Education. It is regarding the need for the redevelopment of Maiden Gully Primary School. My request of the minister is that he commit to funding the redevelopment of Maiden Gully Primary School in the 2016–17 budget to bring the school's buildings into line with 21st century needs and expectations.

Earlier this year I raised the need for the redevelopment of Maiden Gully Primary School with the minister, who visited the school last term. The minister will have a firsthand understanding of the challenges the school faces and will therefore know that committing to the modernisation project should be a priority for the Andrews government. In response to my original question to the minister earlier this year, he said that Maiden Gully Primary School has sufficient facilities to

accommodate its current and predicted enrolment. However, this is not actually the case.

The school has recently provided me with updated information outlining some of the reasons it needs to be redeveloped, including that the population of Maiden Gully is expected to grow by 135 per cent over the next 20 years from the current 4823 residents to 11 342. In 2011 Maiden Gully primary had 431 students; in four years student numbers have grown to 529. Currently there are 580 students enrolled for next year and this number is expected to grow to 600 by the beginning of the school year.

Staff facilities, administration offices and the student sick bay are all inadequate for the current population of the school, not to mention the expected population increase beginning next year. Students use the staff kitchen for cooking sessions, numeracy interviews are conducted in the staff room, the toilet facilities barely meet OHS requirements and there is inadequate off-street parking for staff. The current school grounds are in extremely poor condition due to age, general structural dilapidation, increasing enrolments and random placement of facilities. The current building design is limiting teachers' capacity to deliver a highly differentiated curriculum to adequately address individual student learning at the point of need. There are ongoing operational and maintenance issues with existing services like gas, electricity, stormwater drainage and IT.

Seven of the 10 permanent classrooms are light timber construction classrooms that were shifted onto the school site almost 30 years ago, and these classrooms are at least 40 years old. The remainder of the school's classrooms are all portables. The Department of Education and Training's policy is for schools to be configured to have only 20 per cent of classes in portable buildings. However, by 2016 the percentage of portable classrooms at Maiden Gully Primary School will have blown out to 62 per cent. My request of the minister is that he commit to funding the redevelopment of Maiden Gully Primary School in the 2016–17 budget to bring the buildings in line with 21st century needs and expectations.

Safe Schools program

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Education, James Merlino, and it concerns the Safe Schools program. In light of the Safe Schools rollout in Victoria I wish to make some comments and raise some concerns over the appropriateness of this being the only model being offered as a means of

encouraging mutual respect, understanding and emotional intelligence. The Safe Schools Coalition states on its website that its resource:

has been developed to have a real impact on student attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people and to encourage whole-school change that affirms and supports the right of all students, staff and families to feel safe at school.

I wholeheartedly agree with the fundamental principle that all students, all staff and all families deserve to feel safe while at school, and anywhere else for that matter. Nobody deserves to be bullied for any reason. Every person deserves to be understood and respected. As I understand it, the Safe Schools program will serve predominantly as a resource for secondary school classrooms across Victoria and Australia to discuss and support gender diversity, sexual diversity and intersex topics.

However, there is widespread concern in the community — and many people have spoken to me about this — that Safe Schools is not so much about teaching young people emotional intelligence as it is about promoting an LGBTI agenda. Instead of having a program that is predominantly structured and delivered to specifically promote respect for the lifestyles of only one particular group of people, why do we not have a program which is entirely focused on teaching emotional intelligence, social skills, respect and understanding of all people regardless of sexuality, ability or disability, race, colour, religion, culture or social status?

One such program that I am aware of is the RULER program. It was designed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. This program is used by schools across the US and also by Girton Grammar School in Bendigo and Pymble Public School in New South Wales. RULER is an acronym. It stands for recognising, understanding, labelling, expressing and regulating emotions and it is conducted over a number of phases, which I do not have time to go into now. It is a peer-reviewed program, unlike the Safe Schools program. It has been found to significantly reduce the likelihood of bullying, significantly decrease anxiety and depression, reduce social stress and lead to fewer student problems at school, better academic performance and increased leadership.

I call on the minister to review in detail the appropriateness of the nature and content of the Safe Schools program in comparison with the RULER program and as part of this review to consider how the government can support schools that choose to

implement RULER as an alternative to adopting the Safe Schools Coalition program.

Victorian Health Promotion Foundation funding

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment contribution tonight is for the Minister for Health, and the action I seek is an explicit commitment that the Andrews Labor government will maintain the funding and independence of VicHealth into the future. Two reviews are currently underway looking at the state's health promotion activities: the health promotion and prevention investment project, and a review of the Tobacco Act 1987. Concerns have been raised with me from a number of different places and people that these reviews are actually a way for the government to reorient funding that VicHealth receives to other sources, and that may even be back into the department itself. That is why I am seeking some clarity in relation to the government's intentions and a commitment about the future of VicHealth.

