

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Wednesday, 23 November 2016

(Extract from book 18)

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HANSARD 150



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

(to 9 November 2016)

Premier	The Hon. D. M. Andrews, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Minister for Emergency Services	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

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Minister for Planning	The Hon. R. W. Wynne, MP
Cabinet Secretary	Ms M. Thomas, MP

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 Nationals:

Mr L. B. O'SULLIVAN

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	V1LJ
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 Jaelyn	Northern Victoria	ALP
Leane, Mr Shaun Leo	Eastern Metropolitan	ALP	Tierney, Ms Gayle Anne	Western Victoria	ALP
Lovell, Ms Wendy Ann	Northern Victoria	LP	Wooldridge, Ms Mary Louise Newling	Eastern Metropolitan	LP
Melhem, Mr Cesar	Western Metropolitan	ALP	Young, Mr Daniel	Northern Victoria	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; V1LJ — Vote 1 Local Jobs

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Wednesday, 23 November 2016

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

**PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA
160TH ANNIVERSARY**

The **PRESIDENT** — Order! Members, I just wish to bring a couple of things to your attention. As you know, I have a penchant for the history of this place, and I think that it would be remiss if we did not recognise a couple of milestones that occur this week in which we are sitting. The first is that on 21 November 1856 the Victorian Parliament met for the first time, and the first President of the Legislative Council and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly were elected on that occasion.

Mr **Ondarchie** interjected.

The **PRESIDENT** — I am the father of the house, but I was not there on this particular occasion! Indeed on 25 November, some four days later, the ceremonial opening of the first Victorian Parliament occurred, and that was presided over by the acting Governor of the time.

AUSTRALIAN OF THE YEAR AWARDS

The **PRESIDENT** — Order! Someone may well refer to these people in their 90-second statement, but again I think these are notable Victorians, and I think it is important that the house actually recognises their achievement and their election as Victorian candidates in the Australian of the Year Awards for 2017. To that extent I recognise Paris Aristotle, AM, who is the Victorian candidate for the Australian of the Year award as being a refugee, anti-torture and trauma rehabilitation advocate; as Senior Australian of the Year, 72-year-old Indigenous educator Lois Peeler, AM; as Young Australian of the Year, 28-year-old diversity and inclusion champion Jason Ball; and in the Australia's Local Hero category, Warrnambool community fundraiser Vicki Jellie.

I also note that Neale Daniher has been mentioned as another distinguished Victorian who might well have qualified for one of those awards but has certainly been recognised by the City of Melbourne. All five of those people are in fact certainly Victorians who have made a very distinguished and important contribution to our community and deserve that recognition.

**MELBOURNE OLYMPIC GAMES
60TH ANNIVERSARY**

The **PRESIDENT** — Order! Finally, this also was the week in which the 1956 Olympic Games commenced in Melbourne, and the library has actually prepared a heritage paper detailing that event, so if members are interested in that, they can obtain a copy from the library.

**CORRECTIONS AMENDMENT (PAROLE)
BILL 2016**

Introduction and first reading

Mr **O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria)** introduced a bill for an act to amend the Corrections Act 1986 in relation to the conditions for making a parole order for the prisoner Craig Minogue.

Read first time.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Auditor-General's Reports on —

Portfolio Departments and Associated Entities: 2015–16 Audit Snapshot, November 2016 (*Ordered to be published*).

Water Entities: 2015–16 Audit Snapshot, November 2016 (*Ordered to be published*).

Parliamentary Committees Act 2003 —

Government response to the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee's Inquiry into Portability of Long Service Leave Entitlements.

Government response to the Family and Community Development Committee's Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services.

Statutory Rules under the following Acts of Parliament —

Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 — No. 134.

Magistrates' Court Act 1989 — No. 135.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Regional assemblies

Ms **PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development)** — I wish to update the house on the Barwon, Central Highlands and Gippsland regional assemblies. As members may be aware, the regional assemblies are an opportunity for our newly established nine regional partnerships and the Victorian

government to engage with the community directly to discuss local priorities. Many regional Victorians said that they did not see a clear pathway into government decision-making for the priorities and problems they identified in their regional strategic plans.

The *Regional Economic Development and Services Review* identified after many conversations with regional community leaders that there were some limitations in the ability of the current governance arrangements to deliver better outcomes for regional communities. That is why we have developed a new approach that will enhance the ability of regional communities to have a say and build stronger connections to government by connecting those priorities and regional investment opportunities directly with Victorian government decision-making processes.

The inaugural Barwon assembly took place on Wednesday, 2 November, in Torquay. Pre-engagements saw 809 people visit the website with 379 pieces of feedback. In addition, 168 people provided feedback via surveys undertaken in Colac, Geelong, Queenscliff and Torquay, and it achieved a reach of over 17 000 people via Facebook. The priorities identified in pre-engagement were youth education and training, ensuring a fair and safe community, jobs of the future, improving transport and livability, and tourism. One hundred and forty people attended the assembly, and it was a terrific discussion.

The Central Highlands assembly took place on Tuesday, 15 November, in Ballarat. Pre-engagements saw 723 people on the website provide 386 pieces of feedback. Some of the priorities identified were improved transport infrastructure, industry and business support, community services, health and the environment. One hundred and sixty-four people attended the assembly, and all their great ideas have been captured.

The first Gippsland assembly took place last Thursday, 17 November, in Moe. Pre-engagements saw 1201 people visit the website with 439 pieces of feedback. Over 200 people attended the assembly.

Ordered that statement be considered next day on motion of Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan).

Family violence

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise to inform the house of the Andrews Labor government's continued commitment to tackling family violence. Family violence remains our no. 1 law and order issue. It is estimated that one in three women

and one in four children are victims of family violence. The unacceptable high rates of family violence were well documented by Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence. We know that cultural change is necessary and that early education can play an integral role in this. Building the foundations for respectful relationships starts in early childhood and can have a big impact on preventing family violence in future generations. Respectful relationships education in early childhood settings is about providing a holistic approach.

Our government is investing \$3.4 million over two years in the early years component. The program will deliver face-to-face professional learning for up to 4000 early childhood educators in funded early years programs and provide backfill in order to enable early years professionals to participate. Once developed this professional learning will be supported by online materials, will be evidence based, will reflect age-appropriate practices for working with young children and will be developed in consultation with early childhood experts and practitioners.

This program is about promoting fairness, respect and empathy in children. These are values that the opposition should support rather than peddling the nonsense it has been putting about in the community about radical gender theory. Whilst the Andrews Labor government has set about proactively implementing all the recommendations of the royal commission, the opposition still has not decided what it is going to do about the royal commission's report. Teaching children to be respectful and supporting them to build positive relationships in their lives is how we will build a society free of family violence.

Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Regional Development) — I rise today to inform the house of a significant new investment the government is making in regional tourism in Victoria. The visitor economy supports the jobs of around one-sixth of people in regional Victoria, and there is great potential for growth. I recently had the opportunity to visit Daylesford and announce a total of \$3.44 million in funding to support business case and planning studies for a range of regional tourism projects that have the potential to drive visitation growth and strengthen regional communities.

The government is supporting 26 projects through its \$103 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund, which will enable these projects to have their viability assessed and to be value added as high-impact regional

tourism initiatives. It is important to note that this is just round one of the fund. The projects range from nature-based hikes and health and wellness retreats to Aboriginal cultural experiences and outdoor opera performances.

In Daylesford three of the projects were announced as funded for that region, which is regional Victoria's second-most dependent community on the visitor economy, after Phillip Island: \$90 000 towards the development of a mineral springs feasibility master plan to capitalise on the Hepburn region's position as a leading spa and wellness destination; a study into opera events on Lake Daylesford, which I think captured the imagination of everyone there on the day — a wonderful opportunity for the local community and the local economy; and \$50 000 to develop further the potential of a new health and wellness retreat in the region.

The tourism sector is incredibly important to regional Victoria, contributes \$11.5 billion to the regional economy and generates 114 500 jobs annually. Through our \$103 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund the government is supporting the visitor economy across regional Victoria by facilitating the development of iconic regional tourism projects that will drive greater visitor numbers, create world-class tourism experiences and boost the regional economy. The government has worked closely with regional tourism boards and local governments to identify more than 300 projects that would be suitable for support through the Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund or other means. I look forward to providing further updates to the house on our efforts to create jobs and to grow the visitor economy in regional Victoria.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Prison security

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — After the Moomba riots a hairy-chested Daniel Andrews vowed to smash the Apex gang. Since then the only thing that has been smashed is the Parkville youth justice centre. The Premier is not the only one who has been exposed as clueless and hapless on the crime tsunami engulfing Victoria. A few weeks ago Minister Mikakos hit out at the Liberal-Nationals for raising the prospect of a juvenile supermax for violent young offenders, claiming it was like putting them in Don Dale. But due to the minister's incompetent management of youth justice centres there have been over 20 riots, the last of which at Parkville has all but destroyed the facility, costing taxpayers tens of millions of dollars. This is a hopeless minister in a hapless government.

Now we have this panicked kneejerk response from Daniel Andrews, which will put juveniles into Greenvale at Barwon, which will increase pressure on the maximum security estate in the adult prison system, already down by 200 beds due to the Metropolitan Remand Centre riot. There will be other consequences because of the Andrews government's ham-fisted incompetence. Fewer maximum security front-end prison beds means more prisoners in police cells and more prisoners not being presented to court. The next time Daniel Andrews talks a big game on law and order, Victorians will judge him on his record and remember that what he promises and what he delivers are two different things.

Just overnight we saw yet another riot in a Victorian prison, this time at the Port Phillip Prison, and reports of ambulances being called to the prison on multiple occasions following alleged assaults and fights, including a prisoner reportedly seriously injured and receiving medical attention.

SEXPO

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise today with an offer to the members of this house in my statement. SEXPO, the health, sexuality and lifestyle exhibition, commences tomorrow at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and is running until Sunday. As another auspicious anniversary, it is almost to the day 20 years since it held its first show in Kings Way in an exhibition space next to the chartered accountants annual conference. It has now been held 65 times around Australia, generated millions of dollars of revenue for host cities and created thousands of jobs, in particular here in Victoria where it is based. It now attracts more visitors per square metre than any other show at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Mr Barber — Even the boat show?

Ms PATTEN — Even the boat show, Mr Barber. The event provides a safe, comfortable space where visitors can be entertained and educated. It embodies the values of respect, consent, open-mindedness, acceptance, humour and of course equality. So successful is SEXPO that it has expanded internationally to South Africa and London, with further expansion planned for 2017. So my offer is this: I am willing to give a personal tour and double tickets to SEXPO, which I was a part of 20 years ago, to any member who wishes to join the tens of thousands of Victorians who will be attending the show. I have no doubt it will be a highlight of your weekend.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you. I am just wondering what the accountants made of it all.

Growing Suburbs Fund

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — Last Saturday I had the pleasure of accompanying Minister Hutchins, the Minister for Local Government, when she made several announcements in relation to community investments from the \$50 million Growing Suburbs Fund. The announcements were made in the City of Hume and the City of Melton. The City of Melton has received over \$4.38 million to develop five projects under the 2016–17 Growing Suburbs Fund, including the Melton botanic trail, with \$850 000; Kenswick Drive Reserve upgrade, \$387 000; and the scout adventure activity centre, \$1.755 million.

The Caroline Springs Leisure Centre extension went to a total cost of \$5.868 million. That project will expand the facilities of the existing leisure centre and is a much-needed project for this growing suburb. The Burnside multipurpose community centre will receive \$2.15 million for stage 2 of its development. The City of Hume will gain another \$6.12 million in addition to the \$3 million it received last year to deliver much-needed community projects in that region. I want to take the opportunity to commend the minister on her hard work in establishing the \$100 million fund over two years. It is good that the growing suburbs in Melbourne are receiving some benefit and extra funding to make sure they meet the needs of their residents.

Echuca-Moama bridge

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) — Last week I had the pleasure of meeting with my Nationals federal colleagues the member for Murray, Damian Drum, and the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Darren Chester, to look at and discuss the building of the new Echuca bridge. The bridge has been discussed for decades, and finally Echuca and Moama will see a second bridge built. The Nationals when in government funded \$96 million for the bridge, and the New South Wales government have also agreed to their share of the funding. Prior to the federal election I was delighted when transport minister Darren Chester announced \$96 million from the federal government. It is now time to get on and build it. The locals are very keen to see some actual works happening, and I call on VicRoads to release the time line for the building works and get on with building the project.

La Trobe University Shepparton campus

Mr O'SULLIVAN — Last Wednesday I welcomed Damian Drum, the federal member for Murray, and The Nationals leader and Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce to Shepparton. We visited the La Trobe University campus, had a tour of the facilities and were briefed on some of the building expansion plans as well as the new courses on offer next year, of which one will be in agribusiness. The campus theme of 'Stay near. Go far.' allows students to continue to live in their community and gain a university qualification, which will provide many benefits to regional Victoria.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — This year the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is celebrating its 60th birthday. Since 1956 the National Trust has played a vital role in protecting our built and cultural heritage. The National Trust is an independent not-for-profit organisation supported by a large community base and is the premier heritage and conservation organisation in the state and the major operator of historic properties that are open to the public. It has branches throughout Victoria that monitor and assist with its campaigns and projects.

In 2011 the National Trust released a reconciliation statement and has developed a reconciliation action plan and an Aboriginal advisory committee to the board for conservation and celebration of our shared heritage. The National Trust heritage register covers all types of cultural and natural heritage in Victoria. Some of the most well known include the Old Melbourne Gaol; Rippon Lea house and gardens; Barwon Park Mansion; McCrae Homestead; Mulberry Hill, the home of Daryl Lindsay, who founded the National Gallery of Victoria, and Joan Lindsay, author of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*; and of course *Polly Woodside*.

In addition to maintaining its register and keeping these properties open to the public, the National Trust is involved in advocacy, campaigns, research and providing advice and technical information on a range of heritage topics for the community. I would like to thank the National Trust for its tireless efforts in protecting and preserving Victoria's built and cultural heritage, often in the face of ruthless developers and careless or apathetic governments. We still face this today, where irreplaceable heritage buildings have continued to be lost or are under threat from inadequate heritage protection and government inaction.

Family violence

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Last Wednesday I was very happy to host the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, at a forum in the east comprising 40-plus practitioners who deal with family violence issues. The minister outlined the progress that has occurred so far in implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence and other initiatives that the Andrews government has introduced since coming to government.

Some of the 40-plus practitioners include Manning councillors from the east, Doncare, EACH, Victoria Police, Nadrasca, Knoxbrooke and EDVOS. There was a fantastic forum and great engagement from people from the floor about the challenges they face and the support they would like to see from the government, and there were also a lot of comments about how pleased these particular practitioners are that the Andrews government is taking a lead — I think probably globally — on this particular issue of domestic violence. I once again want to thank Minister Mikakos for her fantastic presentation and being prepared to engage with everyone at the forum for an extended period of time.

Lois Peeler

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I wish to congratulate Lois Peeler, AM, on being named the 2017 Victorian Senior Australian of the Year. Lois is an elder of the Yorta Yorta people and was a member of the 1960s group The Sapphires, whose story was turned into a film in 2012. Lois Peeler is also a political activist, a passionate educator and the principal of Australia's only Aboriginal girls boarding school, Worawa Aboriginal College in Healesville. Lois has worked in a range of roles in Indigenous affairs, currently chairs the Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee and is a worthy recipient of this award. I must say it is fantastic to see an Aboriginal woman acknowledged in this way.

Shepparton Diwali Mela

Ms LOVELL — The Shepparton Diwali Mela celebration was held at the McIntosh Centre on Sunday, 13 November. Diwali is the Hindu festival of lights and spiritually signifies the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and hope over despair. This year's Shepparton festival was dedicated to the memory of Manmeet Alisher, who was so senselessly murdered when he was set on fire by a passenger while driving a bus in Brisbane last month.

Congratulations to the Shepparton United Lions Cricket Club, who organised the event. This was the first year Diwali Mela was held in Shepparton, and it was a wonderful experience, with dance, music and food enjoyed by all.

Multicultural communities

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Over the last week we have seen a blatant undermining by certain political leaders at both state and federal level of what makes our Victorian community great. Singling out people from certain ethnic minorities for punitive purposes or blame-shifting for whatever reason is tantamount to racial profiling and vilification. That is not the sort of leadership we need. We have a proud tradition of bipartisan support for multiculturalism here in Victoria, so it saddens me that I feel I need to get to my feet in this place and point out that it is our diversity that makes us strong.

This is not just my opinion or politics. Yesterday the Scanlon Foundation released its latest social cohesion report, and, contrary to what many pundits would have us think about a so-called rising wave of anti-multicultural sentiment, this report overwhelmingly confirms that it is not the case. Sixty per cent of people agreed with the statement that accepting immigrants from many different countries makes Australia stronger, and a huge 91 per cent of people have a sense of belonging in Australia. These numbers show that, despite the fearmongering attempts of those that would weaken multiculturalism, it is stronger than ever.

Australians overwhelmingly support and embrace diversity and view it as a strength, so I would encourage each and every person that holds a leadership position to think about what they say before they say it and about whether in fact their words are a fair representation of the people they represent or simply a cheap political stunt to capitalise on a divisive and toxic public narrative.

Wine Growth Fund

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — Last week I had a fantastic visit to Rutherglen to meet with wine growers, producers and Tourism North East. I extend my thanks to Campbells Wines, especially Prue and Malcolm, for hosting the event and sharing their amazing family history and of course superb range of wines. It was the perfect venue to announce nearly \$400 000 from the Wine Growth Fund is to be shared between 20 organisations in northern Victoria to

increase exports, boost wine tourism and grow wine businesses.

We have got magnificent wineries in northern Victoria. They already are doing great things and producing premium wines. I am proud to be part of a government that backs this industry and supports expanding into new local and international markets, increasing visitation to the region and creating new jobs. Many of the successful applicants were there to share a glass on the day. The 20 successful projects are spread across the King Valley, Indigo, Nagambie and Heathcote and range from strategic marketing and brand planning to infrastructure upgrades.

Tourism North East will also receive \$50 000 to undertake research and collect data to develop a more robust and profitable wine tourism sector within Victoria's High Country. It will allow for the enhancement and development of new products, more targeted communications and marketing and the potential development of infrastructure required to attract greater numbers of wine tourism visitors to the region.

With the weather warming up there is no better time to head north and explore all our beautiful wineries. I highly recommend the Dal Zotto prosecco.

PRODUCTION OF DOCUMENTS

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That, in accordance with standing order 11.01, the Leader of the Government table in the Council by 12 noon on Tuesday, 7 February 2017 —

- (1) a copy of each weekly briefing compendium sent from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Ambulance Services between 1 June 2016 and 22 November 2016; and
- (2) any response sent to DHHS from the ministers or the ministerial offices specifically relating to the compendium, sent to or received by either minister between 1 June 2016 and 22 November 2016;

and any response from the Leader of the Government should conform with standing orders 11.02(3) and 11.03(1)(a).

I am pleased to be able to speak on this important documents motion today. This issue, in relation to compendiums, is an important one in relation to transparency of the Daniel Andrews Labor government. Before the election and on coming to government, the government made some very grand statements about openness and transparency, but our experience has been that we are actually seeing quite the opposite.

A compendium is a summary document provided to each minister each week outlining a range of issues. What we have found is that the compendium is being used as a mechanism to reduce the number of individual briefings that come to the minister, but we have found a climate of intense secrecy in relation to the contents of those compendiums, and because of this our capacity to make FOI requests of the minister in relation to the briefs on the issues that are being canvassed is being seriously diminished, hence this documents motion today.

Compendiums are something that I have approached under FOI with no success. As I have said, this is a mechanism to decrease the number of briefings, because the briefing issues are being placed into these compendiums. In terms of the context — and just to give you some numbers in relation to it — I also FOI requested the list of briefs provided to the minister, and in terms of responses that I have had so far, for the first few months the minister was receiving about 13.5 briefs per week; from June to November, 12.9; and from November to March, only 9.8. And I have an FOI request that is currently two months overdue, which is not unusual in terms of my response times, that has not yet been provided obviously. What we are seeing is a serious decline in the number of briefings that are going to the minister, and we understand that these are being replaced by notes and information provided through these compendium briefings. So they are an important part of information provided to the minister.

In seeking to FOI request this, the first time I FOI requested compendiums for the period 1 December 2015 to 29 February 2016 it took seven and a half months and a request to the Freedom of Information Commissioner before I had any response from the department in relation to that, where access was denied in full. We are now in a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal hearing.

This motion today does not relate to that time period, so there is no overlap on those two, but I did do a subsequent request for compendiums from 1 June to 1 August, which is the consideration of today's matter, and once again the response from the government has been to deny in full. In fact the letter headed 'Notice of decision — freedom of information request' says:

On the basis of your request, the health service performance and programs division conducted a thorough and diligent search and located the documents that are relevant to your request. The division provided 73 pages of documents.

Decision

I assessed the document in accordance with the act and have decided to deny access in full to the documents.

From an earlier document that we have received, which is a schedule of the different weekly compendium briefings, what we see is that some of those have legitimate claims in relation to cabinet in confidence. Some of those have legitimate claims in terms of releasing personal information, which we understand is at a very basic level; it might be the name of a junior departmental officer. We are not seeking through this process to ask for what we never ask for, which is the release of genuine cabinet-in-confidence documents or personal information about junior officers, which is as it is has always been managed. What we are seeking to do is to have released the information that is not covered by those two exemptions. From this schedule of weekly briefings, what we see — and I just pick one week, the week of 18 February 2016 — there were 17 pages of documents. Two of those pages related to cabinet in confidence and two of those pages had notes of personal information, but all the rest did not. What we are seeing is a general claim under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (FOI act) under section 30(1), which claims that these are internal working documents.

This type of compendium briefing is the type of briefing that I received as a minister. In reflecting on some of those summaries that I received, a review of them actually shows that largely it is factual information. It is not briefings, it is not opinions and in many cases it is not even advice; it is a matter of fact in terms of where things are up to. I will give a couple of examples. From a compendium from September 2014, the type of issue is ‘policy’ and the branch is the ‘Royal commission response’. Under the column heading ‘Brief outline of issue’ it states:

The royal commission has indicated it is intending to issue a further summons requesting a copy of the internal departmental inquiry report titled ‘Critical Client Incident Practice Review: 18 June 2014’, prepared for the South Division. Investigation of sexual assault that occurred in a residential care unit managed by Anglicare Victoria.

That is a straight up and down, factual response. Under the column heading ‘Action taken’ it states:

The royal commission team is working with all relevant areas of the department to respond to the summons.

Another example is under the ‘Industry, workforce and transformation’ branch and states:

Services Connect partnerships will be launched at an event on Tuesday, 28 October 2014 at the Windsor Hotel.

The launch will bring together all successful partnerships and senior government officials (approximately 120–150 attendees).

This event also provides an opportunity to launch the Services Connect progress report which provides an overview of the innovative and collaborative approach to designing and testing Services Connect to date and the positive results which are emerging.

Under the column heading ‘Action taken’ it states:

The policy and strategy group will work with the secretary and the minister’s office on event preparations.

I hardly see that those are matters that should be concealed under FOI, and they are certainly not matters that should be concealed through a process of requesting information through this chamber, should this motion be successful.

I believe that the process that the government has been using in repeatedly denying access to documents in full and claiming section 30(1) of the FOI act across all the documents is an attempt to do the opposite of the commitment it made, which is to be secret rather than transparent with the information that it is providing. I want to reiterate that there will be some genuine cabinet-in-confidence matters that can and should be redacted and that there are also presumably some names and personal information that should not be included. We are not seeking that information. It is the other information which we would seek, I think very reasonably, under this motion.

I have also asked as part of the motion that it is both documents provided to the minister and documents returned from the minister. These briefings contain the capacity for the minister or the minister’s office to respond and request some action. In some incidents I understand that it is ticked or indicated that there may be a note in relation to it.

Ideally we would seek just one set of documents rather than a replication of two sets of documents, but I understand — once again from the summary of documents claimed to be exempt — that while Minister Mikakos and Minister Foley have both listed documents and the same document has been returned as a second document but with notes from the minister, for Ms Hennessy’s document it seems like it is one-way travel. These documents are being provided by the department to the minister but are not being returned. I am not sure if Ms Hennessy is not reading her briefs or has nothing to say or no comments on anything that has been provided over this three-month period, but that has required that the documents requested will mean both those documents going up and those documents going back in case there is an absence of any response from the minister, as there has been in earlier circumstances.

Finally, I just want to say that I have also included in this motion a comment about the Leader of the Government conforming with standing orders. This is an issue that I have raised directly with the Leader of the Government as well. There are requirements in our standing orders in terms of the form that the response should take. Those documents that are provided should be listed in detail, and the standing orders actually outline the basis on which that will be done. Standing order 11.02(3) states:

A return under this standing order is to include an indexed list of all documents tabled, showing the date of creation of the document, a description of the document and the author of the document.

This is improving. It is fair to say that for documents returned this index does exist at the front. Interestingly, though, for those documents which are exempt, and which are covered under standing order 11.03(1)(a), we are not getting such a list; we are not getting that detail. Standing order 11.03(1)(a) requires that:

- (1) Where a document is claimed to be covered by executive privilege —
 - (a) a return is to be prepared showing the date of creation of the document, a description of the document, the author of the document and reasons for the claim of executive privilege ...

We are not getting that response in terms of documents claimed under executive privilege in our return of documents. It is very clearly laid out in the standing orders, and so to encourage the government to conform with at least some part of the standing orders in relation to the documents motion, we have put that very specifically into the motion itself, outlining that, should this motion be passed, that would be an expectation of the house in terms of its return.

We believe this is an important opportunity for transparency and openness, as committed to by the government. This is something that is a reasonable volume. As I read out, it is 73 pages for a three-month period and probably close to double that amount for a 5½-month period. It is certainly manageable. It is for that reason that we have set the response time as 7 February. That would actually give 2½ months for the government to fulfil this requirement, which is plenty of time. We have, on many documents motions, had a shorter period of time, but each and every time the Attorney-General writes and says, 'More time is needed'. This length of time is plenty of time for the government to do the work it needs to to fulfil this documents motion, should it be supported by the house. On that basis I certainly commend the motion to the house.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Government members will not be opposing Ms Wooldridge's motion, but we do find it surprising that Ms Wooldridge, as she admits, has been through an FOI process for these particular documents and certain documents have been denied —

Ms Wooldridge — None of them.

Mr LEANE — Well, none can be certain. We find it quite strange that Ms Wooldridge goes for an independent process when the department and not the government denies these documents. It is the department that denied these documents. They went through an FOI process.

The FOI unit is independent of government. They made determinations around the act, which Ms Wooldridge actually touched on, as far as cabinet in confidence, advice and recommendations made by officers of the department. As everyone in this chamber should appreciate and understand, this is a process that is very important for government to actually achieve the aspirations of the people that the government represents, in this case the good people of Victoria. I wonder if Ms Wooldridge actually wants these particular documents or wants them to be denied by the Leader of the Government. I am not too sure if that is actually the case. I think we will be going through another political stunt in February, and we are being set up for that to occur.

As I said, government members will not be opposing this motion. We respect the Parliament's ability to call for documents, and we will continue to respect that. We respected that when we were in opposition; we respect that while we are in government. This particular government has handed over more documents in half a term — and not just to Parliament but in other avenues when requested — than any government has handed over in a whole term. If this is the best dint that the opposition can put into the Andrews government health agenda, I think it is actually quite lame.

When the Andrews government came to office it inherited a mess in the health system from four years of the coalition government basically doing nothing. When they did do something, they cut funding or they went to war with health workers in the Victorian system. That was probably where the previous failed Minister for Health, David Davis, wore the black shorts — that and that alone. He picked a fight with Victorian nurses. I remember many, many speeches he made attacking nurses from this side of the chamber, but — surprise, surprise! — when a close relative of the Premier of the time gave nurses the bird at a public

function, about a week later the Baillieu government found a way to convince David Davis to stop impeding an agreement with the nurses. They conceded and made an agreement with the nurses, but they did not deliver things like a nurse-patient ratio — only this government has managed to deliver that — and they did not deliver an ambulance system that was capable of keeping up with the needs of the state.

When the Andrews government came to office ambulance response times were the worst on the Australian mainland, which was no surprise, because this went back to the cuts under the Baillieu-Napthine governments and former failed health minister David Davis. It took him three weeks from the time he was sworn in to cut \$350 million from the health system. You would think that you would have better aspirations than that when you have been sworn in as a new health minister, but no. That is over \$100 million a week in his first three weeks that he managed to cut from the health system. It is no wonder that our government has needed to make a number of remedies to the damage that the previous failed coalition government did to our health system.

Of course Mr Davis and the Baillieu-Napthine governments decided it would be a good idea to attack and belittle hardworking paramedics. Rather than working with the paramedics to improve the ambulance system, they decided that they would attack the paramedics. While attacking paramedics, they decided to cut funding for the whooping cough vaccine. That was Mr Davis again and the Baillieu-Napthine governments.

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr LEANE — I know the members opposite do not want to hear it, because they are the champions of everyone and everything now, but back when they were in government they were part of the worst government in Victoria's history. They spent years just sitting on their hands doing nothing, and then in a panic they got rid of their Premier of the time. No-one actually explained why they got rid of the Premier. We still do not know why they got rid of that particular Premier. They replaced him with Denis 'Game Changer' Napthine, whose only trick was to jump on skateboards and tricycles and do all sorts of kooky stuff.

Mr Finn — On a point of order, Acting President, as entertaining as Mr Leane is — he is certainly entertaining himself — I fail to see the slightest bit of relevance to the motion that is currently before the Chair, and I ask you to bring him to order on that point.

Mr LEANE — On the point of order, Acting President, I think I am being very relevant to the motion. I am the lead speaker in response to the motion — not in opposition; we do not oppose it — and I believe that the lead speaker usually gets some sort of latitude.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Order! On Mr Finn's point of order, I see some merit in what he said, but also I think that Mr Leane should have a bit of latitude in his contribution. However, I ask Mr Leane to move on from the former Premier and go back to the motion.

Mr LEANE — Thank you, Acting President. I think we have all moved on from the former Premier, and I will go to relevance to the motion. I just want to touch on a couple of other parts of history. I remember the Baillieu government coming to power promising 800 new hospital beds, and every time the failed previous Minister for Health, David Davis, was asked in this chamber, 'Where are the 800 new hospital beds?', he could not answer. In his term of government as the minister I do not think he could answer anything anyway; I think he chose not to. He could not answer.

In the end, despite David Davis not being able to say where the 800 new hospital beds were, it actually has been quantified in the term of the Baillieu-Napthine governments how many of these 800 new hospital beds were actually delivered. You would think that the previous government and the previous health minister would have achieved about half of that election commitment, but no. You would think maybe a third — —

Ms Wooldridge — Seven hundred and eighty.

Mr LEANE — No, Ms Wooldridge, you can shout across the chamber non-facts and you can harangue me as much as you like, but the fact is 88 beds were delivered out of the 800 new hospital beds that were committed to by the previous government before the election. The word that comes to mind is 'lame', really; it is quite lame that a group came together and promised 800 new hospital beds.

I think the biggest mistake that the Premier at the time might have made was appointing David Davis as the health minister. That probably put the government on the back foot right from the start. I think they could have picked anyone but David Davis and probably would have got closer to that 800, but unfortunately that was the selection that was made. Mr Davis spent more time fighting nurses and fighting paramedics than delivering the 800 hospital beds. I have to say that the

government previous to that gave the Baillieu-Napthine governments quite a head start by starting a number of projects, including Bendigo and including the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre and funding towards Box Hill, and somehow the Baillieu-Napthine governments managed to not achieve the 800 new beds promised despite the head start that the previous Brumby government had given them.

In health it is all good news at the moment, and I think, as I said, if the best the opposition can do — —

Mr Morris — How is Peter Mac going?

Mr LEANE — It is going very well, actually; Peter Mac is going very well. Actually, every witness at our committee, Mr Morris, said they were proud of Peter Mac.

Mr Morris — You're a disgrace.

