

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 12 October 2016

(Extract from book 14)

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

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HANSARD¹⁵⁰



1866–2016

Following a select committee investigation, Victorian Hansard was conceived when the following amended motion was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 23 June 1865:

That in the opinion of this house, provision should be made to secure a more accurate report of the debates in Parliament, in the form of *Hansard*.

The sessional volume for the first sitting period of the Fifth Parliament, from 12 February to 10 April 1866, contains the following preface dated 11 April:

As a preface to the first volume of “Parliamentary Debates” (new series), it is not inappropriate to state that prior to the Fifth Parliament of Victoria the newspapers of the day virtually supplied the only records of the debates of the Legislature.

With the commencement of the Fifth Parliament, however, an independent report was furnished by a special staff of reporters, and issued in weekly parts.

This volume contains the complete reports of the proceedings of both Houses during the past session.

In 2016 the Hansard Unit of the Department of Parliamentary Services continues the work begun 150 years ago of providing an accurate and complete report of the proceedings of both houses of the Victorian Parliament.

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AM

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 20 June 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, and Minister for Emergency Services (from 10 June 2016) [Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation 10 June to 20 June 2016]	The Hon. J. A. Merlino, MP
Treasurer	The Hon. T. H. Pallas, MP
Minister for Public Transport and Minister for Major Projects	The Hon. J. Allan, MP
Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade	The Hon. P. Dalidakis, MLC
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and Minister for Suburban Development	The Hon. L. D'Ambrosio, MP
Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and Minister for Ports	The Hon. L. A. Donnellan, MP
Minister for Tourism and Major Events, Minister for Sport and Minister for Veterans	The Hon. J. H. Eren, MP
Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Equality and Minister for Creative Industries	The Hon. M. P. Foley, MP
Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services	The Hon. J. Hennessy, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for International Education and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. S. R. Herbert, MLC
Minister for Local Government, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Minister for Industrial Relations	The Hon. N. M. Hutchins, MP
Special Minister of State	The Hon. G. Jennings, MLC
Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation	The Hon. M. Kairouz, MP
Minister for Families and Children, and Minister for Youth Affairs	The Hon. J. Mikakos, MLC
Minister for Police and Minister for Water	The Hon. L. M. Neville, MP
Minister for Industry and Employment, and Minister for Resources	The Hon. W. M. Noonan, MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Racing	The Hon. M. P. Pakula, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional Development	The Hon. J. L. Pulford, MLC
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence	The Hon. F. Richardson, MP
Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms G. A. Tierney, MLC

Legislative Council committees

Privileges Committee — Ms Hartland, Mr Herbert, Ms Mikakos, Mr O'Donohue, 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 Bourman, #Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, Mr Morris and Mr Ondarchie.

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

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

participating members

Legislative Council select committees

Port of Melbourne Select Committee — Mr Barber, 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 and Ms McLeish.

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*): 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

President:

The Hon. B. N. ATKINSON

Deputy President:

Mr K. EIDEH

Acting Presidents:

Ms Dunn, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Mr Melhem, Mr Morris, Ms Patten, Mr Ramsay

Leader of the Government:

The Hon. G. JENNINGS

Deputy Leader of the Government:

The Hon. J. L. PULFORD

Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. M. WOOLDRIDGE

Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

The Hon. G. K. RICH-PHILLIPS

Leader of the 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	SFFP	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	O'Sullivan, Luke Bartholomew ⁴	Northern Victoria	Nats
Dalla-Riva, Mr Richard Alex Gordon	Eastern Metropolitan	LP	Patten, Ms Fiona	Northern Metropolitan	ASP
Davis, Mr David McLean	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Pennicuik, Ms Susan Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	Greens
Drum, Mr Damian Kevin ³	Northern Victoria	Nats	Peulich, Mrs Inga	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Dunn, Ms Samantha	Eastern Metropolitan	Greens	Pulford, Ms Jaala Lee	Western Victoria	ALP
Eideh, Mr Khalil M.	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Purcell, Mr James	Western Victoria	VILJ
Elasmarr, Mr Nazih	Northern Metropolitan	ALP	Ramsay, Mr Simon	Western Victoria	LP
Finn, Mr Bernard Thomas C.	Western Metropolitan	LP	Rich-Phillips, Mr Gordon Kenneth	South Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Fitzherbert, Ms Margaret	Southern Metropolitan	LP	Shing, Ms Harriet	Eastern Victoria	ALP
Hartland, Ms Colleen Mildred	Western Metropolitan	Greens	Somyurek, Mr Adem	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP
Herbert, Mr Steven Ralph	Northern Victoria	ALP	Springle, Ms Nina	South Eastern Metropolitan	Greens
Jennings, Mr Gavin Wayne	South Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Symes, Ms Jaclyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	SFFP

² Appointed 15 April 2015

³ Resigned 27 May 2016

¹ Resigned 25 February 2015

⁴ Appointed 12 October 2016

PARTY ABBREVIATIONS

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

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Wednesday, 12 October 2016

The PRESIDENT (Hon. B. N. Atkinson) took the chair at 9.35 a.m. and read the prayer.

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

Reports 2015–16

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan), by leave, presented reports of Department of the Legislative Council and Department of Parliamentary Services.

Laid on table.

SCRUTINY OF ACTS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

Alert Digest No. 13

Mr DALLA-RIVA (Eastern Metropolitan) presented *Alert Digest No. 13* of 2016, including appendices, in lieu of report tabled 11 October 2016.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be published.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There was a slight problem with some appendix references in the report tabled yesterday, and they have now been corrected.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

- Albury Wodonga Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Alexandra District Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Alfred Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Alpine Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Auditor-General's Office — Report, 2015–16.
- Austin Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Bairnsdale Regional Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Ballarat General Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- Ballarat Health Services — Report, 2015–16.
- Barwon Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Bass Coast Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Beaufort and Skipton Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Beechworth Health Service — Report, 2015–16.

- Benalla Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Bendigo Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- Bendigo Health Care Group — Report, 2015–16.
- Boort District Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Calvary Health Care Bethlehem Limited — Report, 2015–16.
- Casterton Memorial Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Castlemaine Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Central Gippsland Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Cobram District Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Cohuna District Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Colac Area Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Dental Health Services Victoria — Report, 2015–16.
- Djerriwarrh Health Services — Report, 2015–16.
- Dunmunkle Health Services — Report, 2015–16.
- Eastern Health — Report, 2015–16.
- East Grampians Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- East Wimmera Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Echuca Regional Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Edenhope and District Memorial Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Geelong Cemeteries Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- Gippsland Southern Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Goulburn Valley Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust — Report, 2015–16.
- Health Purchasing Victoria — Report, 2015–16.
- Health Services Commissioner — Report, 2015–16.
- Heathcote Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Hepburn Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Hesse Rural Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Heywood Rural Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Inglewood and Districts Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Kerang District Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Kilmore and District Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Kooweerup Regional Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Kyabram and District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Kyneton District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.

- Latrobe Regional Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Lorne Community Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Maldon Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Mallee Track Health and Community Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Mansfield District Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Maryborough District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Melbourne Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Mercy Public Hospitals Incorporated — Report, 2015–16.
- Mildura Cemetery Trust — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- Monash Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Moyne Health Services — Report, 2015–16.
- Nathalia District Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Northeast Health Wangaratta — Report, 2015–16.
- Northern Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Numurkah District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Omeo District Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Orbost Regional Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Otway Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Peninsula Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre — Report, 2015–16.
- Portland District Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Queen Elizabeth Centre — Report, 2015–16.
- Radiation Advisory Committee — Report, 2015–16.
- Robinvale District Health Services — Report, 2015–16.
- Rochester and Elmore District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne — Report, 2015–16.
- Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Royal Women's Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- Rural Northwest Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Seymour Health — Report, 2015–16.
- South Gippsland Hospital — Report, 2015–16.
- South West Healthcare — Report, 2015–16.
- Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust — Report, 2015–16.
- Stawell Regional Health — Report, 2015–16.
- St Vincent's Hospital (Melbourne) Limited — Report, 2015–16.
- Swan Hill District Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Tallangatta Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Terang and Mortlake Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Timboon and District Healthcare Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Tweddle Child and Family Health Service — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- Upper Murray Health and Community Services — Report, 2015–16.
- Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 — Minister's letter of request for an assessment by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council into the conservation values of State forests in the Central Highlands, North East, Gippsland and East Gippsland regional forest agreement areas, pursuant to section 26C of the Act.
- Victorian Health Promotion Foundation — Report, 2015–16.
- Victorian Pharmacy Authority — Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.
- West Gippsland Healthcare Group — Report, 2015–16.
- West Wimmera Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Western District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Western Health — Report, 2015–16.
- Wimmera Health Care Group — Report, 2015–16.
- Yarram and District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Yarrawonga District Health Service — Report, 2015–16.
- Yea and District Memorial Hospital — Report, 2015–16.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Men's sheds

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise to update the house on the Andrews Labor government's support of men's sheds in Victoria. Recently I was pleased to announce a \$1.2 million boost to the men's shed program statewide to rebuild or refurbish 32 new or existing sheds across Victoria. I was pleased last month to announce over \$55 000 for a new men's shed for Swan Hill, which will partner with the Swan Hill Neighbourhood House and Swan Hill District Health to boost space for community programs and will support the physical and mental wellbeing of locals. I congratulate members of the neighbourhood

house there and the men's shed group that has been working on this project for some time.

This \$1.2 million funding boost will bring new sheds to regional centres like Sebastopol and Castlemaine and also growing outer suburbs like Mordialloc and Diamond Creek. The funding will also enable the refurbishment of existing men's sheds such as those in Ballarat, Ocean Grove, Glen Waverley and Sunbury, to name but a few. We have prioritised communities affected by fire, flood and drought, and I am proud of the fact that 25 out of 32 projects are in regional Victoria.

Back in 2006 the Victorian Labor government provided the first state government funding for building and refurbishing men's sheds, and in the decade since local communities right across the state have benefited from the safe, friendly and inclusive community spaces that men's sheds provide. All of the 32 new or existing men's sheds being rebuilt or refurbished by this funding boost will offer local men the opportunity to participate in exciting new activities, such as trade-based activities, health and wellbeing information sessions and other activities that enable participants to connect with learning and employment opportunities, especially in building and trades.

The Andrews Labor government is proud to support men's sheds, because we understand that they are more than just buildings; they are enablers of stronger and more resilient communities. I congratulate all the local communities who are receiving either a new men's shed or a refurbished men's shed through this funding round.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Infrastructure Victoria draft strategy

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The Infrastructure Victoria (IV) 30-year draft plan has completely missed the mark for the residents of the south-east. Early concerns about Infrastructure Victoria, including its lack of independence with three departmental secretaries on its board, an inner-city-centric board and an ominous statement by the CEO that IV's priorities did not necessarily include new build infrastructure, have been borne out in the draft plan. None of the top three priorities identified by IV relate to building new infrastructure. While actual infrastructure is ignored, cycling is mentioned 52 times, yet energy security, which might be a slightly higher priority, is mentioned only once.

The message for the residents of the south-east is that they will need to wait decades for the much-needed expansion of the Cranbourne railway line, ignoring the massive growth taking place through Cranbourne East and Clyde. The same residents are being told that they should expect to pay new usage tolls on roads they already use and have already paid for, yet as a consolation Infrastructure Victoria proposes to give them free bike paths.

The direction of the IV draft report ignores the realities of life in the growth suburbs and the need for new-build hard infrastructure. The direction of the draft report and the ideology that clearly underpins it raises the question of whether Infrastructure Victoria, at a cost of \$40 million over four years, is value for money and will deliver the infrastructure plan that Victoria needs.

Greyhound racing

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Sadly yet again we have seen the safety and welfare of animals put behind money and profits. Yesterday, like so many Australians, I was disappointed and sickened when the New South Wales Premier, under pressure from some backbenchers, the Labor Party, the greyhound and gambling industries and the tabloid press, caved in and said he will overturn the decision to end greyhound racing in New South Wales. That was a good decision. It was the right decision based on the evidence of the McHugh special commission of inquiry, which documented in great detail the widespread cruelty practised in greyhound racing in New South Wales and across Australia.

The McHugh report estimates that over the last 12 years 97 000 greyhounds were bred and at least 50 per cent to 70 per cent of these dogs were deliberately killed simply because they never were or no longer were capable of being competitive. That means that up to 68 000 dogs were killed in New South Wales in the last 12 years. A 2015 report by the Victorian racing integrity commission estimated that 4000 greyhounds are killed in Victoria every year — that is, 48 000 in 12 years. Together with New South Wales that makes 116 000 greyhounds killed in the last 12 years in Victoria and New South Wales, all for the sake of a bet.

As my New South Wales Greens colleague Mehreen Faruqi, MLC, wrote:

The sheer scale of animal suffering and death puts greyhound racing into a league of its own. The simple fact is that it cannot survive without the deaths of thousands of dogs.

It should be ended across Australia.

Banyule Seniors Festival

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — On Wednesday, 5 October, it was my pleasure to attend the Great Hall in Ivanhoe to celebrate a seniors morning tea and the launch of the seniors festival hosted by Banyule City Council. The mayor, Cr Langdon, and his council officers officiated at this most worthy event. It was great to see so many senior citizens and residents appreciating their morning tea and having the opportunity to catch up with one another in a relaxed setting. I thank Banyule council for its efforts in making this event so enjoyable.

Immigration Museum

Mr ELASMAR — On another matter, on Monday evening, 10 October, I along with several parliamentary colleagues attended a very interesting tour of the Immigration Museum in Melbourne. I saw the exhibits of the history of immigration in Australia, and I highly recommend that all Australians visit the museum. It is very rewarding. I enjoyed the tour immensely, and I thank the President and Speaker of this Parliament for their kind invitation.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There is actually an outstanding exhibition there at the moment on the pearl industry and also recognition of the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956. It is certainly a venue well worth a visit and, more importantly, well worth recommending to other people to visit. Thank you, Mr Elasmr.

Police numbers

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — More than a year ago, the member for Bellarine, Lisa Neville, announced 15 more police officers for the City of Greater Geelong region, and she has again boasted about that number in response to the latest statistics on rising crime. However, only eight additional first response officers have been added to Geelong since 2014, and the Police Association has now identified an immediate need for at least 63 more frontline officers in the Geelong region. Police Association secretary Ron Iddles says that officers are struggling with Geelong's increasing demands and are strained to cover the region's resource gaps, posing a risk to their own health and safety and to community safety.

Since June last year Geelong crime over 12 months has risen by 21 per cent, including an almost 40 per cent jump in thefts. In the Bellarine electorate, thefts have gone up 31 per cent in a year, while burglaries are up 20 per cent. Theft is up by 72 per cent in Drysdale and Clifton Springs, and burglaries went up 121 per cent in

Barwon Heads, where residents have now formed a Neighbourhood Watch group to protect a community that the state is ignoring.

These numbers are not anomalies. They reflect a trend since the Andrews government took office in 2014. I shudder to think about the story the numbers will tell next year, and the damage may have already been done. For Labor to promise 400 officers in a term of government just is not enough to keep up with the state's population growth of 100 000 people a year, let alone the increasing rate of offences under the Andrews government's soft approach to crime.

Northern suburbs crime

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise today to echo some of the words of my colleagues from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party on the incredibly worrying recent spate of gun-related crimes, particularly in the electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region. It seems that every other day when I watch the news there is a drive-by shooting or another gun haul, as I said, particularly in the northern suburbs and in my electorate.

Although these are largely gang and particularly drug related they are not always, and they are linked to domestic violence and other personal disputes, so I feel like we need to get a hold on these firearms, particularly these illegal firearms, and get them off the street. An 11 per cent rise in violent crimes has to be tackled by this government, and I note that Minister Neville has announced the fast-tracking of 400 new police — and I am sure we will talk about that later today — in a \$26 million effort to put a dent in these alarming new crime stats. It is a good start, but I am not sure it is the right one. Sometimes money just is not the answer.

We recently had a debate in this chamber about legalising and taxing cannabis, and I reiterate: this would cut off the financial legs of criminals who traffic cannabis and prop up their illegal syndicates with cash, and they buy the firearms with that cash. This is the type of thinking we need. And whilst I applaud the police minister for putting more resources into policing, it needs to be complemented with other policy ideas to tackle this. I urge the government to find a pathway that sees both our police supported in their efforts to get guns off the street and progressive policies enacted.

Northern Victoria Region floods

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — I would like to praise the strength and never-give-up attitude of the country communities in my electorate of Northern

Victoria Region, who have for many weeks but particularly in the last week been severely impacted by flooding.

Ms Lovell — We didn't see you at any of the community meetings.

Ms SYMES — I was at Wangaratta, Ms Lovell. Almost half of my electorate has been impacted, particularly those living in Myrtleford, Wangaratta, Cobram, Barmah, Yarrawonga, Wodonga, Alpine and surrounding areas. While rain has eased in recent days, much of my electorate is still under threat. The nature of floods is that they are drawn out and it takes a very long time for them to disperse — for example, we are not expecting peaks in the Echuca area until the end of the week — and of course any further rain slows the rate of recession and heavy rain of course risks further flooding.

I would like to praise not only the community members but every member within the State Emergency Service (SES), Country Fire Authority, police, local government and other agencies who have for the past week and a half worked tirelessly not only to ensure our community was kept up to date but to keep property and homes safe. I visited flood-affected areas over the weekend and Monday and spent time in the incident control centres (ICCs) in Benalla. I know they have been rotated now, but in particular I would like to thank Keith O'Brien and Peter Creak and the teams at the Hume Emergency Management Victoria regional control and Benalla SES ICC. I have the utmost admiration for the professionalism, expertise and effectiveness of managing these diverse emergency situations.

I witnessed great collaboration. The efforts continue, and I thank them, and I know the affected communities are also extremely grateful for their dedication and hard work.

Dairy industry

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — Recently I was disheartened and distressed to read in the *Weekly Times* an article stating that Foodbank — the charity tasked with delivering the Victorian government's school breakfast program to 500 of our state's most disadvantaged schools — is sourcing milk from New Zealand. This is a breathtaking affront from the Victorian government to our dairy industry, which has withstood almost insurmountable struggles this year with little or no direct assistance from the Victorian government.

Farmer Alex Robertson summed it up when he said it is an embarrassment that Victoria, the largest milk-producing state in the nation, is sourcing milk from New Zealand to feed the kids. As he said, 'It's not Foodbank's fault but this government's for saying it's trying to help the state's farmers when they're not'.

It is disgusting that the education minister came to Shepparton, in the heart of Victorian dairy country, to announce that Shepparton-based processor Pactum would be the exclusive supplier for the breakfast program, when the reality is that he continues to allow two-fifths of the product in the 900 000 school breakfasts to be sourced from outside of Victoria.

Grand Final Friday

Ms LOVELL — The Friday before the AFL Grand Final marked the second of Daniel Andrews's deeply unpopular additional public holidays. Businesses in my electorate have once again informed me of the hardship this has placed on them with the additional costs and loss of income. Businesses in regional Victoria cannot afford this additional public holiday, and Daniel Andrews needs to recognise his error and scrap this holiday next year.

Local government councillors

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — Representation on local government is an admirable means to contribute to the public good. Local government is not just about roads, rates and rubbish. If well led, local government can be responsive to the full array of community needs and transform a city or rural community to a better place to live, work, recreate and raise a family.

As a party, the Victorian Greens are proud of our local government councillors. Unlike old parties' candidates, which generally fail to declare their party affiliation and falsely declare to be independent of party politics, Greens councillors are proud to be green and imbue the values and aspirations of our party.

In the local government elections of 2012 we were fortunate to have 18 Greens elected. They have served their communities with distinction. On behalf of the Victorian Greens I would like to thank the following, who have declared they will not be seeking re-election, for their tireless service to their communities: councillors Helen Harris, Sam Gaylard, Sue Wasterval, Eve Fisher and Lenka Thompson. I also would like to thank the following Greens councillors for their tireless service to their municipalities and wish them all the best in the elections that are currently underway: councillors

Cathy Oke, Rohan Leppert, Bronwen Machin, Trent McCarthy, Samantha Ratnam, Amanda Stone, Misha Coleman, Matthew Kirwan, Belinda Coates, Thomas Sounness and Stephen Hart.

CONNECTED Art Exhibition

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — On Monday I had the privilege of officially opening the CONNECTED Art Exhibition, which showcases emerging artists with a disability or experience of mental illness. I encourage everyone to view the amazing artworks in the atrium of Federation Square. It was great to meet with some of the artists to hear their stories and inspiring to see the happiness they felt from sharing their work with others. Congratulations to the State Trustees for supporting this event for 14 years, to the 300 artists who submitted artworks and to the 83 who were selected for public exhibition.

Doctors in Secondary Schools

Mr MULINO — Last week it was great to be at Pakenham Secondary College with Mary-Anne Thomas in the Legislative Assembly, the Parliamentary Secretary for Health. We were there to announce that Pakenham Secondary College will be one of the first 20 schools to benefit from the doctors in schools program. This program will see adolescent health trained GPs placed in 100 Victorian secondary schools for up to one day a week, giving more than 70 000 students better access to health care. This program will significantly improve access to medical advice for many students, a particularly important issue in our high-growth suburbs.

Mount Martha recycled water treatment plant

Mr MULINO — Lastly I would like to say that it was an honour to be able to attend on behalf of the Minister for Water, Lisa Neville in the other place, and officially open an upgraded facility at the Mount Martha South East Water recycling plant. This is a two-year project with tens of millions of dollars invested that will see a tertiary treatment plant deliver class A treatment recycled water to farms, wineries, businesses and council facilities. It will deliver significant livability benefits for the region and also environmental benefits.

Local government councillors

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also wish to take the opportunity of thanking those councillors who are departing, who are retiring or who are moving on. All the very best and thanks on behalf

of the communities they have represented. Of course it is too early to forecast those that may not be returned; with 48 per cent turnover in postal ballots, it is obviously going to be fairly likely. Ballot papers are a problem; they have come out very late. The Minister for Local Government has failed to adjust the time lines, and therefore they will need to be urgently reviewed. Many people will be denied the opportunity of making their vote count.

Ms Dunn made comments about how proud the Greens party is for endorsing its candidates. They are so proud that they are actually covering themselves in the colour blue, as is occurring with Matthew Kirwan, the Greens candidate and councillor for the City of Greater Dandenong. I understand that this is not unique — that in actual fact it is common practice — so I am not sure about how proud they are.

Yom Kippur

Mrs PEULICH — Secondly, I would like to say congratulations to all members of the Jewish community. Today is Yom Kippur, one of the holiest of days. It is a two-day celebration, an opportunity for family members to come together. It is also a time of atonement to reflect on one's behaviour, and I would just like to take the opportunity as the shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs to wish the Jewish community all the very best for Yom Kippur.

Koroit and Port Fairy football netball clubs

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Koroit Football Netball Club and the Port Fairy Football Netball Club on their senior success at the Hampden league grand finals. The Koroit Saints once again showed their prowess in coming from 5 goals down to win the grand final by 33 points, and it was their third straight win, which was a tremendous effort. I would like to note the coach, Adam Dowie, who has retired this year after three seasons coaching the Koroit club and a total of six grand finals in the Hampden league.

I would also like to congratulate the Port Fairy senior netball club, which won their first ever premiership after extra time against Camperdown. It was certainly an exciting event. In particular I would like to recognise Nicole Dwyer for her efforts in the game. It was Nicole's 19th season as a netballer for Port Fairy and her first win, certainly. She has played over 300 games. Nicole comes from very good stock. Her mother, Bev, also played for Port Fairy, coached the team and is currently the treasurer. Her father, Anthony Bourke — I had the pleasure of playing with Anthony on many

occasions — is the record holder at my home town of Bessiebelle. Having played in 610 games over nearly 40 years, he was certainly recognised as being a legend.

Thousands of people attended the grand final at Warrnambool's Reid Oval. Unfortunately the facilities at this premier sporting oval are a disgrace.

Western Metropolitan Region level crossings

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — Last year I raised the issue of two of Victoria's most dangerous and congested level crossings, those at St Albans station and Ginifer station. These two level crossings in my electorate are part of the Labor government's promise to remove 50 of Victoria's dangerous and congested level crossings.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr EIDEH — Over the past few months the 30 000 motorists who use these two level crossings will have witnessed construction staff working tirelessly to get the job done. I am pleased to see that work is progressing well and that the St Albans and Ginifer stations level crossings will be completely removed six months early, as announced by the Minister for Public Transport last week.

In addition to increasing safety, the removal of these two level crossings will reduce traffic congestion for motorists and pedestrians who travel through these crossings each day as they make their way in and out of the western suburbs for work, school and home.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr EIDEH — We have seen two tragic deaths and too many near misses at these level crossings over the past 10 years, and it is about time we removed these outdated and dangerous crossings and made way for more streamlined transport and road systems.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr EIDEH — This is a huge project and will be of immense value to Victoria's train network.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn, I was close to asking Mr Eideh to read that a second time — so that you know my view on 90-second statements.

Robert Grieve, VC

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) — Last month I was very pleased to attend the unveiling of a plaque in honour of Captain Robert Grieve, VC, at the Robert Grieve Reserve in Burrows Street, Brighton.

I lived in this street for many years and walked past the reserve literally thousands of times, and I had often wondered why Robert Grieve was commemorated in this way, because there was nothing to explain that he was a VC winner. Now others walking along the street will be able to immediately know why he is remembered in this way.

Captain Grieve enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in 1915 and was second lieutenant in the 37th battalion. He was promoted to captain in France in 1917. His VC was won on 7 June 1917 in Belgium. I will paraphrase from the citation: his company had experienced heavy casualties; under continuous heavy fire from two machine guns, he bombed and killed the two gun crews from those machine guns; and although severely wounded by a sniper to his shoulder, he regrouped his company and they proceeded with their mission.

Captain Grieve returned to Melbourne and became managing director of his own company — Grieve, Gardner and Co. — which was in Flinders Lane. Unlike many of his generation, he had the privilege of dying at a relatively advanced age, at 68, on 4 October 1957. It is really important to remember men of this calibre who have won this extraordinary medal. It was a privilege to join his family, Caulfield Grammar, and Keith Payne, VC, who unveiled the commemorative plaque. I wish to acknowledge the mayor of Bayside, James Long, and Bayside City Council for helping to facilitate this commemoration.

Federal asset recycling initiative

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — Malcolm Turnbull is again ripping off Victorians while the Liberal-Nationals state coalition is idly standing by. The Andrews Labor government has delivered on its election promise to lease the port of Melbourne. That is done and dusted. However, Malcolm Turnbull has broken his promise. He has failed to top up the funding by 15 per cent. By providing only 9 per cent he has effectively ripped off Victorians by \$650 million.

If Turnbull had met his promise, the funding would have helped us to remove even more level crossings, build more roads, run more trains and have more police on the streets. The fact that New South Wales received 31 per cent of the funding to build its infrastructure is not only grossly unfair for Victorian taxpayers but also clearly indicates that our Prime Minister is running a Sydney-centric government. One rule for New South Wales and a different one for Victoria; that just does not seem right.

What makes this matter that much worse and even absurd is that Matthew Guy from the Legislative Assembly and the state Liberal-Nationals coalition have gone into hiding, selling out Victorians to their federal counterparts by refusing to stand up to Malcolm Turnbull for the betterment of our state.

Western Ring Road upgrade

Mr MELHEM — On another matter, I had the pleasure last Sunday week with Luke Donnellan, the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, to celebrate the start of roadwork on the widening of the E. J. Whitten Bridge and the Calder Freeway — the section between Keilor Park Drive and Furlong Road. When this project is completed — it is long overdue, four years overdue — motorists will travel from the Western Highway to the Calder Freeway in about 5 minutes, Greensborough-bound motorists will save about 15 minutes and Altona-bound drivers will be saving around 10 minutes in peak hours. This project will create some 1350 jobs, of which 850 will be direct and 500 indirect.

OMBUDSMAN JURISDICTION

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, further to the resolution of this house on 10 February 2016 directing the President to act as the representative of the Legislative Council of Victoria in the Supreme Court proceedings pursuant to section 27 of the Ombudsman Act 1973, this house —

- (1) notes that —
 - (a) the Supreme Court ruling of 26 August 2016 determined that ‘the Victorian Ombudsman has jurisdiction under section 16(2) of the Ombudsman Act 1973 to conduct an investigation pursuant to the referral from the Legislative Council made on 25 November 2015’;
 - (b) the Attorney-General has sought leave to appeal the determination, automatically rendering the President a respondent in the matter;
 - (c) the Attorney-General has made a written case of application and that the Court of Appeal has directed that respondents are to provide a written case in response to the court on or before 18 October 2016;
- (2) reaffirms the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction and power under section 16 of the Ombudsman Act 1973 to investigate the matter referred to her by the Legislative Council;

- (3) directs the President to —
 - (a) respond on behalf of the Legislative Council in such proceedings in order to contend the view set out in (2);
 - (b) respond to any further appeals by the Attorney-General unless otherwise directed by this house;

and for the purposes of (3)(a) and (3)(b) this may include, but is not limited to, seeking legal advice, engaging counsel and making submissions.

The only update to the house since we last authorised the President to act on our behalf in the Supreme Court is that in the first hearing the house’s view as to the powers and jurisdiction of the Ombudsman was upheld and that since then the Attorney-General has decided to appeal that hearing. I am therefore hoping that it will be a matter of routine for the house to reaffirm this motion that I have moved at the request of the President to ensure that the house is still willing to participate in this matter. We are left with little choice. The Attorney-General has decided to appeal the matter. We are automatically connected to the matter, and therefore it is not clear what would happen if the house decided to in fact now reverse its position and give up. I do not propose to spend any time commenting on the Attorney-General’s decision to appeal. It would be wrong for me to suggest that his appeal was unmeritorious or to try and second-guess the decision of the court. We will leave that for the court to decide in due course.

There is just one matter that I am concerned about and that I think should be raised here, though, and that is the decision by the Attorney-General. He is effectively standing in for those individual MPs in this house who have had accusations made against them which are now being investigated by one arm of our integrity system, that being the Ombudsman. If I was accused or was being dragged before an integrity body, it would be my job to get my own lawyer and represent myself. Because the members in this case who have been subject to these allegations happen to be government MPs — that is, members of the government party — they have got the government using taxpayers dollars actually challenging the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman to investigate them, and I am not sure that that is right.

It could be that what the government is trying to do here is keep all of its people under the one umbrella. Some of them may already be feeling that this has gone on too long and that they ought to find their own voice and make their own disclosures. Others of them may have already been obtaining their own legal advice and perhaps planning their own legal strategy — I do not

know — in relation to those matters. I just simply make the point that this is unusual compared to some of the circumstances in other states where individual members who are dragged before integrity bodies have to actually find their own lawyers and pay for them if they wish to challenge the jurisdiction of that integrity body.

Members being accused of misusing their entitlements is of course nothing new. It happens from time to time, and in other Westminster parliaments around the world there have been large and long-running scandals where many, many members have been caught up with and caught out doing the wrong thing, so I am not sure why there has been such an overreaction to these accusations. If someone accused me of misusing my entitlements, first of all I would have an inquiry immediately into my own conduct, and secondly, if I thought there was anything in doubt, I would pay back the entitlements and I would apologise to the house for any error, inadvertent or otherwise.

I believe it was a promise of the Andrews government that it would introduce a parliamentary standards commissioner. That would normally be one of the bodies where matters would be referred to or where individual members themselves could seek advice in relation to entitlements. I note also that the code of conduct and the disclosures that exist in the Members of Parliament (Register of Interests) Act 1978 really have not been updated for a very, very long time. While local government councillors now have codes of contact that sometimes run into dozens of pages, we MPs have got a bunch of dot points basically. At the same time there is a regulation-making power under that act which the Special Minister of State could use if he chose to actually produce a wider, more all-encompassing code of conduct or code of disclosure in consultation with MPs in this place. So in terms of the mechanisms that are in place to deal with accusations of this type, to have those accusations actually investigated and to clear the air, we are lacking here in Victoria and that may be part of the reason that we have this particular problem. But, as I say, I am hopeful that the house will simply reaffirm our previous instruction to you, President, to continue representing us on our side of this legal argument, and thereby if members could support this motion, we would be most grateful.

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to rise this morning to confirm that the coalition will support the motion that has been moved by Mr Barber, and the support for this matter has previously been conveyed by the coalition to the President at the time that the appeal was launched by the Attorney-General. The motion that Mr Barber

has moved sets out the basic circumstances of how the house comes to be considering this matter this morning. It arises from the house's decision late last year to make a referral to the Ombudsman for investigation of the allegations around the use of members' entitlements, and the subsequent decision by the Ombudsman to seek a determination from the Supreme Court as to her jurisdiction to undertake that inquiry. Once the Ombudsman had initiated proceedings to get that determination, this house then sought, via resolution of the house, for the President to represent the interest of the Council. The Attorney-General was likewise represented and has now subsequently sought to appeal the matter. Therefore it is appropriate that the Council once again be represented in this matter in this appeal via the President and the counsel that he has previously engaged. It is appropriate that this resolution formally confirm that position for the President, and indeed for the court, to know that the Council remains interested in this matter, and obviously the Council was encouraged by the decision made by Justice Cavanough on 26 August.