VicHealth is an incredibly successful, independent tripartisan organisation that has now been running for 28 years. In 2014–15 it received about \$37.8 million in funding. It has really always been there to push the boundaries, to trial and test new ways to promote health in Victoria, and it has led the way on so many fronts. When you think about smoking and what has been achieved, largely in partnership with Quit, this includes abolishing smoking sponsorship and dramatic reductions in smoking rates in Victoria. When you think of something as simple as the walking school bus program, you think of the impact that has had and the difference it has made in terms of getting young people exercising.

VicHealth has led the way in mental health promotion, and certainly from my perspective it has done amazing work in terms of family violence. I have no doubt that we are where we are today on family violence — in terms of public awareness and the engagement and policy work that is happening — as a result of the work that VicHealth has done over almost a decade, particularly its work in relation to the attitude survey, which continues to this day to capture and understand the changes over time in people's attitudes to violence against women.

Just in the last couple of weeks there has been the release of *Change the Story — A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence Against Women and Their Children in Australia*. This is the national framework established in partnership between Our Watch, the national organisation established by the

former state coalition government with the federal government; the Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, or ANROWS; and VicHealth. These are the three organisations leading the way in terms of the family violence framework.

Just a couple of weeks ago 100 VicHealth stakeholders and partners came together to look at the opportunities for VicHealth in the future. I was very pleased to be there with the member for Forest Hill in the other place. We were the only parliamentary representatives. It was disappointing of course that government members were not there, but this is an organisation that seeks to continue to challenge itself and be as good as it can for the health and wellbeing of Victorians. I encourage the minister to continue to invest in and support VicHealth into the future.

Bass Valley Children's Centre

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — I rise this evening to bring a matter to the attention of the Minister for Families and Children, Ms Mikakos. It relates to the Bass Valley Children's Centre in Corinella, which is in Gippsland, the area that I represent.

Further to correspondence that I have sent to the minister seeking support for a children's facilities capital program grant, I would like to reinforce the importance of building the Bass Valley Children's Centre in Corinella to account for the growth in the area and a number of different factors that are necessary, in my view, to provide really vital services in an area of great need. The needs relate to but also go beyond the requirements to provide long day care, occasional care, before and after-school care, vacation care and also a kindergarten. In line with the planning that has been conducted by the volunteer group to date, there would also be a maternal and child health service, a specialist child health service and also visiting family support services.

The idea behind this application for a children's facilities capital program grant is for the centre to play a really central role in breaking the cycle of disadvantage — financial and social disadvantage and also the tyranny of distance — that is so often part and parcel of a comparative lack of opportunity in Gippsland and in this particular part of the district, and also to ensure that we are providing better opportunities for young people and their families in the area now and into the future.

As the minister would be aware, further positions of various volunteers and their representatives and further to the representations I have made to the minister

directly, the Bass Coast Shire Council has indicated that it is in a position to contribute \$985 000 to the project. That would sit alongside a community contribution that is the consequence of significant grassroots fundraising. On that basis the group has begun a feasibility study and plan, so it is now about taking this to the next step to ensure that we get the funding necessary to make this a reality.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Ms SHING — This is something which, despite the protestations of those opposite, is a necessary part of getting on with making sure that we deliver on educational opportunities and early childhood development opportunities for people throughout regional Victoria, and making sure that we reduce disadvantage whenever and however we possibly can. Again I ask the minister to favourably consider this particular grant application in the terms sought and to provide the necessary relief and opportunity to those in the community who would benefit from it.

Asbestos Awareness Week

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — This week, 23–27 November, is Asbestos Awareness Week. I take the opportunity to express my condolences to the millions of people and their families around the world whose lives have been destroyed by asbestos. Australia has the highest per capita rates of asbestos-related diseases in the world. It has held this dubious distinction for decades, and deaths from asbestos-related diseases — mesothelioma, asbestosis and lung cancer — are expected to peak around 2020 with up to 40 000 deaths.

In any terms this is a tragic catastrophe, the result of the extensive mining and use of asbestos in vehicle and other manufacturing and the construction of residential, commercial and public buildings, including power utilities, schools and many other facilities and settings in Australia, and of the past and ongoing incompetence and negligence of governments and employers both private and public.

Despite companies and governments being well aware of the deadly hazards of asbestos, it was mined in Australia up until late 1984. According to the national Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency approximately one-third of all homes built in Australia contain asbestos products, and the widespread use of asbestos has left a deadly legacy of asbestos in situ. There are many areas in the home where asbestos-containing materials can be found, including, but not limited to, roof and wall sheeting, guttering, gables, eaves, water

pipes and flues, vinyl flooring, carpet and tile underlays, imitation brick cladding, fencing, carports and sheds, telecommunication pits, expansion joints, packing under beams and concrete formwork.