Mr LEANE — Peter Mac's a disgrace? That is amazing, that someone would — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Order! You guys on the other side, on my left, complained about Mr Leane moving on to other matters, and I think you are encouraging him to do exactly the same. He does not need any assistance, and I think he does not need any encouragement. Mr Leane, please continue, in silence if possible, or maybe with a minimum of interruption.

Mr LEANE — Thank you. But as I said, the good news is here now. There were four dark, sad years before this particular government came to fruition. This particular government, as far as putting money where their mouth is goes, put billions of dollars towards the health system, which includes \$200 million for the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital. It is starting to take shape already — a fantastic hospital, I think out in your electorate, Acting President Melhem. I know you have been monitoring it, and it is going to be fantastic.

There is \$200 million for the Regional Health Infrastructure Fund, which obviously is very important because we want our regional Victorians to be able to access the best service they can close to where they live. There is \$168.5 million to redevelop Goulburn Valley Health in Shepparton, and as I said, it is important that our regional Victorians have the best services they can be exposed to close to home. There is \$150 million to plan and construct Australia's first standalone heart hospital. I am not too sure if the coalition supports the standalone heart hospital. I think in Ms Wooldridge's summing up she might be able to

let us know about whether she supports the standalone heart hospital or not.

There is a \$106 million major expansion of the Casey Hospital, which as I said, is very important even though it is on the outskirts of Melbourne. It is not necessarily a regional area now due to the urbanisation of that particular area, but it is a very important strategic hospital as far as the population out there in Melbourne goes. There was extra funding to deliver an additional 64 beds to the Casey Hospital, which will bring it to 160. There is the expansion of Western Health at the Footscray and Sunshine sites. There is \$60 million for ambulance services. I know in Eastern Metropolitan Region there is the work on the new breast cancer centre at Maroondah. There is work at the Angliss; there are capital works of the Angliss as well. All this is going towards improving the health network.

As I said, unfortunately when this government came to power it inherited quite a mess from the previous government. But we have done the right thing. We have rolled up our sleeves. We have put our money where our mouth is, and we are starting to improve that health network to the point where all Victorians should expect it to be. As far as the motion goes, as I said, government MPs will not be opposing it. We think that it is more political games by the people opposite, but as far as the institution that is the Parliament goes, we will respect the right of this institution to call for paperwork, and the government will give the Parliament our response in the new year, no doubt.

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — It is quite an interesting motion. While the Greens generally do support documents motions, I am in a bit of a quandary here because I am standing between two sides that are accusing each other of not being transparent, with both sides saying that they were particularly transparent. My experience of this government is that the lack of transparency is extreme. Having gone through a number of processes to try to gain information for my community about the western distributor — going through the FOI process, going to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal — and having spent a massive amount of time, all of the documents that I requested, especially around the issue of how the government and Transurban could be certain that this project would take 6000 trucks off the road a day, which has not been proved, I have not been given.

But the problem is that the previous government were just as bad. They were not transparent. They would block information, particularly the previous Minister for Health, who actually blocked access to information

at every turn. If he was the minister now, he would certainly not be allowing these documents to be accessed. I had the experience in the last Parliament of week after week after week asking him questions that he simply would not answer. I have just noted down a few quite serious issues that he just gave me spin on, such as the diesel particulate problem in Yarraville and why he stopped the whooping cough vaccination program. If you asked him a question about what was happening with the ambulance dispute, sometimes he would just go bright red and launch into anti-union rhetoric and he would never, ever answer the question. The nurses dispute was the same. He claimed that there were all these new hospital beds but was never, ever able to say where those hospital beds were. So I feel like I am in this situation of the pot calling the kettle black. Both sides do not deal with transparency; both sides do not provide the documents when they are in government.

I think the government does need to prove now that these documents should not be in the public domain. We have a standing order in regard to this, standing order 11.03(1), part (a) of which states:

a return is to be prepared showing the date of creation of the document, a description of the document, the author of the document and reasons for the claim of executive privilege ...

That would actually give us some understanding of what is in the document rather than just a general refusal. I think the government does need to do more work to prove that these documents should not be in the public domain, and one of the ways that they could do that is by actually negotiating with people rather than treating us as some kind of enemy. We are actually quite reasonable people. That would be my recommendation to the government.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That this house notes —

- (1) the two-year anniversary of the Andrews Labor government has been categorised by two years of divisive government;
- (2) that ordinary Victorians have been left behind and ignored by the Andrews Labor government at the expense of union mates, Labor Party figures and a Socialist Left agenda; and
- (3) that in only two years, the Andrews government has, amongst many failures, lost three ministers, as well as delivered increased crime, economic vandalism and

budget deficits, public service wage blowouts, desalination disasters, water bill increases, planning and heritage mismanagement, cuts to frontline police, chaos in prisons, a loss of Victorian major events, cuts to cancer beds and operating theatres, and ambulance response time blowouts; paid \$1.2 billion not to build Melbourne's most required road; had young kids exposed to cage fighting; had public transport strikes and chaos; had a decline in TAFE enrolments; punished Victorian small businesses; doublecrossed Victorian industry; increased traffic congestion; and chauffeured dogs.

After just reading that motion I feel like my time should nearly be up, given the extensive range of failures of Daniel Andrews as Premier and his Labor government. It is important that we debate this motion today on the cusp of the two-year anniversary of Daniel Andrews's Labor government. But it is, I think, of extreme concern to Victorians that this type of motion needs to be before the house. It is about the extreme concern about the future of our great state, because in the two years of this government we have seen a Premier and a government that are divisive at their core. The Premier is absolutely ruthless in choosing winners and losers and putting the Victorian community last in terms of priorities. It is absolutely in the Labor Party's DNA. It is about jobs for their mates, it is about union influence and it is about left-wing ideology being pushed in front of common sense, before law and order and before the needs of Victorian families and Victorian communities.

Over the course of this debate those on this side of the chamber will go through in detail why the Victorian community has already had enough of the Andrews Labor government. Our side will outline the reasons why Victoria is viewed as heading in the wrong direction and the reason why Victoria feels unsafe — why families in their homes, women on the streets and people in the community feel unsafe — as a result of what has happened under Daniel Andrews. It is also why our communities are being eroded and why, from our perspective, in two years time at the next election we need a change of government — we need a change from this left-wing, ideological, divisive government led by Daniel Andrews.

We only need to start by looking across the chamber — very empty, not surprisingly, at the moment. It is quite a different chamber from that which greeted us when we first commenced this 58th Parliament. In December 2014 we had Minister Jennings, Minister Pulford, Minister Mikakos, Minister Herbert, Minister Somyurek and chief whip Mr Melhem. Two years later it is a very different frontbench team. Upon reflection, it is not clear whether Minister Mikakos, with her performance in the youth justice system, should be given the marching orders that

Minister Somyurek, Minister Herbert and Mr Melhem received from the Premier. Perhaps, though, there is no-one left on the backbench to take those ministerial positions; it is a very thin capacity that this government brings to the important task of running the government.

In regional Victoria we see failures across the board for families — job losses, the closure of Hazelwood, the Country Fire Authority debacle and the lack of a population plan. What we have seen, unfortunately, is that Minister Pulford's claim to fame over the last two years — probably the thing that she is best known for — is the Regional Development Victoria plan. There is a lot of hype around the document and a lot of focus, and there is only one issue: of all the fantastic images of what Victoria has to offer from right around regional Victoria, including Wilsons Promontory, the Great Ocean Road and the bakery in Beechworth, the Andrews government decided that the front cover of this marquee document should be a picture of a family riding their bikes in the English countryside. What an absolute debacle. If you want a symbolic message of how the Andrews government treats regional Victoria, this shines out. It could have been Cobram, but it ended up being Coventry. Well done, Ms Pulford — a shining example of your performance in your portfolio in terms of what you do and how you see regional Victoria!

Minister Jennings is unfortunately still out of this chamber today for no other reason than he could not get the backing of his own cabinet colleagues, who I think have sent a very clear message that — —

Ms Pulford — On a point of order, Acting President, Ms Wooldridge might like to familiarise herself with the cover of the document that I think she was trying to refer to, that has a picture indeed of regional Victorians I have had the opportunity to meet and stop misleading the house.

Mr Finn — On the point of order, Acting President, there is clearly no point of order. It is a point of debate that Ms Pulford is making. If Ms Pulford wishes to make a contribution to this debate, she should speak to the whip, who is sitting next to her, and get her name on the speakers list. We would all look forward to that, perhaps.

Ms Pulford — On the point of order, Acting President, Ms Wooldridge was wilfully misleading the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Melhem) — Order! I think it is a debating point. I think you will be able to correct that in your contribution, so I will not uphold the point of order.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — Very, very touchy from those who pretend that pictures of the English countryside are actually Victorian. I would understand why the minister would be touchy about putting pictures of the English countryside in regional Victoria documents.

Minister Jennings is not in this house because his cabinet colleagues have not backed him to return. He sits there because there was a very clear process. His cabinet colleagues first of all failed to adhere to the standing orders of this chamber and the capacity to have documents reviewed by an independent arbiter. We worked through a very decent proposal — a proposal that we believe could have resolved this situation some months ago — but clearly when he took this proposal to his cabinet colleagues they would not back him. They would not back him to uphold the standing orders of this house and deal with the documents motion at hand, and they left him languishing outside this chamber. Minister Jennings does have a commitment to accountability and transparency — this was a commitment that the government made before the election — and he has not been backed by his government, by his cabinet, to provide the transparency that was the promise made.

Poor Mr Somyurek sits on the back bench for reasons that have been well publicised. He was under a lot of pressure in the early days, and he did tell us to google the answers, which will go down in history — the Minister for Google — but perhaps he was correct in saying that the new public holidays, imposing a \$1 billion cost on Victorian small businesses and on the economy, did not quite fit in his small business portfolio. He did push back on the Premier. He challenged Daniel Andrews to put the Victorian community and small businesses first, not his union mates. Many will say Mr Somyurek did make mistakes, and he probably pushed too hard and upset the former union bosses, but at least he was brutally honest and stood up for Victorian small businesses — something the current minister could learn from. When it comes to winners and losers, Mr Somyurek was chosen to be a loser by this Premier and his government. They did not back him, and they got rid of him instead.

How could we forget Mr Herbert? He made international news. There was news all around the world — from Germany to the United States, from the United Kingdom to Indonesia — that he was rorting the system by chauffeuring his dogs around Melbourne, something that is absolutely beyond people that I speak to and that we hear from. The Victorian community probably will not ever know how many times Mr Herbert rorted the system, as there are still

outstanding questions that have not been answered from question time in this place, despite the president saying he would expect an answer. We should remember that on 27 October 2016 Premier Daniel Andrews told the state Parliament, and I quote:

He —

meaning Steve Herbert —

has also indicated that he will seek advice and make repayments of the relevant amount of petrol money, as it were. That is the appropriate course of action, and that is the end of the matter.

How many times have we actually seen the Premier claim it to be the end of the matter when it is clearly not the end of the matter and often just the start of the matter? Two weeks later Mr Herbert was gone. Nothing changed in the rioting by Mr Herbert, so perhaps the answers to Mr Herbert's departure lie in the Premier's parliamentary office, hidden in answers to the questions that he failed to answer and that have never been tabled in this house, or perhaps it was because he did not keep any records. If Steve Herbert's record keeping was that bad, then there was no trust for him to run our corrections system and no trust for him to keep track of Victoria's most violent and dangerous criminals.

That leads us to Minister Mikakos, the minister for riots, repairs and reviews — review after review but never any answers as to the outcomes. When you wake up to images like those today in the *Herald Sun*, where we see the impact of rioting and the damage caused to the Parkville youth justice centre, we just genuinely have to wonder whether Minister Mikakos will even last through the course of this debate or whether she will get the same treatment as was meted out by the Premier to Mr Somyurek and to Mr Herbert just last sitting week. Make no mistake: Minister Mikakos has overseen a youth justice portfolio in absolute crisis, with riots, a damage bill in the millions and youth offenders urinating in staff offices and assaulting staff. What is the response from the minister and Premier Andrews? The response is: call Domino's and order a pizza and a Pepsi Max, more comfortable doonas — and how about a Christmas tree? That will make you feel better.

If this was not so serious it would be an absolute comedy show. Minister Mikakos is now claiming design problems at Parkville are responsible for more than 20 violent riots under her watch. Strangely this frequency of riots never occurred under previous governments, Labor or Liberal, responsible for managing Parkville. The last two years, and particularly the last 18 months, under Minister Mikakos have been

an absolute crisis. Jenny Mikakos must take responsibility for the chaos in her portfolio, and if she does not have the decency to do the right thing and resign, then Premier Andrews needs to replace her with a minister who can do the job that is needed — if there is anyone left in the Labor Party able to do that.

Disunited, angry with each other, divided, fighting — that is the Victorian Labor Party, and that is what Victorians have seen over the past two years. That is what has been regularly pointed out by the Premier: you are either with him and you are his best friend, or you are against him and he will come up with a label for you — you are a bigot, a racist, a homophobe, a sexist or wrong. You are with him, or he calls you these names. That is not the kind of leader who takes our state into the 21st century with unity and a sense of purpose.

In response to some earlier comments of Ms Pulford I note I am very pleased to see a beautiful clear photo on the front of *Regional Economic Development and Services Review — Final Report — July 2015* of a family riding through the English countryside.

Ms Pulford interjected.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — It is on the front page of the report. There they are: a lovely English family riding through the English countryside — so proud of regional Victoria!

Ms Pulford interjected.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE — Ms Pulford, it is very clearly there and very clearly a mistake. It is no wonder you are absolutely embarrassed, because frankly it is highly embarrassing for any minister who would do that as a so-called champion of regional Victoria. It is very clearly there.

Let us go through some of the issues in a bit more detail. I refer to increased crime. Under the Andrews government not only are we seeing a crime wave, we are seeing a crime tsunami, with crime up 13.4 per cent. Do we not recall that when those opposite were in opposition, every time there was even the slightest increase in crime it was an absolute crisis? Now it is 'Nothing to see here'. These are the results of Daniel Andrews's failure to invest in police, the closure of police stations and the weakening of bail laws.

People in Melbourne are genuinely changing how they live, because they are scared. They are scared to drive their cars at night. They are scared to leave their back doors unlocked when they go to bed in the evening right across the city. This is fundamentally changing.

People are scared at their core, and that is as a result of the Premier, his attitudes and his not addressing the issue of crime. This is very fundamental and very serious. Melbourne cannot be the most livable city and Victoria the most livable state if residents are buying baseball bats to protect themselves in their own homes.

Let us have a look. Crime in residential homes is up 20.8 per cent under the Andrews government. In 2016 there have been 427 cars a week stolen, up 65 per cent over 2015. There has been an increase of over 20 per cent in crimes committed at railway stations, and these are often outside the times when there is a protective services officer on duty. That crime wave continues across the board. What we have in fact are 115 fewer first-responder police on the beat now as compared to 2014, putting absolutely massive pressure on frontline policing. The number of incidents in which police are injured has gone up by 9.8 per cent just in a year and by 22 per cent in two years.

I refer to the areas where frontline police have been cut: Darebin, Casey, Monash, Yarra Ranges, Knox and Stonnington. There is a long list of police stations with reduced counter services and the entire closure of the Nunawading police station. The list is long: Endeavour Hills, Burwood, Ashburton, Carrum Downs, Forest Hill, Tatura, Somerville, Reservoir, Pakenham — and the list continues. When it comes to law and order, the Victorian public absolutely deserve better than Daniel Andrews.

We have also had economic vandalism and budget deficits as a result of this government. When an economic vandal pays \$1.2 billion of taxpayer funds not to build the road most needed in the country's fastest growing city, that is absolute vandalism. It is absolutely unacceptable. It was not even the advice of this government's own infrastructure advisory body — tearing up that east-west link contract and claiming that it would not cost a single cent in compensation. The quote we all know now was, 'The contracts are not worth the paper they're written on'. I tell you it was; it was worth \$1.2 billion and counting. This is the most expensive lie in Victoria's history, and we will continue to pay for it. This is something that will be built. It will be built in the future, and there will be \$1.2 billion that has been lost as a result.

When it comes also to seeking to cook the books, Tim Pallas takes the cake. In his first budget in May 2015 he handed down the budget papers claiming there would be a \$900 billion budget surplus, but months later the Auditor-General's report showed the budget was actually \$286 million in deficit. This was the same economic master who produced costings to show that

all of Labor's election commitments, including the metro rail project, were fully costable, affordable and achievable. Well, we still see many of those projects uncosted today.

Something very close to my heart is the cutting of cancer beds that could be treating thousands and thousands of Victorians. It has now been revealed that the cost of Daniel Andrews's ideological decision to scrap 42 beds and four operating theatres from Peter Mac has doubled to \$40 million in lost donations. In a submission to the Victorian Parliament's economy and infrastructure committee, the chair of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Foundation, Professor Lester Peters, raised serious concerns about the — and I quote — 'profound negative consequences' of Daniel Andrews's captain's call, saying:

... the arbitrary decision to cancel approval for Peter Mac Private was an egregious error that will adversely affect —

Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre's —

goal of achieving world-class ranking ... and will seriously limit the revenue and gift-generating potential that would result from offering private care facilities.

Professor Lester Peters raised concerns that the removal of the private wing will reduce the time surgeons spend at the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre. Had Peter Mac come to reality along with in-house consulting rooms, surgeons would have been able to structure their time to spend more time, if not all their time, at the VCCC precinct — something that would be a big boost to patients across the board. In deliberately picking a fight to stop Peter Mac Private going ahead, against the wishes of the Peter Mac board, the Peter Mac foundation and the board of the VCCC, all of whom had approved the approach, Daniel Andrews is picking winners, picking losers and dividing the community.

This is a Premier who should have put his socialist ideology aside and actually thought about Victorians with cancer. Instead what we have is a 13th floor that is absolutely empty — unoccupied — costing the taxpayer over \$700 000 a year and requiring 10 000 cancer patients who would have received treatment having to seek alternatives. It is really unacceptable, very disappointing and something that really highlights this socialist left-wing government making decisions not on logic, not on what is best for the community but purely on ideology.

This continues in terms of ambulance response times under the health portfolio. The Premier claimed that ambulance response was in crisis and that Labor were going to fix it with tens of millions of dollars to be

invested to change the outcomes. Well, after nearly two years as a government nothing has changed for this government. Nothing has changed in terms of ambulance response times. For the investment, there has been very little change. In fact regional Victoria is suffering because there have been significant increases in the response times for regional Victorian ambulances. So what we need and what we are not seeing is the investment that actually delivers the promises that Daniel Andrews made before the election. The rhetoric does not match the reality in relation to what is actually happening.

A Department of Health and Human Services report reveals an Ambulance Victoria budget blowout of over \$600 million, but despite this Daniel Andrews is not improving. Things are not improving for ambulance services. Key performance indicators required 85 per cent of responses to arrive within a 15-minute time frame, but in 29 local government areas, mostly in regional Victoria, this measure has actually worsened rather than improved.

One thing that we see — this has been an incredible decision from this government — is the return of cage fighting. How absolutely ridiculous to bring cage fighting to this state. There are some very strong comments across the board from community leaders, and I would like to quote Dr Tony Bartone from the Australian Medical Association (AMA), who is quoted in an AMA press release as saying:

While most sports injuries are accidental, the aim of this sport is to purely harm your opponent. The medical community often sees the tragedy that brain damage can afflict on a patient and their family. The contestants in this so-called sport have an increased risk of developing irreversible, neurological disorders.

The release goes on to say:

Cage fighting injuries include facial lacerations, bruises, broken teeth, fractures, damage to eyes and vision, internal bleeding, damage to internal organs, transmission of blood-borne infectious diseases and permanent brain damage.

And before, when this was first mooted, Ken Lay, then Chief Commissioner of Police, said:

It concerns me when we start considering cage fighting in the world's most livable city, especially when we're seeing such great progress in reducing violence in our community.

He went on to say:

It would be disappointing if we went down the path of glamorising this extreme violence.

Dr Tony Bartone, once again, in January 2015, said:

The AMA hopes that the government reconsiders this decision ... we would hope that Jill Hennessy, as the Victorian Minister for Health, would have appreciated the safety issues here. Cage fighting should not have a place in Victoria.

Well, unfortunately those who should have been speaking up on this issue did not, and we have cage fighting in this state.

There are a range of things that I just want to touch on, and I know many of my colleagues will speak in much more detail in relation to the things relevant to their communities and relevant to their portfolios. On public sector wage blowouts, there are reports of Daniel Andrews having directed the public sector commissioner to review Victoria's executive officer employment and remuneration framework, recommending an increase to base salary of nearly 15 per cent, higher at-will termination provisions and removing the caps of numbers of senior bureaucrats.

In relation to desalination, Melbourne dams now hold more water than they did at the same time last year, yet due to blind ideology and a justification of previous Labor governments' decisions, Daniel Andrews has turned on the tap and is spending \$27 million of taxpayer funds to order water. Our storages are at 72.5 per cent — more than 13 000 billion litres. It means there are more litres of water available for use than at the same time last year. Storages are filling after recent rains across catchments, and the important point to note is that Melbourne dams were already in the secure high zone when Daniel Andrews arrogantly blocked the order. Daniel Andrews had a choice: union mates and ideology or Victorian families. Daniel Andrews has one mission — to fire up the desalination plant — but it is ordinary families who are losing out and paying through higher water bills.

I know that Ed O'Donohue will have more to say on the chaos in our prisons, but before there were the youth justice riots that we are seeing every day at the moment, there was the largest riot to occur in Victoria's corrections system. Some \$90 million of works are required to fix the damage and mess caused by Daniel Andrews and his former corrections minister — one of four — after rioters trashed the Metropolitan Remand Centre. This has been replicated in spades across our youth justice system, with riot after riot — on 31 October, 7 March, 23 March, 26 March, 27 July, 8 September, 10 September, 11 September, 13 September, and so on and so on, right up to last weekend. There has been riot after riot, and the minister blames everything else but herself and her failure to be

able to lead, her failure to be able to manage the situation and her failure to be able to instruct her department of what is needed and back them to actually deliver it. It is absolutely unacceptable. She is a hapless minister in this government who cannot manage issues in relation to crime.

We have lost major events — axed the body that won Victoria everything, from the grand prix to the comedy festival. Over the last two years Victoria has lost the Australian Masters golf to Perth, the Women's Australian Open to South Australia, the Ironman Asia-Pacific event to Queensland and the opening game of the American college football season to Sydney. There have been cuts to the Melbourne Fringe Festival and the big-ticket items have not been attracted to Victoria. This is a major events strategy in a shambles. Board members are walking out. This has been a real lifeblood for Victoria, and under this government it is not getting the backing and the support it needs.

The list goes on. There has been a decline in TAFE enrolments. We have now got a new minister to try to address the massive decline we are seeing. Significant funding meant for student training has been cut from the Victorian Training Guarantee, including \$125 million that was returned to consolidated revenue. It is an absolute failure of this government, and once again a case of the rhetoric not matching the reality of what was promised prior to the last election and what is being delivered under this government.

There have been transport strikes — and absolute chaos. After two years the Minister for Public Transport, Ms Allan, does not have a single achievement to her name, but there is a litany of absolute disasters, including the bungled design for Melbourne Metro — and no idea how to fund it. Then there is sky rail, this rail that was never voted for. We know level crossings need to be removed, and we support their removal. In fact all the level crossings that are being claimed to be removed under this government are ones that were planned and funded under the previous government. But putting a tower over people's backyards is absolutely unacceptable, is not supported and shows how the government rides roughshod over the community. There are winners and losers, and there is no doubt that those who have sky rail over their backyards are the absolute losers in this area.

For small businesses, as I mentioned previously, there is an additional cost of \$1 billion from that public holiday — the public holiday that was more important than Christmas Day. We are still waiting to hear if the minister has backflipped on Christmas Day, but this government thought it more important to put a holiday

in before the grand final than to put a holiday for Christmas Day. And there is the cost. Victorian small business have voted, sent messages and used their voice clearly again and again. This is an absolute debacle, it is an additional cost that is not needed, it is costing them a fortune and it is completely unacceptable.

I do want to finish with traffic congestion, because this is an anti-roads government. We believe that roads and public transport can coexist. They both can be invested in, and they are both needed. But what we are seeing with things like the cancellation of the east-west link is that people are spending more time stuck in cars. My experience travelling on the Eastern Freeway is one of disgust, and throughout the eastern suburbs people are having the same experience each and every day. People are leaving earlier and earlier to try to get to work on time. It is taking longer and longer to get home, the peak hours are extended and the travel time is slowing down. People cannot get through the congestion because this government has cancelled the project, which is vital from the perspective of those living in the eastern suburbs and which would have made a huge difference to them. This is the reality that people are facing on a daily basis, and this is what they are feeling and living.

In conclusion, we could not forget Patch and Ted. This is a reflection on the way that ministers in this government view the perks of office and the basis on which they can use the entitlements they gain from being in government — that is, they are the winners of the outcome of being in government. It is to the detriment of Victorians who do not understand the attitude that this government and some of its ministers have in relation to their roles.

In two years we have seen a Premier who is divisive, nasty, left wing and ideological — one who does not want to govern for all of us, one who governs for union mates, one who governs with a left-wing ideology and one who has winners, and the Victorian community is the loser again and again. We need a government that treats the people of Victoria with respect and a government that can see country Victoria as an important part of the economic and social future of this state, as are the Melbourne CBD and the suburbs. We need a government that says our regional cities and towns need to take the challenge of growth and embrace it, but this government focuses on Melbourne purely to the detriment of country Victoria. We need a government that can actually deliver a safer community where people feel safe and are safe, where these issues are managed, where our streets are safe, where our homes are safe and where people do not worry on a nightly basis. We need a government that says that this

is a state where we need to think about all Victorians and not just about those who are with us versus those who are against us.

There are many, many speakers on our side who want to speak to this motion, and I suspect others right across the chamber will look forward to speaking to this motion as well. I commend this motion to the house. It is a very sad reflection on this government that after two years it has had more ministers go than has been the experience during decades of other governments in this place. It is a reflection on how they fight not only the Victorian community but each other. They are divided, they are not unified. That is reflected in the way they operate themselves, and it is reflected in the way that they govern this state. It is not acceptable, and this state needs better.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — Can I just say from the outset that the contribution we just heard was lengthy, but it should have been so much better. It was an incoherent, lengthy shopping list of misrepresentations, of half-truths, of cherry-picked petty comments that really did not give any kind of sense of what this government has achieved in two years or in fact why it is that this government is in government after just one term of those opposite.

I think it is worth at a very high level returning to November 2014 and what it was that the people of Victoria faced as a choice and what it is that this government has achieved since that choice was made. In November 2014 the people of Victoria were faced with a choice as to whether to return a government or whether to try something new. I believe fundamentally the reason why they chose to pick something new was that this state had stalled — nothing was happening.

That was why the previous government chose to change horses midstream. That was fundamentally why the previous government dumped their elected Premier midstream and picked a different leadership team. When the Victorian electorate looked back on that previous term they said, 'This is a state facing a number of challenges. This is a state facing a number of opportunities, and not enough is happening. We're not seeing progress when it comes to social policy. We're not seeing progress when it comes to social infrastructure. We're not seeing progress when it comes to economic infrastructure — to the roads, to the public transport'. So they decided to choose an opposition, now a government, that had a very expansive agenda, and looking at the last two years, when I go out into the community what I hear is that people feel this is a government that is keeping its promises and this is a government that is achieving things every single day.

I meet some people who do not like every single decision we make, but people certainly do feel that things are happening. When people hear the description of this state as a state of momentum it rings true. So let us not just list off dozens and dozens of things which those opposite may or may not like or list dozens and dozens of things that we on this side may like; let us take a bit of a helicopter view for a moment. Let us take a helicopter view of where this state is at now after two years of this government versus where it was at in November 2014.

It is absolutely clear that in November 2014 the state economy was stalled. It was barely growing, and in fact it was growing more slowly than population growth. Real gross state product (GSP) per capita was going backwards, and people felt that. People felt that in their welfare, people felt that in their hip pocket and they voted accordingly, but since that time real GSP per capita has grown and jobs have grown. Jobs are growing at a rate that is orders of magnitude faster than they were when we came to government, and people in the community feel that as well.

Without wanting to get into all the ins and outs of boring Australian Bureau of Statistics figures let me give you a couple of headline figures — a helicopter view of the economy. The Victorian economy grew by 3.3 per cent in 2015–16. That is the highest in almost a decade. That is the highest since 2007–08. Now, of course we do not want to obsess about economic growth per se; it is not an end in itself, but economic growth drives jobs growth, which is an end in itself because giving people something meaningful to do with their lives is one of the most important things that a society and an economy can do. Economic growth is important because it allows you to invest in other things, like schools, like health services and like the environment, so economic growth is an important indicator of how well a government and society more generally are performing. So the fact that we are growing faster than at any time since 2007–08 is at a high level a very, very important indicator as to how well this government and this state are performing.

GSP per capita in Victoria increased by 1.4 per cent. That is also the highest since 2007–08. In contrast, under the coalition we had GSP growth of 0.8 per cent in 2013–14 and we had GSP growth of 1.1 per cent in 2012–13. Now, importantly because population growth was growing at 1.7 per cent that meant that people's real GSP was going down per capita — and people feel that. That means lower income. It means lower spending power, and it also means that it is that much harder for government to keep up with all of the needs of the community when it comes to the environment,

health and education. So that is what we inherited. We inherited real GSP growth going backwards per capita, and now it is going up per capita at a rate that is the fastest it has been going up in almost a decade.

Those are the latest real GSP numbers, but an even more recent sense of where the economy is at comes from the state of the states stateometers that some of the major financial institutions put out. The ANZ state of the states indicates that Victoria was the only state with both above trend growth and accelerating economic momentum, so that would suggest that, if anything, those overall economic aggregates are probably going to be improving further in the future.

What do we see in terms of economic management? The Andrews Labor government's disciplined financial management has resulted in a strong operating surplus of \$2.7 billion for the 2015–16 period.

Mr Barber — No. You just had a tonne of stamp duty.

Mr MULINO — The Andrews Labor government is on track as per the quarterly financial report to deliver a \$2.9 billion surplus in 2016–17. Now, again we do not want to obsess about surpluses per se as something to get excited about. They are just numbers on a piece of paper, but what they do indicate is that the state government is well placed to continue strong investment in health, strong investment in education, strong sustainable investment in social services, strong sustainable investment in the environment and of course strong sustainable investment in infrastructure.

Mr Barber has interjected that stamp duty has underpinned a lot of the government's financial status, and it is true that that has grown as part of a long cycle when it comes to where the real estate market is at. But I would reinforce that — and this came out in the committee stage of the last budget papers — the government has made very cautious assumptions when it comes to what will happen to the real estate cycle going forward. It is true that it will turn at some point, and the government has made very cautious accommodations for that in the forward estimates.

Again, it is very important to note by way of contrast that debt doubled under the coalition, from approximately \$11 billion in 2010–11 to \$21.24 billion in 2014–15. So what we have is a very cautious approach, one that is leading to increased but sustainable investment across the board when it comes to service delivery and also when it comes to infrastructure. In contrast, they recorded anaemic surpluses and a worsening debt situation.

When it comes to economic management, I also want to highlight asset recycling. This is something which both sides of the chamber agree with in principle, but it is something which we have delivered on. It is worth going back to the previous term when it comes to the port transaction in particular. This was an idea that this government pushed when in opposition. It was an idea that those opposite had to be dragged to, kicking and screaming. They finally agreed to it, but it was only after they had said initially that it was not feasible. It was only after they said that it was not going to be feasible on any kind of timetable that would see money being accrued to the government in this term. Finally, they came to the party when it came to that transaction.

What we see on the port transaction is this government delivering. It delivered a very strong regulatory arrangement, which the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has said is materially stronger in protecting consumers than those in Queensland and New South Wales. In that context we achieved very strong revenue — over \$9.7 billion. Unfortunately we have not received the full 15 per cent recycling bonus from the federal government; that is the subject of continuing discussions. But the \$9.7 billion will go to supplementing an already very strong infrastructure program, which I will talk about in a moment.