Mr Barber in his remarks touched on the issue of the government's decision to appeal the Attorney-General's decision to lodge this appeal, and Mr Barber is right. It does not go to the merits of the Attorney-General's case; it goes rather to the motivation of the Attorney-General in launching the appeal. The question which was previously considered in this house was: what is the public interest in the government — the Attorney-General — initially opposing the Ombudsman having the jurisdiction to undertake this inquiry, and subsequently through this appeal seeking to continue to oppose the Ombudsman being recognised as having this jurisdiction? So we believe this is an important matter, as the initial action in the Supreme Court was, and it is appropriate that the Council continue to be represented in this matter in this appeal and, as the notice of motion indicates, in further actions if required. The coalition will fully support this motion.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — Our government has a strong commitment to improving our integrity framework to make government more accountable and more transparent. In May of this year we passed the Integrity and Accountability Legislation Amendment (A Stronger System) Bill 2015 which, as members will recall, gives IBAC, the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman effective oversight of the public sector. This bill delivered on an election commitment and included providing the Auditor-General with follow-the-dollar powers when it audits public spending on government projects and services, streamlining access to the Victorian Ombudsman services and

allowing IBAC to investigate the common-law offence of misconduct in public office.

On our notice paper too sits the Transparency in Government Bill 2015, which we look forward to the house having an opportunity to consider upon the Special Minister of State's return to the chamber. We are delivering a modern and effective integrity regime that will ensure the highest standards of conduct within the public sector, and the framework that supports that regime is incredibly important.

Mr Barber I think misunderstands the basis of the government's decision to appeal the matter in question. Let me say that the government is in no way seeking to obstruct the Ombudsman from commencing any investigation into the matter that was referred by the house.

Mr Davis — That is the whole purpose of your action.

Ms PULFORD — Well, Mr Davis, I was just getting to that, actually. On 22 September the government lodged an appeal to the Supreme Court's decision regarding the Ombudsman's jurisdiction to investigate a referral made by the Legislative Council. This is an action that we are taking to protect the architecture of Victoria's integrity regime, particularly regarding the relationship between the Ombudsman and the houses and committees of the Victorian Parliament. The government is concerned that the recent Supreme Court decision has significant resource implications for the Ombudsman and will impact on the Ombudsman's ability to conduct investigations into other matters in accordance with the functions spelled out in the Ombudsman Act 1973. The government is also concerned about the implications of the decision on the question of privilege between the houses.

If this decision stands unchallenged, there would be no impediment to one house of the Parliament referring members of the other house to the Ombudsman with regard to any matter whatsoever, and as I said, in doing this we are not seeking to obstruct the Ombudsman from commencing an investigation into the reference.

I would also make the observation — and, as was Mr Barber, I am very conscious that this matter is before the courts and similarly intend to keep my remarks quite contained — in relation to the question of the involvement of the President of the Legislative Council and the Attorney-General that the Honourable Justice Cavanough did indicate in his judgement:

Fortunately, however, applications for joinder were later made on behalf of the President of the Legislative Council

and on behalf of the Attorney-General for the state of Victoria.

Without this His Honour indicated:

... the court would not have had the benefit of a proponent for any view nor of a contradictor of any view.

As I indicated, the government is committed to Victoria having a strong and robust integrity framework, a regime that ensures the highest possible standards of public administration in this state. The reason for us lodging the appeal is because the decision goes to the very heart of how this integrity regime works. It has significant consequences for the relationship between the Ombudsman and the houses and committees of the Parliament and significant consequences potentially for the operation of our integrity regime and resource allocations.

For those reasons, the government will be opposing the motion. As members have observed, this matter has been set down for 30 November this year, and I am sure we will all await the outcome of these proceedings with great interest.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 24

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

Noes, 12

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

Pairs

Lovell, Ms	Dalidakis, Mr
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Motion agreed to.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 11.01, there be tabled in the Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 8 November 2016, a copy of the Punt Road Public Acquisition Overlay Advisory Committee report submitted to the Minister for Planning on 30 May 2016.

I note for the information of the house that the date has been amended. We had sought to move this earlier, but in the business of the house there was no slot available. There is a slot today and hence the amendment of the delivery date.

The point I want to make here is that this relates directly to an important report. There was obviously a very significant panel hearing and a set of decisions that were made by that panel with information by community, by the City of Stonnington, by VicRoads and by other government agencies presented to the panel. The panel report relates directly to the longstanding public acquisition overlay — more than 50 years in operation now. I put on record that the coalition’s policy before the last election was a clearway through that area going north–south along Punt Road, and I note that in recent weeks the government has in effect adopted the coalition’s clearway policy for a north–south movement along Punt Road and will purchase car park capacity in a number of locations. That is a step that follows our policy, and we obviously support that step. Notwithstanding that, the longstanding issues around Punt Road and the overlay remain.

The government obviously has that report in its possession now; the Minister for Planning has that report. The report, in my view, ought to be in the public domain. The community ought to be able to see the panel report. It has been quite a while now, and I want to be quite clear here. I thank the minister’s office for a short meeting yesterday on this matter. I put on record my thanks to the staff but also to the minister for providing that briefing, and what they indicated to me in that briefing was that there were obviously a number of options canvassed in the hearing that were put forward by VicRoads and others, but the panel has recommended that consideration be given to additional options. Those additional options that are recommended by the panel are not in the public domain, and I believe they ought to be. The community ought to be able to respond to those. The community ought to be able to examine the merits or otherwise of those proposals, and for that reason this documents motion is being brought to the chamber.

I have put forward a one-month delivery date, and I want to just make some comments about the earlier Punt Road motion and some concerns I have about the government’s behaviour with respect to that. In the *Minutes of the Proceedings* of the house listed on the register, Punt Road was one set of documents where I moved a motion and had the support of the house. The resolution was passed on 9 December 2015. A letter was sent to the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) on 9 December 2015. The due date was 20 January 2016. The Attorney-General responded on 18 January 2016 claiming insufficient time. I hasten to add that in that debate I was very clear about one of the points about the urgency of moving that motion. The documents, the studies and the full gamut of information that VicRoads and other government agencies had in their possession ought to have been in the possession of the community enabling it to make submissions to the panel, which occurred in February 2016.

So the motion was moved in early December 2015, I sought delivery in January 2016, delivery was not provided in January and in fact the house will be shocked — or maybe the house will not — to hear that the delivery of the documents was actually on 20 June and the actual tabling was on 21 June. That is seven months after the initial motion and way after the period when the panel met, way after the time when the community could have availed themselves of those documents to make a considered submission and way after the time when the City of Stonnington could have accessed those documents for a more considered and refined submission.

Inherent within the planning panel’s process is actually community input and the community being informed.

The planning panel did seek to expand the number of documents that were sought. I notice that a number of the categories that we had moved in the house were later added to the list that the planning panel were seeking to access themselves. Again I welcome that point. There may need to be some refinement of our own procedures in the chamber so that the essence of the debate is communicated to the secretary of DPC and so that it is not just a cold date that is communicated in a letter from the Clerk to the secretary of DPC. Some essence of the debate needs to be also communicated so that the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet can actually see that there is a clear reason why the documents are being sought and that there is a clear time line that has been set for cogent reasons which relate to the purposes, in this case, of the panel. Having said that, I have communicated my

concern in this matter to the minister's staff, and no doubt they will communicate that to him.

I want to make comment on a similar situation which exists in the register of documents motions, and I thank the papers office for access to the register of documents motions and information on the fate of documents motions. The sky rail documents motion that was passed on 24 February and communicated on 24 February had a due date of 22 March, a month later. The reality is that there have been no documents received on this important motion, so I express my concern about the lack of documents available on this motion. There is nothing on the register beyond 21 March, and I think the document of that date is a letter from the Attorney-General saying he is looking at it. So clearly the government has made a decision not to provide those documents, and I certainly indicate to the house that I will pursue those documents.

The documents include: sound and vibration studies; submissions for and against; de-identified copies of communications; electronic presentation of 3D modelling; minutes and agendas of the community consultation panel chaired by the member for Oakleigh in the Legislative Assembly; assessments of alternate models; and the business case or such of the business case as has been completed. None of these have been provided. Again these ought to be in the public domain. The community has every right to these documents, and I will pursue that further. But I indicate my great concern.

I am sure that in the Legislative Council report tabled minutes ago the chamber's members will focus on page 13, which concerns the production of documents. I think that there is a need to ensure that the non-provision of documents is more adequately captured in the report, and I have suggested to the Clerk that we might look at some way in the future, without making this a voluminous report, to more adequately capture the effectiveness of documents motions or otherwise. A short table might achieve that. You can see in the report the decision of the government to obstruct many documents motions and obstruct the provision of information that I think has critical significance to the community.

I do not want to say much more, other than that the community group Drop Punt and other local community representatives have been in contact with me over this matter. Marcia Griffin contacted me, and I know she is a candidate in the City of Stonnington council elections. Others have also contacted me in support of this very significant motion that is being moved today to get this document.

I make the point here that the minister's reasons for non-provision of the documents do not actually persuade me. In fact they make me more determined to pursue this document. I welcome additional models being looked at by the panel, but I think the community has got to have a say and the City of Stonnington has got to have a say in the process. It has got to be able to put the case cogently for the community's position. I am very much persuaded that the public acquisition overlay is a legacy issue that has to be dealt with very soon indeed, and this panel report will assist the community, the council and others in the process of dealing with that legacy issue.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise today to speak to Mr Davis's motion 319 in relation to the Punt Road Public Acquisition Overlay Advisory Committee. There is no doubt that the Greens support this notice of motion submitted by Mr Davis. Indeed I moved a similar motion with similar intent in August this year, which has appeared on our notice paper. That motion had a date of 30 August attached to it in terms of presenting documents to be tabled to council. It is well past 30 August and we still have not seen those documents. So I am getting a little sense of groundhog day in relation to this issue, and perhaps to some others as well.

I also note that my colleague in the other place Sam Hibbins, the member for Prahran, has also moved a motion with similar intent in that place and has requested a copy of that final report under the Freedom of Information Act 1982. However, that request is still to be fulfilled. This report was due to be delivered to the Minister for Planning in April this year. The Minister for Planning has been sitting on the report for months, and the residents near the road have not been notified as to the recommendations in the report.

I also want to refer to the briefing provided to us by Minister Wynne's staff, and we thank those representatives for meeting with the Greens and talking through some of the issues, one of which was in relation to what I will call the hybrid option, a recommendation by the panel to explore a different option. The Greens have very specific views in relation to any options in that we believe there should not be an acquisition overlay. In fact there should be an entirely different approach to managing traffic in that area.

However, setting that aside, it is important that the community understand what is in that report and what is contemplated in that report. I think if there is a genuineness around understanding community needs, then you actually have to be open and transparent with the community in terms of what you might or might not

be proposing for them. It is a concern that there is an option in there that the community are not aware of. I completely understand that there is a process involved in VicRoads evaluating other options in terms of their impact on traffic modelling, but that does not mean that the community should be treated with contempt by not having that information available to them. It is very important that the community are taken on the journey and the community are part of the consultative process. These matters should be revealed to the community, so we are very concerned about that.

The Punt Road acquisition overlay has been in place for over 60 years. It is to reserve land for the purpose of widening Punt Road to become a six-lane highway cutting through the community of South Yarra. Widening Punt Road would be expensive, with a price tag of at least \$500 million, destructive — 130 properties would be bulldozed, including homes and heritage buildings — and pointless. A widened road would simply induce demand and lead to a 65 per cent increase in traffic with only negligible improvement in travel times.

Think of what could be done with a budget of \$500 million in terms of relieving traffic congestion in that region and in the inner city. You could certainly start with improving the 246 bus service. There are options to create an inner-city orbital route, which of course would allow people to travel across the city in the inner city. It is very difficult to do so at the moment. Those sorts of orbital routes simply do not exist in a seamless, SmartBus-type service, so people are forced to get into their cars because there are no other options. An inner-city orbital road of course could have enormous benefits, linking Elsternwick to Punt Road, Hoddle Street to Clifton Hill and Brunswick Road to Moonee Ponds station and Footscray station. In fact it would provide an arc of transport across that inner ring of Melbourne. You could certainly apply that \$500 million price tag to something that has far more benefit into the future than a six-lane road through South Yarra would create.

Looking at that pool of money, you could modernise the bus stops and include real-time displays as part of upgrades to public transport to make public transport a user-friendly option for people. There are far better options available. We know that Punt Road and the surrounding area is not just a road that people drive through that needs to be widened at all costs; it is a community where people live, they go to school, they play in parks and they visit family.

In terms of presenting documents to the house, it is the role of this house to scrutinise all manner of reports

from government. The Greens believe in open and transparent processes. We also believe in the important role of scrutiny that this house provides. I certainly would like to think that the government will respond to the time lines in this motion, but I do not have much faith in that, given it has not responded to either my motion or that of Mr Hibbins in the other place requesting similar documents. It is well beyond time that the state government come clean to the community of South Yarra and release the Punt Road acquisition overlay committee report. The Minister for Planning must make a commitment to the people of South Yarra, Prahran and Windsor that the widening will not proceed — not now, not ever. What we say is that this overlay should be removed once and for all, providing the certainty that those communities need in terms of the future direction of their local neighbourhood.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — I would like to start my comments with a bit of broad context, which is to repeat some sentiments that I have expressed before in relation to similar motions, and that is to say that on motions like this I feel like I am being presented with a pincer movement of swords. One arm I would say is principled but in error in my view, and that would be the Greens position, which is for a level of disclosure of government documents that I believe would make effective government unworkable. I have heard on a lot of different motions the Greens expound why it is they believe that government should be far more open than it has been in the past. I think we can have a sensible debate about where you draw the line, and on this motion I will explain where I believe the line should be drawn.

As has been discussed on a number of occasions, I think the government believes — and I think rightly so and with justification — that it has in fact been a very open government and a government that is far more open than previous governments.

Mr Davis — No.

Mr MULINO — It has been. However, there have to be lines, and not every single document in existence can be disclosed at any given point in time. I disagree with the Greens, but I do believe they are coming from a position of principle.

The other arm of the pincer on this occasion is Mr Davis, but it is not always Mr Davis; it is usually Mr Davis. That arm of the pincer is what I might call the mischievous and disingenuous arm of the pincer. That arm of the pincer is really to put up motions that Mr Davis well knows fly in the face not only of effective government but of his own previous

government's behaviour and of his own previous behaviour as a minister. He knows this full well. To some degree I have to admire his capacity to stand up and with a straight face speak at length to document motion after document motion. It does show quite a degree of gall and it does show quite a degree of chutzpah, but nonetheless it is all there on *Hansard*. But Mr Davis does strike the sanctimonious pose.

Mrs Peulich — You can't reflect on a member.

Mr MULINO — I think sanctimonious is not too harsh. I think it is very well within the bounds of the debate we get in this place. But I think, without wanting to reflect ill, it is fair to say that there is a degree of pontification on a range of document motions. The core point here is: does Mr Davis really believe that every document in existence, every document being crafted by departments, should be released at any point when either house of Parliament asks for it? I do not think he genuinely believes that effective government would be furthered by the kind of breadth of document disclosure that he often puts forward in motions in this place.

In terms of this particular issue, it is true that this issue has been under active consideration in public forums by a review panel set up by the government. This is an issue which is very sensitive. It is an issue which I think everybody in this place agrees is of great importance for people directly affected but also for our city as a whole. This government went to the last election with a commitment to review the Punt Road public acquisition overlay. Now, Mr Davis talks about the fact that the previous government had all sorts of aspirations and policies and that they went to the previous election with all sorts of policies, but I would not have minded if he had spent at least some of his time telling us what they actually did in the previous four years, because it is all well and good to criticise processes and criticise actions taken by a government that is actually trying to fix problems — those opposite are often far better at criticising than they were at actually doing anything — but what we are doing is actually trying to address a complicated transport challenge, a congestion challenge, that the community identified as a key issue at the last election.

The Minister for Planning established an independent advisory committee to undertake the review that we are discussing in this motion. It comprised Trevor McCullough as the chair, Kevin Breen, Sue Porter and Henry Turnbull. I think it is important to note that the submission process commenced in October 2015 and closed in November 2015 and that 121 submissions were received. Many submissions were received, and public hearings commenced in February 2016 and ran

for six days. It was a process that allowed for considerable public input. That is something which I think is critical.

As has been alluded to in the two previous speeches, the advisory committee submitted its report in May 2016. Seven concept designs for the future layout of the road were developed by VicRoads and were assessed in detail by the committee, but the committee, as part of its assessment, developed its own concept design. So this is a complicated issue, and it is not surprising that a committee, after all of that public input and after all of the consideration it had undertaken, would come up with further ideas. As part of the committee's own recommendation the Minister for Planning referred this additional concept to the roads minister, who has directed VicRoads to test the concept.

So we are not rushing this. We are not undertaking it with no attention for the need to get this done quickly, but we are not rushing it, because it is such an important issue. But it is entirely appropriate for this additional concept to be tested rigorously, and VicRoads and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety are the appropriate avenue in which that should be tested. VicRoads has the expertise and the resources to thoroughly test that additional concept. After the Minister for Planning receives further advice from the roads minister he will make a decision on the status of the public acquisition overlay. It is important, I think, to understand that context. This is a process that has been led by experts, that has allowed for extensive public input and that has on the advice of its experts, after having received public input, developed an additional concept which is being rigorously tested. It is not appropriate at this stage of the process to release all of the documents that are being sought, and this is standard process.

This is where I return to the fact that I believe Mr Davis is being disingenuous, because if we go back through his time as a minister, he would not have disclosed documents when he was a minister that were under consideration in such contexts. As we put on the record when we discussed document motions prior to the outrageous suspension of Mr Jennings, previous ministers such as Mr Davis have a far, far worse record on disclosure than anybody on this side. He says that, but we have already put that on the record in the past, and the number of times when he came back with totally unsatisfactory responses makes it truly outrageous that he should pontificate on matters such as this.

Mr Barber — Two wrongs don't make a right.

Mr MULINO — It is not two wrongs, because we are disclosing far more than the previous government did — far more. That is what makes this so ironic. So it is one wrong and one right. Mr Davis I think knows full well that what we are doing in this process is very much standard practice, and it is entirely appropriate for this government to be careful, cautious and rigorous when it comes to evaluating these seven options plus the additional option put up by the committee. This is very much the way that government works in such situations.

I just want to put on the record also that again Mr Davis made a few references to the fact that the previous government had all sorts of aspirations and policies but made no mention of anything they actually did in this critical transport corridor. We introduced 24-hour clearways along Punt Road to improve the operation of this street, and it is already clear that Punt Road travel times have reduced significantly, as has congestion. The government has also made a \$60 million election commitment to improve the flow along Hoddle Street, and this has been delivered in full in the 2016–17 budget. So I do think it is important to put on the record that this government is delivering when it comes to this corridor, as opposed to the previous government, which had a whole series of aspirations and policies but nothing that Mr Davis could point to — and of course he did not point to any actual achievements.

Again, if we go back to the record of the previous government when it comes to releasing reports, we can go to Mr Davis's record, but we could also go to the record of the previous Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, now in the Legislative Assembly. He chose not to release a number of reports, including the original *Plan Melbourne* ministerial advisory committee report. He did not release the Victorian Planning System Ministerial Advisory Committee final report, commonly referred to as the Underwood report, and on it goes.

I do not judge this government by comparing it to the previous government; we hold ourselves to a different, higher standard. We judge ourselves to the standard of disclosing as many documents as is possible, subject to effective, good government. But I do think it is worth putting on the record that the previous government's record on disclosure is so appalling it makes Mr Davis's speech quite humorous and ironic, and for him to deliver the speech he just gave, given his record and given Mr Guy's record, is remarkable.

But, look, we set a standard of releasing documents wherever possible, subject to it being in the public interest. This is something that we have outlined on

many, many occasions in relation to a raft of disclosure motions that have been put to this place in my relatively brief time here, and I want to reiterate that point. We are an open and transparent government, but we also believe there are limits. For that reason I recommend the process and I support the process that the Minister for Planning is currently pursuing.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I will be very brief in reply. Of course much of what was said by Mr Mulino then is complete claptrap. We were the most accountable of all governments and provided the largest number of documents in a huge range of different categories.

Mr Mulino — Yours? Health?

Mr DAVIS — Indeed, absolutely — more than ever before in health. But the point here today relates to Punt Road, and I would argue that this is a very important set of documents. The community have a right — and we heard from the government that the community do not have a right — to these documents. Mr Mulino says it is all about good government, yet good government equals cutting the community out of access to these documents! This government allows VicRoads and the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to have their input, but it does not allow the community to have their chance and their opportunity to see these different options.

I welcome the planning panel producing different options. We have obviously not seen those options — we do not have the benefit of having seen them — but we should. That will enable the community to get a better outcome. I would argue good government is not, as Mr Mulino construed it, about closing down community access to these documents. It is actually about providing community access to these documents and providing the opportunity for the community to refine and improve government outcomes on their own behalf.

Obviously Stonnington has got a huge role there. Mr Carrasco and the range of people with the Drop Punt group are very active in the local area. I believe they have the right to see these documents forthwith. There is no reason why these could not be released this afternoon, and the community could then have that additional input.

I do take exception, though, to some of the commentary of Mr Mulino with respect to other documents. I used two clear examples as shown by the documents register. One related to the earlier Punt Road documents motion and the more than seven-month period in

relation to the provision of documents long after the panel process had concluded. It is an extraordinary travesty of democracy. In the case of the sky rail documents, they are still outstanding. There are thousands of documents, some of which I have obtained by other mechanisms — freedom of information. But the Leader of the Government and the ministry have snubbed their noses at the community of the south-east — the community through Murrumbidgee, through Carnegie and through Noble Park. They have snubbed their noses at those people, saying, ‘We don’t believe those documents should be provided’. And you will hear more in this chamber about that extraordinary non-provision since late February this year.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Reference

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to be able to rise this morning and move:

That, pursuant to sessional order 6, this house requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into and report on, no later than Thursday, 24 November 2016, issues at both Parkville and Malmesbury youth justice centres including, but not limited to —

- (1) matters relating to incidents including definitions, numbers and changes to the reporting of incidents;
- (2) the security and safety of staff, employees and young offenders at both facilities; and
- (3) any other issues the committee considers as relevant.

In doing so can I say that I have discussed this motion with a number of colleagues and members in the house because some serious issues have arisen in recent times, and I am talking especially about what has been happening in recent months in our youth justice facilities. Colleagues and members of the crossbench from other parties have said that they have concerns in relation to the reporting date in this motion and other areas in relation to what the stakeholders have perhaps said to them about that reporting date as well. I just put that on the record and say that those concerns have been noted, and I thank the members for their discussions with me.

But as I said at the outset, we have a very serious problem here in Victoria in relation to our youth justice centres. There is no denying that, particularly in view of the media reports that are coming out from all media outlets. It is not just one media outlet, such as the

Herald Sun; it is the ABC, it is the *Age* and it is others. In fact it has gone overseas. I heard a report just in September that an outlet in the UK is reporting on this crisis. So can I say that it is not just one outlet. People are looking at what is happening here, and I think that obviously they are looking at it because of what has happened at a national level in terms of the royal commission into the Don Dale situation in the Northern Territory.

If you look at the youth justice facilities here in Victoria, the objectives of those facilities, according to the department’s website, include:

where appropriate support diversion of young people charged with an offence from the criminal justice system;

minimise the likelihood of reoffending and further progression into the criminal justice system through supervision that challenges offending behaviours and related attitudes and promotes prosocial behaviours;

work with other services to strengthen community-based options for young people enabling an integrated approach to the provision of support that extends beyond the court order;

engender public support and confidence in the youth justice service.

I do not think that is occurring. I would say that the community has got real concerns about law and order generally in this state at the current time. There are no surprises in that because of what we have seen in the latest crime statistics, which demonstrate an increase in crime across the state of 13.4 per cent.

Unfortunately many of those crimes are being committed by young offenders. When those young offenders are subject to the courts and then put into the youth justice facilities, of course everybody wants to give them the best chance in rehabilitation, support and education. Can I say it was the former minister, Ms Wooldridge, who actually put an education facility into the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre at Parkville and did a tremendous job in identifying the support that these young people need. Some of them do not have any or have very poor literacy or numeracy skills and have totally disengaged, and this education facility is giving them the skills that they need to enable them, when they are out of the facility, to be productive in the community and ensuring that they can lead productive lives. That is what everyone wants. Everyone in this chamber wants that for these young people. No-one is suggesting otherwise.

But when you have got some young offenders who are very violent and who have committed serious offences, there have to be consequences and disciplinary measures have to be put in place. Of course these youth

justice facilities need to be able to manage those circumstances. Let us look again at the youth justice custodial setting. As we know, these young offenders can have very complex backgrounds, they can be very violent and they can have a multitude of reasons for that. However, that does not excuse causing anyone in the community or within the youth justice facility to fear for their safety. I do not think we need to be putting up with this time and time again.

I want to outline in my contribution why I have put forward this motion to the house and why I think it is important: because of what is actually being reported in the public domain and perhaps what is occurring in the facilities themselves. I will go to the first paragraph of my motion:

- (1) matters relating to incidents including definitions, numbers and changes to the reporting of incidents ...

If I can just look at those reporting requirements, starting with category 1 reporting requirements, about which I have asked numerous questions of the minister, yes, the minister has put on the record data relating to category 1. That is actually a result of a discussion that she and I had in the chamber about reporting and putting it on the website. I am very pleased that the government is doing that, because as I said it is giving confidence to the public about what is actually happening within the Department of Health and Human Services and, in the context of what we are discussing today, what is actually happening within the youth justice facilities.

Yes, we have got the Commission for Children and Young People and, yes, they are doing their job, but my goodness, have they got some work on their hands. There are a number of reviews being undertaken by the commission — and I commend the work that they are doing — but we are about to introduce more legislation in relation to child protection in this house. We are about to debate a bill in this house in the coming weeks, and again the workload that will be put on the Commission for Children and Young People in relation to that particular piece of legislation will need to see additional resources. So, yes, the commissioner might be able to review all these category 1 reports that are going across the health minister's desk and her desk, but, as I said, we need to do what the actual department's website says about youth justice, and that is:

engender public support and confidence in the youth justice service.

With that in mind, if I can just go to the department's website, this is what it says about category 1 incidents:

Category 1 incidents are the most serious incidents and include incidents such as death of clients; allegations of physical or sexual assault; and serious client behaviour issues that impact on client or staff safety.

Well, according to the website, in relation to some of these definitions:

Following public hearings at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, a practice change occurred in mid-2015 that has resulted in all youth justice clients being asked about events prior to being admitted to custody. Following this ... there has been an increase in the number of assault incidents reported.

As we are constantly being told by the government and others, some of these offenders have got seriously complex backgrounds and have histories of abuse. So in the reporting of the assaults in these categories we do not know if they are assaults that have occurred prior to them entering the youth justice system or if the assaults have occurred in the youth justice system, nor do we know, really, who these assaults are against. Are they inmate against inmate, client against client or against the staff?

Looking at these numbers, in the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee this year the minister did provide figures relating to some of these category 1 incidents. Actually, before I go to that, can I just explain again about these categories. Obviously client death is self-explanatory. Assault includes alleged physical and sexual assaults, the majority being physical assaults. In a custodial setting assaults often occur when young people in a confined space become agitated and frustrated, and this can result in physical force such as hitting or throwing objects. Behaviour includes incidents involving aberrant or threatening behaviour, and other incident types are defined as other incidents that include matters such as drug or alcohol possession and injury.

Now, going back to those figures that have been publicly reported on, in July to September 2015, quarter 1, client deaths was zero, assaults was 15, behaviour was 1 and other incidents was 1. That is a total of 17. In October to December, quarter 2, client deaths was zero, assaults was 22, behaviour was zero and other incidents was 5. That is a total of 27. Now to quarter 3, taking into consideration that quarter 3 had the October riots that I will go to shortly. In quarter 3, which is obviously January to March, client deaths was zero, assaults was 23, behaviour was zero and other incidents was 5. That is a total of 28, and in that period

there were the March riots. Quarter 4 was a similar figure to those that I have just given to you.

In relation to the concerns that I have, there is consistency in the numbers that I have just read out; they are around the early to mid-20s. My concerns are in terms of what is being publicly put on record not being consistent with what is actually being reported in a range of media outlets and what is being said to a number of people in relation to stakeholders that are involved in this. I will have a look at that now. We have had, as I said, riot after riot after riot in our youth justice system. Looking at the reports — and I am holding a wad of reports that relate to all of these instances that have occurred — we of course had the October riots that were in Parkville last year when six inmates climbed onto a roof. I am just going to remind members of what actually occurred, what I am referring to and why I have grave concerns about the figures that are being reported. This was reported in the *Age* of 31 October 2015:

A tense stand-off sparked after six inmates climbed onto the roof of the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre was just the tip of the iceberg of ongoing tension ...

Here is another concern regarding that particular incident. The *Herald Sun* of 1 November 2015 reported that:

Staff at the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre say they were short on numbers when six inmates armed with cricket bats and tennis rackets climbed onto the roof.

Four workers were assaulted ... one during an attempted stabbing ...

So you can see that these actually do fit the categories that I spoke about. Again at Parkville, on 7 March the *Age* reported:

The inmates climbed onto the roof, some armed with metal bars ...

The centre was put into lockdown, and police and security guards surrounded the building.

The teens were seen smashing skylights and damaging air-conditioning units on the roof of the facility.

Heavily armoured riot police entered the compound about 7.30 p.m. and were pelted with materials by the inmates.

Again, there is just report after report in relation to what actually occurred. This actual incident was the second incident that occurred, as reported by the *Herald Sun* of 8 March:

It was the second day of mayhem at the centre, which was locked down on Sunday after hammers, pitchforks and metal bars were stolen from a horticulture shed.

One inmate was injured when up to a dozen teen boys turned on him.

Those are just the two major ones that have been reported, and I know that some of these inmates have got some concerns. Yes, they might like to be seen to be displaying this sort of behaviour, but what we have got in here is a gang culture, and I know that the minister refuses to acknowledge that. She calls it a 'community affiliation', but it is well known that gangs are operating in the youth justice facilities. In terms of what is occurring, this is not giving anyone, especially those more vulnerable young people that are in there, the tools, support and necessary guidance to not take up more violent activity, be recruited into these gangs and then be set on a downward spiral into not only becoming attendees of youth justice services but getting into the adult prison system. So we do not want that to be occurring. Clearly there are Apex gang members in the youth justice facilities, there are other gang members from other groups that are also in there and this is causing increased tensions.

Now, the riots; can I say, they are the ones that we know about, and we know that — —

Ms Mikakos — There were never riots.

Ms CROZIER — Well, I would say they are riots, Ms Mikakos, when kids are getting on the roofs, smashing up and causing hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars — —

Ms Mikakos — Ms 'Supermax' Crozier.

Ms CROZIER — Well, you might deny this, Ms Mikakos, but the community and equally those more vulnerable people in that facility, as well as the staff, deserve to be protected. They deserve to be kept safe. You are denying that this is even occurring. You are saying that gangs do not exist; you are saying that there are community affiliations. You do not even acknowledge that gangs exist.

Ms Mikakos — You are just making things up, like you always do.

Ms CROZIER — I am not making it up.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order!

Ms CROZIER — Through you, Acting President, I am not making this up. This is reported and this is coming from people that are working — —

Ms Mikakos — Can you stop? You went out and committed your party to a supermax, not knowing it is 23-hour isolation.

Ms CROZIER — Oh, that is just ridiculous, Ms Mikakos. There are real concerns in the community about gangs recruiting from within these facilities and the riots that are occurring. We must be looking at protecting these young inmates where we can, giving them the support and the rehabilitation that they require — not getting them into a downward spiral. You have just lost control of this youth justice facility. As I said, I am holding a wad of reports in relation to these riots and the activity that has occurred under your watch.

Ms Mikakos — Newspaper clips are not reports.

Ms CROZIER — They are newspaper reports, and they have occurred — through you, Acting President. If I can just refer to another media report from ABC online — —

Ms Mikakos — There is a royal commission; there are two inquiries.

Ms CROZIER — There has been review after review by Minister Mikakos. If I can just go to that, Peter Muir conducted a review of the youth justice facilities last year.

Ms Mikakos — So you don't want me doing reviews, but you want your own inquiry, contradicting your own position.

Ms CROZIER — No. Because you will not release your reviews. So we want to know what is actually going on, because there are statistics that are on your departmental website — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order!

Ms Mikakos interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order! Minister! Ms Crozier, if you can direct your comments through the Chair, and Minister, if you can give the member the opportunity to speak to her motion.

Ms CROZIER — So, as I was saying, there are a number of concerns that have been raised by people working within the facilities as well as others. ABC online quoted Community and Public Sector Union Victoria spokesman Julian Kennedy, who said:

A number of staff with the three [inmates being threatened] had to barricade themselves into a unit coordinator's room, where they had to use a couch and desk against the door to deny the threatening clients access.