The risk of exposure to asbestos from the built environment is broad, and the potential impact to the entire Australian community is great. Asbestos is still widely used in some countries. Despite being a prohibited import in Australia since 2003, goods containing asbestos are still being located at the Australian border.

As I said in this place two years ago, I have raised this issue of the rising incidence of exposure to asbestos in situ in public buildings, including in schools and in private homes, several times in this place because not enough is being done to prevent exposure in the community. At that time two years ago Victoria was the only state to have not signed up to the national strategy. Nothing much has changed, and I have been informed that, while Consumer Affairs Victoria had a stall at the recent *Herald Sun* Home Show, the information it had available on home OHS-type topics did not include asbestos. What a wasted opportunity.

I understand that the government finally signed on to the National Strategic Plan for Asbestos Management and Awareness several months ago. While concerns have been raised about the shortcomings and some watering down of the strategy, it does provide a framework for coordinated action to reduce the hazard of asbestos in the community. My request of the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation is that she outline what steps the Victorian government is taking to implement the national strategic plan and how government departments and local authorities will work together towards an asbestos-free Victoria.

Freedom of information

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Attorney-General, and it relates to freedom of information. On this topic Mr Pakula talked a big game prior to the election. He said in a Labor press release of 9 October:

'Labor will end this secret state and open our doors to the public, because we all deserve to know the details that affect our lives'.

'Under Labor's changes, no future government will ever be able to keep a crisis secret. No more hiding, no more excuses'.

So you can imagine my surprise when I received a letter from the Department of Justice and Regulation on

12 November saying that because I had lodged 16 FOI requests, the department was unable to process them within the 45-day decision-making period. The letter says:

I advise that, given the volume of your requests, it is highly unlikely that the department will be able to process all of them within the statutory period of 45 days as prescribed by section 21 of the act.

Therefore, the department seeks your advice as to the order in which you would like the department to process the requests listed in the table above.

I just want the department to process the request under the timetable stipulated by the act — within 45 days. The department has detailed my 16 requests by date order. I note that many of them are already well and truly over 45 days. I find it staggering that my 16 requests are seen as voluminous by the department, but if you look at the Freedom of Information Commissioner 2014–15 annual report — —

Ms Crozier interjected.

Mr O'DONOHUE — I know. The report shows that the Department of Justice and Regulation received 532 personal requests and 79 non-personal requests, for a total of 611, so I do not think my 16 in the context of 611 requests in 2014–15 are voluminous or unreasonable.

Mr Pakula, in the then opposition policy, said:

... no future government will ever be able to keep a crisis secret.

What are some of the FOI requests I am making? I am seeking information on the Metropolitan Remand Centre (MRC) riots, including briefings, damage and costs, detainee numbers and staff on leave, and there is a request to the minister on prison transfers after MRC riots — and other things. We know that the MRC riot was one of the worst prison riots in Victoria's history, and we still do not know the full details about exactly how it went so wrong, how they got it so wrong, how maximum security prisoners were transferred to Ararat to a medium security prison — an unprecedented change — and how so much damage was able to be inflicted.

The action I seek is that the Attorney-General provide the necessary resources to the department so it can process these requests within the stipulated statutory period.

Princess Mary Club

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is about an urgent call for action from the Minister for Women in helping to save a unique part of Victorian women's history. Heritage Victoria notified me and Sophie Paterson, whose grandfather raised the funds to build the Princess Mary Club, last week that they had tragically approved the demolition of this unique building. This building was designed by the renowned Melbourne architect Alec Eggleston and is a significant building in itself, but it is its social significance that is so important.

Just to recap, the Princess Mary Club was built in 1926 with funds raised by the Nicholas family to provide safe and secure accommodation for women entering the workforce. It is a rare monument to women in the workplace, their rights and the opportunities that suffrage has brought. It provided safe and secure accommodation for the growing number of women who were also seeking a tertiary education in Victoria. This building marks a significant time in history, particularly for women, and it is one of a kind.

Heritage Victoria said that it was too expensive to restore and that that is why it agreed to allow it to be demolished, but this is due to the fact that the Wesley Church has neglected it for 10 years. It seems that this horrible precedent is basically rewarding Wesley Church for neglecting a heritage building. The Nicholas family have told me that there are three commercial companies who are interested in restoring the building and are well aware of the costs.

This also sets a very bad precedent for other philanthropic families to not bother to give money to charities, because those charities may change the purpose of their donations at some later stage. There are so many bad outcomes here, and I strongly believe that this is a really bad thing for our community.

As it is White Ribbon Day we should remember the extraordinary work that the Princess Mary Club did in providing safe and secure accommodation for thousands of Victorian women over the last century. I am urging the Minister for Women to intervene to save the Princess Mary Club as a very important part of Victorian women's history.