When it comes to economic management, we have strong, sustainable surpluses; we have a budget that has been rated AAA by international ratings agencies, in a world of growing uncertainty; and we have an asset recycling program that is the strongest in the nation and is continuing to underpin a necessary and large infrastructure program.

I want to talk for a moment about a really important economic and social phenomenon that flows from all of this economic strength and strong budget management, and that is jobs. Unemployment is at 5.7 per cent — significantly lower than the 6.6 per cent we inherited from the previous government. Importantly it is not just the fact that unemployment is falling, it is the fact that so many jobs are being created. Since we have come to government, over 184 000 people are in work who otherwise would not have been without that strong growth in the labour force. Full-time employment has increased by over 93 200 people. Total employment has increased by over 184 000 people.

Over the last year Victoria has led the nation in total employment growth and full-time employment growth. We have led the nation in both of those areas, and this is absolutely critical. As everybody on this side knows, and I think it is fair to say everybody throughout this chamber knows, employment growth is not just an

economic phenomenon, and in fact it is not principally an economic phenomenon; it is about giving people economic security and it is about giving people the dignity of work. We are facing a society that is experiencing rapid population growth, and we need to keep jobs growth at very high rates in order to provide people with economic security, to share the benefits of economic growth broadly in the community and to provide people with those opportunities to contribute to society. That significant employment growth is absolutely critical.

It is really important to focus on regional employment outcomes as well. Regional Victoria has benefited from 26 800 regional jobs being created in the first two years of this government — nearly five times the 5600 jobs that were created under the entire term of the previous government. In addition to that, of course, we have significant funds going into particular areas, and in particular \$266 million towards growing the community and keeping local jobs available in the Latrobe Valley in light of the economic disruption that that community is about to face.

Jobs growth is a real strength of this government, and it is a priority for any Labor government. I am particularly proud of that — and I know that many of my colleagues are also proud of that priority — particularly when it comes to achievements that we have been able to notch up over the last two years. This is something that we can contrast with what occurred in the four years of the previous government. Only 96 000 jobs were created in the entire coalition term. Contrast that with 184 100 in just two years — and less than 17 000 full-time jobs. So the labour market is an area where we will put our record up against those opposite any day of the week, and this is one of the key economic and social indicators that any government and any society would measure themselves against.

When it comes to some of the deliverables, if you will, infrastructure is one of the key deliverables at the moment, given our rapid population growth, given the economic transition we are going through and given the many needs in our society. In the 2016–17 budget we invested up to \$12.4 billion in new capital investment to provide the infrastructure needed to improve Victoria's productivity and drive future economic growth. If we step back and take that helicopter view, one of the key things that we need to note about this government's performance versus the previous government's performance when it comes to infrastructure is that we have an average of \$7.4 billion in infrastructure over the forward estimates. That is contrasted with an average of roughly \$4.8 billion in the previous term. That is a 50 per cent step jump. That is critical.

And what do we see flowing from that? Again it is not the numbers per se that are important; it is the outcomes for the community. We have the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel fully funded. We have Melbourne Metro going through various hurdles at a rate of knots. A major complicated piece of infrastructure going through a central business district is going through a number of critical stages of approval. We will see major construction benchmarks reached in relation to Melbourne Metro during this term of government. When it comes to the 2018 election, the community will be able to look back on a series of major achievements when it comes to Melbourne Metro. It is a major project that has been talked about by governments for years and years. This government is actually achieving it.

We can also look in relation to the rail system at the level crossing removals. Under the previous government my recollection is that they achieved five level crossing removals. I am happy to be corrected by those opposite. A couple of those were funded by the previous Bracks and Brumby governments. When we will have finished this term of government in 2018, there will be 37 level crossings either fully completed or under construction. So again when you see a step jump in funding you do not just want to see money going out the door without outcomes. We are going to be able to point to outcomes. There will be 37 level crossings completed or under construction. That is an absolute step jump. The community, I think, has been crying out for an increase in investment and an increase in activity when it comes to level crossings. They are now going to see that in practice.

When it comes to extending Melbourne Metro rail services, we will have a number of rail lines extended. We are going to see significant investment in roads. The most recent budget included \$1.46 billion to fully fund the western distributor. It also included funding for important roads, such as \$154 million for Thompsons Road, \$131 million for Yan Yean Road, \$106 million for the Drysdale bypass and \$139 million for Plenty Road. These are significant increases in funding for our road system. We also have not just made significant achievements in level crossings and significant achievements in roads, but we actually have a coherent multimodal approach to transport. This is what this city and this state need. We have rapid population growth. Everybody in this place knows that that is both an opportunity and a challenge. In terms of the transport requirements what we need is a coherent approach where we invest in each of the modes but also where we invest in them in such a way that they all fit together better. That is why it is critical that we invest in the rail system and the road system but also the level

crossing system. That is why it is critical that when it comes to our port we have mandated additional investment in that infrastructure. That is why it is critical that we invest in all the different modes of transport in a coherent way and also invest in our international gateways.

As opposed to the previous government, which took ad hoc approaches to projects here and there, we have a coherent approach for the transport system as a whole. This also brings us to Infrastructure Victoria. It is a much-needed supplementation of our infrastructure planning system. Again those opposite supported Infrastructure Victoria. Of course they did not actually do it; they did not actually implement it. They had four years to bring in an infrastructure planning and advisory body — an expert body — that could advise the government on how to fit all the various moving parts together. Infrastructure New South Wales had been in place for years. Infrastructure Australia had been in place for years. In four years those opposite did absolutely nothing. They did not even have a bill. In our first two years we have got Infrastructure Victoria up and running, and it has already released a 30-year draft strategy. By the end of this year a final strategy will be released, and the government will respond to it early in the new year. That will mean that when future large infrastructure projects are put onto the radar of government, as they will inevitably as this state grows, Infrastructure Victoria will be there to provide both government and the community with additional expert advice. That is absolutely needed. That is something that has been called for by the community. That is something that has been called for by the construction sector. That is something that has been called for by public sector bodies.

When it comes to infrastructure, this government has stepped up the investment from around a bit under \$5 billion to \$7.5 billion. Not only has it put more money in, but it is also getting significant increases in outcomes. We are seeing significant increases in road outcomes, including the Tullamarine Freeway and the M1. We are seeing major road investments that I talked about earlier. We are seeing major significant increases in level crossing outcomes; 37 will have been completed or will be under construction at the end of this term. And Melbourne Metro will be well underway.

When it comes to country roads, there are significant increases in funding. Those opposite like to hang their hat on a program which involved \$1 million being given per council. That is all they can talk about. But what we are seeing on this side are significant increases in major country road projects. That is the difference

between what we are going to be able to point to in 2018 and what they were able to point to in 2014. Those opposite take a very political approach to this, and that is fine. I think those who snipe and use the standard political talking points, who say, 'We spent \$1 million on this project; you spent \$1 million on that project', are using the standard political talking points that people in the community are turning away from. What we are able to point to are actual achievements when it comes to transport projects, and that is what the community is going to judge us on; that is exactly what we will be judged on when it comes to 2018. In the first two years we have already achieved more than they did in four years.

Another area that I want to talk about is innovation and the new economy — —

Mr Barber — Talk about the environment.

Mr MULINO — I am not going to talk about absolutely every area, because I have colleagues who will be talking about all sorts of different areas of achievement. But I think it is absolutely critical that we note achievements in the transition of this economy into the areas of high tech and innovation. This is a government that has seen a number of start-up, high-tech headquarters located in this state. In the past year alone we have seen headquarters for Slack, Square, Zendesk, Expensify, Hired, Datacom, Digital Realty, GoPro, and on it goes. These are all regional headquarters — either headquarters for Oceania, headquarters for Australia or headquarters for Asia. These bring significant local job growth opportunities.

It is for that reason that fDi Markets has ranked Melbourne as second in the Asia-Pacific for its number of greenfield software headquarters. We are second only to Singapore and ahead of Hong Kong and Sydney. That is absolutely critical when it comes to creating opportunities for Victorians in the jobs of the future.

That is in an area of the economy where we are already performing strongly, but it is also an area in which we have plans to expand significantly. We have \$500 million in the Premier's Jobs and Investment Fund which has been focused on six areas where Victoria has already shown itself to be competitive internationally. But it is not only going to be spent on those six areas of the economy; it is going to be spent more broadly. Those areas of economic growth are exciting opportunities for the generations coming through. There are so many initiatives that are helping young Victorians get the skills and the training they need to be able to move into those industries.

Tech schools are just one example of investment in the education portfolio that are focused on helping generations that are coming through move into those industries of the future. There is one tech school in my electorate which has already advanced to the point where students will be coming on in first semester next year. This is, in my opinion, one of the most important initiatives in the education sphere. It is going to give high school students from all around the Lilydale area and surrounding suburbs the opportunity to be exposed to robotics, to be exposed to medical technology and to be exposed to advanced agricultural technologies. There are tech schools right across the state that are going to give students from dozens and dozens and scores and scores of high schools the opportunity to get the kinds of skills they need to transition into these new industries.

We need only look at the kinds of industries that the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade in particular has been attracting to this state in technology and cybersecurity. Victoria is becoming one of the cybersecurity hubs of Australia. There have also been some recent announcements about collaborations with Oxford University and the state of Virginia. Victoria is in a place where it could become a global hub for cybersecurity, which is one of the largest areas of IT innovation and investment. These are all examples.

Of course in eastern Victoria, my region, there are many areas of agribusiness which are based upon capital investment and innovation. These are exactly the kinds of industries for which we need to prepare our next generations, and that is why a record spend in education is so critical. That goes back to the point that I raised initially: you cannot have a sustainable record and increasing spend in education unless you have a strong economy. That is why it is so critical that this government has achieved a turnaround in our economy, an economy that was stalled but is now growing at rates that we have not seen for almost a decade.

There are so many other areas in which this government is achieving. I will not try to go through every portfolio area, given the time limitations; of course I want to give my colleagues a turn. I simply want to say: when one takes a big picture view of this — when one steps back from the political talking points, when one steps back from a shopping list approach, when one steps back from extracting and cherry-picking petty little points here and there — one cannot but view this state as having been turned around.

The big ship of state was stalled in November 2014. We had experienced multiple years of real gross state product per capita going backwards. That is an

appalling outcome, and people sensed that in the community. People sensed anaemic job growth, people sensed that government was not taking action and people sensed that their real economic welfare was either not going forward or was going backwards.

Now the state is in a very exciting place; the state is going forward. We are experiencing real economic growth per capita; we are experiencing real economic growth that is underpinning exciting projects right across the infrastructure space. We are seeing investment in schools right across the state. Last year we saw investment in a whole swathe of disadvantaged regional schools, something that again did not happen under the previous government. So all of this is happening, underpinned by sustained economic growth. This is an exciting time to be Victorian.

I return to what one might think of as a summary description of where this state is at. For me, describing Victoria as ‘the state of momentum’ summarises a lot of what has changed in the last two years — and changed for the better. For that reason I say on this two-year anniversary that we as a government can look back with a lot of pride, we can look back on a lot of achievements and also we can look forward with a lot of hope. Because of all the work we have done, I think we can expect the next two years to be even better than the last two. That is a great thing for the people of this state.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Well, Acting President Dunn, and for the viewers at home, this is one of these motions that the opposition brings in where we note certain things. There is no impact as a result of this motion. It is not demanding a document. They are not introducing a private members bill. They are not disallowing a regulatory instrument. It is simply an opportunity for them to blood their troops. It gives them an opportunity to get up and go off like a frog in a sock on a Wednesday until they have got it all off their liver, but in terms of what impact it will have on the governance of the state, the answer is nil.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — For that reason I am going to be as brief as possible, assuming I am not provoked by my agent provocateur diagonally opposite.

The first word that I noticed when I read the motion was that the opposition claims that this has been a ‘divisive’ government. This in the week when the Liberal Party’s immigration minister came out and said — I am summarising — that it was a mistake to have let all those Lebanese immigrants into the country

over all those decades. There are now some 200 000 people of Lebanese origin in Australia, including three members of this chamber who were born in Lebanon. The minister claimed that at the end of that process 22 individuals — the descendants of those immigrants — have been charged with terrorism-related offences, and therefore it was a mistake to have ever let all those Lebanese people into the country.

Ms Wooldridge said that women do not feel safe in Victoria anymore. As a result of the Liberal Party's comments this week, women in my electorate do not feel safe, and the reason is that they wear headscarves as a religious observance. They will now be targeted — we are seeing it happen every week — as a result of wearing a headscarf and as a result of this rabid anti-Muslim rhetoric that is pouring out of the Liberal Party at the moment. Not one member of the Liberal Party has stood up. Not one member of the Liberal Party up there — including the simpering Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull — or in this chamber has come out and said 'That's wrong' about what the immigration minister said. If I were a member of the Liberal Party, I would not be moving this motion; I would be hiding under the doona sucking my thumb, feeling incapable of even walking down the street as a result of the disgusting, divisive comments coming out of the Liberal Party. Let us talk about that for a start before we move past this item where they claim that the Victorian Labor government is a divisive government.

Mrs Peulich interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Ms Dunn) — Order! Mrs Peulich, I called you to order. Let the member speak.

Mr BARBER — In the second paragraph of the motion the Liberal Party said that ordinary Victorians have been left behind at the expense of union mates, Labor Party figures and a Socialist Left agenda. They are the villains in Liberal world. They did not mention the big end of town, the big political donors who pour money into the pockets of both the Labor and the Liberal parties. Apparently those guys are either ordinary Victorians who just happen to have a couple of hundred thousand dollars spare to donate to Labor and Liberal when it comes to election time or you just think basically they are a force for good. But when decisions come to be made, actual votes of this Parliament on legislation that impacts on the ordinary Victorian, yet again we see the interests of the electricity and gas companies, property developers, gambling companies and big pubs and clubs — all those same people who found it necessary to donate to the Labor and Liberal

parties in the run-up to the election — actually getting represented in the way the votes line up in this chamber, and that is, most often, Greens on one side of the chamber, Labor and Liberal members all crowded hip to hip, trying to fit on the benches on the other side.

But as for this bit about the Socialist Left agenda, my understanding of the intricacies of socialism is pretty limited, but I thought socialism was about collective ownership of assets, nationalisation of key industries and all that sort of thing. That is hardly what has happened over the last two years of the government. In fact one of the biggest remaining economically significant publicly owned assets, being the port, was actually flogged off by this government, with their Liberal Party cheer squad over there providing them the numbers. That is pretty much the opposite of socialism, so I am not sure what the Socialist Left agenda that they are referring to is.

They might be referring to the equality agenda; apparently equality in the human rights sense is part of the socialist agenda. But if we want to talk about the equality agenda, the proposition that has been brought through this chamber by the Greens is that if a student is enrolled in a religious school and then it turns out sometime during that student's academic career in the school that they are gay, or they work out that they are gay, as a lot of teenagers do, or they become openly gay, the religious freedom apparently is to expel them from their school. That is the provision in the act.

Mrs Peulich — Rubbish! Where is the evidence?

Mr BARBER — You could have read it. If the member went looking for it, she would have read it in the media last week actually — quite an interesting case study of how a student who came out as gay while in high school at a religious school was discriminated against by that school. That is one instance. We can talk about that one. I do not think it should happen. If a student falls pregnant during year 12 and apparently this pregnancy is outraging the religious sensibilities of the school community, they have the right to expel that student from the school.

Religious-based schools do have the right to discriminate against people on the basis of religion. They generally do not — generally they will enrol anybody who can pay the fees — but why should they be able to discriminate against someone on the basis that they are gay? This might be a point of disagreement amongst Christians, but a lot of Christians I know say that you can be Christian and gay, and therefore to expel a gay student can hardly be discrimination against someone on the basis of their

religion, but that is the way they choose to characterise it. Perhaps that is the socialist agenda that they are referring to in this motion.

There are a number of other matters that the opposition raised in their contributions. There are a number of matters they did not raise in their contributions. There was no mention of the environment, for example. There was no mention of greenhouse gases. There was no mention of endangered species. There was no mention of urban pollution. There was very little mention, actually, of livability and what is needed to maintain the livability of this city the way we have all grown to love it, so I will take it from that that the opposition approves of everything the government has done in relation to the environment — which, as we know, is practically nothing.

The opposition is the cheer squad for the government on expanding coal exploration licences over some of the most important farmlands in Victoria. They are the cheer squad for trying to set up, using taxpayer funds, an export coal industry from Victoria. We already know — it is not a point of debate — they are the cheer squad for the government in driving the state's faunal emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, further and further to extinction every year, so the complete absence of any talk about the environment in this motion tells you everything you need to know.

The opposition has no environment policy. They have no response to global warming, and they will proudly go to the 2018 election with absolutely nothing to say about it. The proposition is the state government cannot do anything and should not do anything. You will leave it to Malcolm Turnbull, whose promises in this area to the international community are weak. We are a laggard now. The major economies of the world are no longer trying to free-ride off each other; they are actually trying to compete to see who can get to the end point faster. But Australia is bringing up the rear on that.

Even in terms of the commitments that the federal government made on greenhouse gas emissions they do not actually have the policies to back them up. They have made the promise — the promise is far short of where we need to be — but then they do not actually have policies that would implement even their weak promise. As far as the Victorian Liberal Party goes, it is 'Don't ask us. We want to be the government, but we can't tell you a single solitary thing we'll do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions'.

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr BARBER — Maybe Mr Ramsay, that anti wind farm warrior, will be able to articulate what the Liberal Party's policy is, or maybe, due to some votes on legislation that is now working its way through the Parliament, we will just find out anyway what the Liberal Party is for or against on renewables, on action on global warming and so forth. But it is 'Don't ask, don't tell' as far as their policy — or even what they think of the government's policy — on the environment goes in this motion.

That got us to a number of the things that the opposition did say were the failings of this government. You have got to understand that the context for this is that they have absolutely given it a red hot go trying to tear down this government in the last two years, and they could not have done it without the *Herald Sun* — let us face it. The *Herald Sun* pretty much gave them the biggest campaigning gift they could ever give, and yet the polling that we saw last week was absolutely status quo. It was dead bang on, two years into the government, and the government and the opposition found themselves exactly where they were on election night — 52-48, status quo in two-party preferred.

Nevertheless, we should understand that is actually a wafer-thin majority for the Labor government. That has been their problem from day one. They were given pretty much the skinniest mandate in electoral history, and in fact just a couple of thousand voters changing their minds in three seats would be enough for the Labor government to lose its lower house majority and put the Greens in the balance of power. That is what the government is up against. That is what they have been up against from day one, but they are certainly not up against anything that the opposition has thrown at them, because it does not seem to have had any impact — which is not to say that the voters are not out there expressing their dissatisfaction in ever louder tones.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Youth justice system

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children, Ms Mikakos. In December 2013 the Victorian Ombudsman reported on his investigation into children transferred from the youth justice system to the adult prison system. In that report he stated unequivocally:

I am of the view that there are no circumstances that justify the placement of a child in the adult prison system.

So on what basis does the government ignore the Ombudsman's considered recommendation in sending those 40 young offenders to Barwon?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Patten for her question. I point out to her that the gazettal that occurred last week to make this possible gazetted the Grevillea unit of Barwon Prison as a youth justice and youth remand centre. Without that gazettal it is not possible legally under Victorian legislation to move a young remandee to an adult prison. That is something that members of the opposition have failed to understand in recent months when they have called for ringleaders to be sent to prison. It actually was not possible under the legislation to transfer a remandee to adult prison.

We have gazetted a particular unit at Barwon Prison for this purpose. I make it very clear that these young offenders are being kept in this unit quite separately to adult prisoners. They are being managed by the Department of Health and Human Services. They have access to education programs, health services and other services as they would have had in the past whilst they were at Parkville. Contrary to the claims that Mr O'Donohue has been making — he seems to not quite understand the consistency of what I have been saying with what I have said in the past — this is not a supermax. These young offenders are not in 23-hour isolation, which is something that the coalition called for.

Ms Crozier interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — You went out and did a media conference supporting a supermax, Ms Crozier. I think you have forgotten that. These young offenders are not being kept in 23-hour isolation, but they are in Barwon Prison, which is Victoria's maximum security prison, the highest security possible. This is to ensure the safety of the offenders and the community, as I explained to the house yesterday, as a result of the very serious incidents last weekend, which I absolutely condemned. I regard what happened as completely disgraceful. I did go out and inspect the damage immediately after the event was over on the Tuesday, and I was shocked by what I saw. They have caused significant damage to the Parkville facility, which has meant that 60 beds are now offline in the Parkville facility.

But what I want to make clear in terms of the reports that have been in the media today is that there has been an assessment made about the offenders that are going down to Barwon, and contrary to media reports today each offender who has gone down there to Barwon has been involved in incidents. The assessment criteria that

have been used have looked at the behaviour of the young people and their involvement in incidents, whether it was the incidents of last weekend or whether it was earlier incidents. So we do not make an apology for the fact that we have taken the steps that we have taken. The coalition are yet to say whether they support our move — —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Dalidakis, you are a frontbencher for the government. You are a minister. Out of courtesy to your own ministers when they are answering a question, can I invite you to not engage in commentary with the opposition across the chamber. It is difficult for Hansard, it is discourteous to the member who posed the question and, significantly, it is discourteous to your own comrade. The minister, to complete her answer.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. As I was saying, the coalition are yet to indicate whether they support our move to transfer these offenders to Barwon. Based on Mr O'Donohue's questioning yesterday, it is very clear that they do not. I think it is about time that they made their position clear on this.

Supplementary question

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I have to say that I think the gazettal of those certain premises is probably not in the spirit of the Ombudsman's report. But having said that, I appreciate that answer. We all understand that the fundamentals of the youth justice system are rehabilitative, and I appreciate that there will be education and health services at the facilities down in Barwon. On that, these kids have been getting ongoing education from Parkville College. I have seen Parkville in action, and it is a great college. Is it Parkville that will be continuing their education down at Barwon?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — Thank you, Ms Patten, for your question. Let me very clear about this. You cannot rehabilitate young offenders in a facility that is not secure, and the Parkville facility is not fit for purpose. It was not built to the correct standard; it was built to a residential standard, not a custodial standard. This is why we have committed to redeveloping the Parkville facility. We started a business case many months ago, something that I have expedited, and I will have more to say about that very soon. But in relation to education programs, the offenders at Barwon will continue to have access to education programs from Parkville College whilst they are there. It is important that there is a secure facility for

these offenders, whilst they are temporarily housed down at Barwon or whether they are in the other youth justice facilities in Victoria. Clearly those opposite had an Ombudsman's report that they sat on for four years and failed to take action on. We are getting on with the job of fixing this.

Forest Industry Taskforce

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — My question today is for the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, on 9 September the Forest Industry Taskforce reached what has been called a 'major milestone': the release of their statement of intent. In it were included agreed-to ideals such as:

biodiversity values and threatened species need to be appropriately protected across the forest landscape, including by establishing new parks and reserves.

Minister, could you please tell me which members of the task force have a background in public land management?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Young for his question and his interest in the work of the Forest Industry Taskforce, which the government is supporting to create the establishment of a consensus in an area that is historically very much a contested public debate. The core members of the Forest Industry Taskforce include representatives from the Victorian Association of Forest Industries, from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and from the Wilderness Society, and then there is a further group of participants. They are supported in their work by the government and have received significant support from VicForests as well. I am certainly confident that the task force has the information that they require to undertake the task that they have all agreed to participate in, and I would indicate to Mr Young that the task force did, at the end of June last year, seek a little bit more time from the government to continue their work and to conclude their work. They will be providing a further report to the government by the end of this month.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — I thank the minister for her answer. Without explicitly saying so, you have indicated that you are happy with the make-up of the task force, their knowledge base and their backgrounds, so I am assuming some of them have a background in public land management and the use of our public spaces. My supplementary is: are you aware of any stated positions or campaigning done by

any of the groups on the task force on the great forest national park proposal?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Young for his supplementary question. In response to Mr Young's supplementary question, I am confident that the task force has among its members or through the support being provided by government the expertise that they need to achieve what it is that they are seeking to achieve. On the supplementary question, which is probably a bit of a leap from the substantive question, I believe the Wilderness Society supported a rally outside Parliament House last night that was expressing support for the great forest national park.

Barwon Prison

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Families and Children. It is my understanding that 89 out of 101 young people held at Parkville youth justice centre were on remand at the time of the riots that have prompted the transfer of 40 young people to the Grevillea wing of Barwon Prison. Amongst the children your government have placed in Barwon maximum security prison are children who are Indigenous, disabled and under child protection orders and who have had no role in the youth justice centre riot, and most of whom are on remand and have not been sentenced. Have any of the young people who have been transferred to Barwon Prison been convicted of an offence and received a custodial sentence?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — Thank you, Ms Springle, for your question. As I indicated to Ms Patten earlier, we have had to take certain steps in relation to the events of last weekend in terms of transferring some young offenders to Barwon Prison. Ms Springle is correct in that there has been an increasing number of remandees going into our youth justice facilities over a period of time. This is something that has occurred not just very recently but over recent years. The population mix has changed from about three years ago, when typically about 20 per cent of the youth justice inmates were remandees, to now being in the vicinity of about 80 per cent. This does mean that the population mix is more volatile. Remandees typically are less settled than those who are sentenced.

This has come about because, contrary to claims by the opposition in relation to bail laws et cetera, in fact the police have been able to remand more violent young offenders to custody as a result of their concerted efforts to crack down on crime. They are doing an excellent job, and they are rounding up young offenders

in the community. They are incarcerated to protect the community. That is why young offenders do get remanded into custody — for the purpose of protecting the community. Those opposite might be making jokes about this, but we do support Victoria Police in their efforts to keep the community safe.

We have taken certain steps in relation to this particular issue, and contrary to the media reports in one of our newspapers today, which did not come to the department in relation to their claims prior going to print, each of the offenders that have gone down to Barwon have been involved in incidents whilst they have been in youth justice custody, and those who are going down to Barwon are on remand. So I can advise that those who have been going down to Barwon are in fact being assessed on the basis of a risk assessment that has regard to their behaviour whilst they have been incarcerated. That includes those who were involved in last weekend's incidents but also those who were involved in previous incidents as well.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I am not quite sure that I actually got an answer to my question, which was, 'Have any of the young people been convicted of an offence and received a custodial sentence?'

Ms Mikakos — I said they are all on remand, so what does that mean?

Ms SPRINGLE — They are all on remand; is that the answer to the question? Okay. Yesterday the *Age* reported that at least 3 of the 13 Victorian juvenile prisoners transferred to the segregated wing of the maximum security prison were not involved in the riots at the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre that sparked the move. Could the minister please advise the chamber: what is the criteria that was used to assess these 40 children?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — Thank you, Ms Springle. Ms Springle, I have now addressed this matter a couple of times. I addressed it in answering your substantive question. I also addressed it in the comments that I made to Ms Patten in her question as well. I did talk about how behaviour and involvement in serious incidents are part of the criteria used in the decision-making regarding which of the young offenders do get transferred to Barwon. Obviously for security reasons, as is the case in both the youth justice setting and in our corrections setting, we do not want to get into the specifics about exactly who has gone down there, but I did make a

point of saying in answering the substantive question that each of the offenders that have gone down there have been involved in incidents, either last weekend or previous incidents.

Barwon Prison

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Families and Children. The Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 section 174 states the secretary's duties in placing the child must include:

... regard to the best interests of the child as the first and paramount consideration; and

... must make provision for the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual development of the child in the same way as a good parent would; and

...

... must have regard to the treatment needs of the child.

How is your department acquitting their duty of care to the children transferred to Barwon Prison as per the act?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Springle for her further question. I can advise the member that the action that we have taken in relation to this transfer is in accordance with relevant Victorian legislation and in accordance with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — Can the minister inform the house as to who made the decision to send the 40 young people to Barwon Prison in particular, as opposed to another facility, and who is responsible for monitoring the ongoing health and welfare of those young people?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Springle for her supplementary question. I can advise her that obviously we had a situation where a serious incident occurred and where despite the claims of those opposite, who have gone into the Assembly today and just made things up, Victoria Police were called —

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms MIKAKOS — I stood with a member of Victoria Police at a press conference I did on Monday last week where I explained that Victoria Police were in fact the incident controller during the vast majority of

that incident that started on Sunday about midnight and finished on Monday at about 6.30 p.m. So the Liberal Party — —

Ms Springle — On a point of order, President, there are 8 seconds left, and there has been no answer to the question.

Mr Leane interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Leane is right; that is the point that I was going to make. Ms Springle has asked the question, not the opposition. Ms Springle is entitled to an answer. The opposition's interjections and haranguing of the minister are in fact reducing her opportunity to respond appropriately and in a relevant fashion to Ms Springle's question. The minister, to continue, and I will not be looking at the clock for a few seconds more.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. I can assure the member that the government took advice from our officials about options. We had to make some very quick decisions, because we had 60 beds that came off line as a result of a serious incident on the Sunday and the Monday, and this is why the Minister for Corrections and I took steps to make the gazettal which occurred on the Thursday. So let us be clear about this: we had to take some very quick steps about this to put in place accommodation that has been made available in a matter of just a few days.

In terms of the safeguards I can assure the member that the usual safeguards are available to those who are at Barwon. The commissioner for children and young people as well as the commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people have access to these young people. Their independent visitors program is still available. They have phone access to the Ombudsman and the health commissioner. Those oversights that exist at Parkville are available whilst they are there as well. As I have said, Department of Health and Human Services staff are involved in terms of managing them, and they do have access also to educational services as well as health services whilst they are there.

Melbourne Youth Justice Centre

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, you have stated that the damage bill at the Parkville youth justice centre from the riots of 12 to 14 November was less than \$500 000. How was that figure calculated, and what is the extent of the damage?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question. I do not calculate these figures. It is based on advice that I received from my department. My department has given me advice that the preliminary estimate of the costs of repair as a result of the incident last weekend is in the vicinity of half a million dollars to \$1 million. But we cannot just go and do a repair, because that would not be adequate. We are going to go and do fortification work on this facility to make sure we can strengthen the infrastructure to minimise the risk of these types of things happening again.

Our longer term plan, that I have made very clear, is to do what those opposite failed to do. As this report gathered dust on Ms Wooldridge's bookshelf in her office for four whole years — the Ombudsman's report — we have got on with undertaking a business case for many months now to put in place the redevelopment of the Parkville facility, something that should have occurred years ago. The Ombudsman made it clear with his top recommendation to call for the redevelopment of the Parkville facility. In fact the then opposition leader, Ted Baillieu, was quoted as saying just before the election that the facility might need to be bulldozed and there would need to be a new facility built. Then what happened for four whole years? We know that there was a secret master plan that Ms Wooldridge shelved. The then do-nothing Baillieu government failed to fund the redevelopment. They did nothing for four whole years.

Ms Bath — On a point of order, President, on relevance, there is no relevance going back through previous governments when there has been a direct and simple question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In terms of the point of order I was actually about to get to my feet of my own volition on the basis that the minister's answer I think is complete in the context of referring to what might have happened with redevelopment of the facility. That information might be useful to some members of the house, but it certainly does not address the question. The minister actually provided figures at the start of her question which probably did address the question. I wonder if the minister has anything further to add in terms of the cost issue that was put to her. Otherwise perhaps it would be best not to continue down the track of history.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. I am giving context as to why just a repair is not sufficient, because the job was not done over four years of a coalition government. We had Ted Baillieu say a

coalition government might shut down the precinct if necessary on 6 October 2010 — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Minister. I have heard enough.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — On 25 October you were unable to outline to the house the cost of riots in the youth justice system over the last 12 months, stating, and I quote, that the Department of Health and Human Services was still calculating those costs. Minister, given that you were able to outline the cost of the latest riots within 24 hours, will you now provide the house with a total cost of the riots and serious incidents that occurred on 31 October 2015 and 7 March, 23 March, 26 March, 6 May, 27 July, 17 August, 8 September, 9 September, 10 September, 11 September, 13 September, 17 September, 19 September, 28 September, 3 October, 12 October, 17 October, 22 October, 23 October, 9 November, 12 November, 13 November and 14 November of this year?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I am happy to take that question on notice and provide the member with a written response in relation to that. But when you asked the question last time you included an incident that had just occurred, so you need to be very clear about that, Ms Crozier. But let us remember the comments that Mr Baillieu made and the fact that you did nothing for four years. Then Ms Wooldridge came out on 15 October 2014 and said she had fixed the issues at Parkville youth justice.