If this is not an out-of-control situation, I do not know what is. If you have got staff barricading themselves in

and you have got 11 inmates taking over the facility's area, this shows no control by those that are supposed to be in charge, or maybe they do not have the capacity because they do not have the numbers to be able to do so. That is why the system is in chaos and that is why people, and especially these young people who are in it, are at risk.

I just want to again refer to some of the issues that we have been told about. The police have been out there on numerous occasions — —

Mr Herbert interjected.

Ms CROZIER — Well, Mr Herbert, this is a serious issue. The community thinks it is a serious issue. It is only the government that do not understand how serious it is, when you have got kids running amok, causing millions of dollars of damage, and the minister doing nothing about it except having review after review.

As I said, WorkSafe Victoria — —

Ms Mikakos — So you don't want us having reviews to improve the system; you want to have an inquiry — after you committed to a supermax?

Ms CROZIER — Minister, we do not know what is in your reviews, and if we have got serious offenders committing a series of violent crimes, then they need a facility where they can be properly looked after — not recruiting others like they are doing now.

If I can return to what I was speaking about: the WorkSafe report that was undertaken in March of this year. WorkSafe went out and looked at Parkville on 24 March. This report says:

Inspector —

and the name appears —

... and I attended the workplace to make inquiries into an incident that was notified to WorkSafe on 9/3/2016 —

which, you might take note of, is immediately after the March riots —

and to discuss the current measures in place to control occupational violence risk (together with recommendations provided by an external consultant).

...

On 9/3/2016 an employee lost consciousness whilst in the process of subduing a client with other staff members.

Again, there was another health and safety issue that was raised.

The report continues:

We were provided with the Review of the Approach to the Prevention of Occupational Violence in Secure Services document dated September 2015 by Peter Muir, Consulting Pty Limited.

That is the same review that I asked to be made public, but, no, the minister will not allow that but gives it to WorkSafe. They are allowed to have a look at the report into what was undertaken but the public are not.

The report continues further on:

Workplace health and safety issue

A further meeting has been arranged for 10.30 on 12 April to discuss the findings of the review of the above incident and gather further information relating to the above report.

This WorkSafe report is actually quite enlightening because it does raise a lot of concerns. It states:

On 26/3/2016 a client received a leg injury during a restraint process. He was taken to hospital and later released. I viewed the CCTV recording of this incident ...

The inspector —

stated that a review of the restraint shall occur on this incident.

Again:

On 23/3/2016 an employee was injured when he intervened to separate a physical altercation between two detainees. Having discussed this incident and viewed the CCTV I determined the following ...

The inspector then lists a whole range of things that were determined, one of which is:

one of the clients within the unit observed a client in the foyer area through the aluminium door and began kicking the door;

the aluminium door was broken from its hinges from clients kicking it which compromised the physical separation;

the two groups of clients interacted and several began fighting;

...

it was acknowledged that the aluminium door is not of sufficient strength to prevent it being kicked in and this compromises the safety system when relying on the door to separate aggressive parties;

...

The employer has failed to provide a system of work relating to client separation that is, so far as is reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health.

Large areas of this WorkSafe report have been redacted. This is not a newspaper report that I am

referring to, Minister. This is actually a WorkSafe report, so this is actually, as you would know, factual. I mean, you get these category 1s over your desk, so you know exactly what I am talking about with all of these incidents. You have gone silent now on it. These are really concerning issues.

Ms Mikakos — Have you heard of the commission too, because we changed the legislation to make that happen. If you cared — —

Ms CROZIER — This is an FOI, Minister.

If I can, through you, Acting President, go back to this very important WorkSafe report, the one that I am referring to.

These are notes from the staff, who have said:

Daily 4 p.m. staff meeting. Confrontation with offenders escalated. 1 removed. Unit manager returned. Additional verbal confrontation occurred in rec room. Lost consciousness. Transport to —

a Melbourne hospital. The notes also state:

Incident Monday 7/3/16. Offenders climbed up onto the roof of building, including Eastern Hill unit. Unit manager attended incident all day/night. Late night ... Management unit to be created on site —

da, da, da; it goes on. In fact it is a little bit difficult to read, some of this, but nevertheless the notes state:

Full capacity makes it difficult to separate clients. Door flimsy.

... one aggressor moved to Malmsbury ... one released. Incident reported to police.

So we have got police attending, we have got movement between the facilities, we have got people climbing up there, we have got breaches of the infrastructure within the facility and we have got a range of issues in this WorkSafe report — that is heavily redacted, so I do not know the full extent of what was actually going on; I am only just able to identify what I can. Importantly — and this I think is where with these issues we know that they are out of control — the notes state that the security emergency response team, or the SERT, was:

... in training which delayed response. If one more client involved we were stuffed.

This is the workers just writing these reports, these daily reports. We know that they are seriously under stress in relation to their capacity to be able to deal with this ongoing violent behaviour that is occurring and the ongoing issues that are in our youth justice facilities. That was just one report in March. I do not have access

to, obviously, all the other issues, but in this financial year they are the number of incidents that have occurred that we know about. That is all we know about.

On 9 September staff were barricading themselves in after a rampage through Parkville; gang members were outside setting off firecrackers and flares, apparently. Starting the next day there was another violent rampage over a couple of successive nights, and youths attacked other detainees. On Saturday, 17 September, there were three youths on the roof with handmade weapons in Malmsbury. Again, on Wednesday, 28 September, there were more riots on roofs and there was more serious damage to various parts of that facility.

As I said, there are more reports of this that are reported in the papers, and thank God they are, because the government is not coming clean with what is actually going on. So I cannot fully have confidence in what is reported on the department's website in relation to the assaults and the number of behaviour problems when there has been consistent activity as I have described over the past year. What we do know is that the category 1 assaults over the past year have risen by 263.6 per cent in youth justice centres and the number of unsentenced 10 to 17-year-olds has risen from 3.79 per cent to 37.3 per cent.

What is really concerning for some of these offenders who are in there who are not getting the support that they need is that the percentage of youth justice clients participating in community reintegration activities has dropped to 58.7 per cent from 80 per cent under the coalition. So the staff do not have the capacity or do not have the skills or the ability to be doing a lot of the support that is required, and there are many, many other issues that I believe have not been fully disclosed by the government.

As I said, yes, it can have the Commission for Children and Young People doing a review, and yes, it can have Peter Muir doing review after review after review — and I am sure there will be more reviews coming, and there probably already are — but you, Minister, have not been able to provide the safety that these young people require to enable them to have at least rehabilitation or to separate the very violent young offenders from those other more vulnerable offenders that are in these facilities, and you have not provided the staff with support either. What I am being told is that even in the last month, in September, there were 41 incidents of serious assault against staff. These were in the current reporting period, and I will be very interested to see what is on the department's website. It is also being constantly reported that these young

people are armed with makeshift weapons and other weapons that can cause serious damage.

I have heard, which is very concerning, about two incidents. Actually, one was reported in this WorkSafe report, involving a young person who was obviously injured and taken off to hospital after getting concussed. But only just last week or in the last couple of weeks one young person in Parkville was what was described to me as king hit, fell down a flight of stairs, fractured his skull and was unconscious and taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. This was done by another young offender. That could have resulted in the most catastrophic circumstances. That young person could have died or could have ended up with a severe disability. I do not know the outcome for that young person — I have not actually been able to find out — but I do know that it occurred and that it is not the only serious assault that has been going on. So if the minister is telling me that behaviour and assaults like that are within the range of what we are talking about here — knowing that a lot of these people as described by the government itself have got a history of abuse and so then that is recorded in the assaults argument — then I have some concerns about how they are being reported, how the definitions of those assaults and behavioural issues are undertaken and how category 1 incident reporting is undertaken.

That is why I have actually moved this motion, because this issue is not diminishing; this issue is escalating. The government has lost control of this. I do not know if they are trying, but there is no capacity for the minister to get the situation under control because of the repeated serious incidents and riots that are occurring in our youth justice facilities.

I think the legal and social issues committee has the capacity to undertake this. They just recently undertook the extremely difficult reference on assisted dying, and they did a magnificent job on that. I would like to commend the chair, Edward O'Donohue, and all members of the committee for the very considered work they did. It was a very, very difficult reference, and they took a lot of submissions in relation to that inquiry. They reviewed the issues extensively and heard from a lot of stakeholders. It was very difficult work, a very difficult reference and an exceptional job undertaken by that committee. There is no issue about capacity of the committee to undertake such an inquiry as this. If we think about these young people, some of the most vulnerable young people in our community, we know they require the support of the youth justice staff, the department and the government to enable them to be able to get back into the mainstream community. That is what we should be achieving.

Currently we have got a system that is seriously out of control, and what is going on is very concerning.

I do note that the department is undertaking a review of the client incident management system. They announced that last year, and it was meant to be done halfway through this year. Goodness knows where we are with that. When was that new system meant to commence? I do not know what is going on. I do not know whether we have got a half-baked reporting of the client incident management system. I do not know what is going on. That is my point here. We need to understand how this is being reported. We need to see if some of these incidents are now called, as I have described them in the past, serious incidents and whether incident reports are being replaced by critical case notes or whether they are not being reported in the same way that they had been before.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — I am just asking. I want to know what is going on now.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — Ms Mikakos, you can scream at — —

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — As I said, Minister Wooldridge undertook some significant reform within the sector. As I said, she was the one that put in the education facility in Parkville. Yes, there were incidents under her time too, as you would expect. I mean, we are talking about vulnerable children.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — I said at the start — if you were in here, Minister — that this is a difficult area, but it is out of control under you. We have had serious incidents.

Ms Shing interjected.

Ms CROZIER — Well, the description I just gave of the young man getting knocked out and thrown down the steps of Parkville and then ending up with a fractured skull — how is that categorised? Is that an assault? Is that a behavioural problem? What is happening here? Because I do not know. With the consistent records that you are putting on your department's website — 20 assaults, 5 behavioural problems, no behavioural problems — I do not know. I actually want to get to the bottom of this because this

WorkSafe report indicates, in just a few days, the behavioural issues, assaults and serious other incidents that would come under the category 1 definition. Yes, the former minister might have done some review and reform in 2011 and throughout our term, but my goodness, she did some work on this and she had the issue under control. You do not. That is the issue.

I will go back to what I said at the start. Youth justice in Victoria needs to undertake a number of things. Engendering public support and confidence in the youth justice service is not occurring, and the workers do not feel that is occurring. Even your union, the Community and Public Sector Union — —

Ms Mikakos — You are the workers' friend now.

Ms CROZIER — You know, Ms Mikakos, I have actually worked in the public sector. I worked in the public health sector for about 16 years, so I actually do know how this operates. I do not know if you have, but I have. I might sit on this side and you might claim to be the friend of workers, but we actually understand — —

Ms Mikakos — You were very happy to be a scab during the nurse's dispute and spoke about it proudly, and now you're the workers' friend.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order!

Ms CROZIER — In relation to that interjection, the minister can say that — —

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — No credibility? I was looking after unconscious patients and I made a decision to look after unconscious patients rather than standing on the street, and I would do that every single time. I had a duty of care to those patients to not stand on the road with others at the time. You can call me a scab, Ms Mikakos, but I would do that every single time. That is the difference between you and me. I actually worked in the public health system for 14 years after that, and do you know what? You say it all. You are something else.

Nevertheless, I am not talking about me. Let us get back to what we are talking about. Yes, I will defend the workers when they are being absolutely taken for a ride by the government. You claim to be the friend of the worker, but you are not actually representing their concerns. So when those workers are talking about fearing for their lives, you have got a problem. They actually want to help these young people, yet they are not able to, because they have got staff that will not turn

up to work because they are too frightened, that are on sick leave and other leave and that do not want to turn up because they fear for their safety.

Now she is walking out. She does not care. Ms Mikakos, there are a lot of people concerned about this.

Ms Mikakos interjected.

Ms CROZIER — Yes, you can huff and puff, but there are a lot of people concerned about this. You should actually be listening to what those concerns are, come into this house and provide the information that we constantly ask for so that we can have confidence in the system and give those people that have the responsibility in very difficult circumstances of looking after some of these very difficult, challenging young offenders the ability to do so. Yet you are not, and they are leaving in droves.

How many people have left the youth justice sector in the last 12 months? I ask the minister to answer that in her response. I want to know how many casual workers there are. I want to know how many have left, how many are there, how many are on sick leave and how many are on WorkCover leave. All of those questions have been asked, and the minister keeps coming back and saying it will be in the annual reports on the department's website.

As I said, these are serious concerns in relation to what is occurring. If the minister does not know what is going on, she is either incompetent or covering up. These issues are serious. There are reports. She might just say that I am reading from newspaper articles; that is because they are getting the information from people — —

Mrs Peulich — They are people's views.

Ms CROZIER — Exactly. News outlets right across the state and internationally are looking at what is going on here. It is quite extraordinary when it reaches the UK press and they are writing about it.

Ms Mikakos — We have got reviews underway, and then you have criticised them.

Ms CROZIER — Your reviews are not working. Make them public. When the riots happened in the adult remand system, those reports were made public. The minister has stated in this place that she will not release the reviews because of privacy issues, so we do not know what is going on. There was a review after October. There was a review after March. We do not know what is in those reviews. How many other

reviews are going on? She is the minister for reviews. That is all she is.

Ms Mikakos — So you want an inquiry.

Ms CROZIER — I want the Legal and Social Issues Committee — —

Ms Mikakos interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order! Ms Crozier does have a right to speak to her motion. The minister's side will have an opportunity to speak to the motion. I would ask that Ms Crozier be given the respect of being allowed to complete her contribution, and I would ask Ms Crozier to draw her attention to the motion.

Ms CROZIER — Thank you for that guidance, Acting President. As I said, this motion is dealing with a very serious issue. I do not think it should be taken lightly, and I do not understand why the minister will not support a parliamentary inquiry to look into this issue. Parliament needs to look into this issue. It can do so. It has undertaken inquiries in the past. I know colleagues have concerns in relation to the reporting times. Obviously the committee can work through those and look at the reporting times if they feel they are too short. I am very happy to be open about those considerations.

But if we are to understand what is going on, an inquiry must be undertaken, because we do not know what is in those reviews. We have got to rely on the minister. We do not know what is in those reviews because the minister will not release them publicly, and that is not helping the situation where in the last three months — in this financial year — we have had riot after riot and destruction and damage. I am still waiting for my FOIs on the cost. If the minister's department could give me that information — I do not know how many thousands of people are in the department — I would be very grateful, because then we will know what damage has been done by all this behaviour from these young people who have been involved in the situation.

I will conclude my contribution now. I go back to where I started. This is an important motion before the house. We need to understand what is actually happening with some of our most vulnerable Victorians. It is also in the interests of those who are directly involved in looking after those people and who are working in the facilities. I do not see that having another review will get to the bottom of it, because we have had a series of reviews that have not done anything. We have had an escalation of problems. What is more, these young people are seeing that they are

getting the result that they want. They are continuing with their behaviour. It is not helping them.

We need to look at the issues, and I believe that the legal and social issues committee has very committed members who are very committed to the tasks they undertake, and I think they have the capacity to undertake this inquiry. This is an extremely important motion and it needs to be passed.

Regarding the WorkSafe reports — the bans being imposed and then lifted — we do not know what is going on there. Why is that occurring? Why is WorkSafe in there? Why has the ban now been lifted? What is going on in the youth justice facilities? Why are these riots continuing? I think the Legal and Social Issues Committee would undertake a very good piece of work to, as the department says, engender public support and confidence in the youth justice service. That is what we need. We do not have that confidence at all because every couple of days the public are reading in the media and hearing on the airwaves that another very serious incident has occurred. With those words I urge all members to support my motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan)

Debate adjourned until later this day.

SOLAR FEED-IN TARIFF

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house calls on the government to introduce a fair price for electricity exported by small-scale solar generators, whereby the feed-in tariff is paid by the electricity retailer at the same rate per kilowatt hour that the customer is charged.

Just to give the chamber a bit of context to this motion, under the Victorian Electricity Industry Act 2000 the Essential Services Commission makes a recommendation annually as to the amount that should be paid for the solar feed-in tariff for small-scale generators. That is to say that if you have solar panels on your house or your business and you are feeding any excess electricity into the grid, the minimum amount that your electricity retailer is required to pay you for those excess electrons is determined by the processes under that act.

We know that the Essential Services Commission has made a recommendation to the government on this. In fact, they are required to do so by the end of August. The last time I checked the government had not made public or gazetted the particular amount that will apply from 1 January next year.

There is another piece of context here too. First of all the government has cut the amount paid to solar homes and businesses through this tariff in each of its two years in government. The second matter is that there are about 80 000 homes and businesses out there that have been getting a 25-cent or one-for-one feed-in tariff — ‘one-for-one’ meaning that whatever their retailer charges them is what they get paid. That group in particular are going to get a huge shock when they realise their tariff has been cut all the way down to 5 cents under the current level. Those homes and businesses, who may not even know about this until 1 January or later, can expect hundreds of dollars extra on their electricity bills next year.

We are right at the point where the government needs to make a decision about this. I have brought this motion before the house so that members from the various political persuasions can all put forward their view on what they think is a fair feed-in tariff. Why am I arguing that a one-for-one feed-in tariff is the fair level? First of all it is a number that is simple to administer. People are enormously confused by the different retail electricity plans out there. I have tried to understand all the different offerings and how they might impact me. I know a fair bit about my energy consumption, and I find it almost impossible to understand what I am signing up to.

That is the reason, despite high churn, there is actually a very low level of engagement with the various offerings from the power companies. It is the reason that those power companies have been able to go on and basically churn and burn customers using vast numbers of phone callers and doorknockers, it is the reason that those retailers have been fined up in the millions now for misleading practices by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and it is the reason that they have given up on those methods and are using new and different methods. Despite a high level of churn that goes on between different retailers, which this government claims, and the previous government claimed, is a sign of healthy competition, in fact what it really shows is a market failure. People just are not that engaged, and they are not able to understand and model those different plans, and therefore people are constantly being dragged in using other methods — really forms of non-price competition — simply to get them to switch.

So what we need is a very simple system, and a one-for-one system is the simplest way, both for consumers to understand and also for retailers to administer. We do not want people signing up to what looks like a good deal on their solar tariff but then actually getting shafted on some other charge that is

hidden away somewhere in their bill. Make no mistake, Victoria and Australia have some of the most expensive electricity supply charges in the world and also some of the most punitive fixed charges, which are distorting the market. They are making it very hard for us to move smoothly towards what needs to be our new future.

A second issue is that a one-for-one tariff provides a fair rate of return for those who have invested in solar panels; and yes, I should disclose that I am one of those, but I am one of millions now, so I am certainly sharing that in common with a large part of the Victorian citizenry. At the moment while the Latrobe Valley generators largely may get paid 5 cents or 6 cents for the electricity they produce, it basically costs 13 cents to deliver that electricity to my house, and therefore paying me for what I produce and use locally at the same price as what a big coal-fired power station in the Latrobe Valley gets paid really ignores the fact that that electricity has to be delivered and all the other costs are then added, including the profit margins by retailers and all the other people along the chain. It is not right to compare electricity charges produced at the place it is being used with the wholesale electricity rate by incumbent generators a long way from the source of demand.

That brings us to the third issue of why we need to bring in a price that is a commensurate and fair price — that is, solar panels and their associated battery systems are getting so cheap now that they are going to transform the grid. Anyone with solar panels who is getting charged 25 cents for electricity, but getting paid 6 cents for their excess, faces a quite perverse set of market choices. They can either use up all their electricity so that they do not export any and basically give it away to a retailer who then turns around and sells it to their next-door neighbour at 25 cents, which kind of encourages in a way inefficient use of energy, or they do what I have done at my house as part of an experiment and invest in batteries and store that energy to make sure it does not get exported and does not go off to the power company at a bargain basement price so that the company can use it later that night.

Realistically, it would be a lot easier if we just treated the grid as a big battery. You have got all these different people using power, demanding power and in many cases also producing power, and all those loads tend to balance themselves out. A fair price for solar electrons would allow me to just export whenever I wanted; it would be my neighbours that would be using it, and I would get a fair price for that. Instead, what the perverse market incentives we have got have done is driven me to invest in batteries — which are quite expensive at the moment but I expect they will get a lot

cheaper as time goes on — so that I can try and recoup some of that value that at the moment I am effectively giving away free, or almost free, at 5 cents per kilowatt hour to the power company, which then gets to sell it to my next-door neighbour or the bloke down the road for 25 cents. As I said, we have got these perverse pricing arrangements. It is not by any means a free market. Theoretically anybody can connect to the grid after going through various hurdles, red tape and delays imposed by power companies, but to be able to obtain a fair price in the market is very different, depending on whether you have a 1400-megawatt coal-fired power station or a 3-kilowatt set of solar panels.

I am not proposing that we pay this price because I want to be generous. I am not proposing that we pay this price because I think solar needs further incentives. The reason we should pay this price — a one-for-one feed-in tariff — is that it will stop people disconnecting. Over time, if we continue with these poor pricing practices, the huge fixed charges and the really crappy rate of pay for export electrons, then people are going to invest in batteries — they will probably overinvest in terms of the size of their system — and then the power companies will find that there are less electrons going through the system. They still want to recover their costs, so they will hit you with even bigger fixed charges, and then people will disconnect.

It is happening of course out on the fringes of the grid, where it is expensive to run new poles and wires, but the CSIRO is examining scenarios where as much as a third of people disconnect from the power grid even in built-up and urban areas. At that point the power companies are going to want to hit their remaining customer base even harder, and this irrational spiral — what has been described as an electricity market death spiral — will just go on and on because politicians are not willing to step in and, for the first time really since privatisation, make a serious reform to the way the market operates in recognition of what technology has already done and is doing. It is for that reason that we think a one-for-one feed-in tariff is the appropriate price.

By the way, and just in relation to one more matter that came up since I first proposed this motion, the Infrastructure Victoria body presented its report and proposed that we introduce compulsory time-of-use tariffs across all electricity users — that is, that according to the time of day you might be charged a different amount for your electrons. This is something that the Greens have proposed for some time. If that was to come into place, then of course the continuing growth of solar would drive down the price of midday electricity and you would be paid less and the

mechanism would become self-correcting. That is a final rationale as to why we think a one-for-one feed-in tariff is the appropriate price.

We hope that the house will support our motion, and we hope that the government, which actually controls the levers of executive power and actually gazettes the decision for a feed-in tariff, overdue in terms of the decision, coming into effect on 1 January and affecting many, many prosumers, let us call them — producers of electricity who are also consumers — will see the way things are going and make a wise decision.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Keppel Prince Engineering

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — My question is to Minister Pulford, the Minister for Regional Development, in her capacity representing the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. We were very pleased to read of the government's \$20 million New Energy Jobs Fund distributing grants to businesses throughout the state. A key employer in Portland is Keppel Prince, which currently has 300 employees, 220 of which do maintenance for Alcoa. Keppel Prince's other main manufacturing arm is in the production of wind towers, and Keppel Prince indicates it needs to double its production of renewable energy wind towers to 10 sections per week in order to contribute to the state government's plan to have 40 per cent renewable energy by 2025. Keppel Prince has been awarded \$375 000 of the \$1 million that is possible. My question to the minister is: will you revisit the funding application to allow this major employer to undertake this upgrade and subsequent employment growth?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — I think Mr Purcell for his question and his interest in growing renewable energy jobs in the south-west. Keppel Prince is a very significant employer in the region and of course has a great deal of capacity and expertise in manufacturing for Victoria's growing renewable energy industry, which is a great source of future jobs growth for the region. Mr Purcell's question goes to the specifics of a fund that is administered by Minister D'Ambrosio, so I will provide Mr Purcell with an answer to that question after having the opportunity to confer with the minister.

Supplementary question

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — The application from Keppel Prince is a significant one.

They are looking to invest \$2.9 million into their plant. Basically at this stage they are looking at \$375 000 of a possible \$1 million. They are looking to increase by 40 jobs, which I suggest is probably a great investment for the government if they do increase the jobs in the Portland area by 40. If they do not do this very quickly, they will miss out on wind farms such as those at Dundonnell and Moorabool. So my question is: will the minister also commit to reviewing this funding application by the end of this year so that Keppel Prince do not miss out on the applications for those wind farms?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — I thank Mr Purcell for the further detail he has provided through his supplementary question. Of course timely consideration of applications is a very important thing, and where an opportunity exists for the government to work with industry to take advantage of these opportunities we should always do so as quickly as we possibly can while ensuring a proper process for applications. I will also seek some further advice from Minister D'Ambrosio and provide Mr Purcell with a written response.

Questions interrupted.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The PRESIDENT — Order! Can I just take this opportunity to advise the house that we have in the gallery today a visitor from the Fijian Parliament, indeed the Deputy Speaker of the house in Fiji, Mr Ruveni Nadalo. We welcome him to Victoria. Fiji is one of the parliaments that Victoria has a very close relationship with and a Parliament that has recently been re-established, so Mr Nadalo is here discussing processes and seeing some of the things we do and whether or not they might be appropriate to the experience of Fiji as well. Welcome.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Questions resumed.

RSPCA review

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — My question today is for the Minister for Agriculture. We have recently seen the release of the independent review of the RSPCA Victoria inspectorate by Mr Neil Comrie, as commissioned by the RSPCA itself after identifying issues within the organisation. In this review the legal powers of the organisation have been analysed and compared to those of the RSPCA equivalent in the UK. It states:

These powers are broadly similar to RSPCA Victoria inspectors. However, UK inspectors require police assistance to gain access to properties and seize animals.

The chief executive officer of the RSPCA has also stated since the release of the report that:

... the issues we campaigned on have really eroded the trust in our organisation, especially government, with industry stakeholders and in the community as well.

I ask the minister: what review of the RSPCA powers is the government undertaking in the light of the extraordinary powers highlighted, which are in many ways more than our police force but without the same government scrutiny and oversight?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Young for his question and for his interest in the review undertaken by Mr Comrie for the RSPCA. This is a comprehensive review and canvases many issues, most of which I think can perhaps be described as internal to the RSPCA's operation and the way in which it undertakes its functions and some of which go to the question of the inspectorate work that it performs for government. I am advised by the RSPCA that it has accepted all of the recommendations that were made and it looks forward to discussing a number of those matters with the Victorian government. Mr Young and other members may be aware that we have recently had a period of public comment on a draft animal welfare action plan, which gives rise to similar issues.

The community's interest in animal welfare issues I think is greater than perhaps it has ever been before. Both the RSPCA and Agriculture Victoria have experienced over recent years a considerable year-on-year growth in terms of reports. Now, I do not interpret this as us being a more cruel society than perhaps we once were, but I think there is a greater awareness and a stronger desire for all members of the community to report these things and a desire by all participants in industry and many people in the community to see improved standards wherever possible.

A number of the RSPCA recommendations do go to similar questions. We will consider these matters and have discussions with the RSPCA as part of our ongoing work to improve our animal welfare framework.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — I thank the minister for her answer. My supplementary question is very simple: will the government suspend the RSPCA's powers of entry and powers of seizure until a review or

inquiry is undertaken into an organisation that is by its own admission untrustworthy?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — The powers that the RSPCA is authorised to use under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 are significant powers, and they are always executed in cooperation with Agriculture Victoria. It is not uncommon for many of those powers to also be applied through cooperative engagement with Victoria Police. I understand that Victoria Police and the RSPCA have had some very constructive discussions, while the RSPCA has considered the recommendations that have come to it as part of this report. As Mr Young would appreciate, the operations and activities of Victoria Police do not fall within my portfolio's responsibilities, but in response to Mr Young's question there are no plans to change the arrangements that are currently in place, other than to refer Mr Young to my earlier comments about the review work that is currently underway.

Timber industry

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. Can the minister confirm how much of the remaining high conservation value forest in the Central Highlands, which is the last remaining habitat of the Leadbeater's possum, the faunal emblem of Victoria, will be slated for logging under VicForests's *Timber Release Plan*, which was gazetted on 3 October?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Dunn for her interest in forestry in Victoria, and I will provide Ms Dunn with a written response to her question.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister. Can the minister explain why the *Timber Release Plan* has been gazetted but not publicly released, even though, according to the then CEO, Robert Green — who I might add has moved on to the more sustainable plantation timber industry — it is available on the VicForests website. What is the minister trying to hide?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — The government is not hiding anything. Mr Green is the current CEO of VicForests. I will provide Ms Dunn with a written response to her questions.

Australian Border Force

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Training and Skills, who represents the Minister for Police. According to reports we have received, Australian Border Force officers have been entering houses in Melbourne's suburbs where asylum seekers are living for the purposes of arresting and detaining people. In some cases people have apparently been subjected to hours of questioning before being allegedly forced to sign documents declaring that they would consent to being returned to their countries of origin. Apparently people are then being redetained despite, in some cases, holding valid visas and having upcoming court dates. Is the Victorian government aware that the Australian Border Force has been raiding people's homes, including late at night, for the purposes of arresting and detaining people?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I thank the member for her question. She would appreciate that I am representing the police minister. I will have to take that question on notice and provide a written response.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister. Is the Victorian government or any of its agencies, including Victoria Police, working in any way with the Australian Border Force in these raids?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Training and Skills) — I shall also take that on notice and provide a written response.

Family day care

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. What due diligence does the Andrews government conduct before approving family day care services, and can she confirm that this has been done for every service?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Crozier for her interest in the issue of family day care. I can advise the member that I have been making strident efforts to bring to the attention of the federal Minister for Education and Training, Senator Birmingham, the very significant problems that are facing our family day care sector. In fact I have taken this issue up with Senator Birmingham on a number of occasions, both through correspondence and also most recently at the Education Council

meeting in Adelaide. In fact I asked for the issue of family day care to be placed on the agenda for discussion by all relevant education ministers right across the country. This is because some very significant issues have come to light around roting of the federal government's payment system.

This is an issue that requires some urgent attention from the commonwealth. Particularly what is apparent is that there is a disconnect between the national law and the family assistance law, which is why I have been calling for Senator Birmingham to in fact put in place an independent review into how the two pieces of legislation work together. In fact I have asked him to put in place an urgent moratorium around the acceptance of more family day care providers until this independent review does take place, because what we have seen is a massive proliferation of family day care in particular parts of Melbourne really largely driven by the ease with which they are able to access these federal payments.

The concern that I do have is the fact that parents need to be confident about the safety and the security of the places they put their children in when they place them in care, and there is a disproportionate number of compliance actions being taken against family day care providers as compared to other childcare settings in Victoria. So I can assure the member that my department has stepped up its monitoring and compliance activities since we have been in government. We have had a significant number of family day care services being visited by the regulatory authority where they have had non-compliance identified. We have had enforcement actions. We have had some services placed on additional monitoring, and there have been investigations of these services. But I think the premise of the member's question demonstrates her lack of understanding about the commonwealth's responsibilities around the payment system and the fact that they need to take some urgent action around the issues of family day care.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for that answer. My supplementary question to the minister is: Minister, what has the Victorian government done to upgrade this approval process since the family day care arrests in Melbourne in December 2015?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question. The member needs to be aware that in fact the Victorian Department of Education and Training did work with

Australian Federal Police and commonwealth officials in relation to some raids that were made on family day care providers in Victoria that did lead to a number of arrests. Obviously these matters are before the courts, and I cannot discuss issues that are before the courts, but what I can say to the member is that this is a co-regulatory model. There are distinct responsibilities that the commonwealth has, there are responsibilities that the state department has and then there are responsibilities that the service providers have. Our Victorian department has been taking more and more action to address these issues of compliance, but the federal government have failed to take action, and they need to — so why don't you get onto them? Why don't you give them a call?

Forest Industry Taskforce

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Agriculture. The Forest Industry Taskforce was to report in June; however, it has failed to reach a consensus. Both you and the Premier have stated publicly that if there is no consensus, nothing will change. Given the reporting deadline passed over two months ago, will you now concede that no consensus will be reached by the task force?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Bath for her question and her interest in the work of the Forest Industry Taskforce. As members in this chamber — perhaps more than any other 40 people in the Victorian community — would be aware, the government is supporting the work of the Forest Industry Taskforce so that the parties with an interest in these matters can work towards achieving a consensus that will support valuable environmental assets and jobs in the timber industry.

The task force has provided a report to government which is publicly available. The task force has indicated to the government that there are a number of matters on which they would like some more time, and the government has agreed to that. But it is not true at all to say that the task force has not been successful in reaching agreement. In fact the report that has been published indicates a great deal of very good progress has been made on what are very difficult issues.

