

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT

FIRST SESSION

Thursday, 23 March 2017

(Extract from book 6)

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By authority of the Victorian Government Printer

The Governor

The Honourable LINDA DESSAU, AC

The Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Justice MARILYN WARREN, AC, QC

The ministry

(from 10 November 2016)

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Minister for Finance and Minister for Multicultural Affairs	The Hon. R. D. Scott, MP
Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections	The Hon. G. A. Tierney, MLC
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’Sullivan, 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 Barber, Mr Bourman, #Ms Dunn, Mr Eideh, Mr Elasmarr, Mr Finn, Ms Hartland, Mr Leane, #Mr Melhem, Mr Ondarchie, Mr O’Sullivan and #Mr Rich-Phillips.

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, #Ms Symes and Mr Young.

Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues — #Mr Barber, #Ms Crozier, #Mr Elasmarr, 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*): Mr O’Sullivan, 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, Ms Garrett 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 O’Sullivan, Mr Ramsay and Mr Young. (*Assembly*): Mr J. Bull, Ms Halfpenny, Mr Richardson and Mr Riordan.

Family and Community Development Committee — (*Council*): Mr Finn. (*Assembly*): Ms Britnell, Ms Couzens, Mr Edbrooke, Ms Edwards 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 Patten, Ms Pennicuik and Ms Shing. (*Assembly*): Mr Dimopoulos, Mr Morris, Mr D. O’Brien, Mr Pearson, Mr T. Smith and Ms Ward.

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

Heads of parliamentary departments

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

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

Parliamentary Services — Secretary: Mr P. Lochert

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

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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

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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

CONTENTS

THURSDAY, 23 MARCH 2017

FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ANNIVERSARY	1589
AUDIT COMMITTEE	
<i>Review of members second residence allowance</i>	1589
STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE	
<i>Ride-sourcing services</i>	1589
<i>Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015</i>	1591
PAPERS	1591
BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE	
<i>Adjournment</i>	1591
MINISTERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Youth justice system</i>	1591
<i>Learn Locals</i>	1592
<i>Steritech</i>	1592
MEMBERS STATEMENTS	
<i>Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre</i>	1593
<i>Assisted Suicide: The Musical</i>	1593
<i>Racial discrimination legislation</i>	1594
<i>Farm World</i>	1594
<i>Gippsland public transport</i>	1594
<i>Gippsland technical school</i>	1594
<i>Minister for Families and Children</i>	1594
<i>Women in agriculture</i>	1595
<i>Australian Formula One Grand Prix</i>	1595
<i>Wantirna Park caravan park</i>	1595
<i>Hazelwood power station</i>	1596
<i>Government performance</i>	1596
<i>Energy prices</i>	1596
EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL 2017	
<i>Second reading</i>	1597
<i>Third reading</i>	1607
VICTORIAN PLANNING AUTHORITY BILL 2016	
<i>Second reading</i>	1608, 1623
<i>Third reading</i>	1639
MEMBER CONDUCT	1612
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE	
<i>Member for Melton</i>	1612
<i>Family violence</i>	1613
<i>Wyndham youth justice facility</i>	1613, 1615
<i>Port Phillip Prison</i>	1615, 1616
<i>Heyfield timber mill</i>	1616
<i>Child protection</i>	1616, 1617, 1618, 1619
<i>Duck season</i>	1617, 1618
<i>Written responses</i>	1620
CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS	
<i>Eastern Metropolitan Region</i>	1620
<i>Western Metropolitan Region</i>	1621
<i>Western Victoria Region</i>	1621, 1622, 1623
<i>Eastern Victoria Region</i>	1621
<i>Southern Metropolitan Region</i>	1621
<i>Northern Metropolitan Region</i>	1621
<i>South Eastern Metropolitan Region</i>	1622
<i>Northern Victoria Region</i>	1622

VALEDICTORY STATEMENT

<i>Mr Herbert</i>	1639
ADJOURNMENT	
<i>Shepparton rail services</i>	1642
<i>Assisted Suicide: The Musical</i>	1643
<i>Victorian Heart Hospital</i>	1643
<i>Mildura passenger rail service</i>	1644
<i>Sunbury–Broadmeadows bus service</i>	1644
<i>Problem gambling</i>	1645
<i>Coburg High School</i>	1645
<i>Anakie Youang heritage listing</i>	1645
<i>Casey community crime forum</i>	1646
<i>Western Highway road safety</i>	1646
<i>Plan Melbourne: Refresh</i>	1647
<i>Sheep and goat electronic identification</i>	1647
<i>Trade Union Joint Police Task Force</i>	1647
<i>Responses</i>	1648

Thursday, 23 March 2017

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

FEDERAL PARLIAMENT ANNIVERSARY

The PRESIDENT — Order! I just wish to bring to the house's attention a point of historical note — that is, that tomorrow, Friday, is the anniversary of the last time the federal Parliament sat in the Victorian Parliament buildings. As members would realise, the federal Parliament sat here for some 26 years before making one of the worst of their decisions, which was to move to Canberra. In fact they convened for the first time in Canberra on 9 May 1927. This is the 90th anniversary of their exit from the Victorian Parliament buildings, which as I have suggested was a travesty — although we would otherwise have nowhere to sit, so I suppose there is a compelling reason it is good that they left. In May we will have an interpretive display in Queen's Hall of the period of the federal Parliament sitting in the Victorian Parliament buildings.

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Review of members second residence allowance

The PRESIDENT, by leave, presented PwC report on phase 1.

Laid on table.

Ordered to be published.

Ordered to be considered next day on motion of Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan).

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ride-sourcing services

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) presented report, including appendices, extracts from proceedings, minority reports and transcripts of evidence.

Laid on table.

Ordered that report be published.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I move:

That the Council take note of the report.

In doing so I thank the members of the committee for their cooperation and collegial attitude towards this particular matter. Ride sourcing of course is an issue

that has been at the forefront of our minds now for a number of years. We now have some legislation which has passed through the other place and is now before us for consideration. The considerations of our committee in fact were brought forward in order to facilitate the presentation of this report before the legislation was actually considered in this house. The committee has recommended that we defer the legislation until two matters are satisfactorily dealt with. One is the compensation issue, which is I think still burning strongly in the minds and hearts of a good many people in the taxi industry — and quite frankly I can fully understand that. The other one is the taxi tax, if I could call it that — the \$2 tax on every ride, which could go forever, I understand, according to the legislation.

We are not sure exactly where it will go; we are not sure when it will end. It is in itself somewhat of a mystery. These are matters that really need to be addressed before we can take the step of discussing the legislation. It is quite ludicrous that we would have legislation that does not deal with these very basic concepts. These are matters that must be decided and must be dealt with before we go any further with legislation.

So the committee is recommending that we do defer the legislation, and I believe that that is a fair and a reasonable outcome. My belief is that — and indeed the committee's belief is that — there is certainly a need for regulation of Uber and of other ride-sourcing companies that are preparing to enter the marketplace. We certainly see no problem with that at all, but these two matters of the compensation and the \$2 tax are matters that do need to be addressed. They loom large, not just on the horizon but very much in the streets of Melbourne. As we saw on the steps of this building in the last sitting week, feelings run very, very strongly on this. Unless the government addresses these two matters, then really the legitimacy of any legislation will be significantly undermined.

The committee has done a very good job, and I thank the two staff who worked on it. I thank Matt Newington, who has done a tremendous job, and also Lilian Topic, who as our secretary has put up with some extraordinary things and has come out on top. I thank her very, very much for her ongoing efforts with this committee. I would also like to thank the former chair of the committee, Mr Morris — we do miss him, we do not miss his public hearings in meetings every 5 minutes, but we do miss him. We are committed. I think Mr Leane and I are as one on that; we do miss Mr Morris, but we are committed.

I thank those other members: the deputy chair, Mr Eideh, and Mr Leane, Mr Ondarchie, Mr Bourman and Mr Elasmar. We do have Ms Hartland on the committee but she was not involved in this inquiry; it was Ms Dunn in fact, who did a marvellous job. And Mr O'Sullivan joined us as well at relevant times.

Mrs Peulich — How about a cheerio for the family.

Mr FINN — We are. We are one big, happy family; that is the great thing about our committee. We might have our conflicts from time to time, but we all get along very, very well indeed. So I thank the house for its indulgence, I thank the members of the committee, and I commend the report to the house.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I am actually surprised you did not mention that you are going to the match tonight by Uber or something just to fill in the time.

Mr FINN — I am very hopeful I will get there.

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In taking note of this report I think it is important that the government members put the position they took on this particular report. In saying that, I agree with the chair that there was very good work done on the body of the report and by the Parliament team putting it together. We believe that reports live and die on their recommendations and a bit less on their findings. The government members could not agree with the recommendations. The main recommendation, which is the only one, says that the debate on the bill should be deferred for a number of reasons. One is that the committee did agree that there needs to be a level playing field in this sector. It seems a bit unfair — actually, it does not seem a bit unfair; it is unfair — that there is one rideshare operator operating illegally when there are other rideshare companies wanting to come into the sector, including the London Taxi Company Australia and Shebah.

The other issue with the rideshare sector and the hire car industry is the problem of people accessing disability vehicles. London cabs have got 200 disability vehicles ready to go. The other thing that we do not want to see held up is the appointment of the commissioner for disability under this legislation to make sure that people with disability get a fair go. The government obviously would be happy to debate the issues that committee members had concerns with before the passing or not of the bill, but it would argue that the bill should not be held up any longer for any more inquiries or discussion, because there has been a lot of that and the bill needs to be tested.

Mr BOURMAN (Eastern Victoria) — It gives me great pleasure to speak on this report, but before I start I am going to thank the staff who, as Bernie Finn said, put up with a lot: Lilian Topic and Matt Newington, with help from Michelle Kurrle and Prue Purdy. This was actually quite a complex issue because it was not nearly as cut and dry as I thought it was going to be. There are a lot of people that will be affected by this. There are a lot of people that will get jobs from ridesharing and there are a lot of people that will possibly lose their jobs. There are a lot of people that have done a reasonable job of investing in taxi licences over the years, and they are going to be affected.