Ms Wooldridge interjected.

Ms MIKAKOS — You said you had fixed the issues at Parkville after you did nothing — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Mikakos, thank you.

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order, President, going to relevance, the minister said she was happy to take this question on notice and then went into some sort of historical lesson to answer. I ask you to bring her back to actually answering the question or to simply saying she will provide it on notice.

Ms Shing — On the point of order, President, I am sitting across here and it is very difficult to actually hear because, when a question is asked from the front bench of the opposition, the constant barrage that occurs after that makes it actually difficult to understand how the minister's response is not simply responding to that

provocation. So on that basis I respond to Mr Ondarchie's raising the relevance point in that regard.

Mrs Peulich — On the point of order, President, clearly the minister was debating, which is against the standing orders.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Ondarchie's point of order is well made in this context. However, I am also mindful of what Ms Shing says, and I have said on a number of occasions that when there is a barrage of interjections it is inevitable that a minister is likely to be distracted from an answer and in fact to respond to those interjections. On this occasion I think Mr Ondarchie's point is well made — that the minister actually provided a sufficient answer to the question by saying that she would provide a written response to the supplementary question posed by Ms Crozier and then did proceed, I think, to debate, as distinct from provide an apposite response to the question. So unless the minister in the next 28 seconds has anything further to add in terms of the written response she intends to provide, I think we are done on this one.

Ms MIKAKOS — I have more to add, President, thank you. Can I just say that in relation to the comments that the Treasurer made earlier today — I want to be very clear about this — this was in relation to fortification works. It was not in relation to repairs. I have made it very clear what the cost of repair would be, but that is not sufficient. We are in the process of assessing now the fortification work that needs to happen to make sure that this infrastructure can be strengthened whilst we get on with the longer term plan of redeveloping the entire facility.

Melbourne Youth Justice Centre

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is again to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, can you confirm that in riots this year at the Parkville youth justice centre young offenders gained access to administration offices and files relating to other young offenders?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Crozier for her question. She has not referred to a specific incident, and I take it she is referring to last weekend, or incidents of last weekend. I can inform the member that, as I have made clear now on numerous occasions, the infrastructure at Parkville is not fit for purpose. That includes or has included the ability of young offenders to access administration areas that staff have used, and this is something that is of concern. All these matters are being investigated by

Victoria Police. My expectation is that charges will be laid on young offenders who have engaged in this behaviour. This is why we are getting on with putting in place the fortification works to ensure that these types of things cannot recur in the future.

It is interesting that the opposition have a new-found interest in the welfare of the offenders and the staff there. They have got a new-found interest. If they actually cared about the safety of the offenders, then they would have gone and engaged in the redevelopment as per the Ombudsman's report that sat on Ms Wooldridge's shelf for four whole years. In a similar way, if they cared about the staff, then they would not have allowed staff vacancies — something that we have moved to fix.

Ms Crozier — On a point of order, President, on a point of relevance, my question was fairly specific, and I would ask you to ask the minister to come back and just answer it.

The PRESIDENT — Order! My difficulty in this one is that I think she did answer it. She said at the outset that they have actually had access to the administration area, which I think — —

Ms Crozier — The files.

The PRESIDENT — I would have thought that it was implicit in what she said.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President. I have been talking about these matters that are subject to a Victoria Police investigation. The incidents in relation to last weekend are being investigated by Victoria Police, and I expect charges will be laid. In addition to that, I referred yesterday to the fact that I have asked Neil Comrie, a former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police and a very capable person who has a great deal of expertise in these matters, to do an independent review into last weekend's incidents. He will examine exactly how the issues unfolded and what took place during that time, as well as examine issues around the adequacy — or inadequacy as it is — of the infrastructure.

But we have had a new-found interest from those opposite in these matters, when they did nothing for four years. We have been taking steps to address the safety — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, you are debating, and you are testing my patience because the level of debate continues on the same matters on every question. Unless there is something new to add, I am not prepared to tolerate the debate as part of the

answers, because we have already covered it. You have got it on the record. You have got your views as to what the opposition did not do, which already strains what are our expectations of question time, but it is already there. Everybody can see it; we do not need to go over and over it again.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President, but I have been apposite to the question that has been asked — I have been asked about the safety of clients, and no doubt I will be asked about the staff as well — and I am making it very clear that the safety of those who are in these facilities and who work in these facilities is a priority of our government. This is why we have been taking steps to ensure the safety and the security of the facility. It is not fit for purpose. It has some significant limitations; they have become apparent more recently. But let me be clear here: these risks were set out and spelt out in that Ombudsman's report. Ms Wooldridge would have had advice about the significant risks as well — —

The PRESIDENT — Order! Minister, please! Consider yourself sat down on that answer.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Minister, can you advise whether there have been any threats against staff or other young offenders as a result of rioters gaining access to files on young offenders?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — When? Oh, anytime?

Ms Crozier — As my first question related to, it was during riots during this year, not just last weekend.

Ms MIKAKOS — In her question Ms Crozier is suggesting that she is referring to a number of incidents over the course of a period of this year. I will take that matter on notice and provide her with a written response. What I can say in general is that when there are assaults on young offenders incarcerated in the facilities — or on staff members — then there is a process. Matters do get referred to Victoria Police, and charges can be laid in relation to these matters. That includes where threats are made to staff members as well.

Melbourne Youth Justice Centre

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is again to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, can you confirm that during the 12 to 14 November riots at the Parkville youth justice

centre power tools were stolen and were in the possession of young offenders?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question. I do recall that we did actually organise for Ms Crozier to visit the Parkville youth justice facility.

Ms Crozier — No, you have not.

Ms MIKAKOS — You did visit last year. My office organised for you to visit. You seem to have forgotten that you visited last year. Ms Crozier would have had the opportunity to visit the educational areas as well as the program areas that exist there. There is an area in the facility that enables young people to be trained in various trades. Obviously there are appropriate tools and equipment in that particular programs area for that purpose.

In terms of what transpired during last weekend, that is now subject to Victoria Police investigation. In addition to that, I have made it very clear that I have asked Neil Comrie to do an independent review into this matter. He will be able to look at all of these issues in detail. In addition to this, I would fully expect that Victoria Police would be laying charges against those young offenders who were involved in engaging in property damage.

But I found it rather curious that the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly seemed to express his disappointment that no-one was injured during this whole event. I was absolutely astounded. I made it very clear when I spoke about these matters last week that I was very grateful for the way Victoria Police conducted itself as the incident controller of this particular incident, because things may have turned out very differently. It is a credit to them and it is a credit to my department staff that there were no injuries either to offenders or to staff members during the course of the weekend's incidents.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Minister, can you confirm that during the 12 to 14 November riots ringleaders armed with stolen power tools and using information previously obtained by ransacking young offenders' files threatened, trapped and effectively held hostage a fellow youth offender?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I think Ms Crozier certainly was not listening to the answer I just gave, because I made it very clear that these matters are subject to a Victoria

Police investigation now as well as the independent review that will be conducted by Neil Comrie.

But what I can say is that while these matters were unfolding we had Ms Crozier out there making media comments and putting falsehoods out there, including claiming that there were fires, and causing unnecessary anxiety to the families of the staff who work in this facility. I find it deplorable that she would be going out there and spreading falsehoods on the basis of who knows what and causing unnecessary anxiety to the community and to families of both staff members and inmates whilst an incident was unfolding.

I was focused on getting briefings as to what was unfolding as well as addressing the immediate issue that was at hand, and that was to identify alternative accommodation that we needed to put in place as soon as that incident was resolved.

Melbourne Youth Justice Centre

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is again to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, on Monday, 14 November, you detailed in a statement to the media that there were no hostages during the riot. Why did you specifically mention 'no hostages'?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — The advice that I had at the time was that this was as a result of you going out there and talking to the media, putting out a whole lot of falsehoods and claiming that there were fires and a whole lot of things going on that in fact was not the case. We had people who were anxious, including concerns being raised by the union about the concerns of families of staff members whilst that serious incident was underway, and advice was provided to the media based on the advice that I had from the department at that time.

It is very important that the opposition reflect on their behaviour. They clearly do not seem to have engaged in any reflection at all about their behaviour. When you have a serious incident and you have got Victoria Police involved as the incident controller, you should be backing them up, supporting them and letting them get on and do their job.

As I have said, Victoria Police have been engaging in an investigation of this issue. They will be able to press charges in relation to this issue. In addition to this, Neil Comrie will do an independent review into this issue and examine these issues thoroughly.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Minister, has the advice that you have received from the department regarding the hostage situation now changed?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I have not indicated to Ms Crozier what the advice was. I have said to her that the statement that was made at the time was based on the advice from the department at that time. I am going to enable Victoria Police to do their investigation before jumping to conclusions, and I would encourage those opposite to do likewise. Let Victoria Police do their job, do the investigation and let us see what charges are laid as a result of that. As I said, I have also asked Neil Comrie to investigate this matter.

Port Phillip Prison

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Corrections. Minister, a 20-year-old prisoner has been transported to hospital with serious head injuries after being kicked and stomped on the head in a vicious assault at Port Phillip Prison yesterday. This prisoner was reportedly a protection prisoner who should have been isolated from the mainstream prisoner population. Minister, how was this serious breach of basic prison management practices allowed to happen?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. In actual fact there were two incidents at Port Phillip Prison yesterday. Both, I understand, were prisoner-on-prisoner attacks. In both cases the perpetrators have been caught on camera and the police are investigating. There were also media reports that a billiard ball was used in the second incident. I have been advised that that was incorrect, and there does not seem to be any belief that there is a connection between the two incidents that occurred yesterday. I do understand that two prisoners were transferred to police. Both incidents are being investigated, so it is inappropriate to comment further specifically on the matter at this point in time.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — It is absolutely appropriate to comment on that specific issue I raised — but anyway. I ask by way of supplementary: Minister, given that the closure of the Barwon Grevillea unit to adult prisoners has added to existing overcrowding in the maximum security estate,

what role did this overcrowding play in the attack at Port Phillip?

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member. Yes, I am having considerable difficulty in joining the two, particularly given that as I reported yesterday there were salient comments made by the commissioner for corrections in a media doorstep last Thursday, where she indicated that there is no impact in terms of capacity within the prison system. We are not bursting at the seams; we have got capacity within our system to be able to accommodate.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! In respect of today's questions, on Ms Springle's first question to Ms Mikakos, the substantive question, I would seek a written response on that. It is my view that the question went to whether or not offenders had been convicted, and a remandee does not necessarily have a conviction, so I think we do need to go to the specifics of Ms Springle's question. That is one day, on just the substantive answer. Ms Springle's second question to Ms Mikakos, the substantive and supplementary question, one day. Ms Crozier's first question to Ms Mikakos, the supplementary question, one day; Ms Crozier's second question to Ms Mikakos, both the substantive and supplementary question, one day; Ms Crozier's third question to Ms Mikakos, both the substantive and supplementary question, one day; Ms Crozier's fourth question to Ms Mikakos, only the supplementary question, one day; and Mr O'Donohue's question to Ms Tierney, the substantive question, is one day.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, I just seek some advice from Minister Tierney about matters that were taken on notice in relation to the community corrections bill during the committee stage and her undertaking during the last sitting week to provide a response that then Minister Herbert took on notice about six weeks ago.

Ms Tierney — On the point of order, President, I am happy to follow that up.

Honourable members interjecting.

SUSPENSION OF MEMBER

Mr Dalidakis

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Dalidakis, thank you! Goodbye.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! That is half an hour. Mr Dalidakis, I have not yet had to name a member. You are very close.

Mr Dalidakis withdrew from chamber.

MEMBERS PARLIAMENTARY SERVICE

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is unfortunate, really, because on a brighter note what I wanted to do is to congratulate a number of members of this place. Fortunately Mr Dalidakis is not one of them. I want to recognise the fact that this week we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the election of quite a number of members to this place. Indeed that followed a very significant change in the method of election to this house, which introduced proportional representation and then at the election saw a significant number of new members elected to this place.

I would like to extend congratulations to the three members of the Greens who were elected on the first occasion in 2006: Mr Barber, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Hartland. I would like to also extend congratulations to Mr Elasmarr; Ms Pulford; Ms Tierney; Mr Leane; Mr Eideh, the Deputy President; and Mr O'Donohue, and to recognise that Mr Finn and Mrs Peulich, who had both served in the other place, were also elected to this house in 2006.

Can I also just acknowledge that the Leader of the Opposition, Ms Wooldridge, was elected to the Parliament on the first occasion in 2006, albeit to another house, and I am sure that she is enjoying this place much more. We do extend congratulations to all those members and acknowledge their service — your service — over that 10-year period. The contributions I think have been significant by all of those members, and I thank them for their service to the house.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Training and Skills. In last week's edition of the *Diamond Valley Leader*, dated 16 November, there were five substantial

advertisements for Melbourne Polytechnic, four of which promoted the opening of the Greensborough campus TAFE next year. As well as the advertising blitz, the government is also setting up skills and job centres at Greensborough Plaza, Northland shopping centre, Westfield Plenty Valley, Westfield Doncaster and Chapel Street in South Yarra to try to get enough students to justify this decision. It is understandable that they would wish to promote Melbourne Polytechnic, and the Greensborough campus in particular, but my question to the minister is: how much is the department spending to promote the opening of the Greensborough campus, and is this money on top of the \$10 million pledged to reopen the facility or will it come out of it? It is important to understand, given this advertising blitz, where the money is actually going and how much this advertising blitz will cost.

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — Thanks, President, for the congratulations on what has been a long time in the Parliament. My constituency question is to the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos. As I mentioned earlier in the chamber, Minister Mikakos held a forum in the east of Melbourne with a number of practitioners who deal with family violence, and the question that I would ask the minister on behalf of a lot of those constituents and people who represent a lot of people in the east is whether she could give me an update of the progress of the implementation of the royal commission recommendations, particularly how these have benefited the practitioners in the east of Melbourne.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ms PENNICUIK (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Planning. On 13 November the minister issued a media release announcing mandatory development controls for Fishermans Bend, focusing on social housing and smart design for the 80 000 people who will live there one day. Only three lines down it says:

Developers wanting permits taller than 12 storeys will be encouraged to include 6 per cent social housing in their projects, and to make at least 30 per cent of all apartments three bedroom.

It goes on to say that height limits will be now mandatory and applied to every existing development application under assessment. However, social housing will not be mandatory, only encouraged. Given that there are more than 33 000 applicants for public housing on the waiting list, why is the government only

encouraging such a low percentage of 6 per cent social housing, and why is it not mandatory?

Western Victoria Region

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — My question is addressed to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Last week a draft was released regarding proposed new regulations regarding horses on beaches between Warrnambool and Port Fairy. You can imagine my disappointment and the disappointment of my community when my office on three separate occasions requested to have input into this and was ignored on all occasions, as were many other members of the community. The questions and answers provided by the government on this issue state that in addition the 2017 coastal management plan for this area between Port Fairy and Warrnambool will provide a longer term management framework to reduce the impact of people, vehicles and dogs, as well as horses. Does this mean no dogs, no horses and no people? Therefore, for my community's sake, my question is: will the community consultation for the coastal management plan this time include the community?

Southern Metropolitan Region

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question relates to the portfolio of the Special Minister of State, Gavin Jennings, and it relates to Infrastructure Victoria and its so-called 30-year infrastructure plan, part of which focuses on densification and has singled out the south and the east, including much of my electorate, for forced densification. It is clear that councils have not been in a position to respond by the deadline to the Infrastructure Victoria report, and because of the caretaker period have been formally cut out of the ability to respond to Infrastructure Victoria's approach. So what I would seek from the Special Minister of State is that he ensure that there is a formal way for councils across the south and the east — and other councils across Victoria — to respond. I ask him: will he take on board the need for councils to respond to this policy challenge?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is addressed to the Minister for Creative Industries, Martin Foley, and it relates to my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region. My electorate is well known for its diversity. It is home to many exceptionally talented artists, many of whom I have had the opportunity to meet. Like all Victorians, these artists deserve to receive support and encouragement from the government. This can be

achieved through Creative Victoria, Victoria's first-ever creative industries strategy. By working with local government we can grow the arts and creative industries and ensure that the unique needs of each community are met. Can the minister explain how the partnership between the Municipal Association of Victoria, Creative Victoria and local government will promote and support the arts and our creative industries in the west?

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Public Transport. Last week the minister announced some long-overdue changes to the V/Line timetables but did not announce the new timetables in full. Rather she is keeping the community in the dark about what the new timetable would look like. I and many commuters are left to wonder about what nasty surprises the minister has in store with this new timetable when it is finally released next week. So my question to the minister is: why did you choose not to release the new V/Line timetable in its entirety but rather to drip-feed information to the community?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Sport, the Honourable John Eren. A parent in my electorate of Northern Metropolitan Region recently made inquiries of my electorate office regarding a new initiative that was announced last week by the Minister for Sport, John Eren. I understand that new netball courts are to be built, complete with competition standard lighting, at Thornbury High School, two at Northcote High School and one at Fairfield Primary School. They are all contained within the suburbs of Thornbury, Fairfield and Northcote. My question today is: can the sports minister provide information to my northern metropolitan community on what the proposed time frames are for completion of this marvellous initiative?

Western Metropolitan Region

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. I refer the minister to the precinct structure plan released for Sunbury recently indicating unprecedented growth in the town involving a population increase of over 55 000. Given the fact that all routes to and from Sunbury are gridlocked on a daily basis now, we have nothing to look forward to when contemplating the future of these roads. Will the minister advise if the government is prepared to reverse

its decision to ignore the need for Sunbury Road to be duplicated?

Northern Victoria Region

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is regarding the Shepparton bypass. The Andrews Labor government leased the port of Melbourne for \$9.7 billion, nearly \$4 billion more than expected. Some of this \$9.7 billion windfall should be used to cover the state's share of the Shepparton bypass, a major priority project for northern Victoria's road network. Stage 1 of the project, which includes a second river crossing, needs to be funded and begun immediately. The Victorian government needs to ensure that it has done all the necessary preparation work it needs to do before asking the federal government for any contribution from the commonwealth.

The state's component of the funding for planning and construction must be committed to now to display the state's commitment to the project. The port lease proceeds are an obvious funding source, which the minister also identified in a letter dated 9 November in response to my letter of 19 September. However, the minister did not put a date on this funding. Instead he just said it will be considered in a future program. My question is: will he commit to funding at least the first stage of the Goulburn Valley Highway bypass project out of the port of Melbourne lease proceeds as a matter of urgency?

Sitting suspended 1.03 p.m. until 2.04 p.m.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Debate resumed.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — So much for all the things that the Liberal Party did not dare put in their motion because they are too embarrassed to talk about them, like the environment. We heard a great exposition on cage fighting but not a word on Hazelwood, because that might have required the alternative government, the opposition, to actually say what their climate change policy is. So much for this claim of divisiveness in the first line of the motion when we have just seen from the federal Liberal Party one of the most divisive statements ever to come out of the mouth of a senior government figure, with an attack on the Lebanese community. There has not been one demurring word from any Liberal in this place against what the federal minister for immigration said.

However, let us talk about some of the issues the Liberals did raise in their motion and in the contribution of their lead speaker, because there are a number of matters where they are actually on point. There are genuine concerns among the community about economic inequality and insecurity of employment. There are genuine and readily heard concerns from the community about the loss of livability in Melbourne and the impact the growing population has had on that.

The lead speaker for the government said he did not want to bore us with a lot of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistics, but one of those statistics that he did not mention was from his own electorate — that is, of course, the 2 per cent increase in unemployment that we have seen in the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland region. That is a 2 per cent jump over just 11 quarters of reporting from the ABS. Certainly we need a response to that. It is not enough to simply come in here and deliver good news of overarching figures of employment or unemployment results for the whole state if you then use that to roll over and go to sleep and ignore the pockets of the community where disadvantage and unemployment are in fact getting worse. It is a danger to pat yourself on the back about an overall statewide employment and unemployment outcome if you then turn around and ignore communities who are having great difficulty, and Latrobe Valley is one of those communities.

There is no plan from this government about how to deal with the inevitable transition that is happening in the energy industry and the inevitable closure of brown coal. The reason there is no plan is that the government is not actually in the driver's seat. They are simply waiting around to see what electricity companies decide. If they are feeling generous, they will give us six months notice until the day the thing closes. The government, by definition, has to then run around and scramble in response to a decision that they played no part in. But it will continue. Even a few years ago there were about eight brown coal plants operating in Australia. Four of those have closed. Hazelwood has announced its closure, so that leaves just three, one of which, Yallourn, is almost as polluting in emissions intensity terms as Hazelwood. It is facing the same pressures from renewables, the price of which is rapidly dropping.

The lead speaker for the opposition mentioned crime on public transport. Public transport overall is actually quite safe. There are very few incidents occurring on public transport, but she kind of let the cat out of the bag by saying that the incidents that were occurring were actually happening at times when protective services officers (PSOs) are not on duty. It was the

former government's, now opposition's, plan to put PSOs on from sunset until dark because they thought people were scared of the dark. In fact people who know anything about the crimes that occur on public transport, the public order offences which are sometimes just threatening behaviour or even antisocial behaviour, actually occur when the most people are there and at the busiest stations.

The previous method of deployment was to have transit police at the biggest stations during the times when crimes occurred and to use an intelligence-based deployment system. The Liberals came in and invested all this money in PSOs. They put them at every station, even though many of those stations had not even had a recent history of crime. They put the PSOs on in the evenings because they thought it was spookier in the dark. They actually avoided a chance to really make a strong contribution with those extra resources.

Of course the Liberals came out again with the old east-west link. They love that one. They are giving us a big debate at the moment about population — we are hearing a lot about population — but when we get to the end of that, what we are going to hear as a solution is the east-west link. That is what they are building up to. They have very little to contribute towards a sustainable city. They just want to build another dirty great freeway at a cost of \$25 billion over the long term for the taxpayer, one which will actually shift the traffic jam from Hoddle Street to Flemington Road. When the government cancelled the contract for the east-west link, they actually saved the taxpayer tens of billions of dollars, and the Liberals do not like it. They are still flogging that dead horse.

However, the Liberals certainly had a point when they condemned the government for its lack of action to reduce congestion, both on the roads and also on the trains. The government came to office after four years in opposition. They had plenty of time to think about it, but they had no actual plan to invest sustainably and get overcrowding down, whether it be on the roads or on the trains. Of course running more trains is the only sure-fire way of reducing congestion on the roads. Every new train takes a thousand cars off the road. At the moment some lines are so overcrowded people are actually giving up and going back to their cars, which is a disastrous outcome. But this problem did not arrive overnight; it came after decades of neglect from both the Labor and Liberal parties.

Labor point to the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel; that is their big project. It is certainly a big project. It is not a plan for the city, but it is a big project. I will give them a tick for that, but it will cost \$10 billion, it will take

10 years and it will increase the capacity on certain lines by 60 per cent. By that time patronage on those lines will have grown by 60 per cent. This is according to the government's own business case. So it is a project, but it is not a plan and it will only address overcrowding on certain lines. I hope they have something that is going to deliver before those 10 years are up, and I hope they are looking beyond 10 years as well.

For that matter we have seen very little from them on buses, which are actually the only form of public transport for large parts of metropolitan Melbourne. The 2.7 per cent increase in the number of services provided in the last budget is of course welcome, but what that means is that there will be very little relief for those who are on overcrowded buses. There were very few extra late-night services. There will be very little increase in frequency, and there will be very little extension of those buses out into the new suburbs that are growing all the time. A 2.7 per cent increase in bus services is not going to be enough, and we have not even started to talk about V/Line or the V/Line coaches.

This motion fails to recognise that there have been decades of neglect from governments, both Labor and Liberal, and that some of these failings are actually failing to address, after four years in opposition and two years in government, problems that we have all known about for a very long time — problems that have been around for a very long time and which were created over a long time.

On the other hand, the government came to office with very little idea about what they wanted to do about most of these problems, and it now shows. After two years they have been caught flat footed. The problems are getting ahead of them, whether it be unemployment, whether it be overcrowding and congestion in Melbourne or whether it be a lack of service provision to areas outside Melbourne. I have my doubts that in two years time we are going to be standing here applauding some great turnaround that they have achieved, because they squandered their four years in opposition. They have achieved some milestones in their first two years, but they do not seem to have anything that sets us up for the next term of Parliament and the next term after that, which is certainly very much where the voters are looking.

Debate adjourned on motion of Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria).

Debate adjourned until later this day.

LAW REFORM, ROAD AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Reference

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — I move:

That this house —

- (1) notes that —
 - (a) VicRoads has failed country Victoria in the provision of safe country roads;
 - (b) Victorian country roads are unsafe and the occurrence of injury and death is increasing;
 - (c) the condition of country roads is poor and deteriorating further year by year;
 - (d) VicRoads figures reveal western Victorian roads are the worst in the state; and
- (2) pursuant to section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, requires the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee to inquire into, consider and report on, no later than 30 November 2017 —
 - (a) the effectiveness of VicRoads in managing country roads;
 - (b) the existing funding model and its lack of effectiveness for country Victoria;
 - (c) the lack of consultation with regional communities and their subsequent lack of input into prioritising which roads are in dire need of repair; and
 - (d) the option of dismantling VicRoads and creating a specific country roads organisation and separate metropolitan roads body.

It gives me great pleasure today to speak on this motion. It is a particularly straightforward motion. The motion is in regard to VicRoads and how VicRoads have simply failed country Victoria. The motion refers to deaths and serious injuries on country roads, which are twice as likely to occur as on city roads, so it is a big issue for country people. One of the other big issues in the motion is the condition of roads, which have been deteriorating year on year and are continuing to deteriorate. The final part of the first paragraph of the motion says VicRoads figures show that country roads in western Victoria are worse than in any other part of the state, let alone the country. The calculations are that it will take something in the order of \$220 million to bring these roads up to a condition equivalent to the worst roads in the rest of the state — not to bring them up to the condition of the best roads but to bring them up to the next worst road conditions.

The motion then goes on to say that this issue should be considered by the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee and asks that that committee report back to the Parliament by 30 November next year, a little bit over one year from now. The report should be into the effectiveness of how VicRoads actually looks after country roads. It will also look at the funding model and the lack of effectiveness of how this model works in country Victoria so that we get better benefit from the spending of money on country roads.

The motion also asks for that committee to look at the lack of consultation. It is one of the big issues we hear about daily — that reports or suggestions that are made to VicRoads are not taken into consideration and any decision on road upgrades seems to be taken in isolation. The fourth part of the second paragraph asks the committee to consider the possibility and the benefits of dismantling VicRoads to form a metropolitan roads group and a country roads group.

There is no doubt that country roads are falling apart. If members get the opportunity to visit country areas, as I suggest all members in this chamber should do, they will agree with this. It is a common matter that has been raised in this chamber many times before, but nothing is happening to alleviate or fix that problem. It is a problem that continues to get worse, and the work that is done by VicRoads is not helping.

Governments of both persuasions — I am not suggesting that it is coalition governments or Labor governments, but both types of government — discuss their funding commitments to the road network and promise millions of dollars. We saw that even as late as yesterday, with many millions of dollars of funding, and if you look at those figures you would think that the problems will be fixed. We have seen these promises in the past, and this is certainly not enough to overcome this serious problem. Roads are not getting any better.

We are seeing in the country that bandaids fixes are not working. Piles of scoria are being placed into potholes as a means of fixing them, and then by the time the next truck arrives the pothole is emptied of scoria or other base material and the road and potholes are back to where we started. A perfect example of this is the Garvoc rail overpass. For people who do not know where Garvoc is, it is west of Terang. Millions of dollars have been spent on this overpass, including as recently as 2008, when another \$2 million was provided for this overpass to make what was meant to be a permanent fix, but the overpass continues to fail. The answer at the moment, as with many other parts of the road network in rural Victoria, is to simply put up speed restriction signs. There does not appear to be any

attempt to do anything about the long-term problem and fix it up permanently.

To me it seems that the issue is that VicRoads is not an effective manager of country roads. Some people in the past have blamed this problem on high rainfall and truck usage on our road network. It is quite bizarre, though, for anyone who lives very close to the border, as I do. If you go into South Australia, for example, you just cross the border and you magically find that the roads are in so much better condition. Potholes do not exist, the roads are wider and they are in much better condition. Anyone who suggests that this magical climate change occurs as soon as you hit the border is delusional. The condition of roads and the road-making techniques that have been used traditionally throughout western Victoria in particular show that we seriously need a better way of doing it.

In a recent discussion with an employee of VicRoads about the difference between the Victorian and South Australian road conditions it was admitted that our roads have been built with scoria, a traditional base for our roads. The durability of the material used in South Australia is much better. For people who do not know, scoria is a very unstable product to use. It is really porous and not a very good base at all for road making. What was even more concerning about the discussion with the VicRoads employee is that they really do not know what the South Australian road-making authority uses for its base. It is surprising that a simple phone call would maybe help significantly improve the road base material that is used just from one state to another.

Surely effective consultation with regional communities would also help. The people who are on the ground are the ones who know the condition of our road network, and they also are the ones who need the fixes made. They are the ones who certainly contact me and, I am sure, all other members of this chamber on a very, very regular basis with suggestions and input.

The evidence surrounding the deplorable state of country roads can be found everywhere. At a local level these are just a handful of comments that have been made from some of our leaders in our community. One of the major areas where we see a real problem at the moment is through the Glenelg shire, which covers the Casterton-Heywood-Portland area. Their chief executive, Greg Burgoyne, says that the safety of motorists and the protection of export industries were dependent on urgent road repairs, and he also added that we have been neglected for decades. He says it is not good enough.

Moyne shire councillor Colin Ryan, while he was mayor, said that the key freight routes were literally crumbling under the weight of timber trucks, placing lives and livestock and livelihoods at risk. VicRoads have records that do show that the region's roads are well below standard. We need a large input of money and also a large input into a different way of constructing these roads. Corangamite mayor, Cr Jo Beard, described the whole network as struggling, and I think that is certainly as well as you could put it. These are just a few of the complaints that are made to me on a very regular basis.

Recently we went to the public to get their list of worst roads in south-west Victoria. The intent was to identify the 10 worst roads, but as soon as we made our position clear that we were intending to do this the phones just started to ring. Even the local radio station weighed in, playing the AC/DC classic *Highway to Hell* to highlight the issues we have with our road network. The despair from these people and the cynicism that VicRoads would ever successfully fix our road network were absolutely palpable. They have had enough, and rightfully so, because they just want our roads fixed. The nominations that came to our office that we had for the 10 worst roads we submitted to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety and VicRoads in the hope that this list would stimulate some action. We are that desperate that we actually took on the job of community consultation to create a priority list to stimulate some action from VicRoads itself, because it showed little motivation to consult with our regional communities.

Research by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that people living outside the major cities have, as I said earlier, nearly twice the rate of serious work-related injuries as those living in the metropolitan area. If their statistics are based on the assumption of reasonable road conditions, it does not bode well for people who choose to live in south-west Victoria and western Victoria, given the horrendous condition of our roads.

As well as that, there is huge confusion about the responsibility for roads. The public generally do not understand that local government are responsible for some roads and VicRoads are responsible for others, and if they do understand that there is this split, it does come to the situation where they do not know which ones belong to which. This leads to more blame-shifting and more confusion about who should fix the roads, and they get the same answer when they go to VicRoads or go to the local council: 'It's not our responsibility'. You may know, and I may or may not

know, but the general public do not know who is responsible for particular roads.

Given it is these people who use the roads and know which ones are the best, we really need to have a better system of tapping into their intelligence on roads and roads that need repairing. Not only do we not tap into their intelligence; we actually discourage them from contacting either the local government or VicRoads to have a report done of a road condition. They also deserve a lot more than the recent decision to reduce speed limits, and the number of speed limit signs on country roads is increasing at a phenomenal rate. In many cases it would be cheaper to fix the roads than to continually put up reduced speed limit signs.