Supplementary question

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — I thank the minister for her response but also note that a statement of intent is not the full report — it is a statement of intent. The failure of the Forest Industry Taskforce to report and reach consensus has led to increased uncertainty for contractors, sawmills and the general community in far

East Gippsland. Given the failure of the task force to reach consensus, will you now provide certainty to those businesses and residents in East Gippsland and at least rule out any further additions to reserves or reductions in resource allocation, which would certainly threaten the future of the timber industry?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Bath for her further question, which goes to the operation of the industry in East Gippsland. I have met with a number of contractors in East Gippsland and I am certainly well aware of their issues and their views on these matters, but as I indicated, the work of the task force is continuing. The industry is very ably represented in the steering group by the Victorian Association of Forest Industries, and Tim Johnston is an integral part of the group of people who are continuing this work. I would add to that that many other participants within the broader group of people who are engaged in this work are very much involved in these issues and indeed work for companies in which there is enormous interest in the future of the timber industry in Victoria. So I understand Ms Bath's concerns, but I assure Ms Bath that the work of the task force is ongoing. The government is certainly very optimistic that these matters will be satisfactorily resolved, the industry will be able to be on a strong and secure footing and we will be able to improve environmental protections.

Serious sex offenders

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, it has now been nearly a year since the Harper review was handed to government. How many of the 35 recommendations have been fully implemented?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Corrections) — As the member knows, we have been steadily working through the Harper review in a very timely time line. We have certainly gone through a large number of those recommendations, and there is another tranche of legislation coming forward. I will provide written details on the specifics of the answer.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Minister, the Harper review recommends the establishment of a public protection authority, removing from the adult parole board the responsibility for those offenders the subject of an order pursuant to the Serious Sexual Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009. Does the government accept this recommendation, and if so, when will it be implemented?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Corrections) — The government has accepted the Harper review, as the member knows. Members have been part of the debate in terms of the parole board activities and improving the operation of the parole board, and I shall provide a written answer in accordance with the practice we have been taking with your answers.

Serious sex offenders

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I do hope the minister can provide an answer to this one, given that he has been the minister now for some time. My question is to the Minister for Corrections. Minister, Deakin University was recently awarded a \$120 000 contract to conduct a review of the current service model for the treatment of serious sex offenders under correctional supervision in Victoria. Since being awarded the contract the university has informed the coalition that the contract has been returned to the department and the review has been put on hold. Minister, given this important review is now on indefinite hold, when will the review into the treatment of serious sex offenders under correctional supervision actually take place?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Corrections) — On the issue of serious sex offenders, of course it is a very serious matter, and since we have come to government we have substantially increased resources and operational practices in regard to that scheme. We have put \$84 million extra in this year's budget. We have amended the Serious Sex Offenders (Detention and Supervision) Act 2009 to strengthen responses and have presumption against bail, we have created a specialist response unit, we have introduced community safety to the act and of course we are rebuilding. Construction started at Corella Place in terms of strengthening that facility quite substantially and providing better things. On the issue of — I am not sure of the amount — one of the many contracts that we have out there in terms of advice to government in terms of Deakin University, I shall provide a written response to that.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I am disappointed that yet again the minister is unable to answer simple questions relating to his portfolio, so I ask by way of supplementary: given this important review has been put on hold, how many other reviews relating to your corrections portfolio have also been put on hold?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Corrections) — I am disappointed in the questions I am asked, quite frankly, from a shadow minister who yesterday asked me questions about an assault at Barwon Prison without saying that there were 43 assaults at Barwon Prison during the time of the previous government, 17 in his first year as corrections minister.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, the minister has a habit of trying to answer the questions 24 hours later, once he has been briefed on the answers he clearly does not understand. I would ask you, President, by way of point of order, to bring the minister back to the actual substance of the question, not to yesterday's question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The problem that I have with your point of order, Mr O'Donohue, is that your preamble actually was dismissive of the minister and suggested that he was not aware of information and unable to provide it to the house. Therefore it is obviously quite in order for the minister to actually respond in like kind. I have absolute difficulty in directing him on how he should answer when he is confronted with a disparaging preamble. The minister, to finalise his answer.

Mr HERBERT — Thank you. There are many reviews in a very complex corrections system, as the member knows. Whether you use the term 'put on hold' or whether they are 'extended' — many are extended — many services are provided. I shall take the member's supplementary question on notice.

International student safety

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for International Education. Chinese media both in Australia and right across Asia has been full of reports of the crime wave engulfing Victoria, with many suggesting Chinese students are being targeted by criminals due to their perceived wealth. The crime wave has even seen the Chinese consulate in Melbourne issue a safety warning to local Chinese students which recommends, 'Avoid getting out at night, and if you have to, go out with a group of people'. The vice consul general also addressed students at Melbourne University with Victoria Police following multiple pleas for help from Chinese victims of crime.

Minister, what advice have you received about the impact of the current crime wave on Victoria's place — —

Ms Mikakos interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thanks, Minister Mikakos. Mrs Peulich, from the top.

Mrs PEULICH — Thank you, President. Minister, Chinese media both in Australia and right across Asia have been full of reports of the crime wave engulfing Victoria, with many suggesting Chinese students are being targeted by criminals due to their perceived wealth. The crime wave has even seen the Chinese consulate in Melbourne issue a safety warning to local Chinese students which recommends, ‘Avoid going out at night, and if you have to, go out with a group of people’. The vice consul general also addressed students at Melbourne University with Victoria Police following multiple pleas for help from Chinese victims of crime.

Minister, what advice have you received about the impact of the current crime wave on Victoria’s place as a safe and friendly place to live and study in a very competitive global education marketplace?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for International Education) — I thank Mrs Peulich for her question. This seems to be a very old issue that she is raising, but international education is very important to the Victorian economy. It is a no. 1 service industry. The latest figures continue to show that it continues to thrive and we can continue to get larger market share. It is now worth some \$5.8 billion on the latest figures — and they are the latest figures, not old news stories that are being trumped up here today. Of course since those issues with students at Melbourne University I have travelled to China and spoken to Chinese individual ministers and institutions.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr O’Donohue and Ms Mikakos, if you would like to discuss it, please go somewhere else to discuss it and let the minister continue. Ms Mikakos, when you are having a discussion, particularly when a minister alongside you is responding, it is especially difficult for Hansard and the house.

Mrs Peulich — Disrespectful.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you, Mrs Peulich, for that, but please. The minister, to continue without assistance.

Mr HERBERT — Thank you. I have been to China, and this issue that you seem to be raising was certainly not raised with me by any Chinese officials in the number of meetings I had with very senior officials. The Premier just recently went to China and there was

discussion of international education, and so did Minister Pulford and Ms Symes, and we got a very good response.

Mrs Peulich — On a point of order, President, in the hurly-burly of question time I am just wondering whether the minister actually heard the question, and that was: what advice have you received about the impact of the current crime wave on Victoria’s reputation as a place —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mrs Peulich, as we know, that is not a point of order. I know the minister did hear the question because I actually got you to repeat it, and it was heard in silence the second time thanks to the courtesy of the house. The minister is well aware of the question. Whether or not he intends to respond in a way that you find satisfactory we will all find out very shortly.

Mr HERBERT — Thank you very much. I am absolutely responding because the premise of the question is wrong. This is the whole point of the answer. In fact the Premier and senior ministers and senior members of the government have just recently travelled to China again, and I am not aware that any of these concerns were raised with them in the many meetings we have had around promoting international education.

Can I say Chinese students are coming here and getting an excellent education. I have spoken a number of times with the consulate here about various issues. They are certainly satisfied. The only one who does not seem happy about the promotion we are doing about international education and the great role it plays in this state is the opposition. If there is anything more specific that I can add to the answer, I will take it on notice and provide a written answer.

Supplementary question

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — An answer to the question of whether he received advice would have been helpful, but my supplementary question is: Minister, what assurances can you give to Chinese and other foreign students who are considering studying and living in Melbourne that our city is safe and the crime wave we have seen over the last 18 months will be brought under control?

Mr HERBERT (Minister for International Education) — I will not answer in my capacity as representing the police minister, otherwise I would talk about the \$596 million public safety package; I would talk about the 406 sworn police officers and 52 support staff that are coming online, and the 300 extra general

duties frontline personnel and the 106 specialist police officers; and I would talk about the massive program that the government has in addressing public safety in this state.

But when it comes to Chinese students I can give every assurance that they are going to get an excellent education in a fantastic city, one of the best cities in the world, ranked as the second-best city for international students in the world — globally.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Answers

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I have the following written answers to questions on notice: 7160, 7188, 7200–1, 7223–4, 7236–42, 7272–6, 7282–3, 7495, 7503.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! In respect of today's questions, Mr Purcell's questions, both substantive and supplementary, to Ms Pulford, Ms Pulford has indicated she will obtain a written response on those questions, and because it involves a minister in another place, that is two days.

Ms Dunn's substantive question to Ms Pulford: I would seek a written response on that one, and that is one day. I believe the minister did discharge the supplementary question.

Ms Springle's question to Mr Herbert, both the substantive and supplementary question: Mr Herbert has indicated that he is quite prepared to provide a written response to those two questions, and that is two days because it involves a minister in another place.

Ms Crozier's question to Ms Mikakos: the supplementary question I would seek a response on, and that is one day.

Mr O'Donohue's first question to Mr Herbert: I seek a response to both the substantive and supplementary question, and that is one day. Mr O'Donohue's second question to Mr Herbert: again, I seek a response to both the substantive and supplementary question, one day.

Mrs Peulich's question to Mr Herbert: I seek a response to the substantive question, and that is one day.

Beechworth Correctional Centre

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, I wonder if Minister Herbert would like to clarify the record from yesterday's question time. In his response to me about prisoner escapes he said:

... there have been 10 prison escapes this financial year, 5 of these in the first half of 2016.

You cannot have 5 prisoner escapes from that. It is a contradictory statement, and I invite the minister to clarify the record.

Mr HERBERT (Minister for Corrections) — As Mr O'Donohue knows, we did not get a chance to have a look at the draft *Hansard* yesterday because we finished early and it was not available until after Parliament rose. This morning I was aware of a tweet that Mr O'Donohue put out, and so I then sought to have a look at *Hansard*. If I said 'this' rather than saying 'the' financial year, then I will correct the record. It should have been 'the' financial year, because clearly referring to five in the start of 2016, which is in the second half of last financial year, is accurate.

Mr O'Donohue — I thank the minister for his response. I note that he did not provide that detail in his answer to my question. That is why I have taken the opportunity through a point of order to clarify the facts.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Northern Metropolitan Region

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Industry and Employment, Wade Noonan, in regard to representation I have had from constituents in the Northern Metropolitan Region, particularly members of the Islamic community, that feel that young people of Muslim background are overrepresented in the youth justice system. So my question to the minister is about the recent Jobs Victoria Employment Network funding rounds and if there have been any programs funded to specifically support our young people from Muslim backgrounds to engage in employment, and particularly to ease the pressure on our youth justice system, which is heavily populated by young Muslims, to prevent reoffending.

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade. I wish to congratulate the minister on the successful first round of recipients

for LaunchVic. Delivering on an Andrews Labor government election commitment, millions of dollars will be injected into the development of Victoria's start-up ecosystem to increase its scale and capability. I am proud to be part of a government working to deliver this. This innovation ecosystem can only improve with co-working spaces engaging with local communities to the benefit of all. The Dream Factory makerspace in Footscray will provide a boost to the creative capabilities of those in the western metropolitan area and create new digital manufacturing opportunities. It will form part of the broader network of the ecosystem that exists across the west and will be a welcome addition to its landscape. My question for the minister is: how can businesses and innovative enterprises in my region make applications to LaunchVic so they can increase the opportunities for the entire Western Metropolitan Region?

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. In 2015 Skye earned the unenviable title of the most unlivable suburb in Melbourne, largely because there is no public transport. There is also no public transport in the neighbouring suburb of Sandhurst, leaving some residents over 2 kilometres from their nearest bus stop. Is there a plan to extend the public transport network so that the residents of Skye and Sandhurst may benefit from it?

Eastern Victoria Region

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Industry and Employment, the Honourable Wade Noonan, in regard to the closure of Hazelwood power station in the Latrobe Valley. My electorate office has had an influx of constituents very concerned about the media reports that Hazelwood power station, owned by Engie, could close as early as April next year. They are concerned about jobs, house prices and the impact on our local economy. I understand that the closure of Hazelwood is inevitable; however, my constituents are asking: what is this Victorian Labor government doing to ensure transition to closure runs as smoothly as possible, and in doing so how will it assist in counteracting the huge numbers of jobs that will be lost as a result?

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos. The Monash Men's Shed, which is in Glen Waverley, has been interacting

with my electorate office quite a bit lately around its members' desire to increase the capacity of their particular men's shed. It is a very active men's shed, and is probably one of the most active men's sheds in the metropolitan area. Because of that, obviously the room that they have got available to them is getting quite cramped, so they are hoping to renovate an old scout hall to be able to increase their capacity. They have put in an application for a grant that is within the minister's portfolio. The question I would like to ask her is: when will they find out if they have been successful so that they can solidify their plans?

Western Metropolitan Region

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. As part of the western distributor project, it is my understanding that the government has begun air quality monitoring. One of the problems we have found with this practice is that the stations are not placed in close proximity to the pollution source or to where people are inhaling the pollutants. Furthermore, they are often not in place over the long term. They get data for a short period of time and then model what they think it will be in the future without actually testing it in real life. I would be very concerned if this is what the government intends to happen with the western distributor project. My question for the minister is: how many air monitoring stations are set up for the western distributor project, where precisely are they located and how long will they be in place?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question relates to sky rail and is for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. Sky rail will traverse my electorate. That is where the government proposes to build its ugly sky rail. This chamber sought documents in relation to sky rail back in February. We are still waiting for those documents. There has been no further communication. A short briefing on the 3D model, which has not been released publicly, was provided to members of this chamber, but the thousands of secret documents have not been provided to the community or to this chamber. It has now been many months, and now the Lower Our Tracks group has begun action in the Supreme Court. They could have relied on many of the documents that would have been provided under those motions. I ask the minister: when will you finally release the secret sky rail documents, and is your secrecy with respect to these because of their devastating and impactful nature?

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. We know that V/Line trains have been an absolute disaster under this government and the Ballarat service has still not returned to an acceptable level of either punctuality or reliability. Late last year the government promised a timetable change, and yet this has not occurred. My question is: when will the promised train timetable changes actually occur?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I ask this question, having been stunned by today's revelation that the Minister for Planning has vetoed VicRoads's proposal to build the Bulla bypass and another road to Melbourne Airport and the Tullamarine Freeway. As I have frequently pointed out to the minister, congestion on Sunbury Road is often unbearable and is growing worse by the day. It is staggering to think that the government has torpedoed any hope of relief for motorists on this road. I ask: what does the minister say to the tens of thousands of users of Sunbury Road, who have been deserted by the Andrews government?

Northern Victoria Region

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Education, and is in regard to site recognition for the former Shepparton Park Primary School. I have recently been contacted by a former student of the long-defunct Shepparton Park Primary School who wants to see some form of permanent recognition of the old school site. The school was located in Rudd Road, Shepparton, on the hill overlooking the present Shepparton public cemetery grounds. I have been advised that the school operated from 12 October 1896 to 5 November 1952, and in the later stages it was operating as an annex to the Gowrie Street Primary School. My constituent advised that for many years there was an old school fence at the site; however, this fence has been removed, effectively removing the last physical traces of the old school.

The constituent would like some sort of recognition of the site, similar to the signs that mark the site of the former Cosgrove State School and some other school sites in the region. My question for the minister is: will he establish some form of permanent recognition of the old Shepparton Park Primary School on the school's former site?

SOLAR FEED-IN TARIFF

Debate resumed.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on Mr Barber's motion:

That this house calls on the government to introduce a fair price for electricity exported by small-scale solar generators, whereby the feed-in tariff is paid by the electricity retailer at the same rate per kilowatt hour that the customer is charged.

It is a good principle. It is a principle that is actually outlined by the Essential Services Commission as the applicable pricing principle; however, unfortunately general principles do not often work out that way. It is for that reason, and in particular the way that this mechanism would impact on household prices of electricity, that the opposition will not be supporting the motion. The Essential Services Commission has released a final decision to adopt a minimum feed-in tariff (FIT) rate of 5 cents per kilowatt hour.

Can I say from the outset that I do not have solar panels or any other renewable energy source of electricity at home, so I have no vested interest, and I certainly do not have investments in this particular sector. As Mr Barber alluded to, this process of pricing is reviewed annually, delivered at the end of August and then applies from 1 January the next year, so these prices would apply from January 2017. The minimum rate will apply to all customers who have been receiving the current feed-in tariff, currently set at 5 cents for 2016, which was introduced in January 2013, I believe.

This feed-in tariff currently offers a minimum of 5 cents per kilowatt hour for 2016 for excess electricity fed back into the grid. All electricity retailers with more than 5000 customers must offer at least this minimum rate, but they may offer different packages and different terms and conditions. The feed-in tariff is available to solar and other eligible forms of renewable energy, such as wind — and I do not believe that particular renewable is widely used in Victoria — hydro or biomass, with a system size less than 100 kilowatts.

The Greens want the minimum feed-in tariff to be the value of the retail tariff. Most electricity customers are on a flat tariff for their electricity consumption — that is, they are charged a flat amount for every kilowatt hour of electricity they use. This flat tariff will range from roughly 16 cents per kilowatt hour to 30 cents per kilowatt hour. The new feed-in tariff therefore would be increased from 5 cents per kilowatt hour to anywhere from 16 cents per kilowatt hour through to 30 cents per kilowatt hour.

The coalition has a strong record with the solar feed-in tariff. In 2009 the then Victorian Labor government introduced a premium feed-in tariff of 60 cents per kilowatt hour for 15 years, and that was intended, obviously, to increase the uptake of renewable sources of energy. Typically the way that is structured is that it declines over time, and that is an incentive to the industry to actually also become more innovative and efficient and make the new technology, the innovation, more widely used and attractive to customers. The premium feed-in tariff was corrected by the Victorian coalition in 2011 to a transitional feed-in tariff of 25 cents per kilowatt hour lasting until the end of 2016. The coalition brought in a minimum feed-in tariff from 2013 for systems of up to 100 kilowatts, compared to the previous restrictions of 5 kilowatts, at a level of 6 cents to 8 cents per kilowatt hour. Currently, of course, it is at 5 cents per kilowatt hour.

Victoria saw a 33 per cent increase in solar connections for the first six months of 2012 compared to the same period in 2011, despite the feed-in tariff being reduced from 60 cents to 25 cents per kilowatt hour. This demonstrates that it is the falling cost of solar and the rising cost of electricity that is driving uptake rather than feed-in tariffs. Can I say one of the biggest concerns for families is the cost of utilities, and the most substantial cost there is the cost of electricity. That is certainly the feedback that I am getting right throughout my region.

The coalition first and foremost supports energy affordability, which is why the previous Victorian coalition government reformed Labor's disastrous solar feed-in tariff scheme that led to those unable to purchase solar photovoltaic (PV) subsidise those who could, and I believe that those who have taken up the renewable sources of energy are generally those who are more affluent and able to do so.

Mr Barber — Is that right?

Mrs PEULICH — Mr Barber, if you have other information, I would be more than happy to hear it.

The current feed-in tariff, which is set by the Essential Services Commission, uses the wholesale price approach. The feed-in tariff is the approximate wholesale price of electricity per kilowatt hour plus the avoided costs associated with embedded generation. The Greens motion would see this formula scrapped and replaced with that used for the retail tariff that includes the wholesale cost of electricity plus retail fees and network costs.

According to a Grattan Institute report of May 2015, by the time the state — that is, across all of Australia — subsidies finally run out, households and businesses that have not installed solar PV will have spent more than \$14 billion on higher energy bills subsidising households that have installed it. The Greens motion today would have that situation worsen and power bills rise.

Solar PV has the potential to empower consumers through less reliance on the main power grid and to save households and businesses substantially on their power bills. Through innovation and technology such as battery storage, solar PV can make further reductions to Victorian power bills. By substantially increasing solar feed-in tariffs, there is far less incentive for households and businesses to invest in battery storage technology, which is clearly going to be the way for the future. As home batteries become more widely available, consumers will be able to use the grid less at peak times, reducing the load on the network and the need to constantly renew infrastructure. This will be a far slower transition if consumers with solar panels receive a far bigger financial incentive for just putting their power back into the grid during the day and not consuming it when the demand peaks at night.

In closing, I say that the reason why the opposition will be opposing this motion is that the regime would subsidise the more affluent — those who take up renewable energy sources such as solar panels — by the householders who can least afford it and, as a result of that, impose a high cost on the economy, especially energy consumers. Also, they do not appear to be effective at encouraging the use of other forms of renewable energy apart from wind and solar, although natural endowments of the country obviously strongly influence the choice of renewable energy sources.

Indeed if set at too high a rate, a FIT may result in higher than justified profits for equipment producers. FITs are usually fixed by government bodies, obviously, which may have difficulties in finding up-to-date information and production costs and alternative technologies. If the FITs are not set at a competitive level, they are incompatible with competitive national electricity markets. But mostly the reason why the opposition will be opposing this is its impact on the cost of electricity for householders, those who can least afford it. With those few words, we will oppose the motion.

Sitting suspended 12.57 p.m. until 2.05 p.m.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In response to Mr Barber's motion I want to say from the outset that I praise Mr Barber for being a consistent advocate for improved renewable energy over the last 10 years, whether that be via solar or wind power or whether that be through individuals being able to generate their own power via solar cells. I say that genuinely, because I know that he has been very consistent in supporting renewable energy.

Unfortunately I have to say that because the government has not responded to the Essential Services Commission's report and recommendations, government members are in no position to support his motion today. What I can say with a degree of confidence is that there will be a new feed-in tariff at the start of 2017. As I said, we are in no position as government members of this chamber to support this motion, but once again I want to say that Mr Barber and I came into this chamber at the same time, and since then he has been consistent in his advocacy and his message.

I find it amazing that in her contribution Mrs Peulich said the coalition had been consistent in its message around renewable energy and, in particular, solar feed-in tariffs, because Mr Barber, Mrs Peulich and I were here when Mr Hall, who was a spokesperson for energy in 2009 when the coalition was obviously in opposition, moved a motion that the feed-in tariff proposed by the Brumby government, being a 60 cents per kilowatt hour net feed-in tariff, should be a 60 cents gross feed-in tariff. Mr Barber's memory might be better than mine, but I cannot remember if that motion was carried or not. I imagine it might have carried due to the make-up of the chamber at the time, and I imagine Mr Barber and his Greens party colleagues would have supported it.

The coalition went to an election with a commitment to improve feed-in tariffs. The first thing they did when it came to feed-in tariffs was to cut the 60 cents net feed-in tariff to, I think, 14 cents. I am happy to be corrected on that as well. Not only did they move a motion that the Brumby government's feed-in tariff was not good enough but they made an election commitment that they would improve the tariff, and when they were elected to government they cut it down so that it was a quarter of that tariff. To say that the coalition has been consistent in this area is wrong; it is just completely wrong.

Our government accepts that there needs to be as much work in renewable energy as can be done. Our government accepts the reasons why that is important, and our government accepts that if our government

does not commit itself to renewable energy projects and also encourages more people and more households to implement their own renewable energy solutions, then we will be left in a situation which is completely unsustainable. We accept that. I imagine in his wrap-up Mr Barber will say that what we are doing is not good enough, but I would say at the outset that our government accepts that this is an area in which we need to be committed. This is an area where we need to do more work. We have put out a plan to do more work in this area. I belong to a government that believes this should be done because it believes in a number of things, one of them being that we cannot keep polluting our atmosphere. We cannot stand by while global warming increases, and greenhouse gas emissions are a real factor in global warming. It is a huge issue for all the people who will come after us; we should not be leaving it completely to them to deal with.

I do not understand the coalition's position on any of this. The federal minister, after the violent storms in South Australia — the violent storms that caused the state blackout — made some bizarre statements around the fact that the blackout would not have been as bad if there was not such a reliance on renewable energy in South Australia, which is complete and utter madness. It is complete and utter madness insofar as if a pylon is going to fall over and the distribution lines are going to snap and so forth due to a severe weather event, which that weather event was, it makes no difference how that electricity was generated.

It is interesting that an Essential poll in South Australia asked if South Australians believed that the reliance on renewable energy had any effect on causing the blackout or making it worse. The interesting response was that 17 per cent of South Australians said no. Let me say, I would imagine the primary vote for the coalition in South Australia would have to be around 38 per cent or 39 per cent or something like that, so well over 60 per cent believed that it had no effect at all.

Mrs Peulich — You just mixed up the percentages.

Mr LEANE — No. Mrs Peulich, you can search for yourself on Essential poll. Seventeen per cent did believe that the reliance on renewable energy in South Australia had no effect on the blackout at all, so half of your voters, Mrs Peulich — half of your primary vote — do not believe the rubbish that your people are putting out.

Mrs Peulich — What do the others believe?

Mr LEANE — The others believe that there was absolutely — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LEANE — Sorry, no, let me go around again. I think you are right. Thanks for your help.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Mr Leane, through the Chair.

Mr LEANE — I appreciate that, but Mrs Peulich is actually — —

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr LEANE — No, you are right. I got it the other way around. Seventeen per cent believe that there may have been an effect from the reliance on renewable energy — thank you, Mrs Peulich, for that correction — and well over 60 per cent believe there was absolutely no effect, according to an Essential poll. A similar poll might say that the coalition's primary vote in South Australia might be 38 per cent or 39 per cent. Even half the people that vote for the coalition do not believe the rubbish that their minister was peddling. I do not understand what the coalition do believe or do not believe. I know Mr Finn has made a lot of statements around renewable energy, and Mr Guy questions wind power generation and whether it affects health. The tin hat brigade over there is just amazing. They are modern-day Don Quixotes charging at windmills like they are some sort of dragons, when this government believes that wind power is a big part of the answer as far as us pushing towards renewable energy targets and also pushing towards a lesser reliance on the traditional means of generation of energy.

In wrapping up, I want to say again that Mr Barber has at least been very consistent in his advocacy and push in this area, but unfortunately because the government has not responded to the recommendations, it is in no position to support his motion today.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — I thank the members who have contributed on this motion for the perspectives that they have added to the debate. Mrs Peulich fell straight into the usual trap right from the beginning, and that is that she said that if we were to pay people for the electrons they produce off their solar systems, off their roofs, then we would be subsidising one group of houses; that is to say, people who do not have solar panels would be subsidising those people who have solar panels.

People who have solar panels are electricity generators. They generate electrons and they feed them into the grid, and this entire motion is about what they should be paid for that. Mrs Peulich probably gets her electricity from Hazelwood or some equally polluting power station somewhere, but I do not think she goes around saying that she subsidises Hazelwood power station by purchasing their electrons. We do not lie awake at night wondering whether people who happen to own shares in coal-fired power stations are being subsidised by those who do not have shares, because it is pretty clear if you are a generator and you feed into the grid you are going to get paid something for what you deliver. Hazelwood gets paid 5 or 6 cents, but by the time they have delivered it to Mrs Peulich's house they are getting paid 25 cents because of the added costs of delivery. That is exactly what this motion is calling for. It is saying: if you can generate electrons at the place where they are used, you should get paid the retail rate.

That just goes to show why conservatives will never be able to deal with the challenge of global warming, let alone the transformation that needs to be made in the Australian economy and let alone the necessary changes that are coming, ready or not, to the energy system. It is not just that they do not want to change the way things are done — that is the nature of conservatives. It is not just that their cup runneth over with donations from electricity companies, gas companies and oil companies. It is simply that they could not even get their heads around it. The brain is simply locked down from day one and incapable of seeing anything different from what used to happen in the good old days, which is when the State Electricity Commission took care of it and did not even ask the government of the day what they ought to be doing. These are not the sorts of questions that conservatives even want to face up to.

Mrs Peulich then alleged that most of the money would go to solar panel owners — we will leave people who own shares in coal-fired power stations out of it for a minute — and these people would be affluent people.

Mrs Peulich — More affluent than those who can't afford them.

Mr BARBER — More affluent than those who cannot afford them. Well — through you, Acting President — they will be affluent in the sense that they will own their own homes. I do not know if the Liberal Party's definition of affluence these days is that you own your own home. Once upon a time it used to be seen as the very basic. Mrs Peulich is right: if you do not own your own home, if you are a renter — and

many of the people I know will be renters for life — solar panels are not yet cheap enough that you can actually install them on your landlord's house and pack them up and take them when you leave.

Mrs Peulich — There are ordinary home owners who can't afford to install panels.

Mr BARBER — Well, Mrs Peulich, that is exactly the point, and you probably should have done your research before you made your claim. They are ordinary home owners in fact. When you look at who owns solar panels and look at the suburbs where they live, they are typically low to middle income, and often they are retired people, because if you are retired and you have got a bit of a nest egg — you have got a few thousand dollars — you are actually much better off putting that money into solar panels and getting tax-free electrons than leaving a few thousand in a term deposit and paying tax on the interest. So it is not surprising that the big uptake of solar panels has in fact not been in affluent suburbs, but it has certainly been in suburbs where people own their own homes, which for some of my friends is the very definition of affluence — in fact it is the definition of paradise to own their own home.

For example, let us take Cranbourne. I know Mrs Peulich tries to give due care and attention to the suburb of Cranbourne. I do not know if she thinks it is affluent or not, but the area includes: Botanic Ridge, Cannons Creek, Cranbourne, Cranbourne East, Cranbourne North, Cranbourne South, Cranbourne West, Devon Meadows, Junction Village, Sandhurst and Skye — which got a mention this morning in Ms Springle's presentation. We are talking about that area, and it is basically postcode 3977. In that area 24.8 per cent of dwellings have solar panels. In fact the total installed capacity is 171 megawatts, which is getting up to the size of one of the eight units at Hazelwood. It is no surprise that Hazelwood is having trouble actually surviving in the energy market at the moment, because every time the sun shines on Cranbourne they are dumping their electricity into the grid, and as we know they are not getting paid very much for it. They are getting paid about 6 cents, although they are possibly getting paid that by the same electricity retailer — that is, the big three gentailers — that own the coal-fired power stations anyway, the big three retailers.

Mrs Peulich — How about the other 75 per cent?

Mr BARBER — Well, the other 75 per cent of people in that suburb will not be very far behind them. Let us just say that we know there are about 80 000 homes and businesses that are going to see their

tariffs cut from 25 cents to, possibly, 5 cents this year. I will bet that a fair bunch of them are in Cranbourne, and the Greens will certainly be making sure that everybody in Cranbourne knows that the Liberal Party voted against this motion today. Or we could go if we wanted to Rutherglen, we could go to Werribee or to Wyndham Vale. We could go to all of those areas.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

Mr BARBER — There is a Greens vote there, but it is not as high as in some other areas. But they certainly like their solar panels, and it is pretty clear to those people that the Liberals have missed the boat.

Mrs Peulich also missed the point when she said that the feed-in tariff is not driving uptake. It is certainly true that in Victoria right now the rate of installations has levelled off and is going along fairly flat. It has obviously got something to do with the fact that her party and the Labor Party at the state and federal levels have done everything they can in the last few years to destroy the two main forms of incentives for renewable energy — that is, the federal energy renewable target, which Mr Shorten got together with Mr Abbott to cut from 41 000 gigawatt hours down to 33 000, and this feed-in tariff here in Victoria, which as you know was cut first by the Liberals when they were in office but in the last two years has been cut by the Labor Party.

Just moving on to Mr Leane's contribution, I thank him for his kind words. I will take it on face value when he says that the government has not yet responded to the Essential Services Commission's (ESC) recommendation and that therefore in some ways I am pre-empting his government's process that it is going through. I will just make a couple of points about that though. One is that the ESC's decision is made under the existing legislation. The existing legislation only permits the ESC to take into account two things: one is the wholesale price of electricity and the other is any avoidable network costs.

The problem is that the government has not changed that legislation since it has been in office, so it pretty much knows what answer it is going to get from the ESC. In fact in a recent review the ESC kind of hinted and said, 'Well, it's not our job to make policy, but if you change that area of legislation and ask us to consider environmental costs or benefits, then we might actually make a different recommendation'. The government has seen this happen twice now and it has not moved to actually amend the legislation, and therefore it already knows what the answer will be from the ESC.

The ESC got it pretty badly wrong on the wholesale price as well of course. Last year it predicted, looking forward, that there would be quite a low wholesale price for power. It has been a bit higher than it suggested, so in fact even those of us, and I include myself amongst them, who are getting the 5 cents have been getting ripped off all year because we have not been getting the wholesale price, which has gone up considerably due to a bit of volatility in the market, not least of which was the Basslink interconnector that actually stopped working for a while.

Mr Leane also mentioned the gross versus net issue that was raised in previous parliaments. That is really the very issue that we are going to here. If we were getting paid the same price for the power we use as the power that we export, we would all be very happy. That is why the gross feed-in tariff actually gives more certainty, gives more predictability and removes some of these distortions from the market — these perverse incentives that actually say, ‘It’s 4 o’clock in the afternoon and I’m about to start exporting from my house. I’m not going to get paid anything, so I might as well switch the air conditioner on’. That is not a behaviour we want to incentivise. We want to get some rational rules into this market.