That brings me to the main point that I see in this — the compensation. There are a lot of people who are retired and living off this income, and this may well negatively affect them. This is one of the main things I took from the report. I think more work needs to be done on the compensation aspect, and I think it needs to be done in a fashion that will not leave people helpless. After all, these licences were bought within a government monopoly. People did not have a choice. At that time people paid what it was worth. The government determined that value, and now they are changing what it is worth.

There is also the \$2 levy. I see that being more trouble than it is worth. I am not entirely sure, from what I gathered from the evidence given by the State Revenue Office, that it will actually be possible to collect. If someone refuses to pay it and if they are an overseas corporation, I do not believe we will actually have the ability to collect it. And if we do, it will have to be via international courts and things like that. So I think there are a few wrinkles to be worked out, but in the end ridesharing is here. It needs to be on a level playing field. I thank all the members of the committee, and I thank everyone that gave evidence. I think that issues in this legislation, or at least those two parts I mentioned, need to be dealt with before we pass it.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — In terms of this particular inquiry I think it is important to note that as part of the inquiry into ride-sourcing services there were of course the issues around compensation for taxi licences that played a part in that inquiry. For that inquiry, what was going to be contained in a bill was pure speculation, and no-one really knew what the content of the bill would be, which we now know as the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Bill 2017. I think the unfortunate thing was that we really did not get the opportunity to examine that bill as part of this particular inquiry. There is no doubt that ride sourcing and that particular bill are interrelated in terms of the matters they deal with.

Although I recognise that we did have a looming tabling date for this report, I am disappointed that we did not extend that date, perhaps take into account that bill and have a really full examination of the bill as part of the inquiry. It is certainly something that would have been possible, and I think the only decent opportunity we really had was in terms of hearing evidence from the State Revenue Office. In relation to compliance, I am not sure whether I have confidence in companies whose records are located internationally, nor how easy that will be for the State Revenue Office to fulfil its obligations.

I can see the clock is ticking down, so I say thank you very much to the secretariat of this particular inquiry. They worked very hard, and I thank them for their diligence in relation to this matter.

Motion agreed to.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture), pursuant to standing order 23.30, presented government response.

Laid on table.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I move:

That the report be taken into consideration on the next day of meeting.

I want to keenly explore the matter in relation to cyclists and safety on the roads of Victoria, Victoria being one of the last jurisdictions in the country that does not have minimum passing distance laws applied to cycling. I want to ensure that this house has the appropriate opportunity to scrutinise the response to this report, because I would hate to think that cyclists in Victoria, where we have a huge number of cyclists, are in fact being abandoned in terms of their safety on the roads because of a failure to implement minimum passing distance laws. A metre really does matter when you are on the roads on a bicycle. In Victoria you are a very vulnerable road user.

Motion agreed to.

PAPERS

Laid on table by Clerk:

Commission for Children and Young People — *The Same Four Walls: Inquiry into the use of isolation, separation and lockdowns in the Victorian youth justice system, March 2017 (Ordered to be published).*

Essential Services Commission — *The Network Value of Distributed Generation: Distributed Generation Inquiry Stage 2 Final Report, February 2017.*

Northern Victoria Fresh Tomato Industry Development Committee — *Minister's report of receipt of 2015–16 report.*

Statutory Rule under the following Act of Parliament —

Pipelines Act 2005 — No. 9.

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001 —

Conservation values of state forests Assessment Report, February 2017.

Minister's request for the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to carry out an investigation into public land in Central West Victoria pursuant to section 16(1)(a) of the Act.

Response to submissions on the proposed terms of reference for the investigation into public land in Central West Victoria pursuant to section 16(2) of the Act.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Adjournment

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I move:

That the Council, at its rising, adjourn until 12.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 2 May 2017.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERS STATEMENTS

Youth justice system

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I rise to inform the house about the government's response to the Commission for Children and Young People's inquiry report into the use of isolation, separation and lockdowns in the Victorian youth justice system, *The Same Four Walls*, that has been tabled in this house this morning. I welcome this report, and I thank the commissioners for their important work.

There is no doubt that the report gives examples of longstanding very poor practice by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Andrews government

is committed to ensuring a safe youth justice system for young offenders, staff and the Victorian community. The government accepts or accepts in principle all 21 recommendations in the report. The review that I commissioned of our 16-year-old youth justice framework, being undertaken by Penny Armytage and Professor James Ogloff, will be completed in coming weeks and will assist us in considering these recommendations further.

The government has not waited for this report to put in place the reforms needed for our youth justice system, including building modern, fit-for-purpose infrastructure, and we are getting on with addressing the longstanding issues relating to staffing. We have invested in an additional 41 positions and recruited over 100 new workers since late last year, and we have put in place a rolling recruitment pipeline to replace the biannual intakes that were in place previously. Improved staff training is also being rolled out. We are acting to overhaul the separation safety management plans with new secure care plans that include a section that will be provided to young people to give them greater clarity, in accordance with one of the recommendations.

Isolation is sometimes a necessary tool, and that is why it is legislated for in the act. The report shows that the common reasons it is used include physical assaults, aggressive behaviour altercations, verbal abuse and attempted escape. Isolation is used to de-escalate heightened behaviour and prevent a young person from harming themselves, others or the facility, but it should not be overused and should only be used as a last resort.

The report contains case studies that highlight the extreme complexity of the young people that are in our youth justice system. Whilst most instances of isolation occur in a young person's cell with full amenities and for short periods, the report shows compliance with proper authorisation and recording of isolation and separation needs significant improvement. The commission has directed all of its recommendations to the Department of Justice and Regulation in recognition that it will resume responsibility for youth justice from 3 April, and I will be making sure that all of these recommendations are in fact acted on.

Learn Locals

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills) — I rise to update the house on the Andrews government's support for Learn Locals in Victoria. On Friday, 10 March, at the Wyndham Community and Education Centre —

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Tierney, can you start from the beginning? Unfortunately there was some noise across the chamber and I did not actually hear the start of your contribution.

Ms TIERNEY — I rise to update the house on the Andrews government's support for Learn Locals in Victoria. On Friday, 10 March, I was at the Wyndham Community and Education Centre to announce \$1.5 million in funding for three Learn Local quality partnership trials. These partnerships, supported by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board, will enable Learn Local organisations, which provide accredited training to some of the state's most disadvantaged students, to work together to reduce compliance costs, share resources, improve quality and encourage best practice.

The Wyndham Community and Education Centre, Southern Grampians Adult Education and Community College, and the Merinda Park Learning and Community Centre will each lead a network of up to 10 local learning centres. The partnerships, part of Skills First, will ensure that all Victorians are able to access high-quality training that will provide them with the skills they need to meet industry needs, grow economic productivity and lead them to real jobs.

At the launch I had the pleasure of meeting Shayanne, whose story epitomises the value and importance of Learn Locals in this state. Shayanne told me school just was not for her. But instead of dropping out she went to the Wyndham Community and Education Centre to complete her secondary education. Because of the support she received there over a number of years she was able to start a bachelor of social science last week.

This government will always support community education providers because of stories just like these. We are doing this so that other young people like Shayanne can get an education to improve their lives and give back to their communities. Good on you, Shayanne; you should be so proud. A big thank you to everyone who works at the Learn Local centres. There are over 300 in the state, and I encourage all members of this Parliament to visit the Learn Local centres in their electorates.

Steritech

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — Last Thursday, 16 March, I was delighted to join the member for Thomastown in the Legislative Assembly, Bronwyn Halfpenny, to announce the government's

\$4.9 million investment towards the development of the fresh produce X-ray treatment facility at the Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market in Epping. This is a very exciting development for growers, and we have been very pleased to be able to attract decontamination processor Steritech to the Melbourne Market.

Steritech will open a new X-ray treatment facility that will boost export potential and provide Victorian producers with a major market advantage. At present producers are sometimes sending their produce to Brisbane by road freight for this treatment so that it can then be airfreighted to markets. This treatment facility will mean quicker access to markets but also a significant reduction in the expenses associated with that.

X-ray treatment is a phytosanitary measure, using new technology, for fresh horticultural produce that enables growers to meet export market access requirements. It is a viable alternative to chemical treatment or prolonged cold storage of product and is also important for access to some interstate markets. The project involves construction of a 3396-square-metre warehouse, buildings and coolrooms at the Melbourne Market. The facility will reduce costs and improve profitability for Victorian producers. It will enable Victoria's horticultural producers to meet increasing demand from international markets for high-quality product. Unlike some other treatment options, X-ray treatment does not significantly reduce commodity quality and may even extend shelf life.

The Andrews Labor government will be providing funding to secure Steritech's position in Victoria and leverage a significant investment from the company. The investment will mean a 10 per cent reduction in transport costs for Victorian horticultural exporters using Steritech's facilities. More significantly, it will open the door to markets that are difficult to access. This is a massive win for growers across our state, a boost for jobs and exports and a Victorian first. We are delighted to have worked with Jennifer and Ian Dicker from Steritech, the Melbourne Market Authority and Victorian growers to achieve this outcome.

MEMBERS STATEMENTS

Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — The massive cost of Daniel Andrews's ideological decision to scrap Peter Mac Private on the 13th floor of the Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre (VCCC) continues to grow. Daniel Andrews is denying

10 000 Victorian cancer patients each year the world-class treatment they deserve and costing taxpayers \$100 million in the process.

The secretary, Kym Peake, revealed at a recent Department of Health and Human Services parliamentary estimates inquiry hearing that the state government had spent \$11.9 million in fitting out the 13th floor of the VCCC for tenants who have yet to move in. As a result of this terrible decision by Daniel Andrews to cut 42 beds and four operating theatres, Peter Mac has lost millions of dollars in income — \$40 million in philanthropic donations, \$12 million in pharmacy and radiology income and a \$23.8 million hospital fit-out that would have been paid for by the new private operator — and the government has had to pay \$10 million in rent for the floor and is paying that as well as this \$11.9 million to set up the floor for the new tenants.

It is unbelievable that this divisive Premier is happy to leave 10 000 cancer patients a year worse off as a result of his ideological obsessions. This has been an absolutely dark decision by this Premier — and it continues to haunt him, as it should — for the thousands and thousands of cancer patients each year who will miss out on treatment and the massive cost to taxpayers as a result of this ridiculous decision.