Our roads are starting to affect our industry in western Victoria and, I am sure, in the rest of country Victoria, but I know western Victoria — as you do, Acting President Ramsay — better than the rest of the state. In October I raised the issue of freight coming into the port at Portland. There is room for expansion of hauling woodchips to the port, but truck companies have expressed concern over the safety of their drivers and how the already heavily potholed roads will stand up to even more traffic. School buses are routinely cancelled in the region because in heavy rain and wind, which we get more than our share of, the roads are unsafe to transport children to school. This is not a false claim; this happens on a fairly regular basis. These roads are affecting jobs and job creation and the growth of industry in our region.

Prior to 1913 Victoria had a Central Road Board and district road boards. The Central Road Board was responsible for main roads, and the district road boards were responsible for local roads. In 1913, as I understand it, the Country Roads Board was established, changing its name in 1983 and officially becoming VicRoads in 1989, when it amalgamated with the Road Traffic Authority. A lot of these are name changes, but they have not changed the situation that we have. VicRoads has responsibility for overseeing, repairing and keeping country roads safe and needs to have a better rural focus. The roads in Melbourne and in the suburbs of Melbourne are in comparatively good condition, and this is vastly different to what we see in the prime agricultural region where I live.

I am not intending to compare the state of the road network under the Country Roads Board to the road network now or to extrapolate any results, but when we did have the Country Roads Board our roads were in better condition because the board's role was to concentrate on country roads and not get mixed up in

political chases for money throughout the rest of the state. We all know times have changed, but the stress on our roads has increased. Rural roads are not receiving the attention or funding they deserve. Metropolitan areas, in my opinion, are being favoured over their country cousins, whose roads are falling apart around them.

VicRoads is failing country Victoria in the provision of safe country roads. Country roads are unsafe and are deteriorating further year on year. We need to make a change, and we need to make it now. By continuing to do the same thing over and over again we will not get a different result. We need a system that provides dedicated attention to country roads. The existing Melbourne-centric funding model is not providing even the basic maintenance level needed to keep country roads safe.

Finally, I propose that VicRoads be split into two bodies: a metropolitan body and a country roads body. Each organisation should be funded separately and be responsible for geographic areas, with local councils included in the process of consulting and prioritising repairs and ongoing maintenance. Maybe this will help, as nothing else has. I thank you for listening and commend this motion to the house.

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I thank Mr Purcell for bringing this motion to the house and indicate to Mr Purcell and all members that the opposition will not oppose this motion. The opposition welcomes a debate on the state of country roads. Many of the points made by Mr Purcell regarding roads in his electorate I could echo in relation to roads in my electorate, particularly in parts of South Gippsland and East Gippsland. Some of the main arterial roads through there are struggling just to maintain good order, let alone address the capital upgrades or major upgrades that may be required.

Similar to the pressures from the port of Portland and some of the heavy traffic that generates, some of the traffic generated through South Gippsland from the timber industry and through East Gippsland from the timber industry, from the transport of livestock and from milk trucks and the like has put pressure on our roads. But of course those industries contribute enormously to our economy, to local employment and to local jobs, and therefore in a similar vein the roads are not just a conduit for the movement of people but an economic conduit and need to be at a good standard.

I would add in an issue that Mr Purcell mentioned in passing: the specific issue of the road toll and road safety. This is an issue on which members come

together in a multipartisan way. It is absolutely alarming that the road toll for this year has already exceeded last year. While the objectives of Towards Zero are no doubt worthy and well intentioned, regrettably we are not heading towards zero; we are heading back towards a road toll of 300. That is most concerning. Of course there are many factors that play into an increased road toll. There has been much discussion in recent times about the impact of technology as a distraction, but road infrastructure is also a key factor in road safety, as is, I should add, policing and a visible police presence, which is a separate issue that I will not pursue today.

The issue of our roads and the impact of deteriorating roads is multifaceted from a road safety perspective, from a tourism perspective, from an economic perspective for industry and just from the perspective of people being able to move around. Indeed, as Mr Purcell noted in his contribution, school buses are being cancelled because roads are not up to scratch after significant rain events and the like.

Like many members, I am sure, I often marvel at the bridges that display the old insignia of the Country Roads Board (CRB), because the CRB knew how to build roads, that is for sure. Many of those bridges around country Victoria have stood the test of time over decades and decades and decades. I am not sure whether splitting VicRoads into an organisation based on country roads and a separate organisation based on the management of metropolitan roads is the answer, but I do say that the Country Roads Board knew how to build infrastructure for the long term back in the day.

I think we also need to understand that VicRoads can only manage the resources provided to them. The population is growing by over 100 000 people per year, and there is continuous growth in freight and vehicle movements, yet the resources are not being provided to upgrade the infrastructure to accommodate that growth, including the growth in heavy vehicular traffic.

VicRoads as an organisation can only do so much with the resources provided to them. While the opposition will not oppose it, in all fairness I think this motion should be directed fairly and squarely at the responsible minister, Minister Donnellan, and the Premier, Daniel Andrews. Whilst Minister Donnellan may represent an outer suburban electorate, we know that he does not actually use the roads to visit that part of town all that frequently. Minister Donnellan and the Premier have much to answer for in relation to the state of our roads.

With those remarks, I welcome a debate on country road funding, infrastructure, the issues that flow from a poorly funded and resourced country road network and

the appropriate organisational structure to enable government to deliver the best dividend for the available resources in the management and upkeep of our roads. Like Mr Purcell, I am a member that represents a very large geographical area. I understand the importance of our arterial roads as conduits for people and goods and as the lifeblood of communities where public transport options are often scarce and irregular, leaving the roads as an even more important part of the economic and social fabric of country communities.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on Mr Purcell's motion, which notes a number of matters in relation to VicRoads and includes a referral to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee in relation to country roads. The Greens make this observation: that VicRoads must stand alone in the history of government in Victoria as having the rare achievement of failing in every way possible. It is a monumental aggregation of a giant mess-up. If it were a private company, it would have been sued and bankrupted out of existence long ago. This motion is correct to draw the failures of this public agency in the delivery of service to the attention of the public in country Victoria.

Let us consider some of the failures of VicRoads one by one. First, the organisational issues. VicRoads is a vertically integrated road-building machine that remains a power to itself. It does not deploy systems thinking when considering how transport works in the state. It should be part of a system that considers how to get people and freight from A to B. Instead VicRoads solely thinks about how it can lay more square metres of new bitumen and concrete. It is an input-oriented industrial complex. They do not even seem to care where they put the bitumen; they will gladly carve up Royal Park or Banyule Flats if given the chance, yet western Victoria is crying out for repairs to existing services and gets no attention.

Secondly, VicRoads just does not listen to the community. It must have the worst record of public consultation of any public organisation in the history of this state. This is a major problem, not least because VicRoads has the power to acquire private property and public green space to roll out its highways. This is the synopsis of a typical VicRoads public consultation over a road-widening project: VicRoads says it is going to do a project and notifies affected members of the community; VicRoads holds a consultation session where it says what it is going to do and how there are no technically feasible alternatives to that approach; the affected people ask questions about social and environmental impact and are given spin in return;

VicRoads belatedly releases excerpts from social and environmental impact assessments; VicRoads gives tokenistic concessions to affected people, such as input on what species of trees to plant on roadsides or what colour to paint visual barriers; and finally VicRoads gets the environmental and social assessment wrong and the impacts are much worse than initially expected, affecting the lives of everyone that lives along the road alignment, let alone in some cases the wildlife that live in that roadside vegetation. This is not genuine, meaningful consultation; it is a poor way of building public infrastructure.

There have been many horrendous outcomes from this type of modus operandi. Some examples include the loss of trees in the first stage of the Western Highway expansion project near Ballarat. VicRoads estimated 221 large old trees would be removed, but it finally admitted it would be removing 885 large old trees — that is out by 300 per cent. Imagine if they did that with volumes of concrete or turning radii for a corner. That is a pretty remarkable oversight, and you would think heads would roll, but there were no repercussions for VicRoads. There was the failure to listen to concerned parents at Kallista Primary School and Eastern Ranges School in Ferntree Gully when they requested illuminated flashing 40-kilometre-per-hour signs. VicRoads seemingly prefers a lesser standard for the students at these schools than others. These are but two examples — there are probably many more.

Thirdly, VicRoads has a record of improper conduct. Only last year the Victorian Ombudsman released a report that found VicRoads staff routinely broke road rules and then got out of the applicable fines by claiming unjustifiable exceptional circumstances. The Ombudsman found that:

... the process for investigating infringements and approving exemptions was seriously deficient.

The Ombudsman noted that:

The investigation ... exposed a culture within a key unit of VicRoads of ignoring the legislation they are responsible for enforcing.

If VicPol want to crack down on hoons, best they set up shop outside the Kew headquarters of VicRoads.

Fourthly, VicRoads has a habit of putting public transport last. There have been claims that requests from Public Transport Victoria for collaboration on better bus integration into the roads system have been ignored. You only need to travel on the SmartBus services and the bus lanes on the Eastern Freeway to see this. The surfacing is patchy, the buses are pushed into the emergency lane for long stretches instead of

being provided with their own lane and the bus lane evaporates at the intersection with the Chandler Highway. Better bus priority infrastructure, more buses and a future Doncaster rail are the only way to ease congestion on the Eastern Freeway.

I will move now to trams. Trams move at an average of 16 kilometres per hour — slower than most bicycles. VicRoads hates trams because they are outside the bitumen-centric thinking of that agency. VicRoads has failed to work with PTV to give trams priority at traffic lights or isolate a tramway wherever possible.

In the country many people are frustrated with their bus infrastructure. It is too slow to be upgraded to meet new demands in population centres. There is even less bus priority infrastructure in regional centres than in Melbourne.

Fifth, as per this motion, VicRoads has failed to adequately maintain public roads in country Victoria. There are potholes, there are washouts and there are narrow and unfit roads that are signposted at high speeds. It seems that VicRoads is too busy doing big ribbon-cutting for megaprojects, like the CityLink-Tulla widening or the Western Highway duplication, or aching to break ground on the north-east link to do the less illustrious work of repairing potholes, fixing shoulders or repainting lines. Our rural road network is in a bad state, as Mr Purcell pointed out in his contribution. You are four times more likely to die in a fatal car accident if you live in country Victoria than if you live in the city.

I reflect on my own driving experience — in fact in western Victoria. I was appalled at the standard of the roads down there. The seeming way to address those issues was just to put a whole lot of lower speed limit signs on the side of the road. We are not talking back roads; we are actually talking major arterials of western Victoria. So I completely understand, Mr Purcell, why this motion is before the house today.

The dire state of our country roads and the failure of VicRoads to address this is a major concern, and it is for this reason that the Greens will be supporting this motion. This motion proposes some foci for the inquiry regarding institutional and process reform at VicRoads. One of these is to dismantle VicRoads and create separate country roads and metropolitan roads bodies; however, I feel it is important to mention that the mooted creation of Transport for Victoria presents an opportunity to reconsider the way road infrastructure is managed in this state and how it is integrated into a holistic transport system. The inquiry recommended by this motion should keep an open mind as to the best

option for the future for VicRoads. Certainly all planning strategy and policy capacity should be removed from VicRoads and brought under a separate body, regardless of whether the VicRoads CEO likes it or not. An inquiry will allow a detailed examination of the matters raised in the motion, including the structure that is most appropriate in terms of getting the repair and maintenance that country roads are crying out for. The Victorian Greens support the motion for an inquiry; however, such an inquiry should be approached with an open mind as to how we can get better roads and better public transport on those roads for country Victoria.

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I am pleased to join this debate. I spend a lot of time on Victorian country roads, like many members in this place, and I am well aware of the issues Mr Purcell has raised in speaking to his motion. Mr Purcell often in this place raises issues of road repair, road maintenance and road safety, and I know it is a matter of great importance to him and to people in south-western Victoria and indeed across the length and breadth of our very large electorate.

Let me say at the outset that the government does not accept the statement at 1(a) in the motion — that VicRoads has failed country Victoria in the provision of safe country roads — and some of the language Mr Purcell has used to set up this debate, but it absolutely recognises Mr Purcell's motivation in this regard and certainly will be very happy to participate in the parliamentary committee inquiry on these matters.

Of course the condition of our roads and safety on our roads are of paramount importance to all Victorians. As we head ever closer to what is for many Victorians a holiday season — time away from work and with family, perhaps travelling to other parts of the state or to visit friends and family — I think we become ever more conscious of road safety matters. I know that our emergency services and Victoria Police in particular are always very conscious of increasing the communications effort to encourage people to do the right thing when they are behind the wheel, and messages of good sense when it comes to speed and fatigue and drug and alcohol use and/or abuse are of paramount importance in our road safety messaging. Of course Victoria has for I think a very long time led the world in the approach we have taken to road safety, and the many members of this place who over the years have been members of road safety committees of the Parliament know better than I the kind of demand in which Victorian expertise is held across the world.

If I could just respond to earlier speakers, I just indicate to the house that the government has in the last two years made an unprecedented investment of \$1 billion to fix dangerous roads right across the state. Sometimes this is potholes; sometimes this is rebuilding entire sections. Our focus is of course the safety of our roads but also importantly the productivity of our roads. The government is investing \$340 million to address known crash black spots on more than 2500 kilometres of rural and regional roads across the state. I certainly see our road maintenance and construction crews being very busy across the roads of regional Victoria. The government is investing \$51.6 million for new overtaking lanes on key arterial roads, of course another very important safety measure.

In response to the question around the bureaucracy and the organisation that sits behind this work, VicRoads, I would indicate that the government has no plans to create another bureaucracy. I indicate to the house that VicRoads does have seven dedicated regions, and five of those are in regional Victoria, with staff dedicated to serving the region in which they are placed.

The government has, as members will be aware, recently established Transport for Victoria, which is all about leading an integrated approach to transport planning across the state. I know that Ms Dunn was briefly talking about trams. There are not so many trams in regional Victoria, but there is the intersection between road users, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians and the way in which our public transport system connects buses that connect to train services and — indeed for Ms Dunn — trams. The trams of regional Victoria are pretty few and far between. There is one that goes about a quarter of the way around Lake Wendouree which is much loved and tended to by a vintage tram enthusiast in my home town, and of course there is the tram that trundles to the Central Deborah Gold Mine in Bendigo. I am sure if I have neglected to mention any other trams in regional Victoria I will have to make an apology to the operators of those services. But as Transport for Victoria is embedded, we will be able to increasingly target those needs and to take a better approach to planning transport solutions to problems, whether it is through services or new and improved roads.

Of course as anybody who spends lots of time on regional Victorian roads will be well aware, our roads certainly took a beating during what was a very wet September and October with record rainfalls and widespread flooding in many, many communities. Many local government areas were provided with support to respond to flooding, and that work is still continuing. In fact a lot of the assessment work about

the damage done is still underway because, as members would appreciate, that occurred in very recent times. The damage caused by flooding or particularly heavy rain cannot be prevented by routine maintenance, but I can certainly assure the house that VicRoads crews are working around the clock to fix potholes as quickly as possible to ensure that people can get from where they are to where they need to be as safely as possible.

I would indicate also that the government has increased maintenance spending in all regions since coming to office. There has been in the western region an increase of \$8.7 million compared to 2014–15 and in the south-west an increase of \$13.6 million since 2014–15. In western Victoria the government is, as I am sure Mr Purcell is aware, investing more than \$11 million in new road safety upgrades and resurfacing over 120 sections of road in many communities in our electorate of western Victoria. I will spare members the list, but it is certainly publicly available information, and I am sure those improvements to roads will be welcomed by the local community.

Of course the successful sale of the lease for the port of Melbourne will provide significant additional capacity for transport infrastructure spending. More than \$970 million will flow to regional and rural Victoria following the lease, of course improving road safety and increasing employment opportunities for regional Victoria.

We certainly look forward to the work of the committee and to deeper consideration of the issues. We welcome Mr Purcell's interest and his passion about this issue. The condition of roads in the south-west has consistently been a matter of very high priority and great interest for the communities, particularly those in the south-west of the state.

I would just like to conclude by indicating to the house that the government is currently reviewing the maintenance allocation model, which is something that has not been done before but I think recognises that there are challenges in the way that maintenance funding is allocated. This is particularly the case in some parts of the state over others.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to rise to make a contribution to debate on Mr Purcell's motion. There are actually many parts to his motion. I will start with paragraph (1)(a) and work through the list. However, I did want to say from the outset that, while I congratulate Mr Purcell, he is one of many regional MPs both in this chamber and the other house who have been raising concern about the deterioration

of our regional road networks right across Victoria. I take the opportunity to congratulate the following members from the Assembly: Richard Riordan, who has run a very strong local campaign in the seat of Polwarth, Roma Britnell, who has run a very strong campaign in the seat of South-West Coast, and Louise Staley, who has run a very strong campaign in Ripon. I also congratulate those — and I include myself in this list as shadow parliamentary secretary for rural and regional transport — who have been highlighting the need for considerable investment not only in upgrading our roads.

They are not just VicRoads roads. Actually they are local roads and also Roads to Recovery roads and roads of national importance. They all require significant investment, not to mention our bridges, which are also an important part of the connection to rural communities.

I mention our councils as well. I was speaking to the new mayor of Glenelg Shire Council only last Monday. I take the opportunity to congratulate Anita Rank for her success in being elected as mayor of Glenelg shire and Greg Burgoyne, the CEO, with whom Mr Purcell has already indicated he has had discussions about the state of the roads in Glenelg shire. I congratulate the shire. They have done some wonderful work in promoting, sadly, the significant dangers of their road networks within their shire with a video clip that actually went viral on Facebook and has been seen by many hundreds of thousands of people, so all credit to them in using social media to showcase the plight they are experiencing in relation to significant underinvestment in their road networks and consequently some very, very dangerous roads in the south-west — particularly, as Mr Purcell has indicated, in those corridors leading to the port of Portland. There has been significant growth in the amount of freight going through the port of Portland, particularly with mineral sands, grain, woodchips and aluminium. That is putting significant pressure on those arterial roads.

No doubt the work of Dan Tehan, the local federal member for Wannon down there, to commit to \$20 million for an upgrade of the Henty Highway as well as committing \$20 million for Princes Highway west, west of Colac, has been a great catalyst for what we are now seeing. I understand there will be a joint funding arrangement between the commonwealth and the state. Yet the Premier still has not signed off on the sharing of funding, with \$1.5 billion provided by the commonwealth through its commitment to the east-west link and also with the state providing \$1.5 billion. That is a total of \$3 billion for infrastructure across Victoria, of which \$690 million

will be tagged to regional roads. A number of projects have been identified under that \$690 million yet not committed to by the Andrews government, I might say. But if it is, it will be wonderful to see \$40 million getting put into the upgrade of the Henty Highway and \$40 million into the Princes Highway.

Mr Purcell has identified some of the weaknesses of VicRoads, but I am not sure it is all VicRoads's fault. I am not sure that I concur with the Greens either, because the Greens hate VicRoads. But they hate everything and everyone, so how much credibility you can give to their contributions in this place I am not sure, because they have a great capacity to hate. If it is not VicRoads, it is VicForests, and if it is not VicForests, it is something else. Anything to do with coal they hate, anything to do with trees and chainsaws they hate and anything to do with roads they hate. Sorry; I am getting distracted by the hate thing, but Ms Dunn brought that on. What I did want to say was that my hope is that the Andrews government does commit to the \$1.5 billion package — or the \$3 billion, with the two governments co-sharing — so that regional roads can get a significant injection of funds.

Also, while I was down at Portland it was interesting to note that there is still an opportunity to actually provide some rail. Ms Dunn will actually like this. There is a very valuable link between Maroona and Portland to enable a lot of the logs to go on rail rather than on truck. It just requires an \$18 million investment to provide the proper track.

Ms Dunn interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — Yes, up in the plantation area around Maroona. Ms Dunn, you would like the fact that we can actually get those logs onto rail and take them directly down to the port of Portland. I am certainly encouraging, as is Dan Tehan, the federal member for Wannon, an investment of \$18 million to allow the port of Portland — it is a private track — to utilise that capacity to move a lot of those logs off the road network.

As I said, I congratulate those councils. I have mentioned Glenelg, which has been very proactive in highlighting the dangers and deterioration of its road networks. Warrnambool has too, as well as Corangamite, Colac Otway and Surf Coast. The councils and their respective local MPs have been doing a great job. We know we have got a problem.

Strangely enough, the Andrews government saw fit to cut the country roads and bridges program — why? — a huge amount of money. It did provide \$1 million per

year for 40 rural councils to be able to identify and spend the money within their own priority areas on their local roads, which removed a lot of the backlog from the lack of maintenance that had been happening over the 10 or 11 years of the previous Labor government. They were catching up, basically, and just maintaining some of those road networks through that very valuable program. I certainly look forward, when we are back in government, to continuing the success of that program through the local government areas.

Part 1 of Mr Purcell's motion says that this house:

notes that —

- (a) VicRoads has failed country Victoria in the provision of safe country roads.

Even though Mr O'Donohue has indicated we are not opposing Mr Purcell's motion, to blame it all on VicRoads is probably somewhat harsh. They are merely an Indian of the chiefs of government that have the financial purse. The government distributes money to VicRoads, the government invariably have some control of the priorities where VicRoads will spend that money and then VicRoads prioritises that investment. VicRoads is not totally to blame. I think the Andrews government should be held to account for its lack of investment in regional Victoria generally but specifically in our road and bridge networks across certainly the areas that I am familiar with in south-west Victoria, which Mr Purcell comes from also.

Part 1(b) of Mr Purcell's motion says:

Victorian country roads are unsafe and the occurrence of injury and death is increasing.

That is true. We have seen just recently three or four deaths in the south-west because of the dangerous nature of these roads. The potholes are so big that people can actually stand in them. Can you imagine a bus full of schoolchildren actually falling in one of these potholes when the bus lurches to the side and flips over? That has happened. That is not a hypothetical; that in fact happened. In fact we just recently on the Cape Nelson Road had a log truck tip over because of the dangerous corrugations and potholes in that road.

Part 1(c) of Mr Purcell's motion says:

the condition of country roads are poor and deteriorating further year by year.

That is true. Ms Pulford went to some length to blame it on the rainfall, the topography and a few other things, and there is no doubt the excessive rainfall events we have had have had some impact on the foundations of the roads in the south-west. I am pleased to see that

Mr Purcell has read my press releases identifying that perhaps it is the way that we construct our roads that is becoming more of a problem rather than the fact that the climatic conditions are impacting on our roads.

Mr Purcell's advice is very similar to the advice I also received in relation to the material that is actually used. Inferior scoria and the clay, which is quite different in south-west Victoria, used as the foundation for roads are having a significant impact on the longevity of our roads once they are built.

Sadly enough, in south-west Victoria, where I come from, particularly in the coastal areas, there has been no provision for coexistence with cyclists. We have a huge amount of cycling traffic in and around Barwon Heads, Torquay, Connewarre, right along the Surf Coast and the Great Ocean Road to Lorne, yet there has been no significant investment in providing a pavement that will provide coexistence for cyclists. I think this is a priority that the government must look towards, and certainly I am hoping we have the opportunity when in government in 2018 to continue to build a coexistence corridor for both cyclists and road traffic so that people can actually enjoy that environment that Mr Barber keeps saying that we never mention. I am a very keen cyclist, and I love smelling the gumleaves and the fresh dew on the ground and looking around and enjoying the beautiful clean air and space as I take my two-wheeler around those beautiful coastal areas of Barwon Heads, Torquay, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet, Fairhaven, Lorne, Apollo Bay and Wye River — when it is not burning — et cetera.

Mr Barber interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — No, I do not like cycling in the city at all, Mr Barber; it is too dangerous.

Certainly I think there is a great opportunity there. Mr O'Donohue talked about road safety. I think that is a very important point, and certainly Mr Purcell has raised it in his motion. It is about safety. At the moment these roads have deteriorated to such an extent that it has become apparent that many, as I said, of the users of these road networks — particularly school buses, which are most vulnerable — are not safe on many of these country roads. It really is a matter of priority for this government, through VicRoads, to spend a significant amount of money on these roads that are deemed dangerous, as indicated by the RACV. In fact the RACV has indicated that the worst roads in the whole of Victoria are in the Glenelg shire; it identified that five of the most dangerous roads in Victoria are actually in that south-west area.

Part 1(d) of Mr Purcell's motion says:

VicRoads figures reveal Western Victorian roads are the worst in the state ...

I have just mentioned the RACV work that has been done.

Part 2 of Mr Purcell's motion says that the house:

pursuant to section 33 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, requires the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee to inquire into, consider and report on, no later than 30 November 2017 ...

While we are supporting that referral to a committee, I notice Ms Pulford seems to be somewhat reluctant to support that section of the motion here. That basically is to look at the effectiveness of VicRoads in managing country roads. I do not see an issue about that. I think there is nothing wrong with holding that body to account in relation to their activities and seeing if they can actually be more effective in the way they manage our regional road networks. I have some sympathy for Ms Dunn, I think it was, who indicated that VicRoads seem to be more interested in the ceremonial cutting of ribbons on these larger scale roads and highways than they are in looking after our local roads.

Ms Dunn interjected.

Mr RAMSAY — I have noticed Ms Dunn is not averse to cutting an odd ribbon herself wherever she gets that opportunity and wherever a camera might be, so I am sure if there is a road ribbon to be cut, she will be there. I might remember those words that she said in this chamber today in relation to VicRoads's penchant for wanting to have roads that can be opened with the cutting of ribbons by very fanatical MPs in their local electorates.

Regarding the existing funding model, it is true that there is not enough money being put into regional roads. We have all raised — not just Mr Purcell, but all of us that live in regional Victoria have raised this in this chamber continuously — the issue that we have very dangerous, deteriorating roads in regional Victoria and that they need money. They need funding now, and as I said, it is pleasing to see the Turnbull government stumping up \$1.5 billion, and we are still waiting for the Andrews government to commit to \$1.5 billion as co-shared funding to allow money to go back into regional roads.

Part (2)(b) of the motion refers to 'the existing funding model and its lack of effectiveness for country Victoria'. We know it is not good enough; it is not right. I said the Andrews government got rid of the

country roads and bridges program. We know there is not enough money in the financial assistance grants for local councils. We need to look at other mechanisms to provide more money into regional roads.

The motion goes on:

- (c) the lack of consultation with regional communities and their subsequent lack of input into prioritising which roads are in dire need of repair ...

Certainly my experience is that I have identified a number of roads to VicRoads and I do not think I have got due consideration, so I do agree there. The last one is:

- (d) the option of dismantling VicRoads and creating a specific country roads organisation ...

I look forward to the work that this committee will do in relation to what sort of management structure it might recommend to this chamber in the compilation of its report.

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — I rise to speak on this very important issue as an elected representative of western Victoria. The issue of roads, the state of roads and road funding in western Victoria has been an ongoing issue as far back as I can remember, and it is an issue that confronts residents in south-west Victoria on a daily basis because there is no denying that there are many roads in the electorate that are damaged and need repair, and in some cases need a rebuild.

As Mr Purcell outlined in his contribution, when the roads were built in the south-west many of them were built with building material that just is not fit for purpose in respect of roads. We almost have a situation in which from the time the roads were built they have been in decline, so the issue that we have is not an issue that is owned by this government or indeed other governments; it is an ongoing issue that has caused concern for a long, long time. Not only have we had a substructure to the roads that is inferior and is not fit for purpose, as I said, but we also have traditionally high rainfalls in the areas in which the worst of the road damage has occurred. That means that the water obviously gets up and under the roads, but that is coupled with the fact that we have heavy vehicles because we have the dairy industry in that part of the electorate, but of course we have also got the timber industry and heavy vehicles that go in and out of the port of Portland, and of course we all know the damage that has been occurring on the ring-road around the port of Portland.

This issue is raised constantly in the newspapers in western Victoria and on the radio, and at every opportunity there are voices that are saying that something needs to be done about the roads. Of course there is frustration in the electorate because this issue is probably the biggest issue that has been highly politicised over time, which has been unfortunate, but it is understandable because of the nature of road funding and having three tiers of government. The arguments that go on, the leveraging of positions and the gaming out of scenarios might be a way of trying to induce more funding from certain levels of government, but all the ordinary constituent that drives on the road wants is their road fixed, and they are getting quite tired of what they see to be the playing of politics with roads funding.

This is an issue that Labor has been looking at for some time, and I know for a fact that there will be a new funding maintenance model announced next year. We have been putting in extra money over and above the previous government to try to deal with the most immediate situations, and indeed Mr Purcell joined with me north of Warrnambool and south of Mortlake only a couple of months ago, where we announced with the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Luke Donnellan, a \$44 million maintenance fund. We have made a number of other announcements, including the \$1 billion to fix dangerous roads right across the state.

I could go through and identify every other single road that we have made announcements about or have had fixed in recent times, but I think almost every single person in the electorate would be fairly familiar with that list. What does concern me in the playing of politics is that the facts just seem to be forgotten. Indeed in Mr Ramsay's contribution he talked much about the recent \$1.5 billion announcement that the federal government has made and said that the state government is yet to commit to its share. That is just not true; we have done so. And all I can say is that obviously Mr Ramsay has not been travelling on south-west roads recently; clearly he has been asleep.

In respect of the first part of the motion, I can understand Mr Purcell's frustration, but I do not necessarily agree with the tone or the temper. On the notion of an inquiry, I believe that we could, if we did some really good work, actually come up with some very, very good ideas. The test for the committee will be more about trying to take the politics and the positioning out of it and to have a genuine and sincere dialogue with the constituents of Western Victoria Region, in particular, about the issues.

In some ways I am about having the evidence. We all know what our experiences are, but what I would like is a very thorough investigation of the status of roads in general. I would also like to have an agreement. If people want to talk about roads and talk about them properly, then at the beginning of that journey we have got to have an agreement that people do undertake the exercise in a proper and respectful way and are not using it for political purposes, running off to the media before committee members have had an opportunity to thoroughly discuss the issues or indeed trying to manipulate participation in any inquiry.

If people genuinely want to commit and want a genuine inquiry, I think the best of what Parliament can offer could be played out. But I say to Mr Purcell that because this is such a highly politicised issue, that is going to be quite a task. If people are really genuine about this issue, then they need to put their personal party-political leanings to one side and concentrate on the issues confronting those constituents who use those roads, whether it be the mums and dads, the school leavers or industry. We owe it to them to engage with them on the particular issues. We also need to do it in a way that does not create outlandish expectations. We need to do it in a way that ensures that we can work out the steps forward in a planned way. We need to reduce the guesswork, get the evidence on the table and then have a discussion about how you can implement what needs to occur.

I am supportive of an inquiry, but I am not if people hijack it for their own political purposes. That is why I am making this contribution today, to call on those who will be participating in it, whether they are committee members or people who provide submissions or contribute verbally, to make a serious attempt to deal with the issues before us. As I said, this has been an issue from the very day that these roads were built in the south-west of Victoria.

Everyone knows the roads that are problematic and everyone understands what people have been doing to avoid certain roads and the implications of that in terms of other roads and the roads network in the south-west. I get all of that, but if we want to do something really serious in this area, then the politicians need to listen. However, the community also needs to be educated about how funding operates, what formulas are used, what formulas might not be fit for purpose and what formulas in particular need to be adjusted for country and regional roads.

There is an opportunity to do some good work here, but we need to do it in a certain way. Mr Purcell would have a job and a task in front of him, together with

government members, to make sure that those who just want to use this as another political game do not get that opportunity and that that behaviour, when it rears its head, is called out at every possible opportunity. Otherwise we are wasting our time, and we owe it to our constituents in western Victoria to have an in-depth dialogue and discussion about how we can step this out further.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) — I rise to speak in support of Mr Purcell's motion. Some of it notes that VicRoads has failed country Victoria in the provision of safe country roads. The proof is in the pudding. In the east of the state, my region, I spend a lot of time out and about, and there are a lot of road improvements going on. Whilst the reduced speed limits can sometimes be irritating, it is all for the greater good. However, there are still many substandard roads down that way which are properly B-class or C-class roads and which could use a lot of funding.