Unfortunately the market really has not been reformed in any significant way since the government that Mrs Peulich was part of privatised it. They certainly should never have sold off the poles and wires. It is rapidly remonopolising, and basically the coal-fired and big gas-fired generators continue to work the market to their advantage and make it harder and harder for renewables to get in and connect.

Mr Leane noted that the Liberal Party went to the 2010 election with a commitment around feed-in tariffs, and he is absolutely right. The Liberal Party welshed on that in a microsecond. However, Labor never really went to the previous election with any renewable commitments of its own. The only commitment from Dan Andrews was that if we made him Premier, then he would tell us what his plan was for renewable energy, which I thought was a fairly gutsy approach to the voters. It was like, ‘Elect me, and then I’ll tell you what my policies are’. But he succeeded because there were not that many people around trying to call him on it.

The Greens took our own policy on a renewable energy target to the state election, and the then shadow minister, now Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, spent most of the election bagging us about it. She said that we did not need a renewable energy target and if we did need one we did not want one, and even if we wanted one that was no way for us

to get one because it was impossible with the federal law. We put up a number of options around that, and the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change in her recent discussion paper has picked my favourite option. She basically came up with a gross feed-in tariff. You would be surprised!

It is quite simple what the government is proposing in relation to large renewable generators — that is, big wind farms and big solar farms. They will get paid the wholesale price of electricity plus a gross feed-in tariff on top of that, and they will be paid through an auction system, which of course is the system set up by the Green Labor government in the ACT and now adopted by the Andrews government.

That of course is the most transparent and most efficient method, providing the most certainty, you could devise, because it means basically up front when you build your large-scale solar generator or your large-scale wind generator you have got a pre-agreed contract from the government for the offtake. It is effectively a government-backed power purchasing agreement, and that gives you a lot of certainty and drives down your costs. The costs that wind and solar have been bidding into the ACT government auction have been quite amazing. The price of renewables is going down so quickly now, and new-build gas and coal will just never happen in Australia; it is way too risky.

So, yes, it is gratifying to see that the Labor Party, that went to the election with no policy on renewables, has adopted the Greens policy on renewables. It just grates a little bit the way the minister constantly harps about how the Greens do not really get it. It is this top-down arrogance that is embedded in the Andrews government. Not only is it the only one that can ever do anything but it is the only one that can ever think of anything — that is, nobody outside its world, with its little stakeholders and its beves of advisers in the departments all sort of going ‘Ning, ning, ning’ in their ear, could ever do it — and therefore it is not surprising that both parties will be opposing this motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Morris) — Order! Thank you, Mr Barber. Your time has expired.

House divided on motion:

Ayes, 5

Barber, Mr (*Teller*)
Dunn, Ms
Hartland, Ms

Pennicuik, Ms (*Teller*)
Springle, Ms

Noes, 31

Bath, Ms	Mulino, Mr
Bourman, Mr	O'Donohue, Mr
Carling-Jenkins, Dr	Ondarchie, Mr
Crozier, Ms	Patten, Ms
Dalla-Riva, Mr	Peulich, Mrs
Davis, Mr	Pulford, Ms
Eideh, Mr	Purcell, Mr
Elasmar, Mr	Ramsay, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)
Finn, Mr	Rich-Phillips, Mr
Fitzherbert, Ms	Shing, Ms
Herbert, Mr	Somyurek, Mr
Leane, Mr	Symes, Ms
Lovell, Ms	Tierney, Ms
Melhem, Mr (<i>Teller</i>)	Wooldridge, Ms
Mikakos, Ms	Young, Mr
Morris, Mr	

Motion negatived.**POLICE NUMBERS****Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I move:**

That this house notes that —

- (1) since 2014 the number of frontline first-responder police has been cut by 115 under Daniel Andrews;
- (2) according to the police association, police service areas such as Casey, Glen Eira, Boroondara, Whitehorse, Monash, Hume, Manningham, Melbourne, Bayside, Knox, Brimbank, Darebin, Yarra Ranges, Hobsons Bay and Maroondah currently have fewer frontline first-responder police than in 2014;
- (3) cuts to frontline first-responder police have occurred at a time when Victoria's population is growing by over 100 000 per year;
- (4) according to the police association survey, 26 per cent of 'priority 1' jobs, such as home invasions and armed robberies, were regularly being held for an hour or more as a result of the critical shortage of police;
- (5) in recent months, communities have taken to forming 'citizen patrols' across metropolitan Melbourne as a result of the lack of police;
- (6) total crime in Victoria under Daniel Andrews in the year to 30 June 2016 has risen by 13.4 per cent;
- (7) behind every crime there is a victim;

and calls on the government to deliver the resources that Victoria Police urgently need to tackle this crime tsunami.

I am very pleased to move this motion about police numbers in Victoria, about the enormous pressure members of Victoria Police find themselves under when working on the front line and some of the concerning, indeed alarming, trends we have seen in relation to crime and law and order in Victoria. There has been some debate about police numbers in Victoria, and I have noticed the comments of the minister and

her claims in question time this week that there has been no cut to frontline police.

It is always important to go back to the source material and the source facts. Any way you cut it, the number of frontline police — first-responder police, however you wish to describe them — is down under the Andrews government. Frontline police, the police responding to the urgent 000 call in the divvy van, there are fewer of them today than there were in November 2014.

What an indictment of Daniel Andrews and his priorities, when in his first two budgets taxes and charges are up by about 20 per cent, he has got the windfall from the lease of the port and population growth is running very strongly at over 100 000 people per year, yet Daniel Andrews, Lisa Neville and members of the Labor Party expect fewer police at the coalface to respond to the increased calls that they are receiving and the myriad challenges that they are facing.

I now go to the numbers as provided by Victoria Police. In November 2010 there were 11 256.93 full-time equivalent sworn members of Victoria Police. The police minister has this habit of saying, 'The coalition didn't deliver any extra police in their term of government. They didn't fund any police. They didn't deliver any police. They've done nothing'. So we go to those stats, which are 11 256.93 in November 2010 — Minister Neville has actually used this statistic — and November 2014, 13 151. So 11 256.93 to 13 151 is close enough to 1900 extra police. The coalition promised 1700 extra police, and we delivered 1900. It is absolute nonsense — it is untrue — to say that the coalition did not deliver extra police to Victoria during our term in government, and those extra police were delivered through the budgets that took place in those years. Funnily enough, it was the Treasurer of the coalition government that handed down those budgets. The money was provided through those budgets to enable that increase to take place, the largest ever single injection in frontline or extra police in Victoria's history.

Let us move to what has happened under this government. The total number of regional police — so, those police that are on the beat, on the front line at police stations — was 9840.57 in November 2014, an increase from 7972.85 full-time equivalent sworn members in November 2010. So again, the vast bulk of those extra police delivered by the coalition went to regional police stations, and in the context of police regions, that includes the metropolitan areas as well. So they went to the coalface, to the front line — 9840.57 in November 2014. How many regional police at the

coalface, at the front line at police stations, are there today? There are fewer now than there were in 2014 using Victoria Police's statistics. There are 9812.5 — 28 less — according to the statistics that Lisa Neville was quoting in *Hansard* yesterday and that only became available around midday today on the Victoria Police website.

Let us go to the Police Association Victoria statistics. The police association say that there are 115 fewer first-responder police now than in 2014. The Victoria Police statistics say very clearly there are fewer regional police now — so fewer police at police stations on the front line — according to the statistics made available earlier today than there were in November 2014, according to the figures that were released to the opposition under freedom of information for November 2014. According to the police association there are 115 fewer first-responder police now than in 2014.

If you go into the police association statistics, what is an absolute disgrace is that some of the quickest growing areas — some of the areas with the most significant crime increase — have fewer police. Let me say this: when we talk about police numbers and police locations, the chief commissioner should not be put in the invidious position of having to choose between funding a task force of police to investigate serious crimes that are happening — a cluster of crimes or a group of crimes — and vans on the road. There simply should be resources for both, but the position that Daniel Andrews has put the police in is making a choice between vans on the road — those who respond to the 000 calls — and police for task forces to investigate serious crimes and groups of crimes that are happening as a result of the crime wave we have seen and the gang violence, the carjackings, the home invasions and the like.

According to the police association, in Casey in 2014 there were 165 first-responder police; in 2016 there are 152. Crime is up 20 per cent in Casey and up by much more in many postcodes. The population is growing remarkably, and new estates are opening all over Casey. Thousands and thousands of people — anywhere up to 20 000 extra people in the last couple of years — have moved to Casey and crime is up, yet the number of police patrolling that area is fewer now than it was two years ago.

If we move to Glen Eira, again crime is up. Crime in Glen Eira is up significantly, but the number of police is down from 49 in 2014 to 47 today. In Boroondara it is down from 111 in 2014 to 95 today. Similarly in Whitehorse it is down from 94 to 83. In Hume it has

gone from 151 down to 145. In Manningham it is down from 53 to 49. There has been a significant cut in Bayside, from 61 to 48. In Darebin it has gone from 129 down to 125. In Yarra Ranges it is down from 143 to 136.

I want to take the house to some of the statistics in the Shire of Yarra Ranges. In a postcode like 3160, which covers Belgrave, Belgrave Heights, Belgrave South and Tecoma, there has been a 33.9 per cent increase in crime in the last 12 months. In Ferny Creek there has been a 42 per cent increase in crime. In Kallista, although off a small base, there has been a 400 per cent increase in crime. In Mount Dandenong there has been a 34 per cent increase in crime. In Olinda there has been a 70 per cent increase in crime; in Sassafra, a 57.9 per cent increase in crime. And so it goes on: Wandin East, a 34 per cent increase in crime; Mount Evelyn, a 54 per cent increase in crime. Yet there are fewer police in the Yarra Ranges today than there were back in 2014.

In places like Stonnington, where crime is up by 10 per cent, the number of police is the same. The population continues to increase and crime is up, but we have fewer police to respond to these crimes. It is the same in Hobsons Bay and Maroondah.

So on any analysis, any way you look at it, whether it is total sworn members on a per capita basis, or the total regional police at police stations responding to calls and the like, they have been cut. On Victoria Police statistics, according to the police association analysis, the number of first-responder police is down by 115 per cent, and as I say, even in some particularly high-growth, high-crime areas there are fewer first-responder police on the beat now compared to 2014.

We saw the police association, as a result of its survey, express some alarm about the impact on its members but also on the community. The article that appeared on Thursday, 6 October, headed 'Police squads besieged' on the front page of the *Herald Sun* says:

Chronic understaffing at the vast majority of Victoria Police's criminal investigation units has brought detectives to breaking point, high-ranking officers say.

Senior sergeants say there is a staffing crisis at the stretched sexual offences and child abuse investigation teams, where emotionally drained detectives are overrun by work.

All SOCIT senior sergeants who responded to an unprecedented Police Association Victoria survey said they lacked enough investigators to 'properly meet the demands of their unit'. Half said investigations concluded too early.

The police union is calling for 80 extra SOCIT members in the next 12 months to tackle the staffing crisis.

It goes on to say:

Of CIU senior sergeants surveyed ... more than one in three said the quality of a court brief often, or very often, suffered owing to under-resourcing.

Just have a think about that for a second: one in three of these senior sergeants said that the quality of a court brief often, or very often, suffered as a result of under-resourcing. So these are the ramifications of the cuts to frontline police and of Daniel Andrews turning off the recruitment tap as one of his first acts upon being elected to government, making the police academy a ghost town in 2015, and basically emptying it out. Brand-new facilities, funded and delivered by the former government, including a brand-new range and a whole variety of new facilities, were virtually empty last year.

The consequence is more than just slower response times or issues with responding to calls. It impacts on the court process and the prosecution of alleged offenders because the criminal investigation unit (CIU) do not have the resources to put together a court brief in the way they would like. The article goes on to say:

Half of CIU police said services to victims of crime declined often, or very often, as a result of understaffing.

I think that is absolutely tragic, because the impact on victims of crime cannot be overstated. Particularly when there are crimes against the person, the impact can be long lasting. The way that victims are handled, assisted and comforted during what can be an incredibly difficult time can make an impact upon that person or persons for a sustained period, so to think that there are not enough resources to deal with and assist victims of crime, again, is perhaps an unknown or untold aspect of the resourcing crisis that Victoria Police currently confronts.

The article goes on to quote the police association secretary, Ron Iddles, as saying:

SOCITs have a staffing crisis.

Their work is harrowing and emotionally draining yet our members ... tell us that they are overrun with work and do not have enough detectives to meet the demands.

Victoria Police needs to ensure (they) receive regular wellbeing support ... it must also clearly identify the number of additional detectives required to sustain the crushing workloads.

In the context where the road toll has increased this year, I think we had all hoped that the spike from earlier this year would be an aberration and we would see it revert back to a decline in the road toll, which we all want to see, but unfortunately that has not eventuated. If

current trends continue, alarmingly we might be heading back towards a figure of around 300 potentially, which we all hope we do not get to. But in the context of a deteriorating road safety environment it is alarming to hear — and I quote the article again — that:

Road policing senior sergeants also said they struggled to cope: 69 per cent said they didn't have enough staff to properly meet demand.

Almost half of road policing senior sergeants said their units were often, or very often, diverted to general duties; 31 per cent said they often could not attend incidents.

That is reflected in freedom of information material that I have received about the number of infringements issued by highway patrol, which are down by approximately a third, and I think it is generally accepted that the two-up policy for police has reduced highway patrol by around a third, give or take a few.

Let me say again, as I did yesterday, that no-one second-guesses, and I certainly do not second-guess, that operational decision. What the government should have done immediately was fund sufficient extra police so that there was no reduction in service delivery as a result of that legitimate operational decision, particularly given the changed security environment which we have found ourselves in in the last year or so. But that did not happen, so police are now forced to reduce their visible presence and reduce their highway patrol activity.

The government has made much about the extra police it has funded. You cannot help but conclude that the government has been forced kicking and screaming to do what it is doing, but the extra police that are coming are not enough to keep up with population growth. They do not come anywhere near the 3300 that Police Association Victoria says are needed over the coming years, and we have no commitment from the government when it comes to future funding. That is in comparison to the coalition government, which had a very clear policy of delivering 1700 police and protective services officers (PSO). We ended up delivering 1900 police and 950 PSOs. We had a very clear four-year program.

From the government's perspective it appears they are operating in response to the media cycle. The announcement about the 300 extra frontline police, or 406 in total, was made after the police association started their campaign last week — in the afternoon. The government is responding to the media cycle with no long-term plan, and if you look at the forward estimates, how many police are allocated through the forward estimates, without the 406 being delivered in

this financial year? Zero. The minister talks a lot about what the government is doing, but in reality the government has no plans beyond 30 June next year. That comes after they were basically asleep at the wheel for the first 18 months in government and after, as I said, making the police academy a virtual ghost town after it had been a hub of activity during the term of the coalition government.

I just want to mention a couple of statistics from my own electorate that caused me enormous concern. I mentioned the reduction in frontline police in the City of Casey. The township of Clyde is in the City of Casey, and the crime statistics for Clyde show that crime has gone up by 50.9 per cent, according to the recent statistics. That is quite an alarming statistic. The Leader of the Opposition referred in question time today in the other place to a couple, who I believe are from Clyde North, who had their car stolen and who have been traumatised as a result of the crime that had been committed against them.

The lovely town of Officer is a beautiful country town that is changing into an outer-suburban growth hub. Crime has increased there by 50.2 per cent according to the most recent statistics. I just want to give a shout out again to Cranbourne police, because it was my absolute pleasure and privilege to spend a significant chunk of the night shift with them on the Thursday night before the grand final eve public holiday. In Cranbourne, crime is up 25.3 per cent, and there is no doubt that the police there are dedicated, capable, measured and responsive and that they do the best they can. It was fascinating to talk to them, as I talk to police all the time, about the challenges they face every day and to see and hear some of the calls they receive, the issues they need to respond to and the challenges that that presents emotionally, time wise and in many other ways. To think that there are ever fewer police doing that job in the City of Casey today, when the population is rising so rapidly and when crime is up in places like Clyde by over 50 per cent, it is no wonder that we have a law and order crisis in Victoria.

My motion also talks about the police association survey stating that 26 per cent of priority 1 jobs, such as home invasions and armed robberies, are being regularly held for an hour or more as a result of the critical shortage of police. I think I heard the police association secretary on the radio refer to this as playing Russian roulette. What a stressful, challenging and difficult position to be in — to have multiple priority 1 jobs on the go at the same time, knowing that you do not have the resources to respond to all of them and having to hold some of them for an hour or more. Again, the police association secretary referred to a

coronial investigation, which I will not go into now, but clearly these police are being put in a very challenging and difficult position.

We have now seen groups of citizens respond to this crime tsunami by forming what can be described as citizen patrols across many, many parts of Melbourne. I think it really does say something about the level of community concern — the level of community angst — and about crime and police response when private citizens are forming groups to patrol their neighbourhoods. Now, this is not something that I would encourage, and I have noted the comments of the chief commissioner and others about this practice, but it definitely speaks to the alarming concern in the community when it comes to the availability of police resources.

I have been to many of the areas where these citizen patrols have formed — places like Melton and Caroline Springs and indeed parts of the south-east. The police numbers and the police vans on the road often are very similar to when those areas were much smaller, more akin to country towns and outer suburban bustling growth hubs. You have got to feel for the police being in that situation, but you also have to acknowledge the enormous concern from the community that this has not just happened in an isolated way, once or twice, but has happened right across large parts of Victoria.

It is interesting to think: why is this happening? The police minister would say this is inevitable. She says it is part of a six-year trend, as if that somehow explains a 13.4 per cent increase in crime, with more than half a million offences committed in the last 12 months, and as if that somehow explains the enormous crime rate we have seen and the gang violence and the brazen nature of crime that we are now seeing. But it does not explain it away; it is more like a comment of a commentator than a minister. What is she doing to bring that 13.4 per cent crime increase under control?

When you compare the figures to the New South Wales ones, the most comparable jurisdiction to Victoria, the difference could not be more stark. I quote from the New South Wales crime statistics for the period updated June 2016, released on 5 September this year:

The offences trending down were:

1. murder (down 32 per cent);
2. robbery without a weapon (down 25.9 per cent);
3. robbery with a firearm (down 41.7 per cent);
4. robbery with a weapon not a firearm (down 22.2 per cent);

5. break and enter dwelling (down 7.2 per cent);
6. motor vehicle theft (down 12.6 per cent);
7. steal from dwelling (down 6.6 per cent);
8. steal from person (down 9.9 per cent);
9. malicious damage to property (down 3.2 per cent).

The release from the New South Wales crime statistics agency goes on to say:

These changes mean that 12 major crime categories of crime in NSW are now at their lowest level in 20 years. The categories are:

- murder;
- robbery without a weapon;
- robbery with a firearm;
- robbery with a weapon not a firearm;
- break and enter dwelling;
- break and enter non-dwelling;
- motor vehicle theft;
- steal from motor vehicle;
- steal from retail store;
- steal from dwelling;
- steal from person;
- malicious damage to property.

So while crime skyrockets in Victoria, just across the border they have got record lows. Twelve of the major crime categories are at their lowest level in 20 years. Perhaps the police minister should go to New South Wales and see what they are doing so differently up there, because how can it be that Victoria has become the murder capital of Australia while in New South Wales murder is down by 32.2 per cent and is down to its lowest level in 20 years? Any way you cut it, this government has lost control of law and order and lost control of community safety.

I just want to talk briefly about three other things. The first is the Infrastructure Victoria report. The police minister was on radio the day the draft report was released, making commentary about its recommendations to close police stations. Within minutes or hours of the multimillion-dollar report being released things were being ruled in and ruled out by the government.

One thing the government did not make commentary on, so I can only assume it is still a live consideration

for the government, is the notion that closed police stations should be sold off and the revenue reinvested into new infrastructure. Now, we know this government has closed police stations, withdrawn counter services from others or reduced the opening hours of even more. I invite members of the government to give a very clear and explicit statement about their intention regarding the Infrastructure Victoria recommendation to sell off closed police stations.

We have empty police stations at Burwood, at Heidelberg West and at Murrumbena. Currently we have an empty police station at Whitfield that has not had a permanent member now for well over a year, possibly 18 months or more, with no prospect of that vacancy being filled anytime soon. We have had the hours cut back at Ashburton to only two days a week. We have had counter service fully withdrawn from the former 24-hour, 7-day-a-week Nunawading police station. We have the brand-new Somerville police station, where the former chief commissioner wrote to the then minister in October 2014 saying the counter service would be open 16 hours a day; it has never been open. We have a range of other police stations where counter hours have either been reduced formally or informally due to a lack of resources.

In relation to the Infrastructure Victoria report, I would expect a government member to give a very clear indication about the recommendation to sell off closed police stations; otherwise we can only assume that that consideration is live.

When it comes to police station opening hours, yet again we saw the minister with egg on her face when yesterday she said in question time in the Assembly that there has been no change, 'no reduction' of service, to the Pakenham 24-hour police station. Clearly she did not read the Star News Group *Pakenham Officer News* article last year which detailed the closures that have occurred at Pakenham, including comments from Victoria Police itself.

I want to move on and just talk for a minute or two about the impact on police. Policing has always been a very difficult job, and I acknowledge and pay respect to the enormous work that police do and the situations of risk that they put themselves in every day they put on their uniform and go to work. But regrettably that risk has increased, and that is in part no doubt why the two-up policy was introduced by the chief commissioner. Again, the police association secretary, Ron Iddles, said that 48 per cent of the members of the association have been assaulted in some way in the last 12 months. That to me is a truly shocking statistic, that in the next calendar year, basically 1 in 2 police will be

assaulted on the job. It is no wonder that there are issues with burnouts and mental health and fatigue and other issues for police members. I congratulate the chief commissioner on saying that there is a problem with this, on undertaking the inquiry and saying that he is now looking to implement the recommendations. I call on the government to provide the funding necessary to implement those recommendations.

I think it is alarming too that the number of rammings of police vehicles has basically tripled in the last 12 months, to 100 or more. Again, just the flagrant disrespect for the police and the attack on who they are and what they represent to me is deeply offensive. I sincerely hope that those types of crimes will be reduced, because the police deserve our respect. This is just another example of the pressure and the threats to their safety that they have to confront as they go out to protect us.

Finally, I just want to talk about victims of crime. Often we talk about statistics and about percentage increases and that this area has been impacted by this or that. But behind every crime there is a victim, and the consequences of that crime for each and every victim will vary, depending on a range of circumstances, from the severity of the crime to the vulnerability of that person — a whole range of factors that are individual to that crime and that individual and that set of circumstances. But in my travels around in the last 6 to 12 months I have been hearing more and more stories from people, including people I know who have been the victim of a crime, about the deep and longstanding impact that has had on them.

We often hear from people who do not like the concept of incarceration and the concept of custodial sentences, and it is often talked about in terms of costs. What we do not hear is the cost to people, whether that is the cost of having to move house because they no longer feel safe, whether it is the cost of having to replace items stolen that might not be insured for the replacement costs or whether that is the cost of installing CCTV cameras and lighting and sensors because they no longer get to sleep at night-time because they are scared that their home might be invaded again. When we talk about costs in the justice system we need to talk a lot more about the personal cost to individuals and a lot more about the cost that crime has on a community's sense of wellbeing.

One of the very sad consequences of rising crime is that people have a tendency to withdraw out of fear, and when people withdraw from civil society, that society is weakened. The more people are engaged and are part of society, the stronger society will be. We need to think

in broader terms when it comes to the cost of crime and the cost of crime to the community.

My final point is in relation to decisions by this government to cut some of the former government's crime prevention program. What a mean-spirited government it is that cuts funding to Neighbourhood Watch and allows it to get to a position where the full-time CEO is no longer employed and the wonderful volunteers of Neighbourhood Watch — who do so much in our community and are such a great conduit to police and such a great part of our community — cannot even get just that bit of help from government to maintain that sort of resource for coordination, leadership and policy development. What an absolute indictment of Daniel Andrews that he can find \$1.2 billion to not build a road, but he cannot find a few hundred thousand dollars to help Neighbourhood Watch. It says much about his priorities indeed.

What a disappointment it is that some of the fantastic family violence prevention programs that were initiated by the former government have not been continued — again, despite a relatively modest cost. Some of the programs that ran through the south-eastern suburbs and through the eastern suburbs and other parts of Victoria did a great deal in bringing communities together and in developing male role models to speak out, but unfortunately many of those programs were not renewed. I acknowledge there has been different and separate funding, but often the momentum can be lost when those sorts of programs are not continued, which is what happened with this government.

It is the same with the funding for Step Back Think. It was funded by the coalition for four years with \$200 000 each year; the funding only continued with this government for one year, and now it is cut. Step Back Think is trying to drive education about the consequences of violent behaviour in our community; it has been defunded by this government.

When we think of crime indeed we do see the need to have a broad range of responses, including extra police resources so that police are not in the horrible position of having to make choices as to which category 1 incident to respond to. We need to partner with the community to respond to crime and perceptions of crime, and the government needs to show leadership in that. The government has failed to do that. As I said, perhaps the best example of that is the failure to renew the funding to Neighbourhood Watch. We need to send a strong message of deterrence.

How is it that Labor members, members of the Greens and Suzanna Sheed, the Independent member for

Shepparton in the Assembly, voted against the no body, no parole bill? What rational explanation is there to vote against a bill to hold to account convicted murderers who have failed to disclose the location or last known location of the body of the victim? How do they explain their position? How is it that members in the Legislative Assembly, including Ms Sheed, the Greens and Labor, did not even allow that bill to be put on the notice paper? They did not even allow it to be introduced for debate. They defeated it on its introduction so it could not even be debated. What an absolute disgrace.

I heard the police minister in question time saying, 'The upper house has got the carjacking bill. Pass it. Pass it'. Funnily enough, six parties in this place passed the carjacking bill a couple of months ago, and again debate was not even allowed in the other place. The offences for carjacking could have been statute weeks and weeks ago.

Let me conclude my remarks by just reiterating the point about police numbers. The government is all over the place when it comes to police numbers in Victoria. They try and use different numbers to justify different positions, but if you use the official police statistics that I used, you see on that analysis that police numbers on a per capita basis are down and the number of police in regional police stations is down. If you use the police association analysis, you see there are 115 fewer first-responder police in 2016 than there were in 2014. At a time of growing community concern about crime, when crime is up by 13.4 per cent and the population is growing by 100 000 people per year, that is an absolute indictment of the priorities of Daniel Andrews and the Labor government. I look forward to hearing further contributions on my motion.

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak against the opposition's motion, and I totally reject the basis of this motion. Let me explain the facts. We have spent close to an extra \$900 million on our police in just the first two years of government. The truth of the matter is there are more police in Victoria now than under the former government. We have provided Victorians with an extra 1156 police officers, protective services officers and police custody officers to serve the community, and they do a magnificent job.

We are also giving Victoria's frontline police officers state-of-the-art mobile technology to make it easier for them to respond to incidents of violent crime, public disorder, terrorist threats and the scourge of family violence. This will save our police officers valuable time in the field so they can focus on fighting crime and keeping Victorians safe. The Andrews Labor

government funds frontline police and will continue to do so. In contrast those opposite did not fund one single sworn police officer when they were in government. What they did do was cut more than 300 key police staff such as crime lab scientists — the very people that help police catch criminals.

The Victoria Police Academy will run at capacity to train new police as the Andrews Labor government brings forward recruitment of additional frontline police. That decision, made last month, has ramped up the academy's recruitment of extra police to reflect the need for more officers in Victoria's growth communities. The government has provided \$26.2 million to expedite the 406 new police announced in the 2016–17 Victorian budget, following detailed discussions with the Chief Commissioner of Police, Graham Ashton. This means these additional police officers will be sworn in by the end of June 2017, rather than June 2018. The first of the additional police officers will start hitting the beat in early 2017. These new police officers are over and above the hundreds of police trained over the course of the year to cover attrition.

The government continues to give Victoria Police the resources and powers it needs to fight crime, including funding an additional 406 police, new technology and specialist equipment and introducing new laws to target offenders who commit home invasions and carjackings. That is called putting your money where your mouth is — action, not just words. The police custody officer program rolled out has seen 227 custody officers deployed to 22 stations across Victoria. They have worked more than 11 000 shifts to free up police time.

The Victoria Police Academy will be a hive of activity over the next 12 months as 1000 new police, protective services officers and police custody officers are recruited and trained. Victoria Police continues to work on a new deployment model for police, which will examine an area's crime trends and socio-economic factors to best inform resourcing decisions. The deployment model is yet to be finalised, but the deployment of the additional police officers will cover growth corridors and other areas of high need.

These are the real facts. This is where the Andrews government stands, and we will honour this. I oppose the motion, and I call on the house to vote no to this motion.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today to speak to the motion put to the house by Mr O'Donohue regarding police numbers and the increase in crime here in Victoria. I

wish to acknowledge the work of this government and the previous governments in respect of law and order. It is not an easy issue. Law and order often becomes a political football, which I find alarming. An increase in crime is not reliant on who is in government. I wonder how many criminals actually know who the Premier is. However, the fact is that crime is on the increase, and it is therefore incumbent on the government of the day to address this issue. That brings me to this motion, which I believe needs to be discussed in this house.

Mr O'Donohue has not mentioned my local area of Wyndham, so I would like to go into specifics in relation to that area today. According to the Police Association Victoria, even with all members available for first-response duty, Wyndham has the worst police-to-population ratio in Victoria, with 49 response officers per 100 000 people, compared to the state average of 102 response officers for every 100 000 people. The association says that since making the request two years ago that 159 frontline police officers be allocated to Wyndham to bring the region up to the state's average only 15 officers have been put on.

Bruce McKenzie, assistant secretary of the police association, said:

Our members simply cannot keep pace with rising demand for police service.

He went on to say that unless more police were allocated Wyndham would continue to be 56 officers short of the state average of 102 first-response police members for every 100 000 residents. This burden puts not just the health, wellbeing and property of the public at risk but also that of our police officers.

Meanwhile the population in Wyndham continues to grow. Between 2014 and 2015 Wyndham recorded the largest growth in Victoria, adding 10 202 people to its population. It also had the second largest percentage change in Victoria, with a 5.1 per cent change, behind Melbourne City with 5.6 per cent. Nationally Wyndham has the fourth highest growth rate of any other Australian local government area. Point Cook alone is the fourth highest ranked suburb in Australia for population growth, with an increase of 3200 people from 2014 to 2015.

Again, I quote Bruce McKenzie from the Police Association. He said:

Members tell us that there are jobs being held for long periods and times when police can't attend to all calls from the public.

This is in relation to the Wyndham area.

It was revealed earlier this month that a quarter of respondents to a police association survey said that they are holding priority 1 jobs — like carjackings, aggravated burglaries and assaults — for more than an hour due to understaffing. Another very disturbing result is that 84 per cent of respondents said call-outs regularly went unattended.

On 22 June this year Channel 7 news reported that Point Cook residents were defending themselves against physical attack and taking the law into their own hands to get dangerous hoon and troublemakers off their streets. In September a Point Cook resident told Neil Mitchell on radio station 3AW that locals had been arming themselves with baseball bats, preparing to take the law into their own hands in fear of home invasions. These are but some of a long string of attacks dating back over a year now.

In May this year the hosts of a teenage party had to barricade themselves in a bedroom as their Point Cook house was invaded, smashed and robbed by violent gatecrashers. In September of last year — this is something I have raised in the house before — bus windows were smashed by rocks, which left bus company CDC Melbourne with no choice but to pull night-time services in that area, effectively cutting off public transport after hours.

I certainly do not condone any of these actions, and I do not condone the idea of people taking the law into their own hands. It is dangerous, and it is definitely to be discouraged. None of us want to see vigilante groups forming to fill a vacuum. I do understand the frustration of residents, however. These are people who find themselves in a situation they should never be in. Victorians should never have to feel compelled to put themselves in harm's way like this simply to protect themselves, their family and neighbours and/or their property. I have raised these concerns before in this house, and I will continue to do so until they are dealt with effectively.

Finally, I would like to address the last point in Mr O'Donohue's motion, that 'behind every crime there is a victim'. That is so very true, and this is what we should be thinking of most and concentrating and focusing our attention on when we speak about crime in our communities. Too often we speak about crime as an abstract concept, which it clearly is not — at least, not for the victims. Home invasions and armed robberies, which this motion is particularly addressing, are crimes which deeply affect many in our community. These crimes are committed against the ordinary citizens of this state, and the state must act to protect them. For this

reason I thank Mr O'Donohue for bringing this motion to the house, and I will be supporting it.

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise today to absolutely support Mr O'Donohue's motion on the lack of police support in Victoria. I say that, because that is actually what is happening out there. But we cannot blame Victoria Police for this, because the responsibility for providing police numbers and appropriate budget support for Victoria Police lies directly with the Minister for Police, Lisa Neville, and the Premier, Daniel Andrews. Whilst Victorians are frightened — they are nervous to go out on the streets, and they are nervous to go out at night — the nub of this problem rests with the Premier and the police minister. All we are hearing out of them are words, words, words. Victorians are tired of words from this government; they want some action.