Assisted Suicide: The Musical

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — I rise today to thank members in this place and members in the other place for coming to yesterday's briefing and introduction to Liz Carr and Jax Jacki Brown on their perspective on assisted suicide. Liz Carr, who plays Clarissa Mullery in the BBC's *Silent Witness*, and her partner, Jo Church, have come all the way from the UK for *Assisted Suicide: The Musical*, which Liz created, wrote and performs in.

She is a world-renowned activist for disability rights, and Liz spoke to MPs about why she is against the legalisation of assisted suicide from the perspective of an atheist, pro-choice and autonomy-believing disabled person. Jax Jacki Brown, who I met at her protest against the film *Me Before You*, which celebrates assisted suicide of a person with a disability, will become a feature of this Parliament I am sure over the next few months, as she will be standing out firmly against assisted suicide legislation in this, her home state.

Following sellout shows in the UK, *Assisted Suicide: The Musical* will be performed over the next few weeks as part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival

at Coopers Malthouse Theatre, and I invite members to attend Liz Carr's show. It is described as a TED Talk with show tunes, which combines Liz's love of sequins with her life as a performer and campaigner. She is joined on stage by a talented cast to express her important but often unheard disability perspective in this debate.

Racial discrimination legislation

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — This week Australia celebrated Harmony Day, which is a day where we come together to celebrate our enormous cultural diversity and the peace and prosperity that this nation is famous for. In fact it is that diversity itself that has made us such a great place but also a nation that can play its role in the broader global scene. The date was chosen because it falls on the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in relation to which the United Nations human rights chief himself has said he wants governments to adopt legislation that expressly prohibits racial hate speech. Yet here in Australia the Prime Minister decided that Harmony Day was a good day to announce his government's plans to wind back protection on hate speech through reforms to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

Prior to the 2006 election the then Liberal shadow Attorney-General, Andrew McIntosh, announced that the Liberal Party would repeal the religious section of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001, and of course they were openly sceptical at the time about the value of the human rights charter. It is clear that we are going to have a further debate about those laws here in Victoria, though I think the more important point is that MPs should first consider what conduct they themselves would consider acceptable public conduct before we have a discussion about sensible limits to free speech.

Farm World

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — I rise today to congratulate Lardner Park and the Commonwealth Bank, who have agreed to partner with me to ensure that farming families in need throughout Gippsland can enjoy Farm World and a day out with the family as a break from some often very, very difficult circumstances.

Prices for Farm World tickets are often prohibitive, and the recent milk price drop has seen that many things that families might otherwise enjoy have moved out of their reach. On that basis I wish to extend my thanks and congratulations to Gippsland Farmer Relief

Incorporated along with the Commonwealth Bank and the Lardner Park Farm World coordinators, who have ensured that every farming family that is on the database as requiring assistance can head along, access discounted prices for products and services and also have a break from some pretty tough circumstances.

Gippsland public transport

Ms SHING — I wish to note that improved transport services in terms of bus connectivity and additional routes have begun to take effect throughout Gippsland, including West Gippsland and into the Latrobe Valley. This is an important step forward in improving mobility, and I look forward to delivering additional improvements that include better access to rail and related services.

Gippsland technical school

Ms SHING — On another matter, I wish to congratulate all organisers from the Gippsland tech school committee who, along with the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, James Merlino, and I, unveiled new plans for the tech school as part of the Federation Training innovation precinct last Friday in the valley. There are exciting times ahead.

Minister for Families and Children

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — I continue to be amused whenever I see the Labor Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos, claiming credit for a children's centre or kindergarten project that I funded during my term as Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development in the former Napthine and Baillieu governments. Just last week I picked up on two of these projects when the government issued press releases that were very sneakily worded so as to imply the grants were allocated by the Andrews government. The first, on 14 March, was the \$350 000 grant for Hartnett House Integrated Children's Centre in Brunswick, which was announced by me in 2014. Then on 15 March the minister claimed the \$600 000 grant for the Goldfields Children's Centre, when in fact it was a 2012–13 investment by the former Liberal government, a project for which Louise Staley from the Legislative Assembly and I had turned the first sod in 2014.

It is also disappointing that this minister refuses to invite local members to the opening of such centres. Louise Staley, who was a strong advocate for the Goldfields Children's Centre project, should have been invited to the opening but unfortunately was not. This was not the case under the former government, in

which I insisted that local Labor members, including the current minister, were invited to the opening of these facilities.

Women in agriculture

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — The awarding of the Rural Industries and Research Development Corporation (RIRDC) Victorian Rural Women's Award is one of my favourite days of the year. It was an honour yesterday to be part of the presentation of this award and to be in a room full of amazing and inspiring women from across Victoria who work in primary industries. I might be a little biased, but I think it is fair to say that women truly are the driving force behind our nearly \$13 billion agricultural industry.

The four Victorian finalists and their proposed projects are as diverse as the agriculture sector itself — from dairy to Queensland fruit fly, and from minimising farm waste to women as leaders in the seafood industry. All four women are very deserving finalists in a competitive field. The winner of the award in 2017 is Kirsten Abernethy of Portarlington, and she was joined by finalists Cath Jenkins of South Purrumbete, Jo Williams of Lake Boga and Lisa Brassington from the Mornington Peninsula. They are all very deserving nominees, and there is a terrific winner.

When it comes to standing up for rural women it is only the Andrews Labor government that really cares. The Liberal-Nationals coalition yesterday confirmed they are more interested in playing politics than celebrating the role of women. Assembly member for Euroa Steph Ryan should be ashamed for insulting the four finalists yesterday. Their contribution to our agriculture is profound. Ms Ryan has completely disregarded the facts, including the selection criteria, which is set by the federal government and administered by an independent panel and RIRDC.

As Victoria's first female Minister for Agriculture I was also delighted to announce that we will be re-establishing the Rural Women's Network, a much-loved initiative that was canned by the former government when funding was ceased. We are also backing the Women on Farms Gathering this weekend in Harrow, and we have thrown our support behind the Invisible Farmer project, the largest ever study of women on the land.

Australian Formula One Grand Prix

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — You can hear them already — the Melbourne Australian Formula One Grand Prix will open the Formula One season for the 19th time this weekend with plenty of drivers looking to start the season strongly and make a play for the title left vacant by Nico Rosberg's departure. The race weekend commences today, wrapping up with race day on Sunday, 26 March. We wish all teams — Mercedes, Ferrari, Red Bull, particularly Australian Daniel Ricardo, Renault, McLaren, Force India, Toro Rosso, Haas, Williams and Sauber — a safe and successful weekend.

I congratulate John Harnden and his board for the work that they are doing at the Australian Grand Prix Corporation and wish Andrew Westacott and his executive team a successful event this weekend. As ambassador for Guide Dogs Victoria, I am pleased to announce today that Guide Dogs Victoria is the chosen charity for the Australian Formula One Grand Prix, and we encourage all patrons and teams to support the great work of Guide Dogs Victoria. We wish the staff on site, the volunteers and of course the fans a very safe and successful weekend. Melbourne roars again.

Wantirna Park caravan park

Mr LEANE (Eastern Metropolitan) — In the last sitting week I directed to the attention of Parliament the plight of 300 people who have been given notice that they have to leave the Wantirna Park caravan park because a developer called LongRiver have bought the premises and decided that they would like to make a lot of money by putting a heap of townhouses on that land. I understand that that is the way things work, but the residents, some of whom have lived there for a long time, put in some requests for assistance to the developer, who, as we know, is going to make a heap of money out of this project if they have to move. These people would prefer not to move.

Since the last sitting week there was a response to the residents from Mr Yu, the sole director of this company, which was not good enough. I said to him that I am going to be his conscience in here. He said that if people leave early, they might get some assistance in demolishing their homes. The thing about that is this caravan park is currently being run down. The street lighting, the roads and the access are all being run down. So I say to Mr Yu: I am going to come in here every sitting week and be your conscience until you actually address these people's concerns properly.

Hazelwood power station

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — We are now only eight days away from the closure of the Hazelwood power station — eight days away from the loss of hundreds of jobs and massive uncertainty for many workers, contractors, service providers and their families. In 2010 the Labor government had a policy to close Hazelwood, so it is no real surprise that through budget and policy decisions they have facilitated the nails that have hammered down the lid of the power station coffin. If this government had genuinely cared, they would not have slugged Latrobe Valley generators with an extra \$252 million in coal royalties last year and would have facilitated a gradual, phased closure, as promised in 2010.

More than 3000 people have signed petitions calling for a gradual closure of Hazelwood. The decision to immediately shut down Hazelwood blindsided unions, workers, contractors and their families and has caused unknown and immeasurable pain. The closure of Hazelwood comes at a time when under this government the unemployment rate in the City of Latrobe has risen from 7.3 per cent in December 2014 to 11.2 per cent in December 2016, a rise of more than 50 per cent. This week we saw the Heyfield community, mill workers and unions protest on the steps of Parliament House in response to the government's attack on the timber industry. This is death by stealth hiding behind the Leadbeater's possum. This government should be condemned for their lack of leadership and their poor policy and budget decisions.

Finally, I salute the Hazelwood power station for supplying baseload power for over 50 years for our comfort and enjoyment.

Government performance

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — It is extraordinary to think that Victoria's energy security is at risk, with power supply shortfalls more than likely. Energy security will affect both industry and households. Victoria is so rich with energy resources and this impending situation did not need to occur, but in just a few days time a huge part of our energy generation will be shut down. More jobs will be lost, and there will be more communities who will feel the compounding effect of this decision.

The Andrews government has been a complete disaster for Victoria: ripping up the east-west link contract that has cost the Victorian taxpayer \$1.2 billion; going to war with tens of thousands of Country Fire Authority

volunteers who protect our communities; allowing a crime wave to continue across our state, with a record number of home invasions and carjackings; dividing communities by imposing on them infrastructure such as sky rail or the Werribee youth prison with no consultation; and changing an iconic boulevard such as St Kilda Road and ripping out trees for no reason other than that Premier Daniel Andrews just does not care. Our corrections and youth justice systems have seen the biggest riots in the state's history, costing tens of millions of dollars, and youth justice remains a complete mess.