Western distributor

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to my colleague the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and Minister for Ports, the Honourable Luke Donnellan. Transurban

recently released the second draft of its western distributor proposal. This \$5.5 billion project would create thousands of jobs and significantly reduce congestion in the western suburbs, as well as create a second river crossing and provide greater access for trucks, freight and logistics to the port. It is therefore an enormously important economic project as well as an important piece of transport infrastructure. But as the government has always said, it is important to get these things right and to consult widely with the community.

I recently met with a constituent of mine, Mr Michael Fry, a resident and representative of the community of Stephen Street in Yarraville. While Mr Fry and the other residents of his apartment block supported Transurban's first draft of the western distributor proposal, they raised some concerns in relation to certain changes made in the second draft. Specifically they are concerned that the tunnel entrance, which has been moved in the second draft, will now encroach on the green land in Stony Creek reserve, as well as sit too close to local residences. Under the second draft, the entrance portal will now sit approximately 200 metres from Mr Fry's apartment complex.

Issues were also raised around the placement of exhaust stacks. Under the second draft, the tunnel will lie 10 metres under Mr Fry's apartment block, not 30 metres, as Transurban's first draft proposed. I ask that the minister — or someone senior from his office — meet with Mr Fry and his fellow residents to discuss and listen to their contributions on the consultation phase.

Night Network

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. Before you say, 'Oh no, he's on about the trains again', you will be relieved to know that I am not on about the trains this evening; I am on about the buses. Labor committed to introducing Homesafe, a bus to regional cities like Ballarat, beginning on 1 January 2016. Since then we have heard little else.

At what other railway stations along the Ballarat line will this service stop? We do not know. How long will the service take to get to Ballarat from Melbourne? We do not know. This is despite new timetables, starting from now and running until late January, recently being uploaded on the Public Transport Victoria website. These new timetables do not even have this late-night service listed. When this was pointed out, it was claimed that these timetables were uploaded in error. I agree; however, the big mistake is having Minister

Allan responsible for our state's public transport system. It is an absolute shambles.

When will those hoping to avail themselves of this service know the details of this late-night service — 31 December? This service was originally called Homesafe; it is now called Night Network. It has undergone a very quiet name change.

Ms Crozier — Why?

Mr MORRIS — 'Why is this?', one must ask oneself. I agree, Ms Crozier. I have heard from law enforcement that the reason Homesafe has been renamed Night Network is that railway stations will not, like Ballarat railway station, be manned with the protective services officers (PSOs) the coalition introduced to keep the community safe, and indeed late-night commuters will not be getting 'home safe' at all — just another example of this Melbourne-centric government's disdain for regional Victoria.

This government and this minister do not care about the safety of regional commuters. They only care about providing PSOs for Melbourne's railway stations, and they have even cut those. The action I seek tonight is this: will the minister commit to providing PSOs for the 2.00 a.m. bus service to Ballarat to ensure that commuters are safe when arriving at the Ballarat railway station?

Motorsports

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) — Despite my intense interest in shooting and firearms, I do have other interests. I am also a keen motorsport enthusiast and have been to many legal off-street drag racing meetings and bitumen hill climbs. I have also done a few laps of Calder Park Raceway and Winton Motor Raceway over time. I find that not only is driving in a controlled and safe environment quite fun but it also teaches you a lot about how to deal with a situation you may experience if you lose control of your car. The beauty of this is that you are not on a public road and that there are safety precautions taken to minimise risk. If you stuff it up, you generally get little more than a red face and maybe some minor panel damage. You gain valuable experience in how to react or not react in emergency situations with no danger to the public. Grassroots motorsport is a great way to get off the street and get this sort of experience.

I recently went to the hill climb in Boisdale run by the Maffra and District Car Club, at the invitation of Senator Ricky Muir. The hill climb was a dirt track, which was new to me, and the loose surface clearly

added a new dimension to getting the car around the course quickly. Whilst I did not have any time on the track, I think I can accurately predict that I will change that soon. The event ran very smoothly and was a credit to the club. Senator Muir even managed to crash right where I could see, for which I thank him.

I call on the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to support grassroots-level motorsport by actively promoting it and by working with the clubs to ensure that tracks and facilities are at their best. The more people racing off the roads, the less need there is for dangerous behaviour on the roads — and it is fun!

Wild dogs

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Agriculture. Community angst is again building around the state government's contribution to wild dog control in parts of Gippsland and the far north-east of the state. In just one year the communities affected by wild dogs have seen a dramatic change in the government's approach to wild dog control, and they do not like it. The government has scrapped the highly successful wild dog bounty. Aerial baiting did not take place during the autumn window. I note that the minister has previously protested that she did not have money in her budget, but The Nationals know that that is not the case. The minister has been in control of the budget since December 2014 and has seen fit to fund other initiatives that she favours, so that is a poor excuse.