I note that Mr O'Donohue's motion talks about the reduction in first-responder police and about getting people out. I know from talking to people in Northern Metropolitan Region that citizens are frightened, but when they approach the police, the police say, 'We don't have the resources'. The police minister can say anything she likes about what is happening out there, but the truth is that Epping police station has had its hours reduced. Greensborough police station has had its hours reduced. The government that said it would not waste a day has still to open the Mernda police station almost two years on.

I have to say that the general feeling among the operational police out there is: where are the numbers going to come from to support the Mernda police station? I have senior sergeants out that way saying, 'They're not coming from my troops; you're not taking them from me'. They are worried that what is going to happen is that there will be a reduction in their own personal service areas, at their own stations, to support the Mernda police station. It is not good enough. The Heidelberg West police station was closed by Labor and remains closed. Reservoir police station has had its hours reduced. The capacity to get the van out on the road has reduced, and time and time again citizens are saying to me, 'There were these hoons dragging up and down my street last night', 'The local cricket club was broken into', 'They were graffitiing the bus stop' or 'They smashed the windows of the local shops'. I have said, 'Did you call 000?', and they have said, 'We've tried doing that in the past, but no-one ever turns up'.

I have an experience that I will share with the house about a very close friend of mine. He and his wife were asleep in the middle of the night in their home in the northern metropolitan area, and they awoke to find two

men standing at the edge of the bed. They threatened this family, they were physical with this family, they demanded the keys to the car and any money that was in the house and they took off with the car and whatever money and possessions they could. This is a law-abiding, taxpaying family with children, just going about their business, and their house was broken into. The suspicion is that criminals are more active in Victoria now because they know there is a lack of police numbers on the streets. They know they can get away with it. They eventually found the car the next day in a completely different suburb from where it was taken. The car has subsequently been returned to the owners. You can understand that the lady of that family is frightened to drive that car. She does not want anything to do with that car because it reminds her so much of the horror of that evening. The police have only got limited resources to deal with this.

Mr O'Donohue mentioned that according to Police Association Victoria, police service areas such as Casey, Glen Eira, Boroondara, Whitehorse, Monash, Hume, Manningham, Melbourne, Bayside, Knox, Brimbank, Darebin, Yarra Ranges, Hobsons Bay and Maroondah currently have fewer frontline first-responder police than in 2014. I would say to Mr O'Donohue that I slightly disagree with him here because I would say the community would think that it affects all areas, not just those mentioned.

In recent days a businessman going about his business in the northern suburbs of Melbourne had his business attacked. I know Mr O'Donohue knows this story personally. In fact I give credit to Mr O'Donohue because I know he has spoken to the businessperson involved as well, who understandably is frightened. He is frightened for his business and frightened for his staff, and yet a call to Victoria Police puts pressure on Victoria Police to respond when they have limited resources. Where is the Premier on all this? It seems to me he is too busy bullying volunteers in this state and forcing his own union-constructed agenda through Victoria to care about ordinary Victorians, and that is the tragedy of what is going on in Victoria.

According to the police association survey, Mr O'Donohue advised us, 26 per cent of priority 1 jobs such as home invasions and armed robberies were regularly being held for an hour or more as a result of the critical shortage of police. Can you believe that in 2016 we do not have enough police to deal with our population growth and the government, two years in, has done nothing about this? Over recent days, this is a government that leads its policy decision-making by what is on the front page of the paper in the morning. It decided it had better rush some things through the

police academy, it had better hurry up and get on with it. Victorians are not silly. Victorians know that this is a government in crisis because it is so busy fighting internally that it has not got on with the job that it was elected to do. I remind the Premier, I remind the Minister for Police and I remind all members, as Mr O'Donohue rightly pointed out, that for every additional statistic there is a victim.

Why is our government, which it reminds us is a government that was democratically elected, not going to efforts to protect our citizens? It is simply not good enough. In the year to 30 June this year there was an almost 13.5 per cent increase in crime, and that is a statistic that is rolled out across websites and across daily newspapers, but the reality is that is a 13.5 per cent increase in the number of people who are affected by crime — and in criminals. We are not doing enough about it.

I remember when the coalition was in government the then opposition, now the government, criticised Mr O'Donohue for his harsh efforts, as they deemed it, in locking up prisoners. I will tell you what, if I have a choice between the safety of ordinary Victorians going about their roles and locking up prisoners, I know which way I am going to vote. We have to protect Victorians, and this government is simply not doing enough about it.

The cuts to frontline first-responder police have occurred at a time when Victoria's population is growing at over 100 000 per year, 92 000 of whom are moving to metropolitan Melbourne. Where are the police numbers to join that? They are non-existent. Maybe the police minister is too busy organising \$27 million of water out of the desalination plant. Maybe the Premier is too busy looking after his friends at Trades Hall to worry about ordinary Victorians, but I remind the Premier: you were elected to govern for all Victorians, and it is about time you started doing that. I commend Mr O'Donohue's motion to the house.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) — I rise today to speak in support of Mr O'Donohue's motion and to have a little bit of a talk about why. Crime is up — that is a fact — and the reasons why it is so right at the moment are anybody's guess. A lot of the assumptions are that the crooks know they are not going to be caught by the police and so on, but the reality is that with growth corridors and new areas with larger populations where there used to be very small populations and very few police, the police numbers do need to rise — and rise fairly substantially; otherwise we will get to see a little bit more of what we are seeing now, and that is vigilantes. Vigilantism is the last thing we need in

Australia; however, it is the case that obviously vigilantes feel the need to act. That, at some point in time, will end up in tears, but it is avoidable.

We are getting several hundred more police officers. But with the two-up policy and the number of police squads, the actual number of police in vans on the road will not substantially increase. I remember back in the day, when I was a younger man — I will not say young man — we would start a shift with in excess of 10 jobs. This is back in the 1990s. You would usually start with between 10 and 13 jobs. You would write all of the jobs down and you would work through them. You can only imagine what it is like now. With some of the stations not being open as often and some stations in rural areas not being able to actually field a van at all and having to share their area with a neighbouring town, the response rates have suffered. In rural areas they have suffered a lot — not by 5 or 10 minutes; it can be 45 minutes. If you are at one end of the police region and you get a job at the other end of the neighbouring police region, even with lights and bells and driving fast, it can still take a long time. When you have got a priority 1 job and when seconds count, in those cases the police are hours away. Again, this is a service that the state is supposed to give to its citizens, and if this service is suffering a bit, we need to do something about it.

Interestingly enough I had a personal experience with the problem with police numbers. A few weeks ago I was sitting in traffic in Highett, minding my own business, and I saw a young boy get hit by a car. Fortunately he was all right, but the traffic management unit had to come from Carrum Downs to Highett at speed in the rain is quite dangerous, and for all the police knew the boy could have been seriously injured. But they managed to get there, which is a testament to their driving skills because there was so much that could have gone wrong. But they were all there was. There was absolutely nothing they could do about it.

What has also been drawn to our attention of late is that the theft of firearms is increasing. This is a natural increase in that there are more burglaries, and with more burglaries come more firearms. We are all about legal firearms. The last thing we want is illegal firearms getting onto the street. There are a couple of reasons. Obviously there is the public safety reason; the other reason is that firearms are our property. But the police are struggling to keep up, and historically burglary clearance rates have always been low. With the pressure on police now it is going to be even harder for them.

Police numbers is not the only problem. We have a parole system in desperate need of reform. We certainly have some sentencing practices that are in desperate need of reform. We also need a jail or two in which to place the people who are actually worthy of a custodial sentence. To sum up the reason why, as both Mr O'Donohue and Ms Carling-Jenkins have said, with the rise in crime comes a rise in victims. Having more victims is a greater cost to society than custodial sentences. Putting the offenders in jail is about trying to stop them reoffending. They may or may not be able to be rehabilitated — that is an individual issue, I guess — but whilst they are in prison they cannot be out doing any more crimes, or at least not crimes against the community.

In summing up, I do obviously support Mr O'Donohue's motion. I do think we need to look at this in a holistic sense. Regardless of the politics of this matter, the rate of crime is increasing, and it is increasing every year. There is really only one way of dealing with it, and that is to have more police.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I also rise to speak on this motion. Mr O'Donohue's motion talks about police numbers and crime. I accept that we need to do more in that space — there is no question about that — but what I do not accept is making it a political issue and using pointscore, driving more fear into the community and making out that Victoria is a state that no-one should live in because people here are in fear of their lives and in fear of crime. In this scenario Victoria is the new Mexico. That is what those opposite are driven by. They are not driven by trying to work together and offer solutions. They are not recognising reality. They are not offering solutions. They are forgetting one thing: that in their four years in government they did not create a single operational police position. Yesterday I gave the previous government credit for the protective services officers they created. But excluding the normal turnover of police numbers when members retire or leave the force — that is, natural attrition — in the four-year period those opposite did not appoint a single person.

When we were last in government, in the 2010–11 budget — the Brumby budget — we budgeted for 1700 police officers, and they were fully funded.

An honourable member — You weren't there.

Mr MELHEM — I was not there, but Labor was in government. But since we came to government, in addition to the normal police budget we have put in \$900 million. That is in the last two years. Yet we are lectured by the other side about police numbers. If we

look back over the past 16 years we see that Labor has invested more in police numbers in this state — I am talking about net investment, not taking into account day-to-day turnover. We have got the record to show that we have invested more in police numbers; those opposite have not.

Mr Ondarchie — But crime is up 13.5 per cent. What do you say about that?

Mr MELHEM — I am coming to that, Mr Ondarchie. Let us get it right first about numbers and about who is committed to what. There is no question: we are committed to that. Do we need to invest in more numbers? Do we need more police on the road? Absolutely we need that.

Mr O'Donohue — Why did you do nothing for 18 months?

Mr MELHEM — Well, if you put your listening ears on — maybe your ears are painted on — you did not put anyone on in four years. We are putting on close to 1000 now. They are in the academy. We have already put in support officers — they are already in the field — and we are bringing forward some further numbers. Basically, what was going to happen late next year will be brought forward to early next year. So we are actually putting new numbers in.

But what amazes me is what is driving that fear. It is not just the numbers. The Premier made a statement that he will give, on behalf of the government, the police commissioner the resources he needs to protect Victorians and do his job, and that is exactly what we are doing. I have full faith and confidence in the police commissioner, unlike the other side, who keep attacking police command and the police commissioner and former commissioners and questioning their abilities. It is the police commissioner who allocates resources to where police numbers need to be, but the other side is very selective.

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MELHEM — Here we go. Mr Finn just picked on someone. Let us focus on —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MELHEM — I do not go and attack people who get paid to do a job to protect us. I do not attack public servants. I have no issue if you want to go and attack politicians, but certainly I think police commissioners in this state should be above attack and criticism, especially by members of the other side. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr Finn — But not by members of your side. Is that what you're saying?

Mr MELHEM — Well, I have not. You name one. In talking about numbers, what previous governments have done — —

Mr Ondarchie interjected.

Mr MELHEM — I know that pretty well. They cut 300-odd police when they were in government. These are the people who were supporting operational police, and instead of having them dedicated to being on the roads, they sacked 300 of the support officers who were doing a lot of the back office work. That was when you were in government; that is what you did. There are 300 less. They are the people who make life easier for our operational police members to do their job, but these people are gone. What we did was reverse that. We actually put in more support officers so that we can have more police members on the road catching criminals and making our communities safe.

We have seen an increase in family violence. Obviously the numbers are alarming — and increasing. That is something we are concerned about, and a lot of work has been done in that area. The opposition talked about home invasions and carjacking. That is a very alarming thing to be happening in the state. While it probably represents a small proportion of total crimes in the state, it is definitely an alarming thing. Through the efforts of Victoria Police, from their command through all their members, some good work has already taken place, and through Operation Cosmos we have seen that the number of carjackings has fallen in the last few months, and hopefully that will continue to fall.

What concerns me is that the more that people like the opposition keep talking about turning Victoria into New Mexico, the more it will drive fear through our citizens or people who are coming to Victoria that we are a lawless state. I accept that there are some issues, but they are being dealt with, and the statistics — according to Victoria Police, not Mr O'Donohue — in relation to carjacking and home invasions, are going down, and hopefully the numbers will continue to go down and get to zero.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr MELHEM — I believe Victoria Police numbers, not yours.

The other issue I want to talk about is that there has been a fair bit of talk about resources and police stations opening and closing, whether it is 24 hours or 8 hours a day et cetera. There has been an acceptance

by both sides of politics until recently that the allocation of resources is at the sole discretion of the police commissioner and his command, not the Minister for Police, not the shadow Minister for Police and not Mr Finn or Mr Ondarchie. That is not — —

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order, Acting President, I advise the house that there is no minister at the table during the sitting of this Parliament.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Elasmarr) — Order! The minister is on the side. Mr Melhem, to continue.

Mr MELHEM — Thank you, Acting President. In relation to resources, opposition members now want to tell the police commissioner where police members should be deployed.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr MELHEM — Mr O'Donohue, I am glad you raised that, because you got quoted not long ago that you accepted that the police commissioner has absolute discretion to decide where resources should be allocated, but obviously you must have changed your mind on that.

Mr O'Donohue interjected.

Mr MELHEM — But you were quoted as saying that is the case. You quoted the secretary of Police Association Victoria a few times today. You made some comments, and I think some other speakers made comments, about the police minister. Let me quote what Mr Iddles said about the police minister:

To her credit the police minister has actually been out on the road speaking with members.

And:

The new police minister has promised 300 frontline officers and has shown a willingness to listen to police and consult their association.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr MELHEM — We do listen to police members, unlike you. I did not make that up; it is a quote from Mr Iddles.

In relation to police numbers, whilst I accept that we need to have more police numbers on the road — I accept that and I support that — let us get the facts right. The claim that police numbers have not coped with population growth is simply not true.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr MELHEM — I have told you. You cut the numbers. You cut 300 when you were in government last time.

The Victorian population grew by 8.97 per cent between 2009 and 2014–15. Over the same period the number of police grew by 16.45 per cent, so the number of police effectively has gone up, but we need more. The police minister has accepted that, and the government has accepted that. We are investing. We are putting in money. We are employing far more police than you ever did in 20 years. You cannot even name in the last four years when you were in government how many police members you employed. Show me the figures. You sacked 300 police support officers, and if we look at the last 15 years, all the new police recruits — actual operational police members — were funded by Labor. Opposition members should go and look at the records.

You could not point to where you actually employed in the four years you were in government a single operational police officer, apart from the natural attrition which I have talked about, the normal turnover where people resign or retire. You do not count that. I am talking about a net figure in addition to what are the normal number of police members at the beginning of a given financial year and at the end of the financial year. In net I think you can point to zero.

With these comments obviously I will be voting against the motion. I accept we need more police, and we are putting more police in. We have got a carjacking and home invasion bill, which hopefully we will debate tomorrow and pass. The Attorney-General just a few days ago announced a further tightening in relation to the bail laws and so forth, so that is another tranche of changes we are putting in place to make sure that people do not reoffend and that people who offend are dealt with accordingly. I am looking forward to not wasting time tomorrow and to basically expediting the passage of the carjacking bill, and I am looking forward to Mr O'Donohue's contribution. With these comments I thank you, Acting President.

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — Motion 327, moved by Mr O'Donohue, raises important issues, and like many motions moved in this chamber, while the general substance of the issues can be supported, often the way the motion is worded can be very provocative. While listening to the various contributions that have been made on this motion, I would say it has been characterised by claim and counterclaim with regard to police numbers generally and their deployment across the state under this government and the previous government. So there is a

lot of defending of patch going on with regard to this motion, even though the substance of the motion, as I said, is very important and is an important issue for the community.

Despite a number of government members having spoken, including the last one, Mr Melhem, none has given a definitive answer to the points that are raised about police numbers in Mr O'Donohue's motion. The first point that he raises in his motion, which has seven points, is that since 2014 the number of frontline first-responder police has been cut by 115. This statistic comes from Police Association Victoria but has been denied by the police minister, and the Chief Commissioner of Police also says there have been no cuts to frontline police officers. So it is very difficult to get to the bottom of that when you have the opposition, or Mr O'Donohue, saying one thing, the police association saying that same thing and the police minister and Chief Commissioner of Police saying another.

It is not always as straightforward as it might seem to actually get to the bottom of the number of police at any given time compared to the number of police at a former time and whether in fact, as Mr Melhem was talking about, it is natural attrition and changes to the way the police commissioner may deploy police officers in terms of special task forces, different units et cetera and in police stations and on patrols. It is very hard to necessarily get to the bottom of what are determined frontline responder police.

However, the state government also said, and various speakers today have pointed to the fact, that the government has fast-tracked the deployment of more than 400 new police officers, 300 of those being called first responders. The police association is saying it wants an extra 3300 police officers by 2022 to keep up with population growth. Mr O'Donohue's motion states that the population of Victoria is growing by more than 100 000 per year, and that is correct. So clearly we will need more police, however we describe them. We will need more police personnel to keep up with population growth, just as we will need more ambulance officers, just as we will need more teachers and just as we will need more doctors, nurses and other public servants. So police are not alone in needing more numbers in their ranks, so to speak.

A lot of the information comes from the police association. I am very respectful of the survey that was done by the police association of its 329 senior sergeants, and it is very interesting reading to see the results of that survey. The reason I say I am respectful of it is that I am respectful of an organisation like the

police association surveying its members. The senior sergeants are the people running the police stations, and they know what confronts the police every day of the week in terms of the issues that they have to deal with on a daily basis. Certainly when I worked in the union movement I commissioned a very large number of surveys of various workforces to find out what they were experiencing in terms of stress, in terms of working hours, in terms of bullying at work et cetera, and you certainly do get the information from the people on the ground.

From the survey they are saying that population growth has outstripped the ability of the police to meet calls for assistance. Some of the statistics from their survey — and they were all senior sergeants — reveal that more than 80 per cent of them say the increased workload that they are under is due to understaffing. Nearly 30 per cent of them said they lost 50 shifts every fortnight due to staff shortages. That sounds like a lot of shifts to me. That may be an average figure; it would depend on the size of the station, for example, whether that would apply in each station. Senior sergeants in charge of general duties stations said they are struggling to get vans on the road, with 84 per cent of them saying that jobs regularly go unattended. This is where the figure of priority 1 jobs being held up for 1 hour or more comes from. They are saying that is because of resource shortages, and the senior sergeants connect the shortage in police resources to population growth, the effects of secondment and task force policing.

The figures that the police association have provided to the community from their survey do make for sobering reading and do make the case; that is where that priority 1 jobs figure is coming from. However, I did hear that the police commissioner responded to that on ABC radio a couple days ago, and I think he made the point that not all of them were being held up for 1 hour. What the survey is showing, and this is my reading of the survey, is that a large number — 26 per cent, or about a quarter — are being held up but not all for 1 hour. Some are being held up for 1 hour, and that is a concern. I saw some of the examples there where senior sergeants mentioned particular types of incidents said that were priority incidents and that they had to prioritise between priorities, and that is understood.

I have talked about the first three points in Mr O'Donohue's motion collectively. His fifth point goes to the issue of communities taking to forming citizen patrols across Melbourne as a result of lack of police. That is certainly what is happening in some areas, including in the Melbourne CBD area, even though there has been a decrease in crime in the CBD area according to the Crime Statistics Agency. Of

course all the speakers that I have heard so far — Mr O'Donohue and others, including Dr Carling-Jenkins and speakers from the government — have agreed with what the chief commissioner has said to warn people against forming these types of groups because they are only putting themselves at risk in doing that and to advise them that if they see crime or are victims of crime, they should be calling the police, not trying to solve those crimes themselves.

The sixth point is that total crime in Victoria has increased by 13.4 per cent. That is a correct figure from the Crime Statistics Agency, but there is a lot of toing and froing with regard to what the figures actually mean. While the Crime Statistics Agency in fact says that 65 per cent of the increase is due to rising theft, Victorian deputy commissioner of police Andrew Crisp said that a third of all those thefts are related to thefts from cars, and most of those are unoccupied cars. Also there is a bit of a racket going on — they were not his words; they are my words — where numberplates are being stolen to evade the police or evade tolls or to use in petrol drive-offs and some other crimes. The number of aggravated burglaries in relation to the overall burglary number is quite low, so those opposite in the Liberal Party in particular have been playing up the aggravated burglary side of theft, whereas the crime stats — —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms PENNICUIK — I am sorry if I misspoke that. Both parties, really, if you really want to put it that way, are exaggerating the number of aggravated burglaries that are being reported by the Crime Statistics Agency and by the police. When you look at the breakdown of those crimes you see it is not to the extent that is being said by the government and the opposition in this regard. Also, it is worth noting that the family violence statistics make up a large part of the rise in crime, and a lot of that is due to increased reporting of those crimes and an increased focus on those crimes. Of course they are a serious blight on our community, and we are all hopefully trying to work towards reducing that particular type of crime.

The last point is 'behind every crime is a victim'. Of course that is the case, and behind every crime there could be more than one victim. The motion 'calls on the government to deliver the resources that Victoria Police urgently need to tackle this crime tsunami'. Terms like 'crime tsunami' are not very helpful. We are not having a crime tsunami in Victoria. It is not helpful for members of Parliament to run around in the community trying to make people feel as if they are living in a

crime tsunami when they are not living in a crime tsunami. It does behove people to put things in perspective — that is what I am trying to do — and say that, yes, police numbers, as with other essential public services, do need to keep up with population growth, of course, but we do not need to be unduly worrying the community even though nobody is saying there are not serious crimes being committed. I would be saying that we are not in a crime tsunami.

I would also like to say with regard to this particular motion that I have not heard anybody talk about the other side of it, which is crime prevention.

Mr O'Donohue — I did.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Mr O'Donohue, I must have missed that, but I have not heard anyone else. We are of the view that this debate needs to incorporate a wider perspective and talk about the approach that we need to take to address crime, including acknowledging the importance of embracing things like justice reinvestment initiatives.

There have been some presentations just this year in Parliament House regarding the success of the justice reinvestment approach in the United States in reducing the crime rate. It means less money is spent on detention in prisons, less of a need to increase police numbers and increased investment in specialist and problem-solving courts and community-based initiatives that address the causes of offending in the first place and can interrupt offending cycles. So greater investment in rehabilitation programs, health and education and investment in employment programs, particularly in the areas of more vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, would make those communities and the rest of the community more safe. That is the other side that we should be looking at. Rather than just looking at the law enforcement side, we should be looking at the community-based approaches of justice reinvestment and rehabilitation of offenders, particularly young offenders.

In fact, if you look at the crime statistics, you will see that overall commission of offences by young people has fallen. In fact that is the area where crime offending has fallen, except for a very small cohort of repeat offenders, which has been identified by legal aid as around about 500 repeat offenders. But over the general population of young people the offending of that group has fallen, not risen. But that is not the impression that you get from hearing a lot of the contributions by MPs. It is a small proportion of young offenders that are responsible for a disproportionate number of crimes.

They are the comments I wanted to make on Mr O'Donohue's motion today.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — It is with pleasure that I rise to speak to the motion that has been moved by Mr O'Donohue. I want to congratulate Mr O'Donohue on the very important work that he is doing in ensuring that the government is kept to account for its lack of support for our very hardworking police. We have a police force that are working exceptionally hard to try and keep our communities safe, and they are doing so without the resources that they desperately need. Mr O'Donohue is truly standing up for the community in this respect, because he is ensuring that the government is held to account for its lack of action.

After listening to Ms Pennicuik's contribution it seems as though the Greens are apologists for the government's lack of action in protecting our community. But those on this side of the house, the Liberals and Nationals in this house, are certainly here to defend our police force and to support them in gaining additional resources. Mr O'Donohue's motion states:

- (1) since 2014 the number of frontline first-responder police has been cut by 115 under Daniel Andrews ...

I certainly know that my home city of Ballarat is growing at over 2 per cent. Over 2000 people a year are choosing to move to Ballarat. Similarly Victoria is growing exceptionally quickly as well. With a growing population we know that we are going to need additional police to address these concerns. But what does the government do? The government goes and cuts those frontline police who are protecting our community.

We know that there are some significant concerns. One only needs to read the paper. I obviously read my local newspaper in Ballarat, the *Courier*, on a very regular basis, and it is day after day — —

Mr Finn interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Most days, except Sundays, Mr Finn. It is a daily event. Day after day we are seeing front-page stories of crimes that we would never have thought of occurring in Ballarat. Just this week we saw reports of a crime where a 13-year-old child caused \$450 000 damage over 18 days whilst high on ice — awake for over two weeks, I believe the offender told police.

This type of crime is not something that we have seen in Ballarat. I spoke to a gentleman recently whose wife

was presented with a man trying to bash down the door of their home with an axe. His wife was inside at home with their young child, and an ice-affected offender was using an axe, trying to belt down the door to get into their house. These are the types of crimes that were just completely unheard of just a short while ago. The reason for it is clear: we have a government that is not supporting our police force; we have a government that is not providing them with the resources that they need to ensure that the community is kept safe.

If we hark back to when Victoria had a responsible government, it was on 6 May 2014 when the former coalition government made the announcement that a new police station would be built in Ballarat West. That was exceptionally welcomed by the Ballarat community because we knew that Ballarat was growing out to the west, and it made sense to place a police station in that growth area. I was very pleased, in my time as mayor, to be able to support the then Premier, Denis Naphine, in ensuring that the community was aware of how important it was that they were kept safe by having these police stations.

The Ballarat West police station, which was promised and funded by the Liberal-Nationals coalition, was opened earlier this year. I was very pleased on a number of occasions to be able to visit the site with Mr O'Donohue and get a better understanding of the station and indeed the service that it was going to give to the community.

Mr O'Donohue — Every day?

Mr MORRIS — Well, Mr O'Donohue, thank you for asking that question. When the police station was opened there was a media release sent out stating that the police station was going to be open 7 days a week — every day — 12 hours a day. I recently drove past the 7-days-a-week, 12-hours-a-day station at a time when it should have been open, and believe it or not, the doors were locked. The doors of the police station were locked in the mid-morning, when it should have been open. Not only were the doors to the police station locked, but there was an old mattress dumped outside the brand-new police station. So not only was the police station that should have been open closed, but there were people who were so brazen that they decided to dump their mattress outside of this police station. I was aghast when I saw this. I could not believe what I was seeing.

But I did receive a response to a question that I asked the minister with regard to this matter, and she backed away from the government's commitment to the police station being open 7 days a week, 12 hours a day,

saying that it was going to be open at the discretion of the local police. So what we see here is a government that is cutting police station hours. A Liberal-Nationals coalition was funding and delivering police stations, and indeed now we have a Labor government that is cutting these police station resources.

I certainly do praise Victoria Police for the important work it does in keeping our communities safe. One of the real challenges that we have particularly in Ballarat is recidivist youth offenders. What we have opposite is a government that is soft on crime. We have police whose time is continually being taken up in trying to address these youth offenders, who under this government just go through the cycle. It is a revolving door of youth offending under this government. There are no consequences for their actions. These youth offenders get picked up by the police, they get dropped back at their residences and they are back over the fence stealing cars at the very next opportunity. They know they can do it without any consequences because they know that this government is exceptionally soft on crime.

I am pleased Ms Pennicuik is still in the chamber, because I wanted to talk about some of these crime figures that Ms Pennicuik referred to. The real concern that I have is that behind each and every one of these figures is a victim, and I think this is something that those on the other side of the chamber forget. They forget that although these are numbers on a page, these numbers on a page represent real people whose lives have been impacted. These are real people that are not being protected by this government. The most important role of the government is to ensure that the people it represents are kept safe, and on that score this government is failing absolutely miserably.

There are good people who are standing up and saying that this is not good enough. The survey of sergeants that was conducted by Police Association Victoria certainly indicated that they do not have the appropriate resources to do the important job that they do. It said that for 26 per cent of priority 1 jobs, which are very serious crimes, such as home invasions, armed robberies and the like, there is a critical shortage of police being able to respond.

As a father of young children I would like to think that while I am away at Parliament, if my wife needed to call the police to have them respond to a violent crime that is occurring then they would be able to do that immediately, but what we are seeing here is over one-quarter of these types of crimes not being responded to as a result of the lack of resources that our police have.

As I said, our police do an exceptional job. It is a very, very difficult job, and it is being made more and more difficult by this government that is not giving them the resources that they need. So I certainly do commend Mr O'Donohue for raising this, and I commend the work that he does travelling the width and breadth of Victoria talking not only to members of the community but to our sworn officers to better understand the challenges that they are facing, because at the end of the day these are the people who really understand what is happening on the ground.

Mr Iddles is the secretary of the police association. He is talking to his members every day about the challenges that they are facing. Let us just remember that policing is a tough job. These people are dealing with offenders day in, day out. They are dealing with the worst of the worst at their very worst, so the challenges that they face need to be addressed and need to be supported by the appropriate resources.

We have a government that is willing to cut frontline police officers while it knows we are experiencing a crime tsunami, Ms Pennicuk. We are absolutely experiencing a crime tsunami, and it is important that the message is sent loud and clear to the government about the need to resource our police appropriately. To be cutting numbers of police when our state is growing and crime figures are going through the roof is a disgraceful action by this government and is something that they certainly need to be well and truly held to account for. I am very pleased that Mr O'Donohue and members of the Liberal-National coalition are doing so to ensure that our community will be kept safe into the future.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I will be quick in my contribution because I know there are others that wish to speak on this motion. I do congratulate the Honourable Ed O'Donohue on his motion and parts (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6) and (7), which I will not go into detail on, because they have been well canvassed in other contributions. I just want to say on the back of Mr Melhem's speech that there are a bevy of government MPs here in denial about crime rates and police resources.

If you take the politics out, the reality is that in most parts of Victoria the different police divisions and different police commands are telling us that they do not have the resources to be able to respond to the current crime activity. We can argue the toss whether the crime statistics are real or unreal in relation to whether it is because there are more police, they are catching more criminal activities or criminals, the justice system is turning them out through a revolving

door process, they are repeat offending or police are tied up in police stations when they should be out on the front line, but the reality is that police command, which — as Mr Melhem says, quite rightly — should have independence from political interference, is telling us that police do not have the resources. They do not have the staff, they do not have the time, they do not have the response times that are required to keep communities safe and they do not have the infrastructure required — the police cars. They are bogged down with paperwork and regulation. They should be spending more time dealing with police matters rather than being tied up with interviews and writing reports. The technology is Third World. So we know there is a problem. For government MPs on the other side to keep saying there is no problem and then going back and accusing us of sacking 300 police during our term of government and saying that per capita there has in fact been an increase of police is just all nonsense. It is an absolute nonsense. The public will not wear it, and they do not buy it.

We know that in the City of Greater Geelong the crime rate has gone up by 33 per cent. We know burglaries have gone up by 46 per cent. We know the Minister for Police and member for Bellarine actually lives in Geelong West. In her own little suburb of Geelong West crime has gone up by 300 per cent. We know that Neighbourhood Watch groups never formed before are being formed, which is unprecedented, in little safe seaside communities like Barwon Heads and Drysdale. You could have shot a cannon down in Queenscliff last year and you would not have hit anyone, and now the crime rates, burnouts, home invasions and car thefts have gone through the roof. The reality is that it is because response times from police, who are traditionally coming from Geelong, are about 30 minutes, and those who are engaged in criminal activity know that. They know they have got 20 minutes at least to do their burnouts, home invasions, car thefts, robberies, ram-ins of supermarkets and what have you. They can do all that, get away and the police will turn up there in about 30 minutes at least. So they have got the timing right.

The trouble is we have got a command at Ocean Grove that knows that they are stretched. They only have a small number of police cars on the road, particularly at night — one or two. We know that the highway patrol based out in Geelong now are working out at Dandenong because they do not have sufficient patrol cars in the Dandenong area. We know all that. We know during our term of government that there was an increase of 1900 police from a low base, and we pumped as many recruits as we could through the police academy at the time, as well as the protective

service officers (PSOs), who were well received both by police command and the community. In fact the PSOs have been a great success story for the community in relation to providing safety in traditional danger spots around railway stations and car parks. That has worked well. We know the increase in frontline police during our term of government was well received, as I said, by both police and the community at large.

The issue we have at the moment, of course, is that we have a young repeat offender, who traditionally is unemployed and from a low socio-economic background, engaging in a lot of criminal activity that is tying up a lot of police resources. We have got gangs coming in from Melbourne. They are moving into Geelong, out on the Bellarine and Surf Coast in my particular region, where they are particularly active and tying up a lot of police resources. We know family violence is up because of the use of drugs, particularly methamphetamine, and that is in the stats from a whole range of stakeholder groups and agencies, within the department here and also through the Australian Crime Commission and the Australian Institute of Criminology. We have got all that data that tells us that there are problems in relation to criminal activity, particularly associated with our young, and police are stretched.

In conclusion, I am glad that Mr O'Donohue has seen fit to bring this motion before the chamber. It is important that we have the debate. It is important that we acknowledge the fact that Victoria has a problem in the escalation of criminal activity. It is important that we acknowledge that the police resources are not sufficient to cope with the increase in criminal activity. We know there are a lot of socio-economic problems with our youth at the moment and our repeat offenders that are not being addressed by this government. It is the old head-in-the-sand approach up to this point.