And of course there are the rorts. The Premier has presided over the rorting by his very own MPs who have held the highest positions in our Parliament. Not only have those events tarnished the good name of this institution that upholds our democratic process, but Daniel Andrews still refuses to act in a way that all Victorians expect — that is, that despite one MP paying back the money, he should insist that all money is paid back and that the offenders resign from their seats.

For the member for Melton to state that his residence in St Kilda was not spacious enough and then to live in a caravan in Ocean Grove and claim the second residence allowance just does not cut it. Our proud state has been so diminished by this government — a government that is in disarray and most likely one of the worst governments, if not the worst government, this state has ever had.

Energy prices

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I question what the real costs of Victoria's power price hike have been and will be to the economy and the Victorian community. The Andrews government has not told the public what the additional costs will be to run public facilities, local councils and institutions given this significant increase in energy costs. Households and private businesses are horrified at the price hikes. Many businesses are already looking at a 30 to 50 per cent increase in their power bills. Places such as hospitals, police stations, state government offices, water authority offices and schools — publicly run places — will also have to pay bigger bills, and that means the taxpayer will pay. So regular taxpayers will be hit twice for this — paying their own bills and paying for the hikes that government-run institutions will also have to pay. It may be a hidden cost now, but it will not be for long — just watch the budget coming up. Local councils, already stressed about revising budgets to fit a 2.5 per cent cap on rate increases, will be sweating these power increases. I want to know if the Premier

has done his homework on this. What is it going to cost the public purse for Labor's ideological nightmare?

Next week the Hazelwood power station will shut, immediately cutting Victoria's power generation by 22 per cent, and 2000 jobs will also go when the switch is flicked. The Andrews government has tripled the tax on coal and set a state-based renewable energy target of 40 per cent by 2025. The Premier is too busy chasing the South Australian energy dream that has led to that state paying the highest power bills in Australia and receiving national headlines for its infamous power blackouts. I am also concerned about the impact on volunteer-run organisations like surf lifesaving, girl guides, men's sheds and other organisations and sporting clubs that this will affect. Can you imagine a small country football club affording the cost of lights for training during winter? Now the takings from lamington drives and sausage sizzles will be directed towards paying for the Premier's expensive power. So we have a dilemma in the state of Victoria, which is reliant now on sun and wind power, with no gas exploration until 2020 thanks to the Andrews government.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AMENDMENT BILL 2017

Second reading

Debate resumed from 9 March; motion of Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Training and Skills).

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — I am indeed very pleased to be able to rise to speak to the Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Bill 2017. I do so because this is an important bill that addresses the issue of rorting in early childcare settings. Rorting, of course, is very much — —

Ms Lovell — Very topical.

Ms CROZIER — It is very topical at the moment in relation to what is occurring in our very own Parliament, Ms Lovell. This is an important piece of legislation to ensure that rorting does not occur within these services. By way of background, can I just give members some context as to why this has come about. I am very pleased that it has been Victoria that has led the way in relation to reform in introducing quality early education; in fact Victoria was part of this process back in 2012. I would like to commend my colleague Ms Lovell for taking the lead; she was the minister responsible at the time. This work was undertaken really to provide for a national quality framework that

was agreed by all states and territories and that, as I mentioned, has been underway for a number of years. That has been continued by the Andrews government.

This bill has a number of purposes. It amends the Education and Care Services National Law in the schedule to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 and improves the national quality framework. It does that by doing a number of things. It streamlines the assessment and rating process for education and care services by implementing a revised national quality standard; it strengthens the national law as it applies to family day care services by requiring approved providers of family day care services to only operate from a jurisdiction where they hold a service approval; it removes supervised certificate requirements to reduce compliance burden for education and care services, simplifying and streamlining the national law to address unnecessary administrative processes, thereby decreasing administrative costs for the regulatory authority; and it makes minor and technical changes to specific provisions in the national law to clarify their operation and effect.

Largely this bill is technical in nature in undertaking all of those elements. But can I say that it has come about through the rorting of day care process — and there has been significant media interest in this — and some of that has occurred here in Victoria. In fact it has occurred recently, where we have seen a number of day care facilities that have rorted the system and literally ripped off the taxpayer by millions and millions of dollars. It is very concerning that even the Australian Federal Police has had to get involved in some of the investigations that have taken place to ensure that money that has been received through these means has not gone offshore for sinister purposes — something I note on a day when London has experienced another shocking terrorist attack — and that this money has not gone off into those areas. I am not suggesting that it has, but I know the Australian Federal Police has been involved and has been looking at those elements. So this is really very critical in relation to how day care services are provided and how that money is then distributed.

Yes, it is the responsibility of the federal government to be paying for the services, but it is the states and territories that have the responsibility for the regulation of these day care centres. That is a very important element of this bill, because I see that the minister has tried to switch the blame for this to the federal government by saying it was not Victoria's responsibility to assess a provider's likelihood of rorting federal subsidies. It is the state's responsibility to ensure that the regulatory component is undertaken,

that these services are actually what they are supposed to be — that is, legal and highly regulated childcare centres that are providing child care for the right purposes — and that no untoward events occur such as abuse, neglect or any other thing that a child might be at risk from, at the same time as these services get subsidies through the federal subsidy scheme. Once the state government goes through that regulatory process and approves a service the federal government has very limited capacity to deny fee relief for services provided by that day care centre for those services.

It really is critical that governments at all levels understand that there is a shared responsibility for this. It was set up a number of years ago by the federal government, and the federal government needs to take its fair share of responsibility, but the state government cannot pass the buck and shove all this onto the federal government, saying they should not have paid the money, because it is up to state governments to ensure safe and functional childcare centres.

If we look at this, there are a number of examples in Victoria that have come under question. If I look at reports of rotting from last year, an article was published in the *Age* of 15 October with the headline 'Childcare rotting estimated at billions but only five investigators nationwide'. According to this report data has revealed that more than a fifth of all family day care investigations in Victoria identified high-risk operations — for example, where a child was left alone or corporal punishment was used. That is in relation to those child safeguards that need to be in place. It is up to the state to ensure that there is no abuse or neglect of a child in these settings. The article goes on to say that there was a lack of oversight. Foundations Family Day Care director Kathi Hewitson is quoted as saying, 'The lack of oversight is astounding' and that there were dodgy operators that were reaping 'massive amounts of money' due to government inaction. This is a very important bill to address those concerns and ensure that that cannot continue.

The article goes on to quote Ms Hewitson as saying:

I have seen educators at other services just transporting children but not actually having them in care. I quit a service because the staff in the office were fabricating enrolment records, they were then fabricating attendance records and submitting them to the government.

That is an example of what we are talking about. If that occurs and there is no oversight by the state government authorities, then that money can come into those childcare organisations, and that is where the rotting has happened.

This is a very, very concerning issue that I am very pleased all governments are addressing. We know that the number of day care providers in Victoria has surged. That has been partly because of the easy access to federal money and the unscrupulous operators that have seen this as an opportunity, and that is because the government has not been doing enough to ensure that regulation has occurred. We are two and a half years into the Andrews government, and I would hope that they are clamping down on this. I think that there are many more instances that are much worse in other states and other jurisdictions. There have been some significant reports in New South Wales about very large family day care centres ripping off the federal government taxpayer. It is up to the New South Wales government to do exactly what I am talking about here in Victoria.

It is a real responsibility, because there have been many examples over recent months in Victoria of such services being approved. I refer to Gateway Family Day Care, with directors Masuma Akther and Muslima Mohamed from Bangladesh and Kenya, where conditions on service approval were amended on 2 September for failing to register family day care educators, staffing issues and not running a proper program. That is significant in itself. To have that regulation and oversight is very important. Also in Victoria Milky Way Family Day Care, which lists its directors as Ethiopian-born Jale Tujuba and Adnan Yusuf, was put on notice by the Victorian government for providing false and misleading information, not meeting service conditions and failing to run required education programs. This is from a report in the *Australian* of November last year. This day care was put on notice, but actually the government should be doing more than that. If there are any concerns about impropriety within a day care service, then frankly this government should be doing more to shut that service down so that they do not put children at risk or rip off the taxpayer by receiving money from federal subsidies.

As I said, I am pleased that we are talking about improving the regulatory component and tightening that up. This was agreed to late last year by all the states and territories to ensure that they can improve regulation and ensure that rotting does not occur in these day care centres. It is very much a welcome piece of legislation. Despite that, I want to say that it is not only this government that has been working on this and that needs to be ensuring that security is in place. I would like to also acknowledge the work of my former colleague in taking it up in 2012.

We are in 2017, so it has taken five years to get to this, and I am pleased that all states and territories are on board to ensure that compliance can occur and reporting can cease. As we know, reporting can be insidious. It is completely unacceptable to the Victorian community. With those few words I commend the bill to the house.

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the amendments to the Education and Care Services National Law, and I confirm from the outset that the Greens will be supporting the bill.

As we have heard, the amendments contained in this bill aim to improve regulation of service providers, reduce unnecessary administrative burden on service providers and enhance enforcement of the national law. A substantial amount of analysis, consultation and negotiation has gone into developing this bill, which implements recommendations from the 2014 review of the national partnership agreement on the national quality agenda for early childhood education and care.

The Greens recognise the critical importance of universal access to high-quality, affordable child care, and we strongly support efforts to continually professionalise and increase access to child care. A substantial number of amendments within the bill are aimed at improving regulation and quality of the family day care system. This component of child care is one that has grown substantially over the last 10 years in a number of areas.

In principle the Greens are supportive of day care operated by and within communities. It has an important role to play in connecting families within communities, providing a home-like environment that supports children's development, enabling parents to work where they want or need to, providing access to day care at a reasonable price and providing career opportunities to groups of workers that may find entry into the workplace challenging otherwise.

In particular family day care continues to provide strong career options to migrant women with a huge amount of experience in caring for and educating children. Migrant women often face substantial barriers to entering the workforce, and these barriers often act as impediments to integration with their communities more generally, so solid career paths that meet a general need within our communities and provide opportunities for families to connect with others in their communities are hugely important. Family day care provides these kinds of opportunities on a daily basis. Clearly, though, standards of care and safety must be protected and adequately regulated, as they are within our educational institutions and other childcare organisations.