The latest blow is that the minister has dismissed the members of the Wild Dog Control Advisory Committee. This committee was made up of local farmers and community members who have firsthand experience in dealing with wild dog attacks. Their input was invaluable in terms of ensuring that the government-funded programs were hitting the mark. This group of individuals from Gippsland and the north-east helped to make the state's wild dog control action plan a sensible and informed document. This was a five-year plan which was only launched in December 2013. It set out an ongoing and inclusive role for the Wild Dog Control Advisory Committee, and it recognised how valuable community input is. I understand that members received correspondence only 24 hours before what became the group's final meeting, saying that they were no longer required.

The Liberal-Nationals coalition established this committee because it understands that effective wild dog control requires a combined effort with input from community members, industry and the government. Many gains that were made in wild dog control over the

years between 2011 and 2014, including excellent collaboration and communication between communities, landowners and government departments, has been lost, and we are concerned that this will be undone.

It seems illogical that the government would dismiss the members of the Wild Dog Control Advisory Committee when it is clear that it has been overwhelmingly successful in helping to reduce the impact of wild dogs on livestock and providing communities with a direct line of communication to government. Farmers face losing everything that has been gained by this control under our system, and I call on the Minister for Agriculture to reappoint the members of the Wild Dog Control Advisory Committee as a matter of urgency so that the community can continue to have a strong voice in the development and rollout of the state's control programs.

Level crossings

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. I am very delighted that he is in the chamber this evening, and I am hoping that he will be able to give me assurances and confirm what I am going to be requesting of him.

Seventy traders from the Bentleigh, Ormond and McKinnon areas attended a Level Crossing Removal Authority meeting on Monday evening. At that meeting traders raised their concerns with the representatives present about the fact that there have been continual changes to the original plans that were put to the traders regarding the level crossing — and the minister is nodding his head in understanding of what I am referring to. The Ormond traders are particularly concerned about the decimation of the south side of North Road to allow for the installation of a lift.

Night works have now been introduced, with traders not receiving any information about the disruption. All they have is information on daytime disruption to the area. There is a decrease in parking spaces available for customers due to tradesmen taking them up along the shopping strips. Deliveries to the area are being impacted. The level crossing authority has told the traders group that they should be passing the information on to all traders along the various shopping strips. However, the traders have indicated that they do not have the time or the money to be taking on the task of informing traders, delivery truck drivers, commuters and shoppers about all the changes that they are faced with.

Quite rightly the traders are extremely concerned about the impact the works are having on their business, but even more concerning for them is the regular changes made to the original plans. This is leaving traders with a degree of anxiety about what might be coming next. They have made representations to members of the government to voice their concerns, including to the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, as one of their local members and the responsible minister for small business. Apparently they had scheduled a meeting with him, but it was cancelled and he referred it on to another of his colleagues. I believe the minister has a busy schedule and that he was too busy to meet with the traders, and that his first available time will be late February, which is after when the major disruptions will have taken place.

The action I seek from the minister is that he urgently meet with the traders groups before Christmas to hear and understand their real concerns about the major impacts these works are having on their businesses and their ability to make a living.

Bushfire preparedness

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter I raise is for the attention of the Minister for Emergency Services. I have in previous parliaments raised matters in relation to emergency services that impact on multicultural communities. Today I do likewise. With the fire season fast approaching, obviously it is an area — —

Ms Shing — Fast approaching?

Mrs PEULICH — Fast approaching? Absolutely.

Ms Shing — We are here. We are in it.

Mrs PEULICH — Yes, we are. If the member would just allow me to continue, it is fast approaching not just the country and regional areas, but also for the metropolitan area, which obviously has challenges in terms of fire season preparation.

Informing residents in metropolitan areas is equally a challenge, especially those in multicultural communities. I attended a multicultural festival in Coburg last Sunday, and I noted that the State Emergency Service from Broadmeadows was there with a good presence. They were handing out a pamphlet headed 'Home fire safety — Practise your home escape plan — Get out and stay out', which I thought was a good initiative. On having a closer examination of it, and as a former English teacher, I would say that the readability of this document is probably a little sophisticated for the breadth of the

audiences for whom this information would be vital. I asked whether there were translations in other languages, and indeed they did have, on this day, a Turkish translation, which was good. They said that there was not sufficient funding to have translations in other community languages or for them to have a presence at other multicultural festivals, where obviously the targeting would be more precise.