We certainly know that 300 more frontline police over four years is not going to cut it. Regardless of how much government members bang on about that commitment, the reality is we need them now and not in four years time or two years time in the run-up to the election and suddenly they flood the academy with new recruits. We need them now. We have got a problem now, and the police command are telling us that is the problem. This government needs to respond to it. I happily support this motion on the basis that the government really has a problem and needs to fix it.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — I am really pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of The Nationals on this motion put forward by my Liberal colleague

Mr O'Donohue. I would like to point out a couple of facts, and it might be useful for Mr Melhem to hear the actual truth about the police numbers during the time of the coalition incumbency. The previous coalition government delivered on its 2010 election commitment. We said that we would deliver 1700 police and 940 protective services officers (PSOs) over four years. This would have been the single largest recruitment program across Victoria's police history.

In total, at the end of the time period between 2010 and 2014, the coalition actually delivered 1900 extra sworn police, with 950 PSOs. An extra 96 PSOs were funded to ensure that the coalition's commitment for two PSOs at every station would be delivered. The coalition also invested \$250 million into new or upgraded police stations and facilities in their time. I would like to pay homage and thank my former leader, the very Honourable Peter Ryan, for his commitment to making that come to fruition and also for making sure that Gippsland certainly had its fair share of both police resources and police numbers, because they were well needed at that stage.

Whilst we are in opposition at the moment, I would like to commend Mr O'Donohue's work in bringing a number of bills to the house. Unfortunately they have been shut down in the lower house, but nonetheless the Corrections Amendment (No body, no parole) Bill 2016 was a very important bill that would have given victims of heinous crimes — the loss of a loved one — some closure if they were able to find the body of their loved one, but that was shut down without debate in the Assembly. Also Mr O'Donohue in his shadow Minister for Police role brought in the Crimes Amendment (Carjacking) Bill 2016 that was supported by six political parties to pass to the lower house. In many respects I believe he has now shamed the government into action, and before us in a couple of weeks we will see in this house their version of that bill, which is, I think, somewhat of an inferior commentary on the original bill, but nonetheless at least it is coming and it will be dealt with.

Victoria has without doubt the need for an increase in frontline police and a police force at the coalface. It is the responsibility of any government to keep their community — the community of Victoria — safe, and yet the Labor government has simply gone missing while crime is out of control. Under the Premier we have heard that crime is up, police stations are closing and frontline police numbers have been cut, despite a 13.4 per cent increase in crime over the past year to 30 June. The number of frontline police stations has been cut, and they include Ashburton, Burwood, Carrum Downs, Somerville, Minyip, Kaniva, Tatura,

Whitfield, Nunawading, Pakenham, Mooroolbark and Endeavour Hills.

One of the paragraphs of the motion says:

- (5) in recent months, communities have taken to forming 'citizen patrols' across metropolitan Melbourne as a result of the lack of police ...

There was an article in the media on 27 August, and it states:

Police association secretary Ron Iddles said he feared frustrated residents could take 'matters into their own hands' — similar to a resident patrol group recently set up in Caroline Springs.

'I don't call them vigilantes, but concerned residents who patrol and report to the police', he said.

'Police stations are operating at a reduced capacity and they can't respond, it's putting members under stress.

'There are members in the community who are frustrated.

'This is becoming a government issue. The bottom line is there is not enough police'.

Locally in my area of Gippsland there are a number of stories of where crime is unfortunately on the increase. I might just add that I have visited a number of police stations across Gippsland, I know a number of police personally and they do an absolutely outstanding and tremendous job. Often particularly country police, but I am sure all police, try and embed themselves in the culture of their towns and communities. They are often football coaches or may be helping out in schools, giving commentary and advice in relation to road tolls or drug and alcohol abuse. So the exemplary work that they do should be held in high regard, but they are under stress.

Looking at the Latrobe Valley and at crimes against the person, homicides and related offences, the change from last year — so the 12-month increase — is 150 per cent; if I look at sexual offences, unfortunately they are up 18.8 per cent; and assisted assault and related offences are up 13 per cent. Also noted in the Latrobe Valley media is that just recently a woman narrowly escaped a carjacking attempt at an intersection of Princes Highway and Grey Street in Traralgon on 27 August. The offenders — and this is in the article — approached the woman, and one was armed with a large knife. Police went on to state, 'You shouldn't have to, but it is a good idea to lock your doors when driving'. I never thought that would occur in a street where I drive every day — my office is in Traralgon — and that you would feel unsafe. It is just a crying shame that that would happen.

Police also remind people to keep their cars locked and free of any valuables, after a spate of about 30 thefts in Moe. That was reported in the *Latrobe Valley Express*. I know that the Moe police have been doing a tremendous job of connecting with their community and walking down the street at lunchtimes to talk to people in their community and shop owners, so they are out at every opportunity, but they can only do what each individual can do. They cannot be in two places at once.

In the Wellington shire from 2015 to 2016 sexual offences were up by 102.8 per cent. That is a frightening statistic in the light of family abuse and abuse against females. Drug dealing and trafficking have increased during the 2015–16 period — up 133 per cent; breaches of orders, a 36 per cent increase; justice procedures for that period, up 35 per cent.

In South Gippsland the Korumburra Magistrates Court offences heard in the last two weeks — so very recent information — continue to involve ice use with drug drivers admitting to methamphetamine use. At the top of the list are also domestic violence cases in relation to the use of drugs. Offences under the category of 'crimes against the person' are up 25.8 per cent from 2015–16. Stalking, harassment and threatening behaviour has increased by 47 per cent, and burglaries are up almost 16 per cent.

In Bass Coast we have seen an increase of 22 per cent in assault-related offences. These are quite damning statistics in terms of the effect they have. They certainly would have an effect on the police themselves, the members who are trying very, very hard to compensate. They have to judge which call-outs to go to; sometimes there are just not enough police there.

There is also the situation, with all these increases in crime, of the clogging of our local courts and the backlog that must be exhibited in our courts. There is also the impact on victims. Every one of these increases relates to more people in our communities having to recover from one of these crimes, and it can often have a long-lasting and devastating effect on someone's mental capacity, their emotional state and their ability to work and to communicate. So it is important that the government recognise that this is a really red-hot and important issue.

Lastly, in finishing I would like to commend Mr O'Donohue for his work. I would like to say that we cannot sweep these issues under the carpet. It is important to address them. It is important to put resources into training and to reduce the amount of training time in order to fast-track police numbers as

soon as we can — to spread them across into the growth corridors where they are needed but also into rural and regional areas. With that, I shall commend this motion to the house.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I too would like to join in congratulating Mr O'Donohue on bringing this very important motion to the house. Crime is an issue that is growing in every single one of our communities, and it seems to be that this happens every time we have a Labor government. It is an indictment of this government that they have cut numbers and that there has been a reduction in the number of patrols that are happening, particularly in country communities. Many of my smaller police stations, including at Tatura, are finding that that they are able to have the station open for fewer hours because the government's new two-up rule means that they have effectively halved the number of police in those police stations. If they are out on patrol, there need to be two of them, and there is no-one to actually open the police station. The number of patrols that police can do have been halved, and the communities are really feeling it.

We have had a significant rise in crime in Greater Shepparton under this government. Overall in Greater Shepparton crime increased by 9.1 per cent in the 12 months from June 2015 to June 2016, but since this government has been in power it has actually increased by 10.41 per cent — that is, under the Andrews Labor government.

What has been most concerning about the crime figures in Greater Shepparton is the significant increase in crimes against the person. We have seen the numbers of those crimes increase, including homicide and related offences, which are up by 150 per cent; sexual offences are up by nearly 43 per cent; abduction and related offences are up 137.5 per cent; stalking, harassment and threatening behaviour are up 39.8 per cent; dangerous and negligent acts endangering people are up 51.4 per cent; robbery is up by 26.7 per cent; and blackmail and extortion are up by 100 per cent. Drug-related offences have also increased, including drug dealing and trafficking, which is up by nearly 26 per cent; and cultivating and manufacturing drugs, which is up by 11.1 per cent.

These are of real concern to our community. Crimes against the person are horrific. I have just been talking to a friend of mine who was the subject of a home invasion, in preparation for the Crimes Amendment (Carjacking and Home Invasion) Bill 2016 debate tomorrow, and hearing of the personal impact that is still having on him and his partner six years after the

crime. But I will talk a lot more about their personal experience with home invasion tomorrow.

Within Greater Shepparton we have seen that a number of communities have had significant increases in crime, as well as around Greater Shepparton in some of the more outlying areas. In the postcode 3616, which includes the town of Tatura, crime is up by 67.7 per cent. This is one of the police stations we have been talking about that has had its opening hours reduced. It is also one where we see less hours available for patrols because of the two-up policy. Whilst we understand concerns about safety and the reason for the two-up policy, sometimes in country communities a single police patrol is actually adequate. There should be discretion for the local police to make those decisions so that they can adequately patrol the community, or this government needs to do a major recruitment of police and increase the police numbers at that station. The best result would probably be to have additional police allocated to these stations so they can still apply the two-up policy.

The sergeant of the Murchison police station has said the policy affects simple things. For instance, he lives in Murchison and is the only police officer at the station. If the pub had a group in that was getting a bit boisterous, they were able to call him, and he would just do a walk-through of the pub and that would quiet things down. He cannot do that now because of the two-up policy. He has to get a police officer to come from elsewhere to go with him, which almost completely restricts his ability. The result of that is that crime in Murchison is up by 27.3 per cent. That is in the 3610 postcode area. In the postcode 3631 area, which includes Kialla and Cosgrove, we have seen crime increase by 69 per cent in the past year. In the postcode 3629 area, which includes Mooroopna and Undera, crime is up by 14.1 per cent. In the postcode 3634 area, which includes Tallygaroopna, crime has increased by 38.5 per cent.

We can see that in Greater Shepparton and surrounding areas crime has increased significantly. The government has not done anything to increase the numbers of police in our region. In fact its policy has meant that there are less opportunities for patrols and restrictions on opening hours of stations, which has encouraged the increase in crime.

Drugs are a particular problem for us in Shepparton. The epidemic of ice is of real concern. Kim Sedick from the Rumbalara Cooperative leads an ice action group which involves a number of agencies. He and I have been co-chairing that group, which has been looking at ways that our community can contribute to

help reduce the impact of ice in Shepparton, particularly working with young people to educate them. We have an upcoming event which will be held towards the end of this school year and which should be rather sensational, and more details of that will be available soon. We have been working very closely with the police in Shepparton because they too are concerned about the impact that ice is having on the young people in our community and the additional crime that is being driven because of it.

I spoke earlier of my friend who was the subject of a home invasion. The offenders were young people, probably driven by a need of money for drugs. They were 17 and 18 years of age. They stabbed my friend 13 times. They were tried and convicted not of attempted murder — they got off that charge — but they went into the juvenile justice system and served 136 days each. My friend was in hospital for four months and in rehabilitation for seven and a half months. He has a lifetime sentence, while they served only 136 days. Being soft on crime is not the way to go. We need to be much tougher on crime, and in order to do that we need additional police numbers. This government's soft-on-crime attitude is not helping to address any of the increasing crime issues in our community or the increasing drug issues in our community.

I call on the Premier to increase the number of police in my region to ensure that we can have additional police patrols and that we can see a greater level of safety in our community and a reduction in crime.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Country Fire Authority: report 2014–15

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a statement on the Country Fire Authority annual report 2014–15. In doing so I begin by acknowledging the exceptional work that our Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteers do each and every fire season to keep our community safe. We on this side of the house certainly understand the importance of the CFA and volunteers in our community.

I was very pleased this week to learn of the federal Liberal government passing of legislation to enshrine the rights of volunteers in legislation, because we have seen that this government is willing to attack our volunteers and to back a thuggish union in the United Firefighters Union (UFU) and a bully in Peter Marshall over the volunteers who go out day in, day out to keep

our community safe. That is something that we on the side of the house are not going to condone. We are not going to condone bullying tactics, whether it be by union thugs or by the Premier himself, who has managed to bully not only Jane Garrett, one of his own ministers, out of her role but also the whole CFA board out of their positions and the CEO of the CFA out of her position. Now he seems to have started on the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB). We have seen the chief of the MFB bullied out of his position by the Premier as well as the deputy chief, who has just recently left. It appears that the government's tactic in dealing with those who serve our community to keep them safe is to bully them out of their positions and then install their own people who are just going to do whatever it is that they want.

At least we have an organisation in the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) that is willing to stand up for our volunteer firefighters. It is prepared to take the government to court, because its actions are going to result in the community being at risk. That is something that we certainly will not stand idly by and allow.

I was talking with a former member of this Parliament, Paul Jenkins, today — someone who is a former board member and a life member of the CFA — and he is someone who is exceptionally concerned about what is happening with the government's actions, because he is certainly hearing on the ground from many volunteers who are saying, 'Look, this is all a bit hard', and some volunteers are not doing the work that they had previously done. We all well know that Emergency Management Victoria has already released its report which has acknowledged that Victoria is going to be experiencing a higher than average fire risk coming into this bushfire season. We have also seen significant rains over the last weeks, and that is only going to increase the already high fuel load that we have, particularly in western Victoria, which brings me to the absurd decision that this government has made to move the Erickson Aircrane — similar to the Elvis air crane — that keeps our community safe, away from Ballarat and to Moorabbin.

This is something which I think I have probably had more contact from constituents about than any other issue, certainly this year. This is something about which people are ringing my office and saying, 'How could this government do this? How could the government leave our community exposed to the very real fire danger that we're going to experience in this upcoming fire season by moving this critical piece of equipment, this critical appliance, away from the people of western Victoria and placing it in Melbourne, where they're not experiencing the same bushfire threat as we are?'. And

it is not just the average constituent who is contacting me; we also have brigades and groups of brigades that are writing to me and other members of Parliament and saying that this is an absurd decision and it must not occur. It must not occur, because if it does, it is going to expose the whole of western Victoria during our bushfire season. It will mean that not only will we lose homes, but we may well lose lives in this upcoming bushfire season.

This is a serious matter that this government must take exceptionally seriously because our community deserves better. We have already spoken today about the crime tsunami that Victoria is experiencing. This government needs to take a stand and make sure that western Victoria is kept safe in this upcoming fire season by ensuring that the skycrane is left in Ballarat.

Auditor-General: *Audit Committee Governance*

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak to the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) report *Audit Committee Governance*, August 2016. Audit committees play an essential role in keeping departments and government agencies on the right path with regard to expenditure and risk management. Their independence is what makes them effective. Their charter is what makes them unquestionable and imbued with the power to make positive risk management changes. Although the ultimate power rests with management to implement change, it would appear that most of these committees are on track in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

Eight audit committees were assessed for the purposes of this report. The VAGO audit included seven portfolio departments and the Victoria Police. An important aspect of the report highlighted the need to ensure that committees have regard to fulfilling their mandatory requirement to have competent and capable individuals who have the necessary skills to perform their functions effectively. An examination of three audit committees found that two had fulfilled the 2003 standing directions requirements in regard to maintaining the equal number of independent committee members, and though the third audit committee is not fully compliant, work has begun to rectify this oversight.

It is true to say that any audit committee is only effective if its membership is comprised of people with proficient and expert skills. It is only able to function correctly if it has timely, up-to-date material to work with and if it is allowed to operate without fear or favour. Audit committees normally have an independent chairperson and have either a majority or

equal number of independent members. They also exclude from membership certain agency employees who would represent a conflict of interest, such as the head of the agency, the chief financial officer and internal auditors. To be fully effective, an audit committee must be independent from management and free from undue influence. However, audit committees usually do have members from within the agency in addition to independent members, with around six to eight members in total. Notwithstanding whether members are from outside the agency or within, all members are required to exercise independent judgement and be objective in their deliberations, decisions and advice.

As always, and rightly so, the Auditor-General found room for improvement in several areas of operational responsibility. However, VAGO has made 15 important and practical recommendations that seek to improve the current operations of state government audit committees, and I support them all.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2016–17

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the budget papers 2016–17, and in particular I rise to speak about the allocation of funding for domestic violence services and the problem that we have in regional communities where funding all goes to services in regional cities and ignores the needs of townships that are further out within those regions. As an example of this, I would just like to talk about the Campaspe region and particularly the townships of Echuca and Kyabram. Unfortunately the Campaspe region has the highest record of family violence incidents reported in the years 2013–14 of all municipalities in Victoria. In fact the crime statistics released last week showed that there were 4285 reported incidents in the Shire of Campaspe, which was significantly higher than any other region and was actually a staggering 940 incidents more than the second highest region.

This is an area where there is obviously a great deal of will amongst residents to report domestic violence incidents, and yet if you are in Echuca and Kyabram, you have a great deal of difficulty actually accessing domestic violence services. This is because most of the funding goes to Bendigo and services are delivered in Bendigo, but it is quite a distance to travel from Kyabram to Bendigo. To travel from Echuca to Bendigo is almost a 200 kilometre round trip. The closest service to Kyabram is in Shepparton, which is an 80 kilometre round trip, but Kyabram is actually in the Loddon Mallee region. This is a quirk of

Department of Health and Human Services regions. While Kyabram is closer to Shepparton, which is part of the Hume region, the services that are available to Kyabram residents are located in Bendigo, which is more like a 200 kilometre round trip for Kyabram residents — the same as it is for those from Echuca.

This makes it very difficult, because in the country there is limited public transport, and of course these communities often have very low socio-economic conditions. If you cannot get public transport and you have a lack of money, which would prohibit you accessing fuel for the trip — in fact you may not even have a vehicle — you may not be able to afford such a trip. You might also not be able to afford child care so you can go to Bendigo to access services. This makes it very, very difficult for families in these areas to actually access domestic violence services.

Last week a newspaper in the Echuca region reported the government as saying that it had put an extra \$1.75 million into financial counsellors for people in the Loddon Mallee region and that these services will be accessed in Bendigo. It does not instil a lot of faith in the people in Echuca when they read that the government is investing in them, because it is very difficult for them to access those services when it is a 200 kilometre round trip to Bendigo to access them.

Towns that are a little bit more remote are very disadvantaged under the current government structure, and I call on this government to actually allocate resources for services to be located in towns like Kyabram and Echuca.

Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure: Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise today to talk about the final report of the inquiry into the Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015. The Victorian Greens welcome the tabling of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's final report. Considering eight cyclists have lost their lives in Victoria in the last 12 months, it is imperative that this place makes progress on minimum passing distance laws to make our roads safer for all road users.

We are very supportive of the following recommendations which, if enacted, will go a long way to reducing deaths and injuries to cyclists. These include: recommendation 4, which requires motorists to provide a distance of at least 1 metre when passing or overtaking a cyclist in areas with speed limits up to 60 kilometres per hour or a minimum of 1.5 metres in

areas with higher speed limits; recommendation 8, which allows motorists to cross over centre lines, painted islands and other road markings when passing or overtaking cyclists, if it is safe to do so; and recommendation 2, which introduces minimum bicycle and traffic lane widths for Victoria.

Recommendations 9 to 17 also have the full support of the Victorian Greens as they will improve awareness amongst motorists and institute training for police to assist motorists to abide by minimum passing and overtaking distances. This is after all not just about passing distances but about working towards a cultural shift whereby cyclists receive the legitimacy they are entitled to as road users.

However, there are some recommendations in this report that are retrograde and will only create confusion and detract from the effectiveness of minimum passing distance laws. These recommendations — namely, recommendations 3, 5 and 6 — would undercut the positive contribution to cyclist safety through the creation of minimum passing distances. These recommendations will be resolutely opposed by the Greens.

Recommendation 3 proffers a garbled request for different rules or guidance to apply at certain intersections in Melbourne's central business district. Some of its proposed solutions include having cyclists veer left through an intersection before veering right to adjoin the traffic lane. This recommendation is preposterous and could only be made by people who have no familiarity with cycling through intersections in built-up areas. To justify this recommendation some members of the committee have hypothesised about freak scenarios at certain junctions in the city in which hundreds of cyclists would swamp hapless motorists. This is nonsense. Cyclists take off from bicycle boxes and clear the intersection as soon as practical. They are after all on their bikes to get to a destination.

Motorists will not be unduly held up by cyclists. The presence of cyclists will not lead to the stopping of traffic flow, and hence there is no need for any special treatment at these intersections. This particularly includes bicycle lanes that veer to the left. Cycle lanes that veer left at intersections lead to close scrapes as well as accidents and deaths at the point where the bicycle lane adjoins the traffic lane. The existing lanes in the central business district and surrounding suburbs that veer to the left at intersections should be rectified such that they cross straight over the intersection. When the onus of care is pushed from motorists to cyclists at intersections, hazardous interactions occur.

I move now to recommendations 5 and 6. They are also unacceptable as they dilute the existing right of cyclists to ride two abreast. Riding two abreast provides important protection to cyclists as it makes them more visible. When they are more visible motorists take greater caution in passing and overtaking. Furthermore, riding two abreast halves the length of the road over which a passing manoeuvre must be conducted by a motorist. The right to ride two abreast must remain untouched.

The Victorian Greens look forward to minimum passing distance laws in Victoria unadulterated by recommendations 3, 5 and 6. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the cycling groups, other road user groups, individuals and public servants that gave evidence to the committee. It has been a long journey to this point. We are not there yet, but I hold hope that minimum passing distances will become law in this state and provide safer cycling for those people who choose that great way to get around our great state.

Department of Health and Human Services: Victorian cancer plan 2016–2020

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I am delighted to speak on the government's report entitled *Victorian Cancer Plan 2016–2020 — Improving Cancer Outcomes for all Victorians*. It is the first cancer plan to be developed under the Improving Cancer Outcomes Act 2014. I congratulate the Minister for Health and all the individuals and organisations who have worked tirelessly on this report.

An estimated 130 470 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in Australia this year, with that number set to rise to 150 000 by 2020. It is a frightening reality that 1 in 2 Australian men and 1 in 3 Australian women will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85. I have said it on many occasions before, cancer affects us all. At some point in our lives it can touch our lives, the lives of our family or friends who suffer from this illness. Its diagnosis is devastating.

This cancer plan sets out the Andrews Labor government's long-term vision for improving cancer outcomes for all and providing support for all Victorians affected by this illness. It outlines our priorities for the next four years as we work towards our long-term goals. Through the Improving Cancer Outcomes Act 2014 the state government is committed to preparing a cancer plan for Victoria every four years.

Each plan must report on the status and burden of cancer in Victoria; establish Victoria's objectives and policy priorities with respect to cancer; state how these

objectives will be achieved, based on available evidence; and specify how the state intends to work with other parties to achieve these objectives and policy priorities. We have set ambitious but achievable targets. By 2025 we will have saved 10 000 lives. This will be achieved through preventing cancers, detecting cancers earlier, improving treatment and reducing unwarranted variations in outcomes.

By 2040 we will have halved the proportion of Victorians diagnosed with preventable cancers, doubled the improvement in one and five-year survival of Victorians with cancer, ensured Victorians have the best possible experience of the cancer treatment and care system, and achieved equitable outcomes for all Victorians. This plan establishes the key areas for development of real, ongoing improvements in cancer outcomes and a coordinated approach to the research and other initiatives needed to achieve them.

Research shows that many cancers are preventable, and our prevention efforts are effective. We are seeing reductions in the incidence rates for some cancers. A prime example of this is our state's efforts to reduce tobacco use. The Tobacco Amendment Bill 2016 will aid in this. It is something we are very proud of.

Persistence in prevention will ensure long-term pay-offs, and this is a collective and concerted effort. What goes hand in hand with this report and plan is the ongoing commitment and outstanding work of Cancer Council Victoria. It continues to provide dedicated work and research in our state. I commend this report to the house.

Victorian fire services review: report

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I would like to speak to the *Report of the Victorian Fire Services Review* of October 2015, written by David O'Byrne. There are some areas I would like to highlight in the report that I think demonstrate the importance of a cohesive and harmonious volunteer fire service as well as a harmonious, integrated career and volunteer fire service, which we now find ourselves sadly not having because of the Andrews government's approach to the current enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations between the United Firefighters Union (UFU) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

Part of the report says:

Morale can play a role in operational effectiveness. The review found morale in the fire services was at its lowest ebb in decades, with an enormous divide between senior management and firefighters. This has a number of causes, including the strained adversarial climate that exists between the fire services and its workforce, as represented by the

Victorian branch of the United Firefighters Union of Australia ... and the aggressive industrial strategies deployed ...

It goes on:

At times, the relationship between the leadership and firefighters seems like trench warfare.

...

With the current state of morale and strategic and operational leadership, the fire services appear to be in an extremely unhealthy state; a situation that must not be allowed to continue. There has been a fundamental collapse in trust and goodwill. Significant change is required to create more harmonious fire services that work collaboratively ...

...

The review is in no doubt that the Victorian community remains well served by firefighters across the fire services. But the high level of response is being held together by the goodwill and effectiveness of those on the front line.

It goes on to say that this is not sustainable under the current conditions and:

Significant change is required, particularly in terms of morale, governance and joint effort.

I certainly agree with that. The report then identifies:

For brigades where integration is not functioning as effectively as it could, some of the challenges seem to arise from personality issues, condescending leadership, the attitude of some paid firefighters towards volunteers or the frustration of some volunteers at how the brigade is now managed and volunteers directed.

It goes on to say that the elements of successful integration from a cultural perspective are at the request of the volunteers and when the brigade is still strong, where there is honesty about the likely impact of integration on the brigade and the ongoing role of volunteers.

The report goes on, but fundamentally it says that there has to be strong leadership, goodwill, honesty and good treatment of volunteers as part of the integration, all of the things we see are now fraying because of the Andrews government's strong stance in supporting Peter Marshall, the secretary of the UFU, and trying to bulldoze an EBA through which actually removes some of the management controls of CFA volunteers. That is having a significant impact on the morale of firefighters generally. In fact I think it is almost unprecedented to have a government that has inflamed a fire service to the point where we have volunteers walking away, career firefighters resigning and a sense of distrust through the whole service.

I am pleased to see that the commonwealth has introduced legislation to amend the Fair Work Act 2009, where volunteers and the roles and responsibilities of volunteers in our emergency services will be protected. I certainly look forward to the Andrews government indicating to the CFA board that it must comply with the new amendment bill, which will have to reconstruct the EBA to remove the power of veto clauses.

The importance of training is a significant component of the work done by this review. It saddens me that we saw the south-west training facility at Fiskville being closed on a political whim, based on potential contamination of perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) at the site, even though I notice the latest Environment Protection Authority Victoria works notice indicates that there is no sign of contamination in relation to that site. Yet we have seen PFOS being found at Craigieburn, the new Metropolitan Fire Brigade-controlled site in Melbourne. If you used the same parameters as those around Fiskville, you would close the UFU-controlled MFB site at Craigieburn tomorrow because of contamination found there through PFOS, as well as Penshurst and other training facilities. So it is just a nonsense that Fiskville has been closed, taking away the opportunity for our south-west firefighters to train there when there is contamination at other sites.

Dairy Food Safety Victoria: report 2015–16

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — I rise this afternoon to speak on the Dairy Food Safety Victoria 2016 report, and in doing so I would like to highlight the importance of the dairy industry to our Victorian economy, to our Victorian stomachs and for the quality of the food that is produced on our dairy farms right across this great state of ours. The role of Dairy Food Safety Victoria is to independently regulate dairy safety.

Food safety and food quality continue to be recognised as a non-negotiable for the Victorian community, and we are blessed with beautiful, often-green hills that produce the most amazing quality dairy foods. But it is imperative for ongoing access to domestic markets and to maintain our overseas credibility that we are still clean, high quality and disease free in terms of our dairy products. The dairy industry produces \$13 billion in our on-farm, manufacturing and export industry. With a farm gate value alone of \$4 billion, the dairy industry continues to enrich regional Victorian communities.

The report states — and this is very well understood — that the majority of Australian dairy farms are located in Victoria. More than 4000 farms across three dairy

regions — north, south-west and Gippsland — produce around 65 per cent of Australia's dairy milk. Dairy continues to be a very important industry, particularly in my electorate. Our farmers are some of the most productive, least regulated and least subsidised farmers in the world.

Farming is simple in principle — you grow the grass and you grow the milk — but it is actually quite a complex scientific operation and not for the faint-hearted. In Victoria on-farm productivity continues to increase through improved pastures and feed and through herd management techniques. The National Centre for Dairy Education currently lists 172 broad skills that dairy farmers require to operate successfully, and those are across 11 specialist areas. As the daughter of a former dairy farmer I understand many of the jobs that are involved in producing such great-quality milk: fencing; natural resources management; working with machinery; occupational health and safety; feeding livestock, pastures and soil; irrigation and water; working with chemicals; working with animals; milk harvesting and quality assurance; business management and accounting; and human resources.

In 2015–16 the total volume of milk produced in Victoria was 62 billion litres, and there are some amazing people employed in dairy production — 10 600 — and a further 9300 people employed in dairy processing. An example of a dairy processing and manufacturing plant is the Lion dairy based in Morwell, and it annually purchases and processes around 1 billion litres of milk from over 550 dairy farmers.

Lion Asia Dairy announced back in October 2015 a significant new distribution partnership with Canton American Flower Lounge Livestock Co., whereby the new conglomeration would import and market a range of extended shelf-life UHT milks and Thick and Creamy yoghurt brands, along with a range of specialty cheeses. Lion is considered to be the no. 1 yoghurt player in the Singapore market with over 26 per cent of that market share. In the past two years Australian dairy companies have spent or plan to spend more than \$1.5 billion on building new or upgrading existing farms and factories. The Asian market is so very important, and hopefully the new Australia-China free trade agreement will, even in a competitive market, open up significant opportunities for our milk.

The report also identifies that Victorian dairy exports are the second largest through our ports, and I might just say that it was the Liberal-Nationals that held this government to account in terms of the sale of the lease of the port of Melbourne, where 10 per cent of the sale

of the lease will go on rural and regional transport infrastructure. Roads are the lifeblood of our communities, and we need to make sure that we can successfully transport our freight by road from the source at farms to the port. So while the only certainty within the dairy industry is a sense of change — —

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

Auditor-General: *Meeting Obligations to Protect Ramsar Wetlands*

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's report on *Meeting Obligations to Protect Ramsar Wetlands*, tabled in September 2016. In my capacity as shadow minister for scrutiny of government I attend most of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office briefings, which I must say I find very enlightening and very good. I think they have improved in quality over time, and this one I found particularly interesting because it actually related to some significant areas within my own electorate, being the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands, which are a part of the Carrum Carrum Swamp and which were listed as a Ramsar site back in 2001.

In particular, the more I read about it the more concerned I become about the future of this particular wetland. Just for a little bit of background, the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands are a group of two principally freshwater swamps totalling 261 hectares or 640 acres lying in the suburbs of Aspendale, Edithvale, Chelsea Heights and Seaford in the south-east of Melbourne. Together they form the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands Ramsar site. With the nearby eastern treatment plant they form the Carrum wetlands important bird area.

The reason why I am concerned is the likely impact of the sky rail project that I think is going to be such a significant threat to this area, and I cannot understand that the government has not understood why an assessment of the impact needs to be a very serious consideration as part of its deliberations as to how to progress its level crossing removal commitments.

The amount of work that is to be undertaken in this area is going to without doubt impact on the hydrology of the area. Indeed it is going to impact because of the enormous amount of digging that will need to be done in order to embed the pylons — enormous lengths of concrete. In addition to that we will have electric lines elevated to as high as 20.2 metres, which potentially will impact on the migratory birds that we have international obligations to protect. There are also a

number of protected species that are to be found at that particular site.

The last remaining parts of the Carrum Carrum Swamp contain a variety of permanent and seasonal freshwater and saline wetlands. They support populations of the Australasian bittern, considered to be of state significance and threatened in Victoria, and support more than 1 per cent of the East Asian-Australasian flyway population of sharp-tailed sandpipers, or over 2000 birds in up to one year in three.

The Ramsar convention places enormous obligations on all of its contractors, being the signatories and those who manage the sites. The Auditor-General's report found that the framework for conservation and wise use of significant wetlands throughout the world does have some significant improvements to be made in developing governance, coordination and oversight of the management of the Ramsar site. Clearly that may be one of the reasons why the government may not have considered its responsibilities under this act, in particular the responsibilities under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, which include an environment assessment process that clearly needs to be undertaken, given the significant impact that the sky rail may have on the hydrology, on the flight path of protected birds and on protected species.

I have every intention of moving a motion in the chamber calling on the state government to make that referral to the federal government to make sure that the action that it takes is not going to be devastating to the Edithvale-Seaford wetlands and all of the precious things that people value. I would invite members to actually go and have a look and take a walk —

Mr Herbert interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — It is a lovely bicycle path. It is a lovely part of the world, and it would be an absolute travesty, given the proximity of the wetlands to the sky rail proposal — 1.4 kilometres at its furthest and much closer down at Seaford — if indeed the recklessness of this government and its failure to undertake an environmental impact study and failure to take the proposal through cabinet leads to the ruination of this important Ramsar site.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2016–17

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Today I want to refer to the reports section relating to the state budget. I want to talk about some local government

issues, but before I do that I want to pick up some points made by Mrs Peulich. What she points to very correctly are the Ramsar obligations on both this government and all Australians through the Australian government to protect migratory birds, including those that could well be impacted by the proposed sky rail on the Frankston line.