Rapid growth of an industry often presents challenges from a regulatory perspective, and this has certainly been the case in the context of family day care in Victoria, as the government will attest to. This bill will address a number of challenges identified as part of the 2014 review of the national partnership agreement on the national quality agenda for early childhood education and care. This bill will tighten restrictions around the locations and venues where the care can be provided. It will also ensure that regulators receive timely information about changes to key staff and responsibilities. It will remove the supervisor certification scheme. This change aims to reduce the administrative burden on education and care services while ensuring that standards are maintained, and it does this by delegating this responsibility to service providers.

These changes will also ensure that approved education and care services must meet the highest national quality standards in order to apply for an 'excellent' rating. Parents place a great deal of store in educational ratings, and these standards need to be both rigorous and consistent. These amendments are part of an ongoing effort to ensure consistent and high-quality education and care across all Australian jurisdictions.

The changes will not address other persistent challenges facing the family day care sector, including fraudulent operation of services and the availability of federal funding for new services in areas that are already well serviced by existing services. We note that the Victorian government has been taking action on fraudulent operation and called on the federal government late last year to undertake a review of the sector to address this and related issues. We would be fully supportive of such an action.

Notwithstanding this and acknowledging the purpose and scope of this bill in amending the national law to implement the recommendations of the 2014 national partnership agreement review, I commend this bill to the house.

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this morning to speak on the Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Bill 2017, and in doing so I express my gratitude to those responsible for child care and for early education services because child care is very much an education. Those children who are in child care are, I suppose, at the peak of their learning ability. They are picking up things at every moment of the day and night, and the people that have them in their care are absolutely crucial to the future development of those children.

This is a bill that we will not be opposing on this side of the house, but I have to say the irony of this bill has not escaped me, because this is a bill which is being introduced to prevent roting — this government introducing legislation to prevent roting, can you believe that? After everything that has happened in this place and the other place over the last month or so we now have got a government that wants to stop roting. It is beyond me how they would have the gall, how they would have the front to even think about telling anybody else to stop roting while they themselves are roting. It is extraordinary to me and I am sure extraordinary to the overwhelming majority of Victorians who see this as something that is hard to believe — it is hard to believe that they would do this.

The bill itself amends the Education and Care Services National Law in the schedule to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010, and that provides a nationally consistent framework for the delivery of high-quality outcomes in education and care services in all states and territories in Australia. I know that while this bill is predominantly about early child care the fact that it is an education bill as well leads me to express my very deep concern that the welfare of students in this state is being compromised by some of the programs that are being peddled by this government.

I refer specifically to the Safe Schools program, which is very much putting at risk the mental health and proper development of young people in this state. We have a situation where a boy or a girl can go through six or seven years of education and then be told in the classroom at the age of 10 or 11 when they are perhaps entering puberty that in fact they may not be boys and they may not be girls and that they may be something else altogether — that, as we discovered yesterday, they may be gender X. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority made this change. It was reported on Sky News yesterday that senior Victorian school students can now choose to be gender X on official documents instead of identifying themselves as male or female.

We have a situation now where the government is promoting total confusion in the minds of young people at a time when there is a great deal of confusion at the best of times. I might be getting a little older than I used to be, but I well remember my teenage years. They are very exciting years, and they are also at times very confusing years. For the government to add to that confusion by telling boys and girls that in fact they may not be boys and girls and by encouraging them to examine, to experience and to experiment with other genders seems to me to be putting the welfare of our young people very much at risk, and that is something

that I find appalling and absolutely disgraceful. God knows that this government is clearly the worst government this state has ever seen.

Mr Morris — That's a high mark.

Mr FINN — It is a high mark.

Mr Leane interjected.

Mr FINN — I know that Mr Leane is over there screaming, 'What about Cain and Kirner?'. I can hear him now screaming, 'What about Cain and Kirner?'. But I have to say that I do not recall John Cain or Joan Kirner trying to poison the minds of young people just for going to school. This bloke, our current Premier, Daniel Andrews — Despot Dan, as he is known to many — —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I am sorry, Mr Finn, but it is very unparliamentary to refer to the Premier in that way.

Mr FINN — It is. I apologise. I should not do that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! Please desist and call members by their proper name.

Mr FINN — I was just repeating what people say to me. Of all the things that this government has done over the last two and a half years, the attack on our young people is the most despicable. The most unforgivable act of this government is clearly the war it is waging on young people in our schools. To poison the minds of young people to the point where they may never actually recover from the exposure to this ideological nonsense of the loopy left is absolutely unforgivable. I cannot for the life of me understand how they think they will get away with it. I cannot understand how this government thinks that it can get away with rampant ideological stupidity in our classrooms. It is outrageous, and it is something that none of us should tolerate.

We hear a lot about tolerance, particularly from those who are very quick to try and shut you down if you disagree with them, but I have to say that to tolerate the sort of war that is being waged on our young people by this government is criminal. That is something that I am not prepared to do. I think that we need young people to be able to develop by themselves as much as possible into strong, compassionate and productive adults, and this government — the Andrews government — is actively undermining with its program the possibility for that to happen. I sincerely hope for the sake of the young people of this state more than anybody else that this government goes out in November next year.

Mr Leane — You're scaring the kids.

Mr FINN — Mr Leane, they are going out. For the benefit of *Hansard*, the young people in the gallery are leaving, and Mr Leane may know that they are actually going out, having heard what I have said this morning, to register to vote so that they can cast their vote against —

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I have to bring you back to the bill. I have had a quick look at this, and the bill refers to child care and family day care. It has nothing to do with secondary education or the Safe Schools program, so I ask you to come back to the detail of the bill.

Mr FINN — I was in fact referring to the statement of compatibility. I quoted earlier:

The bill amends the Education and Care Services National Law in the schedule to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 ... which provides a nationally consistent framework for the delivery of high-quality outcomes in education and care services in all states and territories in Australia.

I would have thought that that pretty much covers what I have been talking about, but I am happy to take your advice.

Mr Leane — Do you want to make it to the footy tonight? I reckon you should finish up your contribution now.

Mr FINN — Yes, I am very keen to get there. We will give Carlton a fair flogging, I would suggest. It will be good. We on this side of the house will not be opposing the bill. Mr Leane has just reminded me that I really should sit down, so I thank him for that. I may not thank him for much else, but I thank him for that. I do not necessarily commend the bill, but we certainly do not oppose it, and I sincerely hope this government will cease its war on young people and its rorting ways in this state.

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — It gives me great pleasure, as a former Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, to stand and talk on the Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Bill 2017. A little bit of history to this is that back in 2009 the Council of Australian Governments did come together and decide that they would have a national approach to quality of service and regulation of early childhood services. One of the aims of that was to establish a nationally consistent framework under which education and care services would operate in Australia.

In 2009 the enabling legislation was introduced through the Victorian Parliament, and all states and territories except Western Australia signed up to that mirror piece of legislation that was introduced into all Parliaments but hosted here in Victoria. Then after we won government in 2010 Victoria was the lead state for actually developing the regulations for the national quality framework. I led that work, and I was very proud to do so. The regulations are actually hosted in New South Wales but they were developed by the education department in Victoria. We had some extremely good public servants, one of whom I see in the advisors box today, who worked on those regulations and assisted me in implementing the national law. I thank all of the people in the Department of Education, as it then was, who did assist with that during that time.

It was very important work. It was work I was very passionate about because, as we know, 95 per cent of a child's brain is developed before they start school. Early childhood is where we can make the biggest difference to a child's life. For the children who come from homes where the parents are not highly educated and who live in low socio-economic areas and need more assistance, early childhood is the time when we can provide that assistance to those children and to those families to assist their children. It is very important that we do have quality early childhood services.

There are a number of things that support this. We have the Heckman curve, which shows that investment in the early years pays off later in life for children. We also have the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre study, which really did do a tremendous amount of work on investigating early childhood and the benefits of investing in those early years. It is fantastic that we have had that work to rely on as we have been implementing higher quality early childhood education and care in Australia.

Any huge change to legislation and regulation should be reviewed, and part of the national quality framework was to insist that it be reviewed every five years. In 2014 work commenced on reviewing the national quality framework: how it was being implemented, how it could be improved and how we could better have quality early childhood education and care for Australia's children. The work has taken a long time to be completed and has finally gotten to this house in 2017. It did commence in 2014, and now three years later we are finally seeing this piece of legislation come forward to make the changes that have come out of that review.

These changes will be made in Victoria first, and then of course the mirror legislation will be adopted by other parliaments. Some of the major work that this piece of legislation will do is to improve the regulation of education and care services, including family day care services and educators at those services. Family day care has been probably the most challenging of all education and care services to actually deal with under this regulation, because prior to this national law family day care services were completely unregulated. It has been a huge leap for them to comply with the national law, but it has also highlighted a number of flaws in the family day care system that do need to be addressed.

There were a number of challenges with many of the family day care services when I was the minister. I do like the family day care model for care for children, and I realise that it plays an important role in many families' options for child care, but the rorting that has been going on in family day care has to come to a stop. I think the system has got to be improved, and hopefully this legislation will improve the family day care system and stop the rorting that has been happening in that area.

As some of my other colleagues have mentioned, it is ironic that we are talking about rorting in family day care services when at this time in the Victorian Parliament we are so focused on the rorting of entitlements by Labor Party members. 'Entitlements' is a good word when you are talking about Labor Party members. They seem to think that they are entitled to just do whatever they want and to rort the system, and they are finally being held to account, just as some of the family day care services who have rorted the system will be held to account.

This legislation will also repeal the provision for certified supervisors. It will improve the information-sharing arrangements between regulators, government entities and approved providers under the national law, and it will also deal with penalties and non-compliance.

As I said, the Education and Care Services National Law was a landmark piece of legislation when it was introduced, with Western Australia opting out of the national law but having mirror legislation in that state. I was very honoured to lead the way on this as minister for four years and to oversee the implementation of this legislation in the state of Victoria, but also as the chair of the ministerial council I led the way nationally with this piece of legislation and the regulations.