The matter I raise is to ask the minister to look at what resources may be available to allow this document to be translated into other languages so it can be made more readily available and be presented at multicultural festivals and other functions and events attended by multicultural communities. I would also ask the minister to review the suitability of the information. It is very cluttered, but I think the intent is fabulous. The content is good, but the language is quite sophisticated.

I understand that the State Emergency Service has not had an input in the development of the document but that the Country Fire Authority and Metropolitan Fire Brigade have. It is something that certainly could be improved upon. It is a good effort, but clearly more resources and perhaps more careful revision of the content would make it an even more effective document. It is very important that this information gets out to the community.

Ms Shing — It is already available in numerous languages.

Mrs PEULICH — It is available on a website, but it is certainly not available in hard copy.

Ms Shing — It is online in Croatian, Fijian, Burmese, German, Dutch — —

Mrs PEULICH — Not every multicultural community family has access to the internet.

Regional development

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My matter is for the Minister for Regional Development, Jaala Pulford, and is in relation to the regional statement that was announced last week in northern Victoria by the Premier; the Minister for Regional Development, Jaala Pulford; and the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Lisa Neville. I took particular interest in what the government had in mind for the Barwon region, which I represent and live in on the Geelong boundaries.

I noted through the flashy brochures and the media spin that the Labor government put out in relation to this that there would be nine new clusters which would take

over the five traditional Regional Development Victoria clusters in the Barwon and South Barwon regions. There was nothing new in its statement except that instead of five we will now have nine new clusters.

I then looked at the new proposed initiatives and found a \$34 million regional skills and training package to help people into new jobs. We already had one. It was called Skilling the Bay. It was very successful, working closely with the Gordon. I can only assume that there has been a rebadge and rename with the same money that was provided by the previous government. I looked a bit further and found a reference to wi-fi on trains. The coalition government committed \$40 million to black spots and wi-fi on trains, so there is nothing new there. It is just a rebadge of a name and the same old money. There is also a reference to a regional business centre, and one action I seek from the minister is to ask where that centre might be placed and what exactly its activity would be.

I am raising a number of concerns here about this regional statement. It not only concerns the Barwon region; it goes right across Victoria, where there is absolutely no new money. The only new initiative I could find was funding for the Macalister irrigation district, where it was proposed there be a new investment subject to the sale of the port. It is a bit like the Murray Basin rail project and a number of other projects, where any new money the government might be considering for regional Victoria will always be subject to the sale of the port of Melbourne. We are never quite sure how much of the proceeds from that sale, if in fact it does go ahead, would actually go to regional Victoria, but the \$200 million the Victorian Farmers Federation is talking about is a minuscule amount.

The action I seek is that the minister instigate and initiate a real regional action plan that provides new jobs and new money to regional Victoria, particularly in the Barwon region which I have just referred to.

Western distributor

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I raise a matter this evening for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Last week I was contacted by a number of constituents in the Yarraville area, and as is my wont, I visited them shortly thereafter. They are in, to say the least, a state of flux as to their future. They do not quite know what impact the western distributor will have on them, their houses, their neighbours or even their pets. The Stony Creek reserve is between their homes and the West Gate Freeway, and the tunnel — the tunnel mark II, it would seem — will run under the

Stony Creek reserve and turn it into a dirty great hole. They are very concerned about the impact this will have on their lifestyle, the value of their properties and a whole range of matters.

The problem is that despite frequent requests they are unable to get answers. They cannot get a definite answer from anybody as to what is going to happen and what is going on. Transurban is in no position to say, and the government, if it does know, is not telling anybody. So we have a situation where a significant group of people who are living happy and what one would describe as normal lives in the inner suburbs are threatened by a project and have no way of finding out exactly what that threat entails or means for them. It is particularly unfair.

I know the government has a lot of trouble making decisions and struggles when it comes to biting the bullet on these matters, but the time has well and truly come for the minister and the government to let these people know exactly what they are in for. To live this way, with the constant threat hanging over their heads, is something I think is largely intolerable. I ask the minister to make it clear to the people of Yarraville very soon exactly what impact the western distributor, with the revised tunnel — if indeed the revised tunnel is not going to be revised again — will have on them and their homes.

Melbourne Metro rail project

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My matter is for the attention of the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. It concerns the government's proposals for the Metro rail tunnel and in particular the proposed Domain railway station. I note that the government has committed \$1.5 billion or \$1.6 billion for a project that has a total cost of more than \$11 billion and that it has committed to a process of value capture. The minister's role as Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade is to advocate for small businesses and small commercial operators. There are a number of those in this zone around the proposed Domain station — on St Kilda Road and in that vicinity.