I have also spent a lot of time in western Victoria, and I have got to say that pound for pound the roads out there are far inferior to the rest of state. As you get out towards the south-west there is a lot of logging and there are a lot of other large trucks that seem to go backwards and forwards, and this takes a toll on the road. Basically every time it does rain — and I was listening to this in a previous contribution — water gets under the road, and as cars or trucks travel over it the road is damaged. And once you get one little hole develop, the next thousand cars that go over it turn it into a massive hole — into a pothole. After a while, particularly along the Portland–Warrnambool stretch, it can get quite dangerous. I have over the years driven many different sorts of cars, and many of these cars have had their bottom scraped going over these completely dodgy roads. I have not seen a concerted effort to fix this. We really do need to have a look at the problem as a whole.

As for dismantling VicRoads and creating a specific country roads organisation, I am 50-50 on that. I am not entirely sure that it will fix the problem or whether it will make it worse, do something or do nothing.

I think what Mr Purcell has put up is something we really need to look into because the road toll is climbing, and from what I can tell, no-one can put that down to a particular issue. What we should be doing is making sure that the roads are at least as good as they possibly can be. For that we need expenditure, and if it does turn out from the recommendations of the inquiry and the subsequent government response that a specific country roads authority would be necessitated, then clearly that is the way we need to go. At the moment

there is a lot of money being put around into the various urban, suburban and peri-urban roads, but the country roads are quite dodgy. I will sum up by saying that this is a statewide issue, and we really do need to get ahead of the curve instead of wasting someone's life on a road that could have been fixed.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

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

That this house notes —

- (1) the two-year anniversary of the Andrews Labor government has been categorised by two years of divisive government;
- (2) that ordinary Victorians have been left behind and ignored by the Andrews Labor government at the expense of union mates, Labor Party figures and a Socialist Left agenda; and
- (3) that in only two years, the Andrews government has, amongst many failures, lost three ministers, as well as delivered increased crime, economic vandalism and budget deficits, public service wage blowouts, desalination disasters, water bill increases, planning and heritage mismanagement, cuts to frontline police, chaos in prisons, a loss of Victorian major events, cuts to cancer beds and operating theatres, and ambulance response time blowouts; paid \$1.2 billion not to build Melbourne's most required road; had young kids exposed to cage fighting; had public transport strikes and chaos; had a decline in TAFE enrolments; punished Victorian small businesses; doublecrossed Victorian industry; increased traffic congestion; and chauffeured dogs.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — It is a sad indictment of the government that we need to stand up here and outline some of the faults and the failures of this government two years in. I would like to start off by looking at the first part of the motion, which states:

- (1) the two-year anniversary of the Andrews Labor government has been categorised by two years of divisive government ...

To my mind that is totally reflected in the city-centric focus of the Andrews Labor government. We heard statistics around unemployment rates bandied about by those on the opposite side, but I would like to give some factual ones for my patch in Eastern Victoria Region, in Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley. When the coalition finished its term of government the unemployment rate in the valley was at 7.3 per cent. Unemployment is now up to 10.7 per cent. The city of Morwell, a place that I go through and spend a lot of time in during my week, has an unemployment rate of

over 19 per cent, which is really just a travesty, notwithstanding that we now have the imminent closure of the Hazelwood power station.

If I reflect back on a previous Labor government's stance on the closure of the Hazelwood power station, on 27 July 2010 the then Premier, John Brumby, in answering a question during question time and in referencing the government's white paper, stated:

... I have outlined the government's plan for the staged closure of the Hazelwood power station.

He then went on to talk about renewables. I am absolutely in favour of a mixed power system, and I am also in favour of reducing carbon emissions, but there are more efficient and more strategic ways of doing this than by turning off the switch on 31 March next year and losing 1000 direct jobs and leaving people in and around Central Gippsland out of work. The ripple effect across other positions and jobs will be a very dangerous and serious event.

Hazelwood power station supplies 1600 megawatts straight into the grid of baseload power. It has been able to supply industry for many years and support these jobs, so when it closes these people will basically finish and walk out. There should have been a staged closure. There is no reason why this government could not have planned for a staged closure. The contractors will get very, very little, and this whole point around the \$330 000 that most employees would receive in severance is an overinflated figure — it would be for those who have been in the industry for decades rather than for the majority, who have been the industry for, say, 5 to 10 years. So I believe this government has got it wrong, and I believe it has failed these people who should have been able to plan for a staged closure and maybe transfer some of that younger demographic across to other power stations.

So what has the government done? It has produced the Latrobe Valley Authority. Last week I foolishly, and maybe naively, asked the government: who is on that? I thought it could be representatives of industry, business and the community. It is a government bureaucracy; it is another layer. It is headed up by someone out of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and it will be heads of department in the authority's building. We also have a thing called regional partnerships. It sounds great in principle, but it is another layer of the chocolate cake of bureaucracy. I went to it in Moe last week, and there were some great ideas bandied about. That is not a problem. When I talked to some people from the Wellington shire, one person who should know but who will remain unnamed said to me that there were only two representatives from community groups from

the Wellington shire. Wellington covers 11 000 square kilometres and has 42 000 people, and there were two community representatives there. So I am asking: what is the point of having this if it is just ending up being a talkfest?

The other point that I would like to raise is on the subject of roads. My colleague Mr Ramsay put it quite succinctly. I will give a bit of a version of it as it applies to the Gippsland region. I am on the upper house committee looking at rate capping. We have talked and listened to CEOs and councillors from my region in Gippsland and all of them have categorically said how beneficial the country roads and bridges program was. The government now has a little program called the Stronger Country Bridges program. I have said before in this house: how many bridges are there in Gippsland? There are about 700 bridges in Gippsland. How many bridges do we get from this Stronger Country Bridges program? We get one bridge in Gippsland. How many bridges are there within 4 kilometres of Premier Andrews's city electorate? There are five. So do not call it a Stronger Country Bridges program, because it is not.

The government has also cut 10 per cent from the road asset maintenance budget in terms of recurrent funding for basic road maintenance. When you drive around South Gippsland, in fact all over the Bass Coast and central Gippsland, you see that the roads are deplorable and quite dangerous. Much of this is because of the lack of road maintenance funding. There are potholes and the sides of the roads are not maintained or cleared. Sadly people's lives and safety are at risk, including those of schoolchildren in buses et cetera.

Another example of how this government is divisive and is creating winners and losers is through its treatment of the Country Fire Authority (CFA). The Country Fire Authority is the lifeblood and heartbeat of so many small country towns. My beautiful little hamlet has about three stores and a CFA. The CFA was upgraded under the coalition government and was opened by my previous leader, Peter Ryan. This was the case across many country towns. The CFA has 1180 brigades and 60 000 volunteers. It is the world's largest volunteer service organisation. Men and women give up their time to save lives and property. What has this government done? It has endorsed a proposed enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) that basically looks at overriding the autonomy and functionality of these volunteers.

I have been talking to a lot of CFA volunteers and was on a committee — the Hansard transcript is there for people to read. Again and again volunteers said that

they did not have an argument with respect to career firefighters' pay and working conditions. That is what an EBA should be about; that is totally fair and reasonable. But again and again I hear from the volunteers that the EBA is overstepping that mark all the time.

If you look at the attrition rate of people throughout the enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations and the people who have fallen on their sword, it is like a lost city of good people. The former Minister for Emergency Services, Jane Garrett, preferred to fall on her sword and resign from her position than sign off on a deal that was rubbish. The Country Fire Authority's former CEO, Lucinda Nolan, described the current firefighters enterprise bargaining agreement as destructive and divisive to the CFA. She told our inquiry in June that she could not stay to oversee the destruction of the CFA. This is from a lady who has had a long career in serving her community. Joe Buffone, the former chief fire officer who also had 16 years experience as a volunteer, resigned on account of the proposed EBA. He told us:

... my ability to perform my statutory obligations as the chief officer under the CFA act had become fundamentally inhibited.

All of the CFA board members refused to sign the EBA. Who is standing with the government? Mr Marshall and Daniel Andrews are standing together. 'There is nothing to see here', they say. Well, others would say there are 50 clauses of veto. Does the EBA use the word 'veto'? No, it does not; it does not need to use the word 'veto'. The United Firefighters Union (UFU) states in those clauses that it must consult and agree. Each time it has to agree, and if it does not agree, it will go to a Fair Work arbitration and will be stuck in a revolving door.

So what has happened? Earlier this year I attended a march with hundreds and hundreds of CFA volunteers. At that march Malcolm Turnbull committed to — if the coalition got back into government — delivering a fair work amendment bill. That bill has gone through. It is designed to protect emergency services and their volunteers — to protect the CFA. The EBA cannot include terms that will undermine volunteers.

So what did I receive in my mailbox and my email on Thursday, 17 November? I received a letter addressed to ALP members of Parliament but mistakenly sent to opposition members of Parliament. It was written by Mr Marshall and states:

Clearly if the CFA apply to have the proposed agreement certified in its current form, the VFBV and the federal government will intervene and object, which will result in

either the Fair Work Commission refusing to certify the agreement or the removal of a significant number of key clauses resulting in the significant loss of entitlements for employees. We are writing to inform you that there is a perception that since the VFVB's withdrawal of the Supreme Court action that this matter has been resolved. It hasn't.

Here are a couple of clinchers coming up:

The UFU's Queen's Counsel have suggested a number of protective mechanisms which have been dismissed by the CFA.

Then there is this one:

The UFU has acted in good faith with the Andrews Labor government and respectfully requests that the agreements which have been made are honoured in full.

What agreements have Peter Marshall and the UFU made with the Andrews Labor government with respect to this EBA? What has the UFU got over the government? To my mind it just shows that there are winners and losers in this caper. The volunteers are still sitting on the precipice. They need to feel that they are recognised and respected for the work that they do in their communities every day without pay. My last comment on the CFA issue is from the guys from district 9, who said, 'We want to be included as one CFA'. This government is not supporting that. They are being divisive.

There are many other things that have happened in the last two years, and I would like to touch on a couple of them. Firstly, there is the timber security of supply. In East Gippsland there are many sawmill operators whose futures hang in the balance and who almost feel their umbilical cord of supply is being removed by stealth. The Forest Industry Taskforce is in operation. They have put out a statement of intent, but there is no end result to this. What will happen? It will just be by stealth. Auswest Timbers in East Gippsland are looking to substantially invest in infrastructure to help create further jobs and value-added products that can enter the market and be a fantastic asset, but again they have been left hanging because their contracts will expire in another six months with nothing coming. This is not good enough.

Turning to water supply, currently water storage levels in our city reservoirs are at about 72.5 per cent. Despite this fact, the government is forging ahead with an order for 50 litres of desalinated water from the Wonthaggi plant in order to justify its existence. This means that the average bill payer across Melbourne will be funding something that they just do not need to fund. Again, it seems to me to be yet another waste of money and a change in policy on where the government should be directing their energies.

Turning to crime, the Minister for Police, Ms Neville, spoke about how she was going to increase numbers within the police force. Under our government there was a huge explosion in police force members entering the market over our four-year term. Around 1900 protective services officers were put on the beat as well. Minister Neville would not comment when asked about policing resources going to regional Victoria and specifically to Gippsland. I have been told by police on the beat that task forces have been set up, and that is all well and good, but police resources are being redirected from police stations into task forces and not replaced, so there is a vacuum.

Tragically we have also seen an increase in crime across Gippsland. Police are doing a tremendous job, but they are under-resourced. It is with no joy that I speak about this government's two-year anniversary. In many instances for country Victoria there has been a lack of support from this government, as has been evident from my contribution.

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — The eve of the two-year anniversary of the Andrews Labor government in Victoria is a good opportunity for me to rise and pick up a number of the elements Ms Bath talked about in her contribution. I note at the outset that we do have one thing in common — if not our politics, then the region that we represent. Living in Gippsland, as we both do, we both see firsthand the state of everything from the environment to jobs creation, from the delivery of health outcomes through to education outcomes and public transport. What we do differ on, however, is the positions we take on the degree of the government's success in creating and driving positive and intergenerational change within this part of regional Victoria.

It is probably stating the bleeding obvious to say that an opposition's job is to oppose, but it warrants saying in this regard. The way in which this particular motion has been drafted sets it up to be nothing more than an exercise in verbal opposition and naysaying without any constructive options for improvement. This is a really cheap way to be in opposition, it is a really easy way to be in opposition and it is a way that enables those opposite to cut all the corners that they need to cut in this new post-truth environment in which we apparently live. It is a way that enables them to conclude that anything that exists now as a social or economic challenge, whether in metropolitan areas, in regional centres or in rural parts of the state, never existed as a problem under the former government and has only now come to light and become a tsunami or a cavalcade, caravan or litany of disasters — any sort of collective noun that you can possibly think of to

describe a woeful state of affairs in Victoria — when in fact this cheap exercise in opposition ignores some of the fundamental truths that exist in this state.

First and foremost, we have seen a return to economic surplus and a return to a very healthy economic environment in Victoria, due not in small part to the way in which this government, as was also promised by those now in opposition in the lead-up to the election, facilitated a long-term lease of the port of Melbourne alongside a number of preconditions that were designed to maximise the output and capacity of the existing port to return a record amount of money to the state coffers for the purposes of infrastructure and investment. This is no small feat. Victoria has managed to secure \$9.72 billion, I believe, for the state coffers in exchange for the 50-year lease of the port of Melbourne. This money, in addition to the agriculture fund of \$200 million, which was announced by the Premier at a farm in Bunyip — yes, indeed that is in Gippsland, so the Premier is no stranger to my part of the world — will in fact make sure that we make the necessary investment into our region, along with a minimum 10 per cent spend of that \$9.72 billion into the regions.

This is, however, not the end of the story. We have also seen, to pick up Ms Bath's cheap and corner-cutting angle in opposing what has been achieved by way of social and economic progress in the region, the decision by Engie to close the Hazelwood plant and to cease production on and from the end of March 2017. This is something which, it has confirmed, had no relationship to a change in coal royalties, which the state government increased so that they would be on par with other states. Interestingly enough, and to go back to my opening remarks, those opposite would have us believe that this was a new tax — a woeful imposition upon energy users and mine operators. However, they were prepared to sell short the value of Victorian assets until such time as we saw fit to put them on par with those of other states.

In terms of valuing commodities, it is a desperate stretch by those opposite to say that this government does not value the regions when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. We are not, and nor have we ever been, the party that referred to regional Victoria as 'the toenails of the state'. Let us talk about Gippsland for a moment. I am a little bit biased; I do love the region, and I do love what has happened under the Andrews Labor government since its election in 2014. We have seen two budgets which have delivered record investment and funding into the area. We have reopened the Hazelwood mine fire inquiry, and we have conducted and concluded a second inquiry.

At the outset let us note that while Morwell was full of smoke, while people were wandering around in a state of confusion and distress, the answer to the policy problem was not for the coalition government, as it then was, to come to Morwell, be available and talk with people about what they wanted and needed, but in fact to offer them holiday houses as a means by which to escape the area. If that is not an example of being out of touch, I am yet to come up with something that could be more on point as far as the way in which the now opposition runs a government. What we also saw in relation to the mine fire was the handing out of buckets, mops, gloves and a pamphlet to assist people with cleaning out potentially toxic ash from the roof cavities of their houses. What we saw was the government AWOL, completely absent.

Mr O'Sullivan — We were not.

Ms SHING — You were nowhere to be seen. The chief health officer, the government, the then Premier and Mr Russell North in the Legislative Assembly, who was at that point in time the minister, I believe, were missing in action. The government ran around like the proverbial chook without a head, looking to blame anyone and everyone rather than coming up with solutions that would assist a community that was suffering from terrible need, a community which had been ignored yet again after a series of very significant events that led to this emergency.

We had a partial evacuation. The information was insufficient. We had a triage and medical centre set up, as I understand it, three weeks after the fire began. That is 21 days when people had no information about where to go and no assistance in terms of information or engagement from the then government.

Mr O'Sullivan — You're making this up, Harriet.

Ms SHING — It is actually all on the record. It is interesting that Mr O'Sullivan says — I will take his interjection up there — 'You're making this all up, Harriet'. If I am making this up, then it is unfortunate that those opposite have not learned any of the lessons from the Hazelwood mine fire. We reopened the inquiry. We committed a total of more than \$80 million to create a health zone and to create assistance in relation to public lung function, in relation to preventative action so that people can better understand their health needs and priorities and in relation to making sure that Latrobe Regional Hospital and the community health services were better resourced to provide assistance.

We have a series of challenges in and around the Latrobe Valley which have not been a mystery to anyone. We have socio-economic and social challenges which have warranted investment for a significant period of time post privatisation. What we saw in the Latrobe Valley was a series of neglects from a series of governments. And you know what? It is no secret, in fact, that the Premier, Daniel Andrews, has said to the community of East Gippsland, 'We got it wrong previously when we didn't engage post privatisation'. We have not yet heard any such truth from the opposition, which has not learned. What we have had is dirt sheets circulated and lies circulated — cheap, corner-cutting opposition — by those who sit on the coalition benches, who seek to actually talk down the Latrobe Valley and who seek to diminish the intense resilience of the community and the pride that exists in this part of the world.

What we have done is engage regularly. What we have done assiduously is make sure that the government's position in relation to the value of the communities of the Latrobe Valley, the workers of the Latrobe Valley and the industries of the Latrobe Valley and beyond is well understood. We have done that locally, we have done that across domestic energy markets and we have done it internationally as well. For those who would accuse us of not having done enough, I would say to them we have \$266 million in investment that we have announced since Engie made its decision to close Hazelwood.

We have seen from the federal minister, Darren Chester, an initial comment on public radio, on Gippsland FM, that the commonwealth would match whatever the state government contributed, so we saw after the Andrews Labor government committed an initial \$40 million the commonwealth government come out admirably and say, 'We'll give you \$43 million, an initial support package plus \$20 million for planning and infrastructure'. I do not know what sort of size or scale of an infrastructure project you will get as far as bang for your buck goes on \$20 million to \$23-odd million, but we have not yet heard anything further from Josh Frydenberg or from Darren Chester apart from sympathetic platitudes about how the workers of the valley need to be taken care of.

What we have here is a great big set of words that do not amount to much from those opposite, who would have everyone believe that they in fact know what is best for regional Victoria — that in fact the Andrews Labor government has failed to deliver. Well, \$266 million is not failing to deliver. A Latrobe Valley Authority being set up to actually cut bureaucracy, which is something Ms Bath appears not to understand,

is not actually missing the point but rather focused on direct and community-based solutions.

I noted from Ms Bath's contribution that she, along with Mr Russell Northe and Mr Gary Blackwood in the Legislative Assembly, turned up to the regional summit. It was lovely to see members of the opposition come along to the first regional summit, which was completely oversubscribed, to meet with other Gippslanders about community-focused solutions to the challenges and the opportunities that we have, and for once it was fantastic to hear them not daring to talk down a region which outwardly they are supposed to represent. They are required under the duties and the obligations of their posts as elected representatives to represent, and in fact all we have seen them do is talk down Gippsland and talk down the incredible opportunities that we have and the wonderful things that we can achieve and that we are already achieving.

Where they fail to celebrate Gippsland, they talk down and diminish and demean everybody who lives in this part of the world. They diminish and they demean in the same way that they sought to do in the course of the inquiry into unconventional gas. They sought to actually make sure that the views of people on the ground around the importance of agricultural, environmental and other benefits for the area would not see the light of day in the context of a competing priority which they saw as being more important — namely, jobs, jobs, jobs and dollars, dollars, dollars with an inherently uncertain industry.

Mr O'Sullivan — Rubbish.

Ms SHING — It is interesting to hear Mr O'Sullivan say 'Rubbish' from across the chamber, because I hear some cracks emerging in the coalition, where on the one hand we have the National Party saying, 'Fracking — bad, because the Victorian Farmers Federation has said that fracking is bad, and everybody else who sits on the ground in our regional parts of Victoria all of a sudden have made clear to us that unconventional onshore gas industries are not a good idea. We'd best fall in line, or we may be punished for it at the ballot box'. Yet, conversely, Matthew Guy and those opposite who were part of the unconventional gas inquiry came out and said, 'Let's keep the moratorium going for a nominal period of time but then just revisit it. Let's keep that uncertainty going. Let's keep farmers who live and work everywhere from Mallacoota to Seaspray and back to Pakenham, as well as around the Otway Basin, concerned so that they do not sleep at night around the future and the opportunities that they may not have if their watertables are poisoned'.

Let us talk about education. Let us talk about the record investments that we have put into education. Let us talk about the \$1.2 billion that we have restored in TAFE funding. Let us make sure that we understand we are talking about intergenerational change. If you create skills and pathways that are matched to jobs that industries want and need — where you create jobs and pathways that are linked into food and fibre, new energy technology and advanced manufacturing — and you create those opportunities for people, you set people up to be able to live, to work and to contribute in their own communities. And that is exactly what we are doing.

What we have seen in Victoria is a state that is putting people first, and for that we will never apologise. What we have seen is breakfast clubs, spectacles for children and the school Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund. What we have seen is record investment in skills and training. We have seen better opportunities and better options for people than ever existed under the former government, and it is breathtaking that they would even seek to cut further corners with this ridiculous opposition motion.

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I also rise to make a contribution on this motion moved by Ms Wooldridge, which marks two years of another Labor government. Can I say that having served in this Parliament for 20 years, 10 years in the Assembly and 10 years in the upper house, this government — the Daniel Andrews government — is absolutely the worst since I was elected to Parliament.

Mr Mulino interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — No, absolutely the worst. However, I did miss out on Joan Kirner's government, which possibly would have been up for contention, and I note both were led by leaders from the same faction.

I would call this government the 50 cent government, with a 50 cent leader. He only tells half the truth; you never get the full dollar. If you actually read through the platform for 2014, it is bloody laughable — full of lies, spin and deceit. What we have seen is an absence of any sense and certainly an absence of scruples. This government is so ideologically driven, I assume by the Premier, Daniel Andrews, that it wars with everyone, because his mission is to look after his political mates and allies. If that means warring internally with those who are not in his faction, he will do it. We saw Adem Somyurek and his office being subjected to a comprehensive demolition job, and then later we saw Steve Herbert, who is a very nice bloke, but who should have been subjected to a similar process, being

defended to the hilt until Mr Herbert himself actually took the decision to step down. Even within his own government this man — Daniel Andrews — is ideologically driven and filled with hate of anyone who is different.

The social policies that this government has rolled out show that all of their words about diversity, cohesion and freedoms are all bull-dust. It is all rubbish. This is a man who thinks that by extinguishing religious freedom, taking it out of the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, somehow we are improving democracy and strengthening multiculturalism. The simple fact is that if you do not have religious freedom, you do not have multiculturalism and you do not have democracy.

If you have children being inculcated with left-wing ideology and gender theory by crackpots such as Roz Ward, who was on about bullying but is happy to bully someone who has a different political view and who tried to grab and intimidate that person in the street — and we have seen the photographs — and if he thinks this is an appropriate person to develop material for the inculcation of children, then clearly this man has no common sense. I have just got to speak about Safe Schools for a moment, having been a schoolteacher in the public school system for 15 years. If this man thinks that his Safe Schools program is simply an anti-bullying program, he obviously thinks that Victorians are total mugs.

Every teacher, every parent and every person should be teaching respect and advocating against bullying. That does not mean you have to convert or you have to peddle left-wing ideology to children whose parents and own communities may hold a very different values system. That does not mean that one value system is necessarily more important than the other. Our own values define who we are. Our identity is embedded in those values. Parents are the primary socialisation agents. It is not the role of schools, dictated by government policy or mandated by government policy, to be shaping the morals of children. Teach them respect, but leave the value systems to those who actually have the greatest vested interest in those children, and that is their parents and their families.

To be directing children and young people to trawl through porn sites and to read through personal classified ads, to contrive classroom activities where they script their own personal classified ads looking for partners of the same sex and to have role-play activities pretending to be a person of a same-sex inclination is not anti-bullying; it is brainwashing. It is an absolute abuse of government power, responsibility and decency to be attempting to wrest the inculcation of values from

parents, families and communities and to be doing so in secrecy, thus encouraging the alienation of children from their parents. It is an absolute disgrace. That does not mean that a child should be bullied on the basis of anything — whether they have freckles, whether they are fat or whether they can speak English. I could not speak English for a year. I was beaten up every Friday at school at sport. I know what bullying is all about. I have stopped many children from being bullies, but I will not stand by while this Premier and this government bully people out of the values that define them. I will not put up with it. That is more akin to communism and left-wing and right-wing authoritarian regimes. It has nothing to do with democracy.

This government put out an honesty reform platform in 2014. However, they were happy to institute a system of roting public funds to enable themselves to be shoehorned into government on very slender margins in a handful of seats. Where have those investigations gone? Why has that not been referred to IBAC as, for example, Premier Ted Baillieu referred his own chief of staff for investigation, who was ultimately cleared? There is a stark contrast in standards. One man, decent and honest, notwithstanding any criticisms that people may have, and Daniel Andrews, I am sorry, who is absolutely the opposite — again half-truths.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence ended up suddenly being focused entirely on violence against women. Forget about violence against elders, violence against children or violence in same-sex relationships — any form of violence. No, it has been hijacked predominately for party-political benefit. I went to some of their consultations, mostly giving speaking opportunities to local Labor MPs. I was absolutely appalled when I went to one designed for members of the multicultural communities and run by the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Fiona Richardson, attended by Marsha Thomson, that I, as a female parliamentary colleague, was not even acknowledged. That is the hypocrisy of this government. Their notion of success is lighting up 16 buildings in the colour orange for 16 days. That is real action against family violence or violence against women! I am sorry, this government governs for itself, for its mates, for the cafe latte set and for the left wing.

I was really disappointed that Mr Greg Barber, who I do respect — I think he has a keen, sharp mind — used the opportunity of this motion to basically just bag the Liberal Party. And look, the Liberal Party is not beyond reproach — —

Mr Barber interjected.

Mrs PEULICH — No, no, no. But more so, Mr Barber, to be talking about multiculturalism when just the other night at the Islamic Council of Victoria annual general meeting and dinner your brother-in-law, Senator Di Natale, was blowing the dog whistle, extrapolating comments made by Minister Dutton to somehow be applying to all Muslims and saying that the target of anti-terrorism laws were Muslims. They were the targets. If that is not dog whistling, I do not know what is. I go out of my way as shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs to go to as many Islamic events as I possibly can, as well as to other faith community and multicultural events. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to make people feel included, valued and respected; to make them feel that they belong to this society so that they have a vested interest in it — —

Mr Barber — I don't think what Peter Dutton said — —

Mrs PEULICH — Well, I am sorry, what Mr Dutton said or did not say — and I actually am not sure exactly what he said — is not what Senator Di Natale claimed he said. It is deplorable. I was actually getting text messages out of that event quoting Senator Di Natale. They were appalled.

I turn to just a few other things where this government is clearly not interested in representing people. The crime rate is just out of control. In Narre Warren South more than 50 per cent of the population think that it is totally out of control. They feel frightened in their own homes, and what has the government done? It has done nothing. It continues to close stations. It has pulled together task forces; however, that has left many stations dramatically undermanned, in most instances with only 50 per cent of the police officers that they need. The laws are lax. This situation is getting out of hand, and there is a sense of crisis and urgency. People feel afraid in their own homes, and this government has done nothing except spin.

The cost of living continues to be a problem, yet what do we have? We have economic vandalism in the commitment to the closure of Hazelwood. We have 600 years of brown coal reserves to give us the competitive advantage — the edge — of having an efficient industry and a competitive industry. This government wants to close it down because they want to protect two or three inner-metro seats from the Greens. Basically that is what it is about — bugger Victorians and their household energy bills that they are wilting under, caving in under — 'Let's do this to save our inner-metro seats'. It is, again, a deplorable government.

The drug problem continues to be rife. Families are at their wits' end. In particular it is ice, but there are many other types of drugs, yet we have seen no leadership on this pernicious social problem.

They claim to have, or they want to have, the environmental vote, yet they are happy to roll out projects such as sky rail without a second thought to the number of trees that may be destroyed and are being destroyed as a result of it, without regard to the international obligations under Ramsar and without actually referring the sky rail project on the Frankston to Dandenong line to the federal department for assessment — no regard whatsoever. Yes, they committed to level crossing separations. In actual fact I fought very hard to put that issue on the agenda, primarily motivated by what I saw at the Clayton level crossing near the Monash Medical Centre, which was built under a Labor government and relocated — the level crossing should have been dealt with at the same time — and what I saw were ambulances being held up all the time. I worked very hard to raise that issue, but what do we have? We have got a divided community.

This man is destroying the physical amenity of the communities and the peace of mind that people enjoy in their own homes. There has been what he claims is consultation — they are going through the motions, spending lots and lots of public funds in making people feel as if they are part of the consultation. No-one believes for one minute that they are actually listening. My heart goes out to people like Chris Papapavlou in Noble Park next to whose house — I think it is only a few metres away — sky rail is being elevated, which will have a full view of his backyard. He lives there with his mother. There is also the woman who of course spent all of her money renovating her home that she was teaching music in — it will of course now have sky rail running past it. No, it did not go through cabinet. There was no business case. I am sure that Richard Wynne would have had a few things to say, because it was in direct conflict with planning policy which encouraged densification around transport nodes. No, this Premier just goes straight ahead, because it is looking after mates.

Then there is the Country Fire Authority (CFA) debacle, basically betraying 50 000 volunteers in order to satisfy some commitment he made to a union hack and political friend who helped him on the polling booths with a membership of 880. Volunteerism and the CFA, which is an iconic institution, is the stuff that defines what Australia is all about. We are a country built on the back of volunteerism. Those volunteers are the ones who we turn to in times of fire safety needs in

their own communities, yet this Premier is prepared to throw them under the bus.

The time is lacking. There is a clear lack of leadership. This can also be seen in my own shadow portfolio of multicultural affairs. The Victorian Multicultural Commission has been integrated into the department. I am not sure exactly how many staff they have. It has become an operation for the elite, not for the working class, hardworking, aspirational people from multicultural backgrounds who have come here to build a new life. There is no clarity about the funding program, there is a lack of leadership on the issues and there is the African situation — I have finally forced the minister to take some action, to formulate an advisory committee and indeed to start releasing some funds to help our African communities, but it has taken two years. Fifteen minutes is not long enough to condemn this government to what it is, and that is a big F — a fail. It has failed Victorians and it has failed multicultural communities, and this indeed deserves to be noted by this motion.

Mr MELHEM (Western Metropolitan) — I also rise to speak on Ms Wooldridge's motion. In doing so I will just pick up a couple of points in her motion — about budget deficits, for example. Obviously the opposition failed to read the budget papers. Last time I checked we had a surplus last financial year and the year before that, but nevertheless, do not let the truth stand in the way of a good story — that would basically describe the whole motion. I will not even bother talking about the wasted four years when this lot was in government in which they did bugger all. That is why we had to pick up the pieces and play catch-up — so that we could actually start delivering the services and infrastructure Victorians need and deserve. Because of four years of wasted time by the other side we have had to play a lot of catch-up. And guess what? I think we are doing pretty well, and I think there are some good stories I am going to tell in the next 13 minutes, which is the remaining time allocated, about what we have done for the last two years. I am not going to waste any more time talking about what the opposition has done, even though I may use some comparison from time to time.

Let us talk on the job front. In the first 12 months the Andrews Labor government created 95 300 jobs, where the coalition in comparison created 12 100 in their first year. There were 162 100 jobs created to September 2016, whereas the figure for their whole four years was 96 000. So that is a comparison. In terms of full-time jobs created there were 37 300 in the first year, whereas 11 300, in comparison, were created by the other mob. There were 89 300 jobs created to September 2016,

whereas over the other side's full term they created 24 200. If the opposition wants to talk about comparisons, that is a good comparison for you.

I refer to the AAA rating. Victoria is probably now one of the best states in the commonwealth. We can actually say we have a rating that is solid and is not under threat, unlike the Liberal Party and its federal counterparts, seeing as their AAA rating, under the Liberal Party's watch, is actually under threat over the next 6 to 12 months. Mind you, when Labor was in government before the last Liberal government we had a AAA credit rating from 1999 to 2010, so the runs are on the board for that.