I am very happy that the review has now been completed and that the implementation of the

recommendations of the review are now being made law through this piece of legislation. I hope the national law continues to deliver high-quality education and care for Australia's children, but also I hope it continues to be reviewed so that we can ensure that it is operating in the most effective way possible into the future.

Ms SYMES (Northern Victoria) — It is a pleasure to rise to make a brief contribution on the Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Bill 2017. It is great to be part of a government that has the education and care of our children as one of the key pillars of its strategy for all Victorians. Education leads to opportunity and opportunity leads to success. In a state and country as fortunate and prosperous as ours every single child deserves the best chances that life can offer. Nelson Mandela said, 'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. In this state, under the leadership of this government, we believe and seek to honour those sentiments.

My eldest child just started school this year and my other child is at kinder. Like all parents I certainly want to have confidence that the care they receive and the learnings they are being given are from people who know what they are doing, who care about what they are doing and who have my kids' best interests at heart every day they are with them.

The changes proposed in this bill are further steps as part of the ongoing task of ensuring that all aspects of a child's care and education are best practice and deliver on the highest of standards across the sector. These amendments came about as recommendations from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) review of a national partnership agreement on the national quality agenda for early childhood education and care. This established the national quality framework (NQF), a jointly governed unified regulatory framework covering long day care, family day care, preschool and outside school hours care services. The NQF is a world-leading proposition which aims to raise the quality and consistency of standards and drive continuous improvements in education and care services. These amendments will reduce the administrative and compliance burden whilst at the same time providing more rigour, certainty and confidence for the community in terms of those people responsible for caring for our children.

The bill will improve oversight of and support for carers and educators engaged by family day care services; remove the supervisor certificate requirements and make approved providers of education and care services responsible for ensuring that nominated

supervisors are fit and proper persons with suitable skills to perform their roles; strengthen the eligibility criteria which must be met before an education and care service may apply for the excellent rating as part of implementing a revised national quality standard; and simplify various administrative and enforcement provisions.

There has been exceptional growth in the family day care sector in recent years, which has led the COAG review to recommend some technical and operational improvements. The bill contains important reforms that will provide state and territory regulators with strengthened regulatory tools to address non-compliance in the sector, especially in relation to family day care services. This is a very important oversight.

In Victoria in 2015, 47 per cent of national quality framework published sanctions related to family day care services. Although these services made up only 10 per cent of the services, approximately 40 enforcement actions related to family day care services. The family day care sector by its nature is challenging to regulate. Family day care service providers with a track record of good performance will largely be unaffected by these changes, and I would like to put on the record my utmost admiration for those that provide family day care services. I have two kids. I do not think that I could do five at the one time like these people do, so hats off to them.

We want Victorian families to have options and alternatives for their childcare and education choices, but equally we want them to have high standards of quality and service across those choices. This legislation seeks to give them exactly that — rigour, confidence and certainty. I commend the minister for all her hard work and all those involved in the exceptional policy work that sits behind this legislation. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I am pleased to be given the call to speak on the Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Bill 2017. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Education and Care Services National Law in the schedule to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. The bill improves the national quality framework by streamlining the assessment and rating process for education and care services by implementing a revised national quality standard. It strengthens the national law as it applies to family day care services by requiring approved providers of family day care services to only operate from a jurisdiction where they hold a service approval. It also removes supervisor certificate

requirements to reduce the compliance burden for education and care services as well as simplifying and streamlining the national law to address unnecessary administrative processes, thereby decreasing administrative costs for the regulatory authority. The bill makes minor and technical changes to specific provisions in the national law to clarify their operation and effect.

It is my understanding that this particular reform has come about due to some imprudent use of funds within the sector. Some childcare arrangements were not using funding in a way that could be best used, and of course this funding is incredibly important, as is all funding in education.

I was very pleased during the former term of government to attend with Ms Lovell, the then Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, many openings of kindergartens and the like. Buninyong kindergarten I remember was an exceptional opening. Ms Lovell read a lovely book and there were many students present at that particular opening. The facility at Buninyong is an incredibly important one. Buninyong is a growing community, despite the fact that under the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* some of the important planning controls that were put in place by the former government and by the Ballarat City Council at the time look to be unwound. The neighbourhood residential zones, which are an incredibly important part of the protection of the village that is Buninyong, appear to be weakened, watered down, by the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* that this government has just recently announced. I was also fortunate to attend with Ms Lovell the opening of new facilities at the kindergarten in Wendouree.

As Ms Lovell stated in her contribution, the time prior to attending school in the vicinity of ages three to five in the early years of their care is an incredibly important time in a child's development and we need to make sure that all funding during this period of time is used appropriately. I am very pleased to report that the kindergartens that Ms Lovell opened were spacious enough. I think that is incredibly important, given the revelations in the report that has been tabled today where some residences have been referred to as not being spacious enough by the member for Melton in the Legislative Assembly. I do note that despite the fact that Mr Nardella did not reside in Ballarat we have not heard anything from our — —

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, Acting President, I just want to draw attention to the issue of relevance. We are talking about an important reform of early childhood education, not just in Victoria but

nationally, and given that this legislation has national implications the member should really be very embarrassed to be talking about matters that have nothing to do with this bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Mr Ramsay) — Order! I uphold the point of order. Mr Morris, I ask you to come back to the bill. There is no mention of Mr Nardella in the bill or his caravan or his residence at Ocean Grove.

Mr MORRIS — Or of its not being spacious enough! The main provisions of the bill include in particular clause 5, which puts into law what is in effect already happening under the Department of Education and Training guidelines anyway — that is, to improve the regulation of education and care services, including family day care services and educators at those services.

Family day care is certainly something that has been utilised across Victoria and is supported by many local councils. It achieves a care option that suits many families quite well. I know that there are many families who need regular day care with more prescriptive hours than some day care facilities provide. The facilities are not always able to meet the demands of families where parents may be working. They may be doing shift work or night shifts or they could be people in the nursing profession and the like who require some flexibility in child care arrangements because they are working hours that are outside the normal hours that day care centres may be open. Family day care is an incredibly important service and one that I think serves our community quite well in many regards.

Further main provisions in this bill are contained in clause 36, which seeks to amend section 163(1) of the national law. It is an offence provision which currently requires an approved provider of a family day care service to ensure that one or more qualified persons are employed to assist with the operation. The intention of this provision is to ensure that the national regulations will prescribe the minimum number of family day care coordinators for the first 12 months of operation to be at least one for every 15 family day care educators in that service. Ensuring that we have people who are appropriately qualified in these professions is important.

The provision of childcare services in the community is something that I think the community has an evolving view of. At one time child care was just seen as an opportunity for children to be placed somewhere while their parents worked. We as a society and as a community are now moving much more towards the

point where we need to make sure that when children are at child care they have a fulfilling and educationally colourful experience that will make sure their progress and development is going to be supported by the environment they are in. Play is incredibly important for children at this time, but structured play and an acknowledgement that there needs to be work put into the opportunities children have at this time is important as well because, as previously stated, this is an incredibly important time in their development and they should be supported in this way.

Clause 11 requires an application for a service approval to nominate one or more individuals as supervisors of the service. This is to enhance the enforcement of the national law, including by making further provisions for enforceable undertakings and powers of entry to the premises as well.

Clause 54 amends section 199(4)(a) of the national law to provide that an authorised officer may exercise entry power under section 199. Clause 45 goes on to provide that the regulatory authority may apply to the relevant tribunal or court for an order to enforce the undertaking if the regulatory authority believes that a person has failed to comply and to improve the information-sharing arrangements between regulators, government entities and approved providers under national law.

Clause 64 further goes on to amend the current sections 271 and 272 that provide for sharing of information between the national authority, government authorities and approved providers. This clause substitutes section 271 of the national law to clarify who may disclose information and to whom information may be disclosed. It also empowers the national authority and the regulatory authority to disclose information at the request of an approved provider if the authority believes there are reasonable grounds for the provider to have that information.

As has been previously discussed, this particular piece of legislation came about as a result of what could perhaps be described as the non-prudent use of funds within the sector. I think when we are talking about child care and the importance of child care that all of these funds need to be made available to the appropriate people at the appropriate time, and it should be ensured that anybody who is found to be misusing taxpayer funds is recognised as it is entirely unacceptable for that to occur. It is pleasing to see the government has been taking some steps in relation to child care to amend some of the concerns that have been raised over a period of time.

I note that the coalition has a 'not oppose' position toward this piece of legislation, and I am very much looking forward to hearing the contributions of other members on this bill.

Ms BATH (Eastern Victoria) — This morning I am pleased to rise to speak on the Education and Care Services National Law Amendment Bill 2017, and The Nationals will be adopting a 'not oppose' position on this bill. The main purpose of the bill is to amend the Education and Care Services National Law in the schedule to the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 to improve the national quality framework.

As some history or background, this bill now looks at changing some technicalities that have been brought about through an agreement between the states and territories, the federal government and the Education Council in late 2016. The state and territory governments approve and regulate services to ensure quality and compliance, whilst the federal government regulates the payments. It is a state jurisdiction to encompass regulations while the federal government puts up the funding, so it is a joint arrangement. In 2009 it was agreed at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) forum that a national approach would be taken to the regulation of early childhood services with an object of maintaining and providing better services.

The national quality framework commenced in 2012 in Victoria, which leads the states and remains the host state to the agreed reforms. I would like to pay tribute to the former minister, Ms Lovell, for her work and effort in this area and for being at the forefront of this development. Since 2014 each state and territory has conducted their own consultations with peak bodies and stakeholders, but it is getting a good way through 2017 and we are only now coming up with a reform. I feel there has been a great lag there, which is a shame.

In terms of the day care system it is a very important system and very vital for families and working mothers in Victoria. The federal government established the system to relieve pressure on day care by providing positive subsidies to childcare centres in people's homes, which can also include grandparents' homes. These regulations certainly need tightening and a greater focus on regulation and implementation of the rules.