The Edithvale swamp area is a significant area. It is Ramsar listed and does contain a number of protected and endangered species. It does very much behove this government to make sure that appropriate referrals are made to the federal government. It is a fact that a trench solution is likely to be much less impactful in a visual sense, in a noise sense and indeed in terms of diesel that comes from the freight trains that do use that line with some regularity. But as Mrs Peulich has pointed out, it is also important to see this as an issue that should be properly managed in terms of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 at a federal level and in terms of obligations at a state level.

The environment effects statement (EES) process that has been bypassed on the sky rail between Caulfield and Dandenong is a case in point. That project has no business case, no EES process and no project description. They are already beginning serious works, and yet there is still no clear project description. That is a travesty, and it is a travesty in a number of ways, not only because of those points I have outlined but also because the Premier declared on 28 July the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009.

This is a Brumby government act, a little bit amended by the previous government in Victoria but nonetheless a Brumby government act. It provides a stripped down but sensible and integrated process to enable transport projects to be built with proper supports, proper tests, proper impact assessments and proper ways of guaranteeing that the community gets a good outcome. When you are building major projects and major infrastructure, it does mean that a government has to get it right, and the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act, the use of which was declared by the Premier on 28 July, is such an act that contains those protections. But the Premier did not proclaim parts 3 and 8 of the act, and they are the sections that have the protections in them. They have the impact assessments. They have the panels which enable the testing of projects and ensure that the best outcomes are achieved.

This is a new and shocking departure from proper process and from proper planning steps. It is a new and shocking departure for that project to be declared on the Caulfield–Dandenong line, and in declaring it on that line they are riding roughshod over the community.

They are doing this simply because they know their project will not stand up to assessment. It would not stand up to an EES process, it would not stand up to a proper planning panel process and it would not stand up to the processes that are part of the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act but have been left out of the Premier's declaration of the project. They are also deliberately riding roughshod over local governments and local communities.

The truth of the matter is that the Premier hoodwinked the community before the election. He never told them about his sky rail, and he knows that if he goes through proper assessments and proper tests, his sky rail would not stand up. The community want rail under road. Rail under road is a better outcome for the community. It is a better long-term outcome. The sky rail may be noisy, cheap and nasty, but the fact is that noisy, cheap and nasty is not a good solution for the community in the long term. Booming sound going out kilometres in either direction is a very bad outcome, and I say this Premier has hit a new low in pulling the guts out of the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009, cutting corners just so that he can build his sky rail. It is not what he promised the community. The community wanted rail under road, and they should get it.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Northern Victoria Region roads

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is regarding funding to improve regional roads in the Northern Victoria Region, including the repair of disintegrating and dangerous roads and funding for the much-needed Shepparton bypass.

My request to the minister is that he allocates a significant proportion of the port of Melbourne lease proceeds to improving regional and rural roads, including urgent maintenance and repairs to northern Victorian roads, and that he also confirms that the Shepparton bypass is a priority project for funding.

The Andrews Labor government has no excuse to continue its neglect of roads in regional Victoria after it leased the port of Melbourne at nearly \$4 billion more than it expected. A significant portion of the more than \$10 billion that they will get from the port should be used to address regional Victoria's crumbling and

dangerous roads, which are full of potholes, uneven surfacing and other hazards that put regional road users in danger and slow down travel time. Funding from the port lease should also be used to progress new infrastructure for rural Victoria, including the Shepparton bypass.

In the last fortnight alone I have been contacted by multiple constituents who have outlined significant problems with major roads across the electorate, including the arterial Murchison-Tatura Road, particularly near Dhurringile Prison; the Lancefield–Melbourne road, particularly at Clarkefield; the Echuca-Mooroopna Road, particularly between Tatura-Undera Road and Byrneside-Kyabram Road; and the Murray Valley Highway, in too many spots to mention.

My constituents are concerned that these roads are all in a dangerous state of disrepair, with major potholes, loose stones and bitumen and other hazards which, as one constituent said, are 'an accident waiting to happen'. These roads were in poor condition prior to the recent extremely wet weather and flooding in our region, which will only contribute to further deterioration of road surfaces.

The Shepparton bypass is a new road project that needs to be delivered as a matter of priority for the Shepparton region. Stage 1, which includes a second river crossing, needs to be funded and begun immediately, as was made abundantly clear recently by the two closures of the Peter Ross-Edwards Causeway twice within one week and the closure of the only other local road that connects Shepparton and Mooroopna, which is Watts Road, later in the same week.

To the west, in the Echuca-Campaspe region, there is a need for additional maintenance work, with motorcyclists in particular saying country road users are being neglected. The Independent Riders Group has said that too much focus has been placed on Melbourne roads at the expense of regional Victoria, and they say the rural roads 'don't get the proper maintenance that's required to have good surfaces and remain in a safe condition'.

As I have been speaking, another email has come through to me about the Murchison-Tatura Road, and this government must do something to address the state of disrepair of country roads.

Northern Victoria Region floods

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is a matter for the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. I spoke earlier today of the extensive flooding impacting the electorate of Northern Victoria Region. I visited the State Emergency Service (SES) incident control centre and Hume region Emergency Management Victoria control centre over the weekend and on Monday to ensure that I was up to date on all of the threats to my communities.

One of the more complex problems connected to the flooding is that a West Wodonga sand quarry sparked concerns for a gas pipe and a powerline within the vicinity. A section of sand at the quarry began to show evidence of erosion and risked collapse. SES, Country Fire Authority, earth resources from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Victoria Police, North East Catchment Management Authority and Wodonga City Council representatives, engineers and flood experts — and quite possibly I am leaving someone out of that — were all on hand to assess the situation and develop strategies to safeguard, firstly, the residents and the surrounding community, and secondly, the integrity of the energy infrastructure. I was taken through the situation and shown drone footage that demonstrated the difficulties of the situation. A section of more than 300 metres of gas pipe runs between two large quarry pits, and in the event of the walls of the pits further eroding or giving way it may lead to areas of unsupported pipe and, once unsupported, the risk of leak or rupture, which was foremost in the minds of those monitoring the situation.

At all times the risk of harm to the community has been impeccably mitigated, and the only concern in relation to the community was that of interruption of supply. However, the significance of this inconvenience cannot be understated in the event of the gas pipe having to be shut off; it would result in turning off the gas to Albury, not to mention the impact on the Albury-Wodonga and obviously every house, resident and business in Albury.

The quarry has been impeccably managed. I commend the experts for their work, and it is very pleasing that the risk has now been downgraded. I know there are nearby residents that want to return home and everyone is working towards that outcome. I thank them for their patience, but I urge them to continue to take the advice of the emergency services personnel until it is safe to return home.

There is no-one looking at this situation who is not questioning why there is a sand quarry next to a gas

pipe or a gas pipe next to a sand quarry. It is therefore my request to the minister that she order a comprehensive examination or assessment of the site to consider what measures can be taken to ensure the future safety and reliability of the energy infrastructure.

Youth justice centres

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the Minister for Families and Children, so I am very pleased that she is in the chamber. The matter I wish to raise relates to the increasing number of assaults on staff by clients of Victoria's youth justice facilities. I know we discussed this matter this morning on a motion, but the *Herald Sun* of 8 September reported that a WorkSafe report revealed that staff were at risk of being killed by violent inmates at the Malmsbury Youth Justice Centre. The WorkSafe report inspector wrote, and I quote:

Employees' health and safety is at risk of serious or fatal injuries due to the amount of attacks and assaults on staff members occurring at this location.

According to the article, the inspector's urgent report noted that last month alone saw 41 reported incidents of violence towards staff members and other stress-related incidents.

As I said, I spoke about this issue this morning, and I have asked the minister on a number of occasions in question time, at the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC) and in questions on notice about category 1 incidents and changes to reporting or recategorisation of incidents, and repeatedly her response has failed in any way to address the questions asked. Responses received from the minister have referred me to the department's website, and her response during PAEC was a definite no.

The department have confirmed that the first phase of work on a new client incident management system, including a new model of how incidents are categorised, is being undertaken, with phase 2 of the work, putting the new client incident management system into practice, starting from mid-2016.

So the question I ask of the minister is: can you advise if the review has concluded, as the department indicated it would be, and whether that new model for reporting will impact the 2016–17 reporting of data, particularly data relating to category 1 incidents?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Ms Crozier, can I ask you to just rephrase that and ask for an action as distinct from asking a question.

Ms CROZIER — Yes; I beg your pardon. I will rephrase that. The action I seek is that the minister confirm to the house that the review has concluded, as the department indicated it would be — it would have been during the middle of the year — and whether the modelling that it was indicating would have been done and the reporting would impact the 2016 data, particularly data relating to category 1 incidents.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Okay, we will take it as an action, but only by the barest of margins, I have to tell you.

Bolton Street, Eltham

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Bolton Street in Eltham has become a traffic sewer. An average of 19 000 vehicles per day use this dilapidated road, which is the preferred connection between Fitzimons Lane and Sherbourne Road. It lacks sealed shoulders, turning lanes, bicycle lanes and proper pedestrian infrastructure. Local families are seriously concerned about the safety hazard the road creates for students at Eltham High School.

The people of Eltham welcomed the commitment of \$10.5 million by the Labor government to fund an upgrade to the road. The first \$300 000 of this was used to fund a study by VicRoads into options for the upgrade, including public consultation. This study presented some credible options, but consultants to VicRoads deemed the road unsuitable for declaration as an arterial road. Such a declaration would require VicRoads to take over management and maintenance of the road.

Further transparency around this decision-making process would provide confidence to the people of Eltham and to Banyule City Council and Nillumbik Shire Council as to their maintenance responsibilities once the road is upgraded. The action I seek is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety to revisit the VicRoads determination and declare Bolton Street an arterial road, thereby providing proper status to the road, rather than leaving local government carrying the can for a road that operates as an arterial road.

Infrastructure Victoria draft strategy

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Regional Development, the Honourable Jaala Pulford. The action I seek is for her to strongly advocate for a greater share of infrastructure than identified in Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year strategic plan.

Regional Victoria has been snubbed again. Infrastructure Victoria announced that 92 per cent of its recommendations are focused on Melbourne. The state government introduced this independent body to remove short-term politics from infrastructure planning, but just 11 of the 134 recommendations target regional Victoria. It is just simply short-sighted.

This follows Dan Andrews's city-centric approach, which has also seen \$34 billion allocated for transport infrastructure in Melbourne while regional Victoria receives only \$3 billion. Even the state government's citizens jury says the infrastructure plan by Infrastructure Victoria is dominated by a Melbourne-centric approach, but Dan Andrews is blind to his own bias. If Victoria truly wants a successful population policy, livable cities, jobs and quality of life for regional residents, our government must think broader than the Melbourne city boundary and start committing to transport and infrastructure investments that move people and products efficiently and competitively across the state.

I have just returned from an international tour of cities around the world, and Victoria appears like a Third World country compared to our global partners in infrastructure growth. The non-existence of fast trains linking our cities and towns is a disgrace, as is the unmet basic need for wi-fi services on our trains. The absence of an efficient rail link to our major airport resembles a Third World lack of investment. The lack of freeways that move people and products through and around our major city is congestion madness. Inefficient, slow and congested arterials roads in our regional areas make Victoria a state on the slide, not a state on the move.

The challenge for us is to prepare regional Victoria for a population shift, with important, timely infrastructure that will also preserve the important food production economy that is the lifeblood of human need and quality of life. The Andrews government has not signalled that commitment to regional Victoria. Infrastructure Victoria's long-term vision for the state has bypassed the needs and aspirations of a regional Victoria that stands ready to embrace a modern world with critical infrastructure, but sadly it has been dealt a hand only suited to a Third World country.

The only reference I can see in Infrastructure Victoria's 30-year plan is a need to improve regional roads and apply user charges to regional train services and regional roads. Ms Pulford, I implore you, that is not good enough for regional Victoria, nor is it good enough for a long-term regional infrastructure investment plan. My view is that this plan needs a full

review by the Andrews government, and I encourage Ms Pulford to stand up for regional Victoria and seek more investment longer term into regional Victoria.

Family violence

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter today is for the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. The Andrews Labor government made a firm commitment to tackle the issue of family violence in Victoria when it formed government. This is why we introduced the first Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria. Family violence comes in many forms. A common experience which goes hand in hand with family violence is financial abuse. Too often we hear that victims feel powerless to leave an abusive relationship out of serious concern for their ability to provide financial support for their family. Financial consideration should never compromise safety.

This is why the Andrews Labor government has introduced \$1.75 million for specially trained financial counsellors. This will assist victims of family violence who suffer financially at the hands of perpetrators. The funding will provide 10 new full-time family violence financial counsellors. This new funding is in addition to the \$7.8 million provided by the Labor government for the financial counselling program run by Consumer Affairs Victoria. These initiatives align with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. I ask the minister if she could outline how these counsellors will assist victims of family violence within my electorate.

Sunbury Road duplication

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. It is not very often that I am stuck for words, but I have to say that I was this morning when I heard the news that the government had in fact scuttled the plan to build the Bulla bypass and another road which would ease the traffic congestion on Sunbury Road between Sunbury and Tullamarine airport.

I have explained to this house now on a number of occasions going back some years the increasing problems that we have on this particular road. I have begged the government for action which would build the Bulla bypass and which would relieve congestion on this particular road. We have a situation now where it can take anything up to half an hour just to get off Sunbury Road and onto the freeway. It can take anything up to half an hour again, maybe longer sometimes, to get from Sunbury to that bottleneck at

the beginning of the Tullamarine Freeway. It is ludicrous for any government to undertake an action which stops the building of a road.

Look, I fully understand that this government is committed to stopping the building of roads, but this one, if anything, is even more necessary than the east–west link. This situation we have on the Sunbury Road is getting worse by the day, and I am not exaggerating there. It is getting worse by the day. We have the bottleneck at the end of Sunbury Road heading onto the Tullamarine Freeway, and we have a bottleneck at the top of Bulla Hill, which goes back almost to Sunbury sometimes. It is quite an extraordinary situation.

VicRoads has put forward a proposal — and let us face it, VicRoads do not do things lightly; sometimes you can wait for a couple of lifetimes to get VicRoads to do something — to build a Bulla bypass, to build a road which is going to ease the congestion on Sunbury Road, and what happens? This government knocks it on the head on the most spurious of grounds. I find that absolutely astonishing.

What I would like the minister to do, and what I am asking the minister to do, is immediately put forward and announce — to announce in fact, not just put forward — an alternative plan to relieve congestion on Sunbury Road, to relieve the congestion through Bulla and to provide the people of Sunbury and the people of Bulla with the relief that they need on this particular road. There is, I have to say, astonishment in Sunbury today at the announcement. I ask the minister to put forward and announce an alternative to this road now.

Regional and rural roads

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — The matter I raise tonight is also for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. Again I find myself rising to raise the issue of the standard of roads in western Victoria, and particularly the far west of Victoria. I have sympathy with the issues that are being raised tonight in regard to the roads, but if any members here really want to see how poor roads can get, they need to go to the far west of Victoria. The roads are in such a condition that the answer to it is only to put up restriction signs. They went from 100 kilometres per hour down to 80 kilometres per hour down to 60 kilometres per hour, and now they are down to 40 kilometres per hour. It is dangerous, and the community deserve better.

I keep hearing the argument that it gets wet in western Victoria, and it does. But there is no excuse for the conditions of the roads. If you come over from the

South Australian border, as I often do, you find the roads in South Australia are in good condition, but if you go to Rennick, which is right on the border — there is not that much more rain on the western side of Rennick as there is on the eastern side — you find the roads are falling apart in Victoria. The roads are in a terrible state, and that needs to be addressed.

The answer usually is that we need to throw money at it. That is part of the answer, but the bigger issues are some of the work practices that I get told about daily that VicRoads is undertaking. They are basically just putting a bit of gravel into the potholes and not trying to seal it at all. The amount of trucks that just sit around and do little pieces of work rather than major repairs really is a disgrace.

I had a meeting last week with Greg Burgoyne, the CEO of the Glenelg shire, and one of their councillors, and they told me that unless things improve the port of Portland will be closed because you will not be able to get any products into the port. Now, if that happens, this state should be ashamed of itself.

As I said, the issue is not just about fixing the roads; the issue is that we need to change the work practices. VicRoads in their own reports admit that the roads in western Victoria are the worst in the state, and anyone who has ever been there will see that is the case. VicRoads have in my mind failed country Victoria, and you can see that that becomes more of an issue the further you get away from Melbourne. The roads are unsafe, and therefore tonight I urge the minister to give country Victoria a chance by splitting VicRoads into two distinct operations — being city roads and country roads.

Caulfield–Dandenong line elevated rail

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Today I raise a matter for the attention of the Premier, and it concerns his action gazetted on 28 July to declare the sky rail project between Caulfield and Dandenong a Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009 project. It is a declaration that the Premier must make. The Premier made it, but to the shock of everyone this was not a complete declaration, because he left out some key parts of the act — parts 3 and 8. These are the sections that contain the protections that mean that projects are looked at thoroughly and improved.

Part 3 was left out. It is headed ‘Assessment and approval of major transport projects’ and includes sections headed ‘Determination of impact assessment process’, ‘Impact management plans’, ‘Preparation of impact management plan’, ‘Comprehensive impact

statements’, ‘Scoping directions’, ‘Preparation of comprehensive impact assessment’, ‘Public exhibition of comprehensive impact statements’ and ‘Refinement of comprehensive impact statements and options for declared project’. I am going through sections of part 3 of the act, and they are pretty clear. There are also sections headed ‘Formal public hearings’ and ‘Supplementary comprehensive impact statement assessments’, and they go on. All of these have been ripped out of the act and have not been put into operation here.

This follows a travesty of a process relating to the planning amendment that the Minister for Planning, Mr Wynne, declared. What is clear is that the government announced the project and then went around the planning approvals after that. It went on a so-called discussion process with the community, but it was not a real process; it was a total and utter sham. Then late in the piece it overrode the community again with the extraordinary powers and teeth in this bill, and it can override local councils at will with this particular bill.

When the act went through the chamber — and I was in the chamber at the time in 2009; it is a Brumby government act — nobody ever imagined for a second that this act would be proclaimed in part. Everyone imagined that it was an integrated act that would actually provide checks and balances and enable a government to proceed with a particular project.

What I am seeking today is that the Premier publish an explanation as to why he has cut these processes short. I am seeking that he publish and explain to the community why he has cut these processes short, because the truth of the matter, I believe, is that he wants a sky rail. He does not want rail under road, like he promised the community before the election.

Health funding

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health. After examining the recent report from the Grattan Institute which has highlighted health inequalities for the disadvantaged in our society, it is evident that the postcode you live in and your income level will strongly influence your health status.

The Grattan report has exposed 25 locations around Victoria where health inequalities in low socio-economic areas are extraordinarily high. Individuals who live in Broadmeadows, Ardeer and Frankston North have persistently high rates of potentially preventable hospitalisations for health issues

such as diabetes, lung disease and dental conditions. We know that these health issues can be treated by good primary care in community settings to avoid poor outcomes, yet rates for these conditions are reported to be 50 per cent above the state average for the past decade in those areas.

These findings confirm what we already know — that people living in low socio-economic areas are not getting sufficient health promotion investment and may be receiving a lower level of health care. It is unacceptable of this government to allow health inequality to continue by maintaining it and remaining indifferent. Whilst the government has acknowledged the need to reduce health inequalities for disadvantaged people in the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2015–2019*, the Grattan report strongly demonstrates that there are persistent ‘hotspots’ of poor health in rural and metropolitan areas throughout Victoria. Therefore the evidence is clear: health inequality has not reduced for individuals living in Victoria’s most disadvantaged communities. Consequently these people have a higher risk of being diagnosed with chronic disease and suffering premature death than people living in wealthier suburbs.

Keeping people out of hospital makes economic sense. Not only will the government save money; more importantly, it will improve health and wellbeing in these communities and save lives. The Grattan report has estimated that if preventable admissions in hotspots were reduced to state average levels, this would save the health system and all Victorians \$10 million to \$15 million a year. The Greens are deeply concerned that our health system is consistently failing disadvantaged communities where the burden of disease is so deeply entrenched.

For these reasons I ask the minister: with the defunding of Healthy Together Victoria programs, what specific investments will the government make to redress health inequality throughout Victoria to reduce the likelihood of individuals in low socio-economic areas developing diabetes, lung disease, cardiovascular disease and poor oral health conditions?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Ms Hartland, could I ask you to rephrase that? I think you may have in fact asked a question instead of requesting an action. I could be wrong, but I think I am right.

Ms HARTLAND — A request of the minister in terms of what will happen now that Healthy Together Victoria programs have been defunded? What specific investments will the government make to redress health

inequity throughout Victoria to reduce the likelihood of individuals in low socio-economic areas developing diabetes, lung disease, cardiovascular disease and poor oral health conditions?

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! So the action that you seek is for the minister to provide that information?

Ms Hartland — That is right.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Marvellous; thank you.

Crib Point Primary School

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the acting Minister for Veterans, and it is for the minister to provide funding for an initiative that has been proposed by Crib Point Primary School to develop a commemoration walk and to design and produce a mural, an educational plaque, to tie various elements of the school grounds — in particular the school navy memorial garden, a World War I memorial path and Gallipoli oak tree — together so that people can take advantage of these various facilities in a coherent way and use them as a source of contemplation in relation to the themes that they address.

This is a very important initiative that the school is proposing. Indeed I think it is worth reflecting for a moment on the importance of the military to the community in which Crib Point Primary School is located. Of course that community is the home to HMAS *Cerberus*, the navy’s premier training establishment, but over the last 13 years this establishment has extended its activities to training personnel from the other elements of the armed forces — the army and the air force. Something in the order of 6000 personnel a year are trained. Of course some of the people who are trained at the facility and some of the people who are permanently stationed there will educate their children at the Crib Point school. Something like 27 Royal Australian Navy families have children at the school, which has long had strong ties to the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

HMAS *Cerberus* has a long history. In this part of Victoria the first sod was turned in 1913, and the base was officially opened in 1920, so it has had a role in a number of engagements that this country has been involved in. I would ask the minister to consider funding this initiative, which would be a significant enhancement of the school’s commemoration of this country’s military past.

Stawell employment

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Industry and Employment. It relates to a response that I have received from the Minister for Resources, who happens to be the same person. I raised an adjournment matter with the Minister for Resources with regard to the Stawell goldmine. Now, Stawell Gold Mines is a significant employer in Stawell and is something that is very, very important for the future prosperity of that fine town. In part this response to the adjournment matter, which asked about how it is that Stawell Gold Mines can go about receiving an answer about whether or not they can go ahead with a future proposal read:

DEDJTR is currently working with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, as well as the Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Health and Human Services, to finalise an assessment process for the proposal for my consideration.

When I read that I thought I was reading a script from *Yes, Minister*, because what we have here is departments having a circular discussion about a very important decision about the future of many, many jobs in the town of Stawell. I am certainly very concerned that the Minister for Resources is not taking this seriously, that the closure of the Stawell goldmine would have a significant, detrimental impact on that great town and that this government is washing its hands of it.

So the action that I seek from the Minister for Employment relates to an election commitment that this government made on 14 November 2014. That election commitment related to this government creating 440 jobs in the town of Stawell. Since coming to government we have seen over 700 jobs being lost in the township of Stawell, and this is obviously very concerning. So by my calculation it looks like the government now has 1140 jobs to create in Stawell so that they can meet the net result that they committed to in November 2014. But the action that I seek is that I would like — I would certainly be keen for — the minister to detail to the community of Stawell how it is that the government will go about meeting this election commitment of 440 jobs created in Stawell.

Responses

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — This evening I have received adjournment matters from Ms Lovell directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; from Ms Symes directed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change;

from Ms Dunn directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; from Mr Ramsay directed to the Minister for Regional Development; from Mr Eideh directed to the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence; from Mr Finn directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; from Mr Purcell directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; from Mr Davis directed to the Premier — although the matter appears to be more appropriately directed to the Minister for Planning; from Ms Hartland directed to the Minister for Health; from Mr Mulino directed to the Minister for Veterans; and from Mr Morris directed to the Minister for Industry and Employment. I propose to refer all of those matters to the relevant ministers for response.

Ms Crozier also referred a matter to me in my capacity as Minister for Families and Children, and I propose to respond to the member and discharge this matter. At the outset Ms Crozier referred to issues around youth justice, and we have had discussions about these issues on numerous occasions. I want to reiterate to Ms Crozier and to the house that the safety of the staff, the safety of the young people who are the clients in youth justice facilities and in fact the safety of the community are the paramount considerations of the Andrews government. We take the safety of our staff very seriously.

In fact Ms Crozier referred in her adjournment matter to a WorkSafe report. She referred to the same report in an earlier debate today. I recall that she expressed surprise that an occupational health and safety report commissioned by my department would be provided to WorkSafe, and that is — —

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — It related to WorkSafe issues. Ms Crozier expressed surprise that an OHS report would be provided to WorkSafe, the body that deals with occupational health and safety issues in this state, which I find rather perplexing. I should not be surprised, given it was in fact the coalition that tried to take 'safe' out of WorkSafe and reduce the role of WorkSafe in this state. I make no apology for the fact that I asked my department to undertake an occupational health and safety review as well as other reviews around specific incidents, because this demonstrates that our commitment as a government is to improve the safety of both the staff and the clients in these facilities.

I have to say that the staff in these facilities are presented with a very challenging environment, and I have spoken about this issue before. We have had more young people remanded in these facilities — in fact that

is something that started during the term of the previous government as well — and I have talked about how these young people can come into these facilities being drug affected when they are on remand. Despite that, our WorkCover claims are in fact down. The WorkCover claims rate for the previous month of September is in fact half what it was in July 2014. WorkCover claims have been trending down and are actually lower now than was the case under the previous government.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — Ms Crozier, you had a lengthy adjournment matter in which you prefaced your questions with a number of issues, and I am wishing to respond to you.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — I will come to that, because you continuously make a number of assertions which are incorrect. I make the point around data because in your adjournment matter — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Minister, you might like to direct your comments through the Chair. That would be very helpful.

Ms MIKAKOS — In her adjournment matter, Acting President, Ms Crozier referred to the issue of data, and I reiterate the point that the issue of incident data is one that we have addressed as a government because we are committed to greater transparency. We are now publishing category 1 incident reports on a quarterly basis on the department's website, which is something that did not occur under the previous government. We have reflected on the advice and the evidence put before the royal commission into child sexual abuse, where issues have come to light around the historic abuse of young people in youth justice facilities — and sadly this occurred in Victoria as well as other states — and we have changed the practice so that young people on entry into our youth justice custodial facilities are asked questions around assault and abuse that may have occurred before they came into the custodial setting.

So yes, this has had the impact of pushing the assault numbers up, as they are classified as category 1 incident reports, but these relate to incidents that have occurred before they have come into the youth justice custodial setting. And Ms Crozier, as someone who was involved in the Betrayal of Trust inquiry, you of all people should be welcoming that young people are being asked these questions now.

The other matter I want to highlight is that we have changed legislation so that the Commission for Children and Young People also receives these category 1 incident reports. In relation to the incident reports and their classification, which Ms Crozier asked me about, I make the point that Ms Crozier in her motion earlier and in numerous questions she has asked is proposing a lot of conspiracies around classifications. I draw her attention to the fact that the document that sets out the policy in this state for youth justice facilities as well as out-of-home care facilities is in fact a document that was issued in 2011 by the department. It is titled *Critical client incident management summary guide and categorisation table — 2011*. In fact on its last update it says at the bottom, 'Updated December 2012'. You can make any assertion you like about classifications, but the document that was issued as it relates to category 1 incident reports and other incidents that are classified by the department is in fact a document that was put in place by Mary Wooldridge as Minister for Community Services.

I have referred in this house before to the fact that the Department of Health and Human Services is developing a new client incident management system. This should come as no surprise to anyone. In fact it was one of the recommendations of Bernie Geary in his report that was tabled in this house last year. At the time our government responded to that report, and we have been taking action in implementing those recommendations — and yes, a new client incident management system is being developed. The new system will focus on the most serious incidents based on the impact on the client and will strengthen processes, systems and workforce capability to prevent and effectively manage client incidents.

In terms of the timing that Ms Crozier asked about, I can advise her that the system is being developed in two phases, and phase 1 is now complete. This involved the development of the new client incident management policy and guidance following extensive consultation with external oversight bodies, peak organisations, in-scope service providers and advocacy organisations. The second phase will progressively be implemented throughout the course of next year, with full implementation expected by approximately the middle of next year.

I can advise the member that, yes, there is a new system coming into place. The current system is one that was put in place by Mary Wooldridge. It has drawn the attention of Bernie Geary, the previous commissioner for children and young people, who found that system to be deficient. This is why a new system has been developed with the sector to better address the

classifications so that they are based on the impact on the client. This is occurring in consultation with the sector and is being progressively rolled out.

Ms Crozier posed a number of questions in her adjournment matter. This is not going to have a retrospective effect. There is a classification system that exists and is currently in place that relates to policies put in place by Mary Wooldridge as the then minister, and there is a new system that is coming into effect, which we have been very up-front about. It is important that when Ms Crozier comes in here and makes all sorts of assertions — —

Ms Crozier — I will continue to ask you questions of relevance, Minister.

Ms MIKAKOS — I welcome questions, but I think it is important, Ms Crozier, that you stop your assertions based on conspiracies and stick to the facts.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! It would be even better, Minister, if you were to direct your comments through the Chair.

Ms MIKAKOS — The point I make is that there are important issues around our youth justice facilities and we are working very hard to address these. I make no apology for the fact that we are conducting reviews into specific incidents, including addressing our occupational health and safety issues, to provide a safer working environment for the staff who work there. Ms Crozier refers to releasing reports. Actually there were seven reports published by Mary Wooldridge as minister, none of which was put out publicly. They included a report on escapes that occurred in July 2014. That report was never put out publicly.

We had serious incidents during the time of the previous government, including where a staff member had his skull broken. We had a staff member with his throat slashed. They are the most serious incidents that have occurred involving staff in our youth justice facilities in years, and did we ever hear a peep out of Ms Crozier then? No, we did not. Ms Crozier might now be the Johnny-come-lately, pretending to be the workers' friend, but we know which party and which government cares about our workers in this state, and that is the Labor government — our government. This is why we will keep taking action to address these issues, and this is why Ms Crozier is yet to justify why she wants to introduce a Don Dale supermax for Victoria to incarcerate young people as young as 10 in 23-hour-a-day isolation. That is what a supermax is. Ms Crozier needs to go and do her research.

I also advise the house that I have received written responses to adjournment debate matters in relation to a matter raised by Mr Ramsay on 31 August and by Ms Fitzherbert on 14 September this year.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I remind members that there is a joint sitting at 6.45 p.m. this evening. Until then, the house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 6.29 p.m.

Wednesday, 12 October 2016

JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT

Legislative Council vacancy

Honourable members of both houses met in Assembly chamber at 6.47 p.m.

The Clerk — Before proceeding with the business of this joint sitting it will be necessary to appoint a Chair. I call the Premier.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I move:

That the Honourable Telmo Languiller, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, be appointed Chair of this joint sitting.

I understand that he is willing to accept the nomination.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I second the motion.

The Clerk — Are there any other proposals? There being no other proposal, the Honourable Telmo Languiller, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, will take the Chair.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR — I draw the attention of honourable members to the extracts from the Constitution Act 1975 which have been circulated. Please note that the various provisions require that the joint sitting be conducted in accordance with rules adopted for the purpose by members present at the sitting. The first procedure therefore will be the adoption of rules.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — Chair, I desire to submit the rules of procedure, which are in the hands of honourable members, and I accordingly move:

That these rules be the rules of procedure for this joint sitting.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR — The rules having been adopted, I now invite proposals from members for a person to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

Mr ANDREWS (Premier) — I propose:

That Mr Luke O'Sullivan be chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council.

He is willing to accept the appointment if chosen; I am confident of that. In order to satisfy the joint sitting as

to the requirements of section 27A(4) of the Constitution Act 1975, I advise that I am in possession of advice from The Nationals that Mr O'Sullivan is the selection of The Nationals, the party previously represented in the Legislative Council by Mr Drum.

Mr WALSH (Murray Plains) — I second the proposal.

The CHAIR — Are there any further proposals?

As there are no further nominations, I declare that nominations are closed.

Motion agreed to.

The CHAIR — I declare that Mr Luke O'Sullivan has been chosen to occupy the vacant seat in the Legislative Council. I will advise the Governor accordingly.

I now declare the joint sitting closed.

Proceedings terminated 6.51 p.m.