I turn to health. Let us talk about investment in health. Where the former government were basically cutting — they cut over \$1 billion from the health fund in four years in office — we have delivered basically \$2.4 billion in health services and programs in just two years. That is in addition to the normal spend. To give some figures as examples, in the 2015–16 budget there was \$14.564 billion in comparison with the opposition in 2011–12 with \$11.954 billion, so that is another statistic to compare.

In my own electorate of Western Metropolitan Region the government has invested in health. For example, it provided \$200 million — and construction has commenced — for the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's Hospital, which will have 237 beds, 39 special care cots, four theatres and additional clinics. Eighty-five million dollars has been invested already in Werribee hospital, which will add six operating theatres and support services and 64 new inpatient beds, including critical-care beds. Also in the 2016–17 budget another \$61.3 million was invested in Western Health to repair existing infrastructure in Sunshine and Footscray as well. That is in my area in relation to health; we are definitely investing, whereas the former government basically decided that instead of investing in health it would go and cut.

Another thing in terms of comparing the scorecards is elective surgery waiting lists, for example. Under the watch of those opposite, as the March 2013 figures show, there were 50 000 people waiting for elective surgery, whilst we had managed to deliver as at 30 June 2016 the lowest elective surgery list in six years. We had cut that down to 37 004 cases. In terms of emergency departments we reduced to 96 the number of patients waiting longer than 24 hours for a bed or to go home in the April–June 2016 quarter. Under the watch of those opposite more than 1000 patients were waiting longer than 24 hours for a

bed or to go home; the figures peaked at 1154 in September 2012.

The list goes on. I go on to schools. That is another area where the former government decided in its wisdom to actually cut costs. It cut almost \$1 billion from the education budget over four years. What have we done? We actually put in an additional \$4 billion in the 2015–16 budget, and in the 2016–17 budget we added another \$1.1 billion to school funding, which includes 42 new schools in the pipeline, with a \$287 million state budget for the new schools. We have also got the school upgrades program of \$1.8 billion, and in relation to uniforms there was a basic investment of \$15.5 million to provide uniforms for kids whose parents cannot afford to buy their uniforms — to assist them to go to school so they can feel normal like any other kids who can afford to buy a uniform and go to school. For those kids who cannot afford it we came to the rescue there and helped these kids, and it is the right thing to do.

Gonski I will not even mention. Too much time has been spent on Gonski. We know what the other side's commitment is. They failed to commit any additional money to schools as required, leaving an \$850 million hole. We committed to fix that with \$747 million over four years to make sure we continue to be the education state.

The next one I want to touch on is public transport. That was one of the most neglected sectors under the former government, but this government sees public transport and public transport infrastructure as the most important thing in this state; hence a \$19.6 billion infrastructure investment was committed in the first budget, 2015–16 and a further \$3.2 billion in transport funding over four years from 2016–17.

We are talking about the following: removing 50 level crossings over a period of time, of which 37 will be completed or on the way by 2018. We have seen the successes on that project of removing these level crossings. In my own electorate we are happy to celebrate; I was pleased to join residents in St Albans to celebrate the removal of the Furlong Road crossing and the Main Road West crossing, one of the deadliest railway crossings in the state of Victoria. We were celebrating the removal of those. There is the Melton Highway crossing near Watergardens; the contract has now been awarded to BMD Group to commence construction on removing that railway level crossing in my electorate.

Melbourne Metro is now going to become a reality. It is not something we are going to just talk about; it is

going to actually happen. There is \$518 million for the upgrade of the Ballarat line, which is very welcome, and also \$280 million to fund 27 new VLocity carriages. And that is the other thing: upgrading railway infrastructure does not mean just building new stations or rail tracks. You need to order the stock.

Unfortunately the former coalition government did not learn that lesson. The former Labor government started the regional rail project, but the coalition government forgot during their four years to actually order any stock for when that job was finished, so our government finished up with not enough rail stock to actually use on the track.

Also we just announced not long ago orders for 65 new trains for metropolitan areas, 48 VLocity carriages and 19 X'trapolis trains. A more important issue, and one that is forgotten, is that it is now mandatory that 60 per cent of these trains has to be local content, and credit is due to the Andrews Labor government because it does care about jobs and it does care about local jobs. That is why part of this contract, which was only signed a few days ago, is a requirement for 60 per cent local content. The government policy was 50 per cent, but we went one step further, and it is now confirmed at 60 per cent local content.

The list of infrastructure projects goes on. In terms of major roads and infrastructure projects there is the \$1 billion commitment to regional and outer suburban maintenance contracts to be spent. VicRoads is currently, for example, trying a new model and finding a better way to fund and build new roads in the suburbs. In my electorate, Western Metropolitan Region, the first package has gone out to build six new roads, and also included in that is the maintenance of — I think from memory — 7000 kilometres of roads over the next 20 years to give enough incentive to the private sector to make sure we have done things in a very efficient manner and to save taxpayer money, but more importantly to make sure we can sort of unblock all the deadlocks when people want to take their kids to school or go to work. So that is a new model, which I think should be a successful one.

Talking about my electorate again, the West Gate distributor is going to become a reality. The duplicated —

Mr Morris — The western distributor.

Mr MELHEM — The western distributor — thank you, Mr Morris — the second crossing to the city from the west. The widening of CityLink and the Tullamarine Freeway is going reasonably well, so that should finish up soon, and that is going to sort of make

it easier for people to travel west, north, to the airport and to the city. There are many other projects that have been commissioned under this government. There is massive investment in road infrastructure projects. It is unprecedented in the state's history. It is the best time to invest when interest rates are low and when we have a AAA credit rating. We need to start investing for the future to make sure we have an efficient economy and people are able to travel from point A to point B, and that is why we are investing so much in that.

That is why I want to congratulate also the Treasurer and the Minister for Ports for doing such a great job in making sure we got an excellent outcome for the long-term lease of the port of Melbourne. Getting \$9.7 billion enables us to invest in these sorts of projects that are much needed in Victoria. They have done a fantastic job. In fact I think the opposition might have choked on that, because they did not expect there to be such a good outcome. Again, I want to congratulate the ministers and the whole of government for doing such a great job and making sure we have now got \$9.7 billion we can invest in these vital projects.

The list goes on and on in relation to what we have achieved in two years. Family violence was talked about. The Premier said within 100 days he was going to establish a royal commission into family violence. He has done that, and there is a lot of action taking place on that front. We should be proud as Victorians that we are the first state in the country to do that and that we are leading the country in the fight against family violence. There is a lot of investment being put into making sure we implement all the recommendations coming out of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. There is investment in multiculturalism as well to make sure that we are proud to be Victorian; it does not matter where we come from. I will finish off on that point.

Mr Barber talked earlier about leaders of the Liberal Party attacking a particular ethnic group, the Lebanese Muslims. I am a Lebanese Christian. I am not in that category Peter Dutton talked about, but what he said about the Lebanese Muslims I think was an outrage. I think it is a shame. In fact if Malcolm Turnbull had any decency, he would sack Minister Dutton for insulting Lebanese Muslims. They are honest Australians; 99.99 per cent of Lebanese Muslims are decent citizens of this country. They came here for a better life. We do not punish the hundreds of thousands of decent Lebanese Muslims because of the actions of a few — the actions of the 22 whom we ought condemn. We have no place in this country for terrorism or for anybody to basically give their first loyalty to other

countries or other religions. We all stand on a unity ticket on that. To condemn the whole population of Lebanese Muslims because of the acts of a few is an absolute disgrace.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I rise to speak on the motion moved by Ms Wooldridge. I note that it states:

... the two-year anniversary of the Andrews Labor government has been categorised by two years of divisive government ...

I certainly concur wholeheartedly with that first part of Ms Wooldridge's motion. I just reflect upon the impact that this government has had on my own electorate of Western Victoria Region, and I truly believe that the way this government has gone about governing Victoria really has been about picking winners and losers and choosing those that they agree with, and those they disagree with can go and please themselves.

This has been nowhere more evident than in what we have seen with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) and Country Fire Authority (CFA) enterprise bargaining agreement debacle. We saw the Premier choose the UFU members and the thuggish tactics that they employed in the 2014 campaign, and he has endorsed those tactics at the expense of the tens of thousands of CFA volunteers across the breadth of our state who ensure that our community is kept safe every day.

I note that just earlier this week we saw a significant fire up in the north of the state around Swan Hill. Unfortunately we saw two firefighters having to be taken to hospital due to smoke inhalation and a CFA truck being engulfed by flames and significantly damaged. That is a stark reminder about the importance of the work the CFA does in ensuring that our community is kept safe. But that is being put at risk as a result of the actions of the Andrews government and the commitments Daniel Andrews made to Peter Marshall. We found out more about this when Peter Marshall attempted to email only Labor MPs but accidentally sent that email around to other MPs, including coalition MPs. We see that Peter Marshall is seeking special treatment. He is seeking favours from Daniel Andrews. One must ask: what does Peter Marshall have on Daniel Andrews? Is it photographs, is it a video, is it audio recordings? What were the commitments that Peter Marshall was given by Daniel Andrews, and what did Peter Marshall give in return?

We saw the fake firefighters out at the polling booths prior to the 2014 election, intimidating female Liberal candidates in marginal seats, which I viewed as

absolutely shocking and something that should be condemned by the Premier rather than endorsed through the actions he has displayed since the election.

I come a little closer to home and think about what Ballarat has missed out on as a result of Daniel Andrews coming to power. The VicRoads relocation to Ballarat would have meant 600 jobs and over \$40 million of annual economic activity in the CBD of Ballarat. That is a missed opportunity. Denis Napthine, the then Premier, came to Ballarat. It was a great day in Ballarat when the announcement was made about the relocation of VicRoads.

I note that the Treasurer has said that VicRoads is going to move from its current location in Kew, but he is yet to decide who is going to be the winner and who is going to be the loser in that particular decision. That matter has been sitting in cabinet for many, many months without a decision being made. It is critically important that VicRoads does come to Ballarat, and the coalition certainly remains committed to relocating VicRoads to Ballarat if it is not moved by this current government at some time in the near future. I have heard that Daniel Andrews made some comments about some jobs at some point coming to Ballarat — all very airy-fairy. I must say the people of Ballarat are getting sick and tired of these weasel words from the Premier.

We have a very fast growing suburb in Ballarat — the suburb of Lucas. Lucas is a suburb people are choosing to move to, including people with young families. Indeed there are many, many young families moving there. There is a primary school in the adjoining suburb of Alfredton, and Alfredton Primary School is absolutely bursting at the seams. There is a huge need for a new primary school, which again the coalition — the Liberal Party and the Liberal candidates — recognised prior to the 2014 election, which is why we made a commitment to build a primary school in Lucas.

The Catholic education office has committed to building a primary school, and indeed it is due to be opened, I believe, for the 2018 school year, so the Catholic education office understands there is a need for students of faith and for parents who choose to send their children to a Catholic school to have a primary school in Lucas. However, the government is still yet to commit to building one. It is an absolute no-brainer that we need a primary school in Lucas. I acknowledge the hard work of Assembly members Louise Staley, the member for Ripon, and Nick Wakeling, our shadow education minister, in advocating for the incredible need for a primary school in Lucas.

Mount Clear College, another fabulous school in Ballarat, has missed out on significant funding. We made a \$13 million commitment to rebuild the school at Mount Clear. There is a great school community there. There is great school leadership, there are great students at Mount Clear College, but the simple fact is that the school is falling down around them. The principal is having to invest significant funds just to keep the children safe at that school, and that is not what a principal should have to spend their time on. They should be worrying about getting great educational outcomes for their students rather than having to continually be fixing ripped carpet and the like to ensure that children are not going to hurt themselves at school.

Prior to the election the Premier spoke very loudly about making Victoria the education state. We have not heard so much about that from him lately, because he is clearly stepping away from that commitment, just as he did from the commitment to make the Canadian State Forest, as it once was, into a state park. This was again policy on the run by Daniel Andrews and the member for Buninyong in the Assembly, Geoff Howard. They did not realise that if you created a state park out of the Canadian State Forest, you would not be able to take your dogs for a walk in there, you would not be able to ride your horses in there, as many locals do. Again they had to backflip from that promise and step away from it.

Another critically important development in Ballarat is the Ballarat railway precinct. I am sorry Ms Pulford is not here to hear my contribution about this, because the Ballarat railway precinct is something that I was very pleased to be able to work on with former Premier Denis Naphthine when I was involved in the Ballarat council, and I think it is a signature project of Denis Naphthine. He certainly believed in the importance of the railway precinct. It is a significant landholding within Ballarat's CBD, and it has been incredibly underutilised. Dr Naphthine actually went through the master planning process and really drove a critically important project for Ballarat, but under Labor we have seen this project stall. We have seen the government freeze out the community from any possibility of having a conversation about that site.

Commuters are travelling every day on the train, and they want certainty around car parking and the like. Again, the government has been absolutely silent on this, which brings me to those trains that do come and go from the Ballarat station. Under Jacinta Allan and Labor we saw absolute chaos on V/Line throughout the launch of the regional rail link in June of 2015. We saw the V/Line system grind to a halt — indeed grind to

such a halt that buses were replacing every single V/Line train. Wheel wear was causing a significant problem, and the government had no idea what they were going to do to fix it — absolutely no idea whatsoever. Commuters were not able to get to work. On many occasions I caught that service and spoke with commuters who were just so frustrated with the lack of foresight of this government to understand any challenges whatsoever faced by the train service to Ballarat. Indeed I spoke to many who had decided that they were going to pack up and move back to Melbourne because life was so hard commuting to Ballarat, which was in complete contrast to what we saw under the Baillieu-Naphthine governments, where we had a train service meeting the needs of the community. There was a significant push from the community to return to that old timetable. People in the community were pleading with the government, saying, 'You've made an absolute meal of this. Go back to what the Libs were doing, because it was actually working back then, and you guys have just created absolute chaos'.

Ballarat Base Hospital in Ballarat is an incredibly important piece of health infrastructure, not just for the people of Ballarat and immediate surrounds but for all of western Victoria. It services a huge catchment area and is one of the largest employers in Ballarat. Under the former Liberal government we saw significant investment in the Ballarat hospital. We saw the building of a helipad as well as a multilevel car park that was desperately needed there. We also saw the building of a new building on a new site on Drummond Street that has capacity for operating theatres.

One might ask what is happening with that building, and I can tell you what is happening with that building. It still remains empty. Indeed there is a ghost wing in the Ballarat hospital. We have an elective surgery waiting list that is climbing. It is growing. The number of people on the hospital waiting list is increasing, and those who know anything about what is happening at Ballarat Health Services understand they are working at absolute capacity. There is no more capacity with the operating theatres that are currently operating. They need those operating theatres to be fitted out so they can do the work that they need to do to be able to service the Ballarat community.

This call has fallen on deaf ears. Of course again the Liberal government with Mr Ramsay's strong advocacy prior to the last election committed to the outfitting of those operating theatres. Indeed the Ballarat *Courier* I thought contrasted the commitments of both the Liberal and Labor parties well just a couple of days before the election, when they said you can either choose Labor,

and they will give you a football oval, or choose the Liberal Party, and they will give you new operating theatres and an upgraded hospital. I think that contrast paints us and them fairly well in terms of what their priorities are.

This government also saw fit to cut the country roads and bridges program, which goes again to exemplify what this government is about. They are about a city-centric focus; they do not recognise that Victoria extends beyond the ring-road, and they decided to cut that \$1 million of funding per year to the 40 smallest councils and pork-barrel that money in and around the Premier's own electorate of Mulgrave to upgrade those bridges on the Monash Freeway. It is an absolute abomination to think that the government could possibly describe its program as the Stronger Country Bridges program while it is upgrading bridges in Melbourne.

The Safe Schools issue has been another one that has caused significant consternation in the community, and rightly so, because there is a strong need to understand what it is that our children are being taught at school and a right for schools to be able to decide what is going to be taught to their children. We have school councils, and we have autonomy of those school councils for a reason, and that is because parents themselves know best what their children should be taught at school. As a former teacher I am aghast at some of the things that are present in the Safe Schools program that has been labelled by this government as an anti-bullying program. It is not an anti-bullying program; it is a gender diversity program. This is what this government does: it paints something for what it is not. It is fine if you want to have a gender diversity program, but call it that. Say what it is.

I do note that Roz Ward, the author of this said program, was seen to be harassing someone who appeared to be peacefully counter-protesting at a rally in the city. If this Premier wants to stand by people who are prepared to bully, threaten and intimidate others, then I suppose he is probably reverting to form, because that is what was seen with his treatment of Jane Garrett in the Legislative Assembly, his former minister, whom he chose to throw under the bus when she was being bullied and intimidated by Peter Marshall. He refused to stand up for her then, and he refused to stand up to Roz Ward, who bullies people in public.

We have also got a youth justice crisis. We have got a desalination plant that is being utilised. On day one I am quite sure Daniel Andrews would have said to Lisa Neville, the Minister for Water, 'You've got one job — that is, get that desal plant fired up to make sure that we

don't look like complete fools for what we did in our previous term of government'.

Mr O'Donohue — Don't worry about the police.

Mr MORRIS — Don't worry about the police at all. They will be fine. Ron Iddles has got control of all those guys, and this is what we have seen from this government.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to be able to follow my parliamentary colleague Josh Morris, who I think was just warming up to Ms Wooldridge's motion in relation to noting the two-year anniversary of the Andrews Labor government, which has been categorised by two years of divisive government. I must say when we look back it has been a very long two years, particularly on this side of the chamber, because we have seen one disaster after another in relation to policy implementation by the Andrews government, actions by the Premier himself, actions by respective ministers and the management of their portfolios.

Even today we saw Ms Mikakos struggling to be able to defend her actions in relation to the responsibilities she has in responding to the youth crisis we see in our detention centres in Parkville and Malmsbury, and a facility that was built for hardened criminals is now providing for some of our youth justice offenders in a segregated but still insular part of that prison just outside Geelong.

Mr O'Donohue has for the last two years raised community concerns in relation to the fact that the Andrews government has no control on law and order. Worse still, there is a total lack of respect for our frontline police. There is a total lack of respect for the judiciary system, where we are seeing ongoing repeat offenders going through the system and being spat out again only to reoffend in a couple of hours. I am reminded of Superintendent Daryl Clifton, who at the time was responsible for Geelong command, saying that they were so exasperated and frustrated that they went through hours and hours of police work to investigate crime, apprehend the criminal and have them appear before the court system only to see the court system let those police down by letting offenders out on bail or a misdemeanour offence or a correction order whereby they go and recommit again, and we are seeing this again and again. That is why the communities have lost faith in the way the Andrews government is managing law and order in this state.

I guess from a regional point of view we have highlighted the lack of interest and investment by the

Andrews government in our transport connections. We know our road networks are crumbling, we know our rail networks are failing and we know our service deliveries are not meeting their targets. We know, particularly in regional areas, that we are being let down by the inferior service that is being provided through both rail and road. We know our bus timetables are not meeting the expectations of our more remote rural communities, and we know there have been significant safety issues in relation to some of that deterioration in infrastructure over time.

Much has been said about the desalination plant and the actions of the Minister for Water, Lisa Neville, who is actually the member for Bellarine and the Minister for Police. In fact I will mention that her electorate of Bellarine has one of the highest crime rates in the whole of the state, and she is supposed to be the Minister for Police. She has more police stations closed than open in her own electorate.

But I am digressing, because I actually wanted to refer to her other portfolio of water, which she has managed to stuff up spectacularly in that not only is the desalination plant a billion-dollar white elephant but it is costing every Victorian \$1.8 million per day just to have the plant sitting there, far less have the plant operating. But, true to form, Ms Neville decided in July that she would order 50 gigalitres of water from the plant, supposedly for Geelong's security of supply. As we know now, Geelong's reservoirs are at around 70 per cent to 80 per cent capacity. We know our Melbourne storages are sitting around that sort of capacity, and we know all that water is going to do is sit in the headlands of the Yarra River and never see its way down to Geelong, and it is going to come at a considerable cost to Victorian taxpayer. All in all, this is a total waste of money for the Victorian taxpayer — both the Wonthaggi desalination plant itself, the size of it, but also the fact that Ms Neville had to prove that it does, would and could provide water, despite the fact that Victorians do not need the water. It comes at a cost of \$27 million for that order of 50 gigalitres, which we will not see I suspect in any community in Victoria in the short term.

Every single one of the Andrews government's portfolios has been touched by disaster. In small business Mr Dalidakis, who was dropped into the role by the resignation/sacking of Mr Somyurek, in his very first fine efforts had to convince the Victorian public that in fact we needed a holiday — a grand final eve holiday — without any sort of economic impact assessment about the regions of Victoria in relation to what impact that might have on small business. He just bulldozed his way on and said, 'This is going to be

great for Victoria'. We know it has come at a significant cost to regional Victoria with the cost of labour, whereby many small business owners have had to use their own families to staff their businesses in order not to have to pay the high penalty rates that have been incurred by this holiday. I think this is no. 13 holiday in Victoria — as if Victorians need yet another holiday. But we now see Mr Grunge himself, the Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, is not declaring Christmas Day a public holiday — or he was not until last week.

Ms Symes — Mr Grunge?

Mr RAMSAY — I think he is a relation to Mr Grinch! Now, apparently, he has done a backflip. I am not sure if he has consulted caucus, but he has suddenly decided that maybe Christmas Day will be a public holiday, and we will all be the benefactors of that.

Ms Shing — Grungy? Grinch?

Mr RAMSAY — No, grunge for me today — I can have a grinch and a grunge.

It is not apparent yet whether Mr Dalidakis has talked to the Premier about whether Christmas Day will be a public holiday or not; certainly businesses are not sure whether they are going to pay penalty rates on Christmas Day or not, and it is all very unclear and all very messy, which is typical of the way that Mr Dalidakis is handling his portfolio.

Safe Schools: there is outrage at the Andrews government's forcible intervention into the curriculum of our schools. What was to be a policy that we actually initiated when we were in government for anti-bullying in schools has now turned into social engineering to provide complicity with the Socialist Left. Gender diversity, social engineering — whatever you want to call it — it is a far cry from anti-bullying. This is typical of some of the leftist ideology of the Labor Party in forcing a curriculum onto our children that has a purpose in relation to creating a leftist, socialist, Marxist, communist dimension — —

Ms Shing — Grungist?

Mr RAMSAY — No, I am not sure about grungist. Anyway, engineering thought patterns in our children as young as six and seven years old is an absolute disgrace, and it is no wonder communities right across Victoria are uprising and are saying this is not to happen in our schools. And I suspect we will see a backdown from the government in relation to the introduction of that.

Religious instruction: they could not help themselves in getting their hands all over religious instruction in schools as well. So they have now deemed that religious instruction will not be taught in the normal school hours of the curriculum, but if parents want their children to have some knowledge of the historical teachings of the Bible they can do that after hours. Seriously, this government cannot help itself by getting its fingerprints on the way it is engineering thought patterns in, as I said, the very young and sensitive demographic, our young children, in trying to infiltrate their minds with this social engineering that they are on a pathway to create.

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has been a disaster for the government. It has been a disaster for our 60 000 CFA volunteers. Again, the government has meddled itself a way into causing so much angst. In fact I cannot think of one single issue in regional Victoria that has caused such division as the Andrews government siding with that bullyboy Peter Marshall, secretary of the United Firefighters Union (UFU), in supporting their career firefighters — their union membership coterie of career firefighters — in seeking an enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) that will actually push aside decades and decades of managerial responsibility of volunteer firefighters in this state to create a whole new hierarchy for the United Firefighters Union to be able to expand their membership and have total control of the CFA, as they have with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB).

And let us not forget that the MFB is being strangled at the same pace and in the same way that Peter Marshall is trying to strangle the CFA and gain control. Our hope of course is that with the intervention of the Turnbull government, by introducing new commonwealth legislation that will protect our volunteers, the UFU will not get its way; it will not get the power of veto contained within the clauses of the EBA and it will merely eventuate into what should have been an EBA in relation to salaries and conditions and not into the powerplay that Peter Marshall has been trying to conduct over the course of this negotiation period.

It has been an absolute tragedy for regional Victoria that our CFA volunteer firefighter force has such low morale. Our volunteers have lost all respect for the Andrews government because of the way the Premier has sided with the UFU. I think there has been total condemnation of the way he has treated women in his caucus. The way he treated Jane Garrett in the Legislative Assembly is an absolute disgrace, as is the way he treated Fiona Richardson in the Assembly by sidelining her from her family violence portfolio, and I could go on. The record already shows how he has

treated women in his own cabinet with contempt and the way in which he has bullied and demeaned other members of this place in the Assembly with his smart-arse commentary, whether on the public record or not.

It is a pity that Ms Pulford is not in the chamber, because I am going to mention the proposed puppy farm legislation. It is again another significant and decisive piece of legislation that is being foreshadowed. It has had a second-reading debate in the lower house, but it came to an abrupt halt because there was such a huge outcry about how the proposed legislation will impact particularly on those farmers in regional Victoria who breed dogs to help with the running of their businesses, particularly their sheep farms. They may well now have to register a trading name to be able to breed these dogs for their working businesses, which is an absolute disgrace. The proposed legislation is also capturing those who are breeding and showing purebreds and do not want to register a business name but merely want to register as a breeding activity.

Business interrupted pursuant to standing orders.

STATEMENTS ON REPORTS AND PAPERS

Auditor-General: Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services — Emergency Care

Mr ELASMAR (Northern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Auditor-General's report tabled on 26 October 2016, *Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services — Emergency Care*. A constantly rising demand for emergency hospital services is unfortunately a fact of life in Victoria. Our growing ageing population and an increasing migrant intake, coupled with a strong financial incentive for patients to attend a free medical service, does not help the situation. According to the Auditor-General's report in 2014–15, more than 1.5 million people attended a public emergency department in Victoria, an increase of 8.2 per cent from 2010–11. In comparison, Victoria's population increased by 6.1 per cent between 2010 and 2014. In 2014–15 one-third of presentations — almost 500 000 — were, not surprisingly, at a major metropolitan hospital. However, according to data provided in the Auditor-General's report of the four major hospitals audited, the average length of stay for patients in emergency departments has reduced during the past four years, notwithstanding increases in the volume and complexity of patients presenting to emergency departments.

I must admit I was very surprised to read that other than children less than 4 years of age, due no doubt to most

parents erring on the side of caution, 20-to-24-year-olds presented as the next highest intake at emergency departments. Excessive alcohol, illicit drugs and senseless car accidents are taking their toll on our young Victorians. I also think the prospect of the recent federally introduced co-payments for general practitioner visits has frightened many people away from attending the local family doctor. Massive community financial anxieties have, I am sure, resulted in higher attendances at those emergency departments across Victoria. All public hospitals employ a triage system whenever a person presents in their emergency departments. The average length of stay in an emergency department varies by the triage classification. Patients classified as urgent stay longer in an emergency department than do less urgent patients.

While hospitals have improved their efficiency in treating and discharging less urgent patients — in other words, those patients who should have or could have attended their treating family doctor — efficiency improvements for urgent patients are slower, according to the report, due in some cases to the unavailability of inpatient beds in wards. A local constituent recently informed me that he attended a private hospital for major surgery and was released the next day. That is a little bit too efficient, I would say, as the operation was being paid for by the commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs. We need to balance the patient's need in the first instance.

There is a common message in all Victorian Auditor-General's Office reports that relates to the need for agencies to improve their communications and proper data records. This report is no exception. I support the recommendations contained in the report.

Melbourne Water: report 2015–16

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) — I rise this afternoon to speak on Melbourne Water's annual report for 2015–16. Melbourne Water play a very critical role within our society. They are the managers of the bulk water system and also the sewerage system. If either one of those services did not operate effectively, we would all know about it very quickly and it would make life in our society rather complex.

In terms of Melbourne Water, one of the aspects in managing the bulk water supply for Melbourne is managing all the dam systems, and that is something that I want to talk about in a little detail in the short time that I have got. Melbourne has an extensive dam system, and there is an extensive dam system and water storage system right around the state. Melbourne's water storage is somewhere in the vicinity of

1.8 million gigalitres, which is a very big number. A gigalitre is also a very big volume of water.

To supplement that, as part of what the Labor government call an 'insurance policy', they decided they would commission a desalination plant to be built at Wonthaggi. The desalination plant currently has a capacity to produce about 150 gigalitres a year. It has also got the potential in the way that it was designed to deliver 200 gigalitres of water, and I suspect that the Labor government at some stage will probably start to talk about increasing the size of the desalination plant.

As we know, the desalination plant was a very expensive piece of equipment that has never actually been used in anger. It was used to produce just a little bit of water as part of the commissioning process, but it actually has not delivered any water that was required. It is interesting to know that this Labor government has ordered 50 gigalitres of water to be delivered through the desalination plant, which will start to come online sometime early next year. This is at a cost of about \$27 million. That is on top of the existing cost each year of somewhere above \$600 million a year. When this all occurred we saw water bills in Melbourne virtually double. The coalition clawed a little bit of that back when we introduced the fairer water bills, which chopped \$100 off people's water bills, but I think that has pretty much evaporated already under this government, and there will certainly be additional costs to families when the \$27 million for the extra 50 gigalitres of water comes online.

It is interesting to know that the government is going to order an extra 50 gigalitres of water, because I have just gone through and had a look at the current water storages. I was actually going to go out at lunchtime, but it was too wet, so I had to stay in. It was pouring rain. Melbourne's water storages now are at 72.5 per cent. That is nearly three-quarters full. I find it interesting that you would exercise your insurance policy when you are at three-quarters capacity. I certainly know that when my car gets down to three-quarters full I do not go and fill it up again as an insurance policy, so I find it intriguing that the government is going to turn it on. Melbourne's water storages are above what they were at this time last year. We are at 72.5 per cent full. I find it remarkable that this Labor government will continue on with their water order even though the water storages are three-quarters full.

What I think should probably happen is that the Labor government should reconsider its decision. I note Mr Dalidakis is here. He might be able to take this back to the Minister for Water. We should cancel the

desalination water order. Storage levels are at 72.5 per cent. We do not need that extra 50 gigalitres of water; we do not need it at all. That is \$27 million in cost, which will go on to families, and families are hurting already because of the increased costs that they are having to put up with day in, day out, so I do not think we need that water anymore, because our storages are at 72.5 per cent, and I think they will fill up even further because we are in a filling season right now. It is pouring rain outside, and over the next couple of weeks we will get further rain and those water storages will continue to fill up. So I do not think that water is going to be required.

Commission for Children and Young People: report 2015–16

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today to speak on the Commission for Children and Young People's annual report for 2015–16. I would like to begin by thanking all of the staff and volunteers who have contributed to the commission's commitment to children and young people for their conscientious work. In particular, I would like to acknowledge and thank Ms Liana Buchanan, principal commissioner, and Mr Andrew Jackomos, commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people, for their continuous hard work and proactivity in advocating for the voices and needs of the state's most vulnerable children.

Thanks to the amended legislation passed in early 2016, the Commission for Children and Young People now has a higher capacity to monitor Victoria's youth justice systems and an increased oversight of youth justice. The 2015–16 annual report contains difficult to read and confronting information on incidents that our most vulnerable and innocent civilians have faced in out-of-home care and residential care. I felt extremely uneasy reading it. What made it so difficult to read were the accounts of children who have suffered from or been exposed to vulgar violations, such as physical and sexual violence, when living in their family home or under the state's care. No child should ever have to experience this, especially not when this is their one chance to live a better and safer life.

The annual report provides the community with an in-depth understanding of the harms to and suffering of children and young people, making us more aware as a state. Liana Buchanan, principal commissioner, states in the report that the rights of all children and young people should be 'recognised, respected and defended'. The annual report gives some hope that the knowledge the commission have gained from inquiries into the services provided and the independent visitors program will allow them to better allocate funding by the

Department of Health and Human Services and use it to fix the gaps revealed by the report of children not receiving the care and support needed.