In country Victoria it is so very important to be able to provide flexible day care arrangements. In many small communities and hamlets across my electorate of Eastern Victoria Region there are not specific formal day care centres, so we are reliant on great people

within our communities who want to provide a family day care arrangement. In fact when I had my children many moons ago and worked in my own business, a family business, I had to be away from home. It is an unfortunate thing that sometimes you cannot be at home all the time, because being at home for children growing up is I think vital and very important in their developing sense of wellbeing, but many mothers do have to make that difficult choice and go to work. When I was in my business I put my children into day care, and I did it in two ways. One was in a family home, a family setting, and I think that provided an excellent start for them to acclimatise to being away from their parents. We were most fortunate, as in my experience all the home day care centres that I have had contact with have been exceptional in the care of their children, but this is not the case across the board.

We have found through various mechanisms that there has been rorting in the system by home day care centres. Also I would just like to acknowledge that in our country centres we also have a great many wonderful formal day care centres, which provide care to infants and almost newborns as well as in kindergarten settings and services. In fact I was most delighted to attend the opening of the Karmai Community Children's Centre in Korumburra only a couple of weeks ago. It is just an amazing centre down there, and it provides state-of-the-art facilities from newborn all the way through to kinder and a very nurturing modern supportive environment. I take my hat off firstly to the long-sightedness of parents many years ago — up to 30 years ago — who saw the need in Korumburra to provide a wonderful centre and enlarge the centre from a kinder to a great flexible centre.

I believe, from memory, Karmai will hold up to 120 children. It is such an impressive facility which this country town will be able to enjoy. Congratulations to the people who put in many hours over a long period of time. It was a combined community effort, with great support, I might say, and great hammering or lobbying of their federal representative, Russell Broadbent, and also The Nationals' former leader, the Honourable Peter Ryan, who was the member for Gippsland South in the Assembly. The community highlighted the need for a great centre in Korumburra. This was listened to and funding was put forward. The community actually raised \$100 000 for that centre, so it was a joint venture between the community, the South Gippsland Shire Council and state and federal governments. I cannot commend the community enough on that facility.

The other thing that childcare centres do in our country towns is provide a career, and an interesting and rewarding career, for people leaving school. They

enable people, both young men and young women, to stay in their country towns. If towns are lucky enough to have a TAFE — they do not always, but if they do not, some people are able to drive to the next town to receive their formal education — people can combine work with study and be retained in that setting, and quite often they can go on to have a long-term career in a very important field of work. The quality of care that I have seen in our country settings is tremendous, but the important thing is that it needs to be regulated. We cannot rest on our laurels, and governments need to keep a close eye on what is happening with regard to compliance and standards.

The other things that are very important in early education programs within these settings are numeracy skills and literacy skills. These can be incorporated almost from day one. Probably for students of around two to three years of age we can start to encourage them into the world of numeracy and literacy.

Childcare centres need to be able to meet children's physical needs — the sleep requirements and calm and supportive environments — and also provide emotional support for them. Early education is very important for a child's development and their security moving forward into the formal education system of primary school. That is the ideal — that is what we want to see happening. Unfortunately it does not happen across the board, and sometimes there is rorting of the system.

This policy has been developed to address childcare centre replacement shortages, and it encourages parents to go back to work, but up until now the system has been able to be rorted, and the bar is set too low.

Mr O'Donohue — I beg your pardon?

Ms BATH — The system can be rorted. And in fact the government well knows about the rorting of a system. I would like to make some comments on an article that was published in the *Age* on 14 August 2016. Nick McKenzie said in this article:

The federal police, working alongside state and federal welfare and education bureaucrats, had uncovered a suspected systemic rort that was as simple as it was profitable.

The article goes on:

In the investigation targeting the Point Cook families —

I will remove the part of the article that identifies who they were —

... police allege that the extent of care provided under the grandparent benefit scheme —

and this is the thing that needs to be changed —

was grossly inflated. In just 18 months, almost \$16 million in grandparent childcare benefits were claimed. Most of this money was allegedly for child care never actually provided.

What a terrible system. Government money can be directed to the most needy of places, but there are pariahs in this world who wish to rort the system and direct money into their own coffers when they should not.

The article in the *Age* goes on to say that in this system:

'Anyone can set up as a day care provider. And you can make millions', the official said. When federal police raided the Point Cook home in December, they seized two luxury cars and \$1 million in bank accounts.

That was to highlight that the rorting of any system is not on.

Mr O'Donohue — Disgraceful.

Ms BATH — It is. I also highlight that the bill before us tidies up a number of regulatory requirements. The federal government funds this area, and it is the state governments' responsibility to implement regulations. As I said, The Nationals will be holding a 'not oppose' position on this bill.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I welcome the debate in relation to this important bill, and I make the point that the amendments contained in it were recommended as part of a recent Council of Australian Governments (COAG) review of the national partnership agreement of the national quality agenda for early childhood education and care. The bill has in fact gone through a very extensive process of consultation with the early childhood sector, and in fact a regulatory impact process occurred as well. Most recently the changes were endorsed by the Education Council. The changes that we have been debating here do have national implications as this is mirror legislation that will be adopted by other jurisdictions as well.

There have been comments made about the amendments contained in this bill that relate to the strengthening of the oversight of family day care that is needed. I make the point that strengthening is needed to ensure the health, safety and education of children in these settings. It is necessary to ensure that the best outcomes for children are maintained. I also make the point, particularly to those members opposite who have taken some cheap shots about this issue, that the family day care system has operated under a co-regulatory model. Approved providers are responsible for the compliance of family day care services, and they assess the educators they engage or register and the safety of residences where care is provided.

In fact I have been leading the debate nationally around these issues and highlighting to the federal Minister for Education and Training, Simon Birmingham, a number of examples where the federal payment system has been rorted. I have been pleased to see that there have been some subsequent changes made following my giving him examples of this, such as an 18-year-old sibling being paid to care for their 17-year-old sibling. We have also had situations of child swapping and many other rorts occurring in family day care.

Family day care of course is a payment system that is paid for by the commonwealth. The easy availability of these payments has led to a massive proliferation of family day care providers in recent years, particularly those operated by private organisations. In response to this my department has taken more compliance and enforcement action against these service providers. We have had a 400 per cent growth in the number of family day care services in Victoria since 2012 largely due to the commonwealth's funding policy. However, due to action taken by my department, the number of family day care services has reduced from nearly 400 in the middle of last year to around 360 in January of this year. What we have also seen in recent years is a change from a situation where local government was a very significant player in family day care to one where they have exited the system and small private providers have taken over.

My department has also been addressing issues of compliance around family day care for some time. It has tightened up the process for the approval of family day care services and has significantly stepped up enforcement action. It has taken action to cancel 32 approvals and prosecute one family day care educator and one provider. We have also worked with the commonwealth on this. In particular my department has worked with the Australian Federal Police to enable some prosecutions to occur. Given that some of those matters are still working their way through the courts, I will not go into that in any further detail.

For some time now I have been calling on the commonwealth to take further action in relation to these fraudulent activities. I have called on the commonwealth to put in place an independently chaired review of the entire family day care sector. I have also called on the commonwealth to immediately cease funding new family day care services in areas that are already saturated with services until an independent review is undertaken and parents can be assured of the quality of care for their children.

I have raised these issues at the COAG Education Council, and I will continue to raise these issues. I certainly hope the commonwealth remains engaged with these issues because child care is a very important

issue. It does provide the ability for women in particular but for all parents to not only participate in the paid workforce but also engage in other activities. I think it is important that parents are provided with affordable, accessible childcare options and also that there is quality in our early childhood system to deliver the best possible education outcomes for children in their care. There are other changes in the bill as well that relate to maintaining and enhancing service quality.

It has been disappointing to me that Ms Crozier is supporting her federal Liberal counterparts in trying to shift the blame for these matters. I have called on Ms Crozier and the state opposition to not only support the Victorian government but also Victorian parents and the early childhood sector around the 15 hours of kindergarten funding. We will uphold our end of the bargain under the national partnership agreement by continuing to fund our obligation of 10 hours of kindergarten, but there has been complete silence from those opposite in relation to the commonwealth maintaining a commitment to funding their 5 hours of kindergarten. I encourage all members to support our call for the commonwealth to give us funding certainty and an ongoing funding commitment in relation to the 15 hours of kindergarten.

In concluding my remarks, can I say that Ms Lovell made some points about invitations to early childhood openings. I find it absolutely gobsmacking that, as someone who has held this portfolio, she does not know that invitations are sent out by the local council or those individuals who are putting on the event. She is complaining about matters that I am not intimately involved in.

In summing up, I am very proud that Victoria has played a leading role in this COAG review and has led much of the policy work that has led to this bill. Raising the quality of care provision in the early years is something that we constantly strive to achieve as we make Victoria the education state. This bill will ensure that we are heading in the right direction in providing the children of Victoria and Australia a foundation for lifelong learning, wellbeing and success. I thank members for supporting this important bill and these important reforms.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

VICTORIAN PLANNING AUTHORITY BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 February; motion of Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture).

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak about the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. This is a bill the opposition does not oppose. It is a bill which tinkers with what is happening in planning in this state. It is a bill that does not go to the extent of creating effectively a new and reformed planning authority. What it does is take the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and officially indicate that it can now work across the state, but in fact of course the old Metropolitan Planning Authority — originally the Growth Areas Authority (GAA) — was already working across the state, whether it be in Wodonga, at sites I have looked at, or in Bendigo or elsewhere in the growth areas and in major metropolitan areas. The Metropolitan Planning Authority has had a wide purview under a number of governments. So the new Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) will be a body that is in no way materially different from the old body. That is the reason the opposition does not oppose this. Equally, as I say, the bill does not reform the body in any serious or significant way.

The bill does the sorts of things you would expect in a bill that establishes a new planning authority: there is the establishment, functions and powers, the composition and operations of the board, the appointment of the chief executive and employment of staff, the managing of conflicts of interest, the transitional directions and arrangements enabling delegation of power, and of course a series of consequential amendments. So in those senses the opposition does not quibble. It is claimed that the VPA has as its primary objective providing advice and assistance in accordance with the objectives of planning in Victoria and to do so in collaboration with councils and government; as I say, pretty much what the MPA was doing already.