What I am seeking from the minister is that he take a clear advocacy role to ensure that existing businesses and commercial operations are not unfairly penalised by new taxes, levies or charges — whatever name you wish to put on them — that could be applied to commercial operators. It seems that there are two types here: existing commercial and business operators and those who may come into the area at a later point. My request tonight is that the minister advocates to the

Minister for Planning and the Treasurer in particular to ensure that the existing commercial and business operators in that area are not unfairly penalised; for example, you would not want to see a significant increase in land taxes applied to pay for the tunnel if it targeted or unfairly penalised the small business operators in that area.

Responses

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — We had adjournment matters from Ms Lovell for the Minister for Education in relation to Maiden Gully Primary School; from Dr Carling-Jenkins for the Minister for Education in relation to the Safe Schools program; from Ms Wooldridge for the Minister for Health in relation to VicHealth funding; and from Ms Shing for the Minister for Families and Children in relation to funding for the Bass Valley Children's Centre.

Ms Pennicuik raised a matter for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation and asked that the minister outline a strategic plan for an asbestos-free Victoria.

Mr O'Donohue raised a matter for the Attorney-General regarding the processing of Mr O'Donohue's voluminous FOI requests.

Ms Patten raised a matter for the Minister for Women regarding the Princess Mary Club building.

Mr Melhem raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding the western distributor proposal. I might add, Acting President, that that is exactly the same adjournment matter as Mr Finn raised for the same minister. I think we need to note that as well.

Mr Bourman raised a matter for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety regarding grassroots motor sports.

Ms Bath raised a matter for the Minister for Agriculture regarding wild dogs.

Ms Crozier's adjournment matter was to me and was in relation to the small businesses affected by the current level crossing removals at North Road, Ormond; McKinnon Road, McKinnon; and Centre Road, Bentleigh. In relation to that, I will indeed perform an advocacy role. However, the adjournment matter related specifically to the Level Crossing Removal Authority, so I will refer it to the Minister for Public Transport, but I will also play an advocacy role in speaking to the Minister for Public Transport and I will try to make sure that I get time in my diary to meet with

the traders as well. I wish to refer the matter to the Minister for Public Transport to ensure that the Level Crossing Removal Authority deals with the associated communication issues and trader issues as well as meeting with me, so there are two adjournment matters in the one go for Ms Crozier.

Mr Ramsay raised a matter for the Minister for Regional Development in relation to concerns about the regional statement that was released and about appropriate funding for the Barwon region.

I have dealt with Mr Finn's adjournment matter already.

I believe I have left out Mrs Peulich — I apologise to Mrs Peulich — whose adjournment matter was to the Minister for Emergency Services and was apparently regarding funding for the home fire safety resource to be translated into more languages. However, in order to assist the member, my understanding is that the document is available on the Country Fire Authority website in Arabic, Burmese, Fijian, Greek, Hindi, Khmer, Serbian, Italian, Korean, Sinhalese, German, Macedonian, Somali, Malay, Croatian, Maltese, Sudanese, Mandarin, Tongan, Turkish, Vietnamese, Persian and Karen. Those translations may not be available in hard copy, but they are certainly available on the website in soft copy.

Lastly Mr Davis raised a similar issue to that of Ms Crozier. It was an adjournment matter for myself in relation to small business advocacy around the issue of the construction of the Domain station as part of the Melbourne Metro rail project. Mr Davis asked me to play an advocacy role with the Minister for Planning and the Treasurer. For the sake of completing this I say that I will indeed play that advocacy role on behalf of small businesses, but I will refer the adjournment matter on to the Minister for Public Transport in relation to undertaking the appropriate work, given that it is a public transport infrastructure project. Melbourne Metro as a project resides with the Minister for Public Transport.

That is all in relation to the adjournment matters — —

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Before I hear Mrs Peulich's point of order, did Minister Dalidakis make reference to the bus service to Ballarat? I do not recall hearing it.

Mr DALIDAKIS — I think you may be right; I do apologise, Acting President. It was a matter for the

Minister for Public Transport regarding buses for the Night Network.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, Acting President, I was certainly interested to hear Mr Dalidakis repeat what Ms Shing had whispered to him. I would hope that Mr Dalidakis does not consider he has discharged the matter, because what I asked was directed to the Minister for Emergency Services and was in relation to hard copies to be made available in particular at multicultural festivals.

Mr DALIDAKIS — On the point of order, Acting President, I welcome the opportunity to clarify. I am sure that in the fullness of time, when we can reflect on *Hansard*, we will see that there was no reference to additional hard copies being made, which is why I wanted to volunteer that information. However, in the interest of finishing this sitting of Parliament today, I am happy to say that I will not discharge that adjournment issue. I am sure the minister responsible will provide exactly the same details that I have provided this evening.

Mrs Peulich — Further on the point of order, Acting President, the minister is not in a position to discharge the matter on behalf of the responsible minister.

Mr DALIDAKIS — I said I did not.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mrs Peulich — Shut up!