The report also outlines the importance of Aboriginal children and young people, who fall victim to violence too often, giving them hope and the human rights to life, family and protection, which all children are entitled to and should receive. Two important reports — *In the Child's Best Interests* and *Always was, always will be Koori children* — amplify the voice of not only Aboriginal children but also young people in Victoria. They outline the importance of the commission's work with Koori children and how important an attachment to their culture and identity is.

The report ... *as a good parent would* ... looks at the core of the problem and investigates all aspects of child abuse and neglect. The commission received 2833 reports in 2016 from category 1 clients. Last year that figure was 2213, with the majority of the incidents occurring in residential care followed by home-based care. The commission's findings, thanks to the new legislation, have now allowed them to plan and commence prevention of the abuse of children in organisations, improve policy adequacy and improve the outcomes of all children, including Aboriginal children, and families through Taskforce 1000, as well as children's death inquiries and youth justice.

The report contains a powerful message by the Royal Commission into Family Violence that children have too often been the invisible, unsupported victims of family, leading to trauma in the future. The state has been able to increase awareness and understanding of the impact that abuse, neglect and mistreatment has on children and their lives and how current and future generations can receive better support and attention. The report highlights how the commission is going to tackle and eliminate the terrible crimes and abuse vulnerable and innocent children face on a day-to-day basis as they are exposed to situations that no child should ever have to experience in their life. It will do this by investigating and thoroughly monitoring the system these kids are placed in. Child safety and welfare — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! I am afraid, Mr Eideh, that your time has expired.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2016–17

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I rise to speak on the budget papers 2016–17. Back in May, when the budget was announced, we had a press release from the

Minister for Public Transport that heralded ‘More services and better bus stops for Shepparton’, which basically talks about more train services for Shepparton. We also had a press release headed ‘Budget delivers more trains to Geelong and Waurn Ponds’. I think the announcement this week of the additional services shows that the budget did deliver more trains for Geelong and Waurn Ponds, with 18 new services on that line, but it did not deliver one new service for Shepparton. A press release this week says:

... a Seymour train will also be extended to Shepparton each weekday to provide an extra service ...

Well, it is not an extra service, because we have always had a 4.31 p.m. service from Melbourne to Shepparton. It was a train to Seymour and then a bus to Shepparton, but we have always had that service. It is a service that has replaced a bus with a train; it is not an extra service.

Just from quickly looking at the press release from the minister, I cannot see how the number of services added up to 80, but there is no doubt that everywhere else in this state gets more trains than Shepparton. It says Geelong will get 18; Bendigo, Ballarat, Traralgon and Warrnambool will get 10 each — so we are up to 58; Maryborough will get 1; and Shepparton will get 1. That is 60, not 80, so either she has left some out of this press release or I have read it wrongly, but it does not look like 80 to me.

The 4.31 p.m. train will arrive in Shepparton at 7.21 p.m., which is 14 minutes earlier than the bus currently arrives, but what have we given up for those 14 minutes? I will read from a comment that was put on my Facebook page by Mary Shaddix, who travelled on the train from Shepparton to Melbourne and back again for work one day a week for quite some time. She said:

I would call it an unmitigated disaster and further proof that we in the Goulburn Valley are still considered second-class citizens by the Victorian state government.

We have always had a 4.31 weekday service from Southern Cross to Shepparton. Arrive Seymour 6.08 p.m., transfer to a coach, arrive Shepparton 7.35. The new service (which I assume is a train all the way) will arrive 14 minutes earlier at 7.21. Those who are currently able to make the 4.31 service will continue to do so.

But what have we given up for those 14 minutes? It’s the people who travel to Melbourne for work who will suffer. I did this trip one day a week for many years on the Shepparton train. My workplace was an extra 30 minutes from Southern Cross ... Not once did I use the 4.31 service because it was unacceptable for me to leave work so early. The 6.22 departure gave me enough leeway to complete my workday and make it back to Southern Cross in time.

The current 6.22 p.m. service arrives in Shepparton at 8.59. The new 7.08 service will arrive in Shepparton at 9.45 —

that is a quarter to 10 at night, 46 minutes later than it currently does. It goes on:

Heaven forbid you might need to make that trip two days in a row.

Once again V/Line and the government say they’re giving when they’re actually taking away. Let them offer only two services home past 2.30 p.m. on a weekday on the Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong lines and see what happens.

Mary Shaddix is right. We are not really being given anything additional; we have the same number of services. We do have a train that is now arriving 46 minutes later, at quarter to 10 at night. The train that now leaves Southern Cross at 6.22 p.m. will leave at 7.08 p.m., 46 minutes later. That means instead of arriving back in Shepparton at 8.59 p.m., it will arrive back at 9.45 p.m. For some people those extra 46 minutes will be helpful. One person commented that when they have medical appointments they will be able to leave the appointments later in the day and that will be great, but for those who do travel for work, getting home at a quarter to 10 of a weeknight is not acceptable.

This government needs to look at Shepparton and actually invest in our train line. The *InterCity* report says that we should have eight return services per day; we have four return services, and it is just not good enough. This Labor government does not care about Shepparton. When Jacinta Allan in the Legislative Assembly was in opposition, she came to Shepparton and said we should have Sprinters to Seymour, but she is not delivering now she is in government.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2015–16

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I wish to make some comments on the Victorian budget papers 2015–16. I particularly want to refer to the section of budget paper 3 — and I have to say it is quite a lengthy document of 417 pages — in relation to the *Ice Action Plan*. This is on page 16, for those who would like to trawl through the budget papers.

As this chamber would be aware, in the previous Parliament I chaired the Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee — a joint parliamentary committee — and we spent eight months researching, investigating and writing a report on the supply and use of methamphetamines, particularly ice, in Victoria. It was quite a substantial report, with 57 recommendations in relation to how the government might respond to what was at that time an epidemic of drug abuse running through Victoria.

We drew from the experience of New Zealand in particular, where the use of methamphetamines per capita was the highest in the world. Some of the feedback we got from those New Zealand hearings was that prevention was the most useful approach in trying to reduce the use of meth and also the effects of meth use in New Zealand. We made a number of recommendations in relation to prevention and harm reduction, as well as some more potent, I guess, recommendations in relation to punishment for illegal drug use, particularly for those people who are trafficking.

The issue I want to bring to the chamber's attention in relation to the budget papers today is about the amount allocated for drug treatment services, particularly in rural rehabilitation. A big part of our report was the fact that regional Victoria did not have capacity to provide for the rehabilitation needs of those drug users. We visited Odyssey House in Melbourne and a couple of other agencies where there was long-term — eight to nine months — rehabilitation for ice users, but in country Victoria we had nothing that could provide that sort of extended care and rehabilitation.

In the papers here \$4.4 million has been allocated for 2015–16, \$4.5 million for 2016–17, \$4.6 million for 2017–18 and, again, \$4.7 million. That is a total of about \$20 million over four years for drug rehabilitation in regional Victoria, yet I see no evidence of where that money has been invested or how it has been invested or in fact if it is actually doing any useful purpose in providing for long-term rehabilitation. I have approached the Minister for Health on a number of occasions suggesting certain facilities that could be used for rehabilitation — idle state facilities — as well as some of our hospitals that have spare beds, particularly for chronic alcoholism or the detoxification requirement within a 24-hour period, not only for drugs but for alcohol as well.

In fact the Geelong hospital, which I cited, has capacity to provide quick, 24-hour immediate care service for alcoholism and immediate care to detox, and likewise it could be for those who have are having a harmful impact from the overuse or abuse of methamphetamine or crystal methamphetamine in particular. Geelong does not really have the facilities at the moment to provide that long-term care, and neither do those smaller towns like Ballarat, where there is a high use of crystal meth and the resulting high crime rates that that follows in our provincial cities, not to mention our provincial towns like Warrnambool, with our Indigenous populations, and Shepparton, where there is high use of crystal meth but not the rehabilitation needs required.

On a finishing note, I have always asked for and pleaded for regional drug courts that could help rehabilitate through the judicial system those offenders that are not traffickers but users —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Finn) — Order! Mr Ramsay, your time has expired, sadly.

Department of Treasury and Finance: budget papers 2016–17

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — Today I want to speak about the state budget 2016–17 and specifically about that section that deals with local government and planning. I want to make some comments about the regional and metropolitan partnerships. The government has embarked on a new form of governance, and it is introducing a whole new layer of governance. We have state and federal government and we have local governments, but we are also now seeing a new governance layer introduced by this government in the form of these regional and metropolitan partnerships.

These partnerships will be the creatures of state government, let us make no mistake. They will be wholly-owned subsidiaries. They are appointed by government, they will be funded by government and there is no doubt that a large bureaucracy will be erected and is being built already in the city here in Melbourne. There will be conferences, there will be forums, there will be board fees — the full works is on here, butcher's paper and so forth. Council CEOs will get a special place — they are automatically on these regional authorities — but elected councillors are not allowed on them. They have been prohibited. They have been cut out. It is a savage attack on local democracy and a removal of control from local communities.

Local communities will not be in a position to dictate what they want. They will be told what they want, what they need and what is good for them by those bureaucrats, board members and the officialdom run out of Melbourne. I have to say that I regard these as a very sinister outing by this particular government. The Minister for Suburban Development, Lily D'Ambrosio, said on radio yesterday in an interview with Jon Faine that there would be no additional costs. I know for a fact that there are new bureaucrats being employed, and I know for a fact that board fees are going to be paid, so that is frankly just an untruth from the minister or an error of some kind.

What is clear is that the powers have not been outlined by these partnerships. The minister was vague; she did

not appear to have any clue. On the role of council CEOs, will they be acting at the direction of the council and implementing council policy, or will they be hooked in and asked to do what the state government wants them to do? I think it is going to be more of the latter, and my advice to councillors is to get a tight rein on these bodies and make sure that the matters they want to put forward are put forward very strongly.

I am also very concerned about the decisions that these bodies may actually make and their impact on democracy. I am going to quote exactly one of the minister's comments in her interview with Jon Faine yesterday:

Well, the fact is this is not just about what local government thinks, it's what the broader community thinks, and this is why it's so important that we don't just leave key decisions that are made to elected officials whether it's local government ...

Cutting out elected officials from decision-making appears to be a new intervention by this government, a bizarre new outcome. I inform Mr Finn, as Acting President in the chamber today, that when it comes to the one that operates out to the west, the council CEOs will be in the box seat, the government officials will be in the box seat, the hand-picked tamed cats that are going to be appointed to these boards will be in the box seat, but the people in the community will not be in the box seat. What is more, the councillors will not be in the box seat. Those who have been elected and been prepared to put their hand up and say 'I want to get elected; I want to represent my community' will be cut out, and the CEOs will get an automatic berth, along with the officials from the city and the officials that are appointed — the board members that are hand-picked by the minister. Oh my goodness, you have got to read the criteria that have been laid out to believe it.

This was a train wreck of an interview by Minister D'Ambrosio; It was an absolute train wreck. She had no idea about this area, which she shares responsibility for — or has most of the responsibility for. The metropolitan side of these partnerships is her responsibility. It is not clear how this is going to work with respect to planning either. They want to do all this work, but who is going to bear the responsibility for it in the end? Well, I say they have got this wrong. I say we do not want a fourth level of government. We already have three, and that is just about enough. A fourth level is one too many. The cost and the impact on the community is a serious problem.

V/Line: report 2015–16

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I rise to make some comments about the V/Line annual report 2015–16. In doing so I want to make some comments surrounding what we have seen happen with the V/Line service of late, particularly in Ballarat but more broadly in Warrnambool as well. I was fortunate to be down in the great south-west coast late last week at the same time that a couple of track faults were experienced on the Warrnambool line. I note that as a result of those track faults the train services to Warrnambool have been cancelled by the government for up to a fortnight.

From what I understand there were two level crossings that were not responding in the proper way in that they were not reacting in the appropriate time frame as a train approached. I had conversations with a few people down in the south-west coast area and a couple of them said, 'Well, rather than cancelling every train service, both freight and passenger, why not have a couple of people man those crossings and ensure the safety of those crossings?', because no doubt it is incredibly important that people do remain safe both on the train and on the road at these level crossings. Manning those crossings would facilitate the trains continuing to run, ensuring that both passengers and freight continued along that line.

I think there is an incredibly important question that needs to be put to the government: why is it that they are spending thousands upon thousands of dollars on replacement buses and causing significant economic loss to those in western Victoria as a result of not having those freight trains running, rather than just spending a few thousand dollars on manpower to ensure that those level crossings are manned and are safe?

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Thank you very much, Ms Shing, for picking me up on that. I also wanted to make some comments around the Ballarat service and the new timetable or lack thereof. Ms Shing will be pleased to know that Ms Allan has announced an additional service on the Ballarat train line. However, that is the only detail that the minister has given to the good people of Ballarat in regard to this new timetable. The new timetable was due months upon months ago. The minister has seen fit now to say that there is going to be a new timetable beginning January next year and that this new timetable will have one additional service.

Mr O'Sullivan interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Just one additional service, Mr O’Sullivan. However, we are going to have to wait for the murky, dark details of this timetable until early next week. The minister says, ‘Good news. I’ve given you an additional service’, but the kick is going to be when we get the new timetable and everything is in disarray. As we know, this minister has form on this. She has already announced one new timetable, which occurred in June 2015 with the launch of the regional rail link, which caused the complete meltdown of V/Line across the state. Every service was replaced by buses at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Let us hope that the minister’s incompetence does not extend to the new timetable she has announced.

I do note that the minister, as a result of strong lobbying from the Ballarat community — —

Mr Ramsay interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Not me, Mr Ramsay. I would never take credit for that strong lobbying, because there are commuters who have been doing so. I have certainly been supporting them, Mr Ramsay. They have taken the lead and I have certainly supported them in this place.

The minister has said that when the new station at Caroline Springs opens, those peak services travelling from Ballarat, and indeed to Ballarat, will not stop at that station, because Caroline Springs will be well serviced when it opens in January next year by Melbourne Metro services and the like that will go there. I was very pleased at that, and I congratulate the Ballarat community for shaming the minister into ensuring that those services do not stop at Caroline Springs. The Ballarat community is still suffering through congestion and through not being able to find a seat on these services, because the people on these trains are packed in like sardines.

Multicultural affairs: report 2014–15

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to use this opportunity to speak on the *Victorian Government Report in Multicultural Affairs 2014–15*, in particular on the commitment by the government to increase support for asylum seekers and whole-of-government settlement coordination. I make these comments in relation to the very sad and disturbing incident that occurred in Springvale in my electorate involving a 21-year-old asylum seeker, Mr Nur Islam, a Rohingya from Myanmar, who allegedly injured 26 people as well as himself in a fireball, a terrifying incident that I think we all are familiar with, having seen the reports on TV.

I note that the government has paid significant lip-service to extending support for asylum seekers, and in this report they outline a couple of programs through which they do that. The asylum seeker support program, administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC) — but I am not sure it is called that now given that the government has restructured its services and integrated most of them in the Department of Premier and Cabinet — is designed to assist three key asylum seeker support agencies to improve their access to essential support services, such as housing, employment, English language tuition, computer literacy, transport and social and recreational activities.

The other program, the whole-of-government settlement coordination unit within OMAC, achieved important outcomes, it claims, on page 38 of the report in the coordination of settlement and asylum seeker policies and programs across government departments and agencies. In March 2015 the Victorian government endorsed the national settlement framework, a high-level structural blueprint for commonwealth, state and local governments to effectively plan and deliver settlement and support services to new arrivals to Australia. The structures are complemented by OMAC’s multicultural leadership and coordination group, and so on.

It is quite disturbing to read the report of the incident. I note the Premier’s comments that the police will be investigating the case, and I accept that. I do not wish to pre-empt any of those processes, but it was disturbing to read in the newspaper reports that Mr Islam, and I quote:

... had not been acting normally for months, according to five friends who shared a house with him several streets back from the shopping strip.

He would wander the backyard in the dead of the night by himself, after telling his housemates he had seen a ghost in the living room.

Mr Islam was also stressed after his sister in Myanmar fell ill and his mum asked him to help foot the medical bills. His housemates chipped in up to \$500 to help.

I understand that Mr Islam had approached a number of banks asking for money. He was expecting Centrelink payments to arrive, but Centrelink had been waiting for him to come to an appointment with a case manager. So clearly things had gone awfully wrong and resulted in a terrible tragedy. Apart from the police investigation, I just wish to use the opportunity of statements on reports to call on the Minister for Multicultural Affairs to use the resources that are available to him within his own department to investigate whether asylum seekers who

have been released into the community from so-called detention centres established initially in 1984 by a Labor government and from the more modern iterations that actually have an open-door policy, where at least they have a roof over their heads, meals, access to health and medical services, have adequate support. This release into the community program in principle sounds like a very good thing to do, but if there is no oversight and if there is no adequate support — if people such as Mr Islam, who clearly has been observed to have mental health issues, has not been able to access help, does not know how the banking system works, does not understand his responsibilities in relation to Centrelink to continue receiving payments — I am concerned that there are other people like Mr Islam.

I am calling on the minister to urgently review the services that his government has made to support asylum seekers released in the community so that tragedies we have seen unfold in front of our very eyes and the tragic experience of those who found themselves in the Commonwealth Bank of Australia branch in Springvale do not occur. It is certainly disturbing to think of a young person so lost in this world that he is driven to this event, and I think that minister must without further delay embark on an immediate investigation to make sure that asylum seekers released in the community are appropriately supported and that the gaps are identified.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Murchison-Tatura Road

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is regarding the deplorable condition of the C357, Murchison-Tatura Road. My request of the minister is that he commits to funding a full upgrade of the C357 so that this road can properly accommodate the quantity and type of vehicles that use it both now and for the foreseeable future. Murchison-Tatura Road is a major arterial road connecting the Goulburn Valley Highway at Murchison East to all cities and towns north-west of Tatura. This road is regularly used by high-volume traffic, including heavy vehicles such as trucks and buses.

Parts of Murchison-Tatura Road are among the regional roads in the poorest condition of any that I have driven

on in recent times. A stretch of this road, between the Tatura township and Dhurringile Prison, is in such bad condition that the road speed has for the past few months been reduced to 60 kilometres per hour from 100 kilometres per hour. Potholes, loose stones, broken and narrow or non-existent shoulders, and poor road markings make this stretch of road both dangerous to road users and damaging to vehicles, and local residents who are required to use this road regularly have had enough. The local community have created a petition calling for this road to be properly repaired, and in a very short space of time the campaign has garnered significant support, with 135 online signatures and some 400 hard-copy signatures collected in about a fortnight.

According to one older local resident who has lived on the stretch of road for some 60 years, the road has not had any significant upgrade in this time despite the changes to the road — specifically the increase in vehicle quantity, vehicle size and traffic speed — that have occurred over the last six decades. As the frustrated local resident explains, the best this road gets is a spot of repairs to fix bits of the road at different times, but these repairs inevitably fail and are not able to withstand the volume of road use and natural conditions, including the recent wet winter, that contribute to the significant wear and tear on this road.

According to the local residents, this road realistically needs to be completely rebuilt to suit today's local conditions, high traffic volumes and modern heavy vehicle sizes. My request of the minister is that he commits to funding a full upgrade of the C357, Murchison-Tatura Road, so that this road can properly accommodate the quantity and type of vehicles that use it both now and for the foreseeable future.

IVF services

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health. It is estimated that in Australia infertility affects around 9 per cent of the population at any given time. IVF has become one of the most popular treatment methods for those diagnosed as unable to conceive without medical intervention. Despite increases in federal public funding through changes to Medicare and the safety net, the cost of treatment remains high for many consumers. The average cost per cycle typically sits at around \$4000 to \$5000, with all costs included after the Medicare rebate. Often women will need to undergo several cycles before having a successful birth through IVF. For many this is unaffordable. This means that some women and couples are missing out on essential health care and the

opportunity to conceive a family — one of the things that many people hold dear.

There are no public IVF services in Victoria, or indeed in Australia, despite apparent commitments to universal health care for all by governments of all descriptions. Meanwhile the assisted reproductive technology industry in Australia is dominated by a duopoly. Prices for treatment have increased significantly over the past decade, placing a huge burden on both consumers and the budget.

Another failure of the system is the lack of transparency and consistency in reporting stats for IVF clinics. Clinics are not required to report their data to the Australia and New Zealand Assisted Reproduction Database and can choose at their discretion what to report and when to report it. This leads to inconsistencies in what exactly is measured and reported. Furthermore, the database only publishes general stats on assisted reproductive technology success rates. Unlike government health performance data, it is not detailed by clinic, meaning there is no way for consumers to compare different providers in a meaningful way.

There have been a number of people within the sector who have talked quite openly about the incredibly high costs and the fact that IVF does not need to be as costly as it is now. The action I am seeking from the government is that it considers investing in a public health IVF clinic at a Victorian tertiary hospital in order to give women and couples living on low incomes proper access to this treatment.

Public transport disability access

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan, and it is to do with the bus replacement programs when there is an occupation on the rail during a level crossing removal, particularly occupations at future level crossing removals. A lesson has been learnt at the community liaison groups, particularly ones that I have been personally involved with out in the east. Bus replacements are not the best way for some people, particularly for people with disabilities. For some people with intellectual disabilities bus replacements are not the best way to travel to where they want to go on a daily basis.

Metro Trains Melbourne, which I must compliment on doing a great job with their bus replacement regime, have been speaking directly with a number of disability organisations in the east, like Knoxbrooke and Nadrasca. They have been individually dealing with

their clients to ensure that if they do need a taxi instead of a bus replacement, that will be available for those particular individuals. So the action I seek from the minister is to ensure that this is a position taken across the board by Metro and that discussions, wherever the particular level crossing removal may be, are had with disability employers and trainers to ensure that their clients are not affected adversely during a rail occupation due to a grade separation at a level crossing.

Hume planning scheme amendment

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise on the adjournment this evening a matter for the attention of the Minister for Planning. It concerns the Sunbury precinct structure plan that has been released in the past week. This is a significant change to Sunbury and surrounds, and it is safe to say that if this plan is implemented, Sunbury will never be the same again. When I first went to Sunbury a long time ago now it was a township of some 10 000 people, and it was quite literally a small country town. These days it is a thriving metropolis. It is the regional hub for the Macedon Ranges. It now has some 35 000 to 40 000 people, but this plan proposes that they will be added to by some 55 000-plus people with a further 9500 dwellings. As you can see, it is an extraordinary growth plan that is being put forward by the government for discussion.

My issue is this: the amendment C207 for the Hume planning scheme is now open for public comment, and that is a very good thing obviously, because we do want as many people in the community to have a say on the future of Sunbury as we can possibly fit in. But the real problem is this: the date for the close of comments is Monday, 6 February 2017. Now, that in my view is just not sufficient time. We are already into the Christmas period, when people are busy. We all know we all get carried away during this time, trying to finish up our work for this year, preparing for Christmas — —

Mr Morris — On the banks of the Maribyrnong.

Mr FINN — Indeed, Mr Morris. We will wind down over the Christmas period, we will have a bit of a break hopefully over January and a 6 February close for comments just does not give people enough time to give this extremely important matter the appropriate level of consideration it deserves. So what I am asking the minister tonight to do is to extend the time for consideration of this matter by the community by, well, perhaps two months. Perhaps we could have a look at 6 April 2017, because certainly to have this thing closing so early in 2017 is just not good enough.

Keysborough South schools

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — The matter I wish to raise is for the attention of the Minister for Education, and it is in relation to a matter I have raised on several occasions before — that is, the need to secure a primary school site in the Keysborough South area, which is a densified community. Following the number of closures of school sites by former Labor governments in the area there are now more kids than there are schools for them to go to. We have certainly had enrolments in the two schools in Dingley Village grow substantially as a result; that is really out of the area for many of the Keysborough South parents.

I understand that a site had been identified and that the government had in principle made a commitment to purchasing that site; however, time is galloping away. We are nearing Christmas. There has been an expectation that the settlement on the school land would occur — that the Department of Education and Training would in actual fact finalise that — and parent groups that have lobbied hard for this commitment and that I have worked with are now concerned that that money may disappear. So I am just calling on the minister to make it clear as to when settlement for the purchase of the site for the new school in Keysborough is happening so that parents and the community can continue making plans for what will be a much-needed and valued opportunity.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you. I call Ms Bath.

National disability insurance scheme

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is directed to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing in relation to a review of the national disability insurance scheme (NDIS) rollout within my electorate to prioritise urgent cases. The action I seek from the minister is to change — and I do not mean this lightly — the strategy of the scheduled NDIS geographical rollout to prioritise individuals who are on the disability support register (DSR) waitlist so they can begin receiving financial support.

Currently we have members in our community on the DSR waitlist who have critical needs that are not being met. I refer specifically to two constituents, both of whom I have met, in my electorate who have been on the DSR waitlist for a number of years. Young Lachlan resides in Gippsland with his mother, who is both breadwinner and full-time carer, along with his three

siblings. He was two when he started having severe epileptic seizures. He has Dravet syndrome and autism. Now 16, PEG fed and wearing continence aids all the time, Lachlan requires support for his personal care, and due to his inability to realise safety and security he requires constant supervision. As for many other families waiting for help, the NDIS will not be rolled out in Lachlan's area until October 2017 at the earliest — 12 months away. Until then he remains on the disability support waitlist, missing out on the valuable help he so desperately needs. East Gippsland is not rolled out until 2019.

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Dalidakis, you are doing a grave discourtesy to members who are putting items on the adjournment tonight by continuing a conversation. Now, I stopped and did not call the current member until you had completed your conversation — or I thought you had completed your conversation — yet you have resumed a conversation, turning your back on the member who is putting the item, as you did with Mrs Peulich, and not recognising the Chair. It is not on. It is discourteous. Please! Ms Bath, I would suggest you go to the top.

Ms BATH — Thank you, President. It is a matter dear to my heart. My adjournment matter this evening is directed to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, and it is in relation to a review of the NDIS rollout within my electorate and prioritising urgent cases. The action I seek from the minister is to change the current strategy of the scheduled NDIS geographical rollout to prioritise individuals who are on the DSR waitlist so they can begin receiving a support package as soon as possible.

Currently we have members of our community on the DSR waitlist who have critical needs that are not being met. I specifically refer to two constituents who are in my electorate and have been on this waitlist for years. Lachlan resides in Gippsland with his mother, who is both breadwinner and full-time carer, along with his three siblings. He was two when he started having severe epileptic seizures. He has Dravet syndrome and autism. Now 16, PEG fed and wearing incontinence aids all the time, Lachlan requires full support for his personal care, and due to his inability to realise security and safety he must be watched all the time. As with many other families waiting on this list, the NDIS is not rolled out in Lachlan's area until October 2017 at the earliest. Until then he remains on this list missing out on valuable help. In East Gippsland the rollout does not start until 2019.

Adelaide is another girl I have met, and a beautiful girl at that. She is 16 years old, and her family is also on the DSR and desperate for help. Having recently met this lovely girl and her family, I quickly learned that she was diagnosed with severe autism and uncontrollable epilepsy. She has had a broken nose on several occasions and has been forced to wear a head brace when not in her wheelchair. She also has an array of complex medical conditions, including an inability to communicate verbally. Whilst requiring full assistance for her personal care, she wakes every 3 hours, so her parents know the full measure of sleep deprivation. Adelaide's father told me that if they still remained where they lived a few years ago in Carlton they would have access to the NDIS and a financial package, but they do not; they live in country Victoria, and it is a great disadvantage to them.

I am a parent myself, and it saddens me to see that these beautiful children with severe disabilities are impeded by the system. The system has failed them. They are well known to the Department of Health and Human Services, so they are in the system, but they are just not being picked up. You can see the love and care that these people's families provide to them, but it is just that financial and physical health that needs to be addressed now, not another year later. They are removing the burden from the community, but they need to have help.

Bellarine Peninsula community safety

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is to the Minister for Police, the Honourable Lisa Neville. Last week the shadow minister, the Honourable Edward O'Donohue, and I met with residents of the Clifton Springs and Drysdale community, who are fed up and frustrated with the rising crime rates, especially after several of their applications for CCTV cameras have been denied. As their local member and the Minister for Police, I am sure Ms Neville is aware that theft is up by 72 per cent in Drysdale and Clifton Springs according to the latest statistics, which only makes it more frustrating that nothing has been done to reverse this trend.

The community's Neighbourhood Watch group has been unsuccessfully applying for CCTV funding through the Public Safety Infrastructure Fund, which provides grants of up to \$250 000 to local councils to improve community safety and security. It is interesting that the state government has found this much money in the budget for CCTV at St Kilda's penguin colony yet residents at Drysdale and Clifton Springs continue to live in fear that criminals are targeting their once quiet neighbourhoods.

In August the City of Greater Geelong allocated funding for two temporary CCTV cameras in the township of Drysdale, which were put to good use within six weeks by catching the driver who rammed a police car and fled the scene. Certainly more CCTV would act as a deterrent and help solve crime, but it would also put those residents at ease, many of whom have been part of the Neighbourhood Watch effort to raise the thousands of dollars required to apply for the denied CCTV funding grants. It has become more ridiculous that we have a Minister for Police who, in her own electorate, has three of her police stations mostly closed during the day and refuses to talk about it, despite promising to open them for longer in her campaign.

Today the action I am seeking from the Minister for Police is to recognise that she has not kept her election promise to open Drysdale, Portarlington and Queenscliff police stations for 16 hours a day and to support the installation of more CCTV cameras at Drysdale to deter crime and stop the rise in thefts that is making the Bellarine community fearful for their own safety.

Regional partnership representation

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter this evening is for the attention of the Minister for Regional Development, and it relates to the regional partnerships that have been much discussed today at great length, in particular the Central Highlands regional partnership, which takes in many of the highly populated areas of western Victoria. I note that there have been community members that the government have hand-picked to place on this regional partnership group to in effect become a fourth level of government. These regional partnerships have not only these hand-picked Labor appointees but also all of the CEOs of the local government areas.

Now, I have nothing against these CEOs in particular; they are bureaucrats that work under the direction of their respective councils. However, rather than having the CEOs directly appointed by the government, I think it is incredibly important that the elected representatives of these councils have a say in who it is that is going to represent their councils on these regional partnerships — the fourth level of government. I think it is incredibly important that the people of Ararat, Pyrenees, Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool and Golden Plains, through their elected councillors, get to choose who it is that is going to be their representative on the regional partnership.

So rather than having the minister direct the councils to say that the CEO is going to be a representative, I think what needs to happen is that the minister needs to go back to the councils. She needs to say to the councillors themselves, 'You need to choose. You need to choose who is going to be your representative on these regional partnerships, the fourth level of government'. Rather than having these Labor appointees, I think the councillors themselves should have a role in saying who it is that is going to represent their community, because these people are the elected representatives. The councillors have been chosen by the people of their municipalities to represent them; therefore, if there is going to be a decision made about who is going to represent them on these regional partnerships, it should not be the minister dictating that it is the CEOs, it should be the councillors themselves who choose their representatives.

The action that I seek is that the minister reconsider her position to appoint the CEOs as the representatives of the councils on the regional partnerships and indeed go back to the councils themselves and ask the councillors to choose — to nominate — a person to represent their council on this new fourth level of government.

Responses

Mr DALIDAKIS (Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade) — We have adjournment matters tonight from Ms Lovell to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in relation to a commitment to funding road C357; from Ms Hartland to the Minister for Health to consider investing in a public IVF program, particularly for people from a lower socio-economic background; from Mr Leane to the Minister for Public Transport asking that instead of bus replacements the minister consider taxis to be provided for people with significant mobility issues; from Mr Finn to the Minister for Planning to extend time for community consultation by two months for C207; from Mrs Peulich to the Minister for Education to secure a site in Keysborough South for a primary school; from Ms Bath to the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing to change geographic scheduling for constituents on the waitlist for the national disability insurance scheme rollout; from Mr Ramsay to the Minister for Police to support new CCTV in Drysdale; and from Mr Morris to the Minister for Regional Development in relation to the regional partnerships at Central Highlands — he would like the minister to reconsider the appointment of CEOs in replacement of local councillors.

I also have written responses to adjournment debate matters raised by Ms Dunn on 13 September 2016 and Mr Davis on 25 October 2016.

House adjourned 6.05 p.m.