Mr DALIDAKIS — I ask Mrs Peulich to withdraw.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! I will clarify for Mrs Peulich that the minister indicated that he had not discharged — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Mrs Peulich! On Mrs Peulich's point of order regarding the discharging of the adjournment matter, the minister did indicate that he had not discharged it. Regarding the minister's point of order asking for a withdrawal, I did not hear anything that I felt was unparliamentary, but I will ask Mrs Peulich, if she wishes, to withdraw anything.

Mrs Peulich — There is nothing to withdraw.

Mr DALIDAKIS — I have written responses to adjournment matters raised by Mr Morris on 21 October, Mrs Peulich on 21 and 22 October,

Mr Mulino on 22 October and Mr Ondarchie on 22 October.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! The house now stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.30 p.m.

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Responses are incorporated in the form provided to Hansard

Firearms

Question asked by: Mr Young
Directed to: Minister for Training and Skills (for the Minister for Police)
Asked on: 12 November 2015

RESPONSE:

The benefit to public safety for having a 28 day waiting period before a firearm licence is issued by the Chief Commissioner is so that Victoria Police is able to undertake an adequate assessment of a licence application. This is to ensure that a person applying for a licence is a fit and proper person to hold a licence and that the grant of a licence would not be against the public interest or a threat to public safety and peace.

Section 33 of the Firearms Act, which provides that the Chief Commissioner must not issue a licence until at least 28 days have passed since an application has been made, forms part of basic standards that are applicable to all firearm licences. These standards are part of a series of resolutions that Victoria along with all states and the Commonwealth agreed to as part of the 1996 National Firearms Agreement (NFA) following the Port Arthur shootings. The NFA provided a broad range of changes to firearm regulation and affirmed the overarching principle that the possession, carriage, use, acquisition and disposal of firearms is conditional on the need to ensure public safety and peace.

In response to the Member's supplementary question, I can advise that the 2002 National Handgun Agreement (NHA) established in the wake of the shootings at Monash University, required all states and territories to introducing tighter restrictions on the availability and use of handguns, particularly concealable handguns, in order to mitigate the risk of future shooting fatalities. These restrictions included licensing requirements that provide for a graduated system of access to handguns for legitimate sporting shooters based on demonstrated training, experience and event participation.

General category handgun licence applicants must;

- be a member of a handgun target shooting club, approved by the Chief Commissioner, for at least 6 months; and
- have completed a handgun safety course; and
- have sound knowledge of firearms and related laws; and
- have participated in at least 5 handgun shooting matches

The benefit of these measures include that those licensed to possess a handgun have the necessary experience and expertise to use and safely store these firearms.

I am advised that the limit on the number of handguns that a person is permitted to own during the first six months of holding their general category handgun licence is three— being one .177 calibre air pistol; one .22 calibre pistol or centre-fire pistol; and one black powder handgun that is muzzle loading. This limit is consistent with the licensing requirements set in the NHA and, as a benefit to public safety, aims to ensure that a person cannot acquire and stockpile a large quantity of handguns in a short space of time after first obtaining their handgun licence.

TAFE staffing

Question asked by: Ms Bath
Directed to: Minister for Training and Skills
Asked on: 24 November 2015

RESPONSE:

The Andrews Government came to office with a commitment to restore stability and strength to the TAFE sector.

To date, we have established the \$320 million TAFE Rescue Fund to rebuild and grow the sector by revitalising TAFE campuses and supporting TAFES to meet their community support expectations.

Additionally, our \$50 million TAFE Back to Work Fund is supporting the Government's Back to Work Plan to create 100 000 jobs and get people back to work. The Fund is supporting TAFES build partnerships with businesses and industry, including in the six growth sectors identified by the Back to Work Plan.

This funding will support TAFES to retain their best teachers and support staff.

Under the previous Government, TAFES across Victoria had been devastated by massive funding cuts, unstable and rapid changes to subsidies and eligibility, and huge staff losses. In 2014 TAFES recorded a combined deficit of \$52.5 million, were deteriorating rapidly, and had deferred further rounds of massive redundancies until after the 2014 State election.

In December 2014 I wrote to TAFES to inform them that the days of wholesale job losses must come to an end. I informed them that on the issue of individual TAFE staffing arrangements, I appreciate that TAFE institutes, in aligning their operations to meet the needs of students, industry and communities, will need from time to time to change the position of their workforce and assets.

There was no moratorium on staff redundancies, rather a request for TAFES to put on hold any new redundancy processes and the wholesale forced job cuts that had been undertaken under the former Government.

My position on this has not changed.

I appreciate that TAFE institutes, in aligning their operations to meet the needs of students, industry and communities, will need some change to the composition of their workforce in 2016. I expect this will involve some contracts not being renewed as well as some additional hiring of staff in growth teaching areas.