I think it is important to see the MPA and VPA in the context of planning more broadly statewide. The MPA has often taken on more difficult tasks, tasks that are significant in terms of the scale of a site or the complexity of a particular development. It has often done this in a way that has provided additional intellectual and organisational horsepower that sometimes a smaller council or another planning authority does not have. In that sense again I pay tribute to some of the work that the MPA and its predecessor,

the GAA, has done, work which no doubt the Victorian Planning Authority itself will do.

I also note the work of Peter Seamer, who recently stepped down as the CEO of the MPA, perhaps in circumstances that need some public explanation. I think he has been a fine public servant over many years and has provided good service to governments of all political colours. I think I first knew Mr Seamer back in 1991 when he was the CEO at the City of Essendon as it was then called, and I have watched his career over a lengthy period of time. I do want to take this opportunity today to put on record the work he has done, as I say, under governments of all political colours, in locations not only in Victoria and in a number of municipalities and his time at the MPA in particular. I wish him well in his future endeavours.

As I say, though, the MPA and the new VPA need to be seen thoroughly in context of how planning operates in this state. We saw an Auditor-General's report tabled in this chamber yesterday on the Victorian planning scheme and the operation of planning in this state. It points to serious deficiencies and work that will need to be done by governments of both political colours over a lengthy period of time. The Auditor-General essentially pointed to a lack of reform over a long period. There was some significant reform, I think, under Matthew Guy, now in the Legislative Assembly, but the Auditor-General yesterday made a complex set of points which will require further examination.

At the same time we have seen the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* put in place by the current government. That sets the context for planning within the state — the importance of the MPA, or the VPA as it will be when this bill is likely carried, within that and the way it operates within the context of metropolitan and statewide planning. I think it is worth refreshing the chamber's view, in terms of background, in relation to the *Plan Melbourne* document brought forward by the then Minister for Planning, Mr Guy, in the period of the last government. This was a document that set new and overarching aims for planning in this state and did recognise the importance of our regions but also importantly focused strongly on the need to establish employment clusters or employment centres in key locations.

I will perhaps draw on the western region one as a single example, or I could draw on the one around Monash, pointing to the need to have planning documents that are focused on employment and wealth creation and job creation. That was a new and explicit focus of *Plan Melbourne* under then Minister Guy, and I welcome and put on the record the fact that one aspect

of the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* released on the weekend is the retention of the concept of those employment zones, which focus on employment in those areas and a need to support the development of planning instruments, planning guidelines and planning frameworks that support the creation of jobs and employment.

The recognition of the need for the 20-minute city has also been retained. It is not my intention to go through every aspect of *Plan Melbourne* but just to set some broad context for this and counterpoise some of the changes that have made been in the recent period which will impact on any planning work that the Victorian Planning Authority would do under this new and particular bill.

What is clear though is that there is a focus on densification. It is important to recognise that there will need to be areas of density within Melbourne, but I think this new focus on densification by this government is obsessive. This is reflected in the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* document, in other statements by the planning minister and the Premier and in statements particularly in the documents released by Infrastructure Victoria — firstly, in its draft document, which I think was a doozy and made it very clear that densification was the primary objective of infrastructure policy for the next 30 years. I would have thought some deeper objectives about the nature of the city in which we want to live, the quality of life and a whole series of other important values might have trumped densification as a singular objective. I think the focus on densification is misplaced.

It is not something that is unimportant to the city — to understand how we can manage our significant population growth — and in this context, before I continue with other points, it is worth putting on the record some of the population figures. Last year we saw a 2.1 per cent growth in the state's population — a growth of 123 100 in one year. It comprised three parts — that is, natural growth, interstate migration and significant overseas migration as well. The interstate component was very significant at 16 500 — a net movement of people from other states coming to Victoria. That significant population growth is being stacked year on year on year, not quite at that high rate but in the order of 100 000 per year over a number of years — over a decade in effect, noting that the turnaround in interstate migration to Victoria, I think, happened in about 1997; prior to that we had had a net outflow of people.

But either way that very significant population growth — 100 000 a year and 123 000 last year —

means that there is a significant need for new capacity and a variety of new housing stock in various parts of the city. There is a real need for a renewed focus on ensuring the adequacy of supply. This government has been tardy in providing that supply on the edge of the city. I note the panicked announcements in recent weeks that they were going to create 17 new suburbs and that there is now a schedule of precinct structure plans (PSPs).

The pace at which PSPs have been coming through has not been sufficient in the last two years, and I think the government has been caught napping with this a bit and is still living on the work that was done in the 2010–14 period when Mr Guy pushed the rate of PSP movement forward at a faster rate and made sure that the supply of land, particularly on the edge of the city, was sufficient to help deal with the price. We did see falls in the price of land on the edge of the city and consequently some assistance in terms of housing affordability. Since the change of government the land price has crept up again — in fact, it is higher than it was in 2010–14. Those costs will directly impact on communities and young families seeking to buy their first home, their first property — often a house and land package on the edge of the city. Every dollar in additional costs has a direct impact on those families.

As part of *Plan Melbourne* the government is setting itself an objective of 30 per cent of growth at the edge of the city and 70 per cent inside. I think its plan for the inside is not sufficient, and I will have more to say on that on other occasions. The government's belief that it can get to that 70 per cent figure is not well grounded. It has been achieved in the past, but there have been greater components of growth in the inner city, and that is likely to slow given decisions made by Minister Wynne on a range of controls on the density of growth close to Melbourne itself and the Docklands.

The point I would make here is that all of those changes are going to impact on how we go forward. The new VPA — the MPA, to use its old title — will still have an important role in taking on targeted sites. There is a need to make sure that there are mechanisms to deal with some of those targeted sites. Professor Michael Buxton at RMIT has been successful in calculating the amount of available opportunities. He has been very clear in collating across a number of municipalities the opportunities that exist for significant infill development, done in a way that does not destroy the structure, ambience and quality of life in many of our suburbs.

However, the government is making a wholesale push for densification, as outlined in Infrastructure Victoria's

report and as is also a significant feature in *Plan Melbourne*. I am calling Daniel Andrews ‘Density Dan’ now. He wants densification. He is going to be known in history as the Premier who pushed for densification — —

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr DAVIS — I do not know what Bernie calls him. I do know that the community is going to look at this across many of Melbourne suburbs and see this wholesale push for densification as the primary, overriding objective, come what may. It will crush all other objectives along the way, such as streetscapes and heritage. All of those key values are being pushed to the back by Minister Wynne and Daniel ‘Density’ Andrews in their push for the densification of metropolitan Melbourne.

It is interesting to see a number of these key changes that the government has outlined in its *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*. It said it intends to change the residential zones, and we are awaiting the actual teeth; we are awaiting the actual gazettals of the planning scheme amendments which will change what the neighbourhood residential zone, the general residential zone and the other zones are actually going to mean.

I think there is a bit of a sleight of hand going on here. The government says, ‘We’re going to keep the neighbourhood residential zones; yep, they remain’, but actually what the government is doing is gutting them. They are pulling them to bits. They are going to gut the neighbourhood zones, and that is clearly what the primary intention is. There is a push for densification. We want more in activity centres according to the government, and that is appropriate in many circumstances, but not all. Then there is a push for densification in the general residential zones and the neighbourhood residential zones and along many of the transport corridors.

We saw the Urban Renewal Authority Victoria Amendment (Development Victoria) Bill 2016 come to this chamber before, and I have put on record already my concern about the use of Development Victoria as a body to develop public land in an unsophisticated way where yield and the financial screw-back on public land is the primary objective. I put on record now that is what Jacinta Allan, Richard Wynne and the Treasurer are going to do with Development Victoria. They are on the hunt for public land, and they are going to force dense, inappropriate and ugly development on many of our suburbs. They have not done this in a sophisticated way, and nor are they intending to do this in a

sophisticated way, in the neighbourhood residential zones and the general residential zones.

In the neighbourhood residential zones — and Mr Ramsay and Mr Morris will have more to say about this — many of the local groups are becoming more and more concerned as they read deeper into this *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*. I see the Newtown Action Group (NAG) has put out a statement, which I have in my possession, which points very directly to what will occur in that area of Geelong. They stated:

The state government wrongfully claim they are introducing mandatory height limits in each zone. In fact they have increased the height limit in NRZ/GRZ. There is already height limits in each zone!

NAG also said:

The City of Greater Geelong schedule identifies the heights as follows: NRZ ‘must not exceed 8 metres’. It has now been increased to 9 metres.

Not yet; the changes have still got to be gazetted. It continued:

GRZ ‘must not exceed 9 metres’. It has now been increased to 11 metres!

The state government have removed the default limit of two dwellings per block for NRZ. There is no cap on the number of dwellings you can cram onto a site!

Understand what that actually means: it means on large properties in areas like Newtown, but also across the suburbs of Melbourne, there will be no limit on how many dwellings you can actually cram onto one site. This is a worrying aspect of the changes, according to NAG. It continued:

Hits at the heart of the purpose of the NRZ. So much for restricting housing growth in areas of recognised neighbourhood character. Sadly bad news for residents and great news for developers.

I have nothing against developers per se, but what I say is that we have to put in place policies that protect the ambience and protect the livability of our city. The state government has introduced a minimum garden area requirement in both neighbourhood residential zones and general residential zones. The intent is to protect the open-garden character. NAG said:

The sizes mentioned according to the size of block are smaller than the rule now in many areas.

And that is certainly true across many areas of metropolitan Melbourne as well. NAG said:

The state government have misled the public with the media coverage in terms of what these changes mean. It is an outright attempt to densify the middle suburbs without any

regard to existing infrastructure, neighbourhood character and amenity.

The NRZ has effectively ceased to exist.

Not yet; they have not been gazetted, but if the government does what it says it will, that is what we are talking about. NAG continued:

The removal of the cap on 'number of houses on block' opens the way for medium-density and middle-rise housing everywhere.

With the latest reforms, there's been no public exhibition of the final version, and no opportunity for formal community consultation.

NAG quotes Stephen Rowley from the *Age* as follows:

Community have some right to feel concerned about the 'bait and switch' here. The promise of NRZ has been reversed very, very quickly.

I think the Newtown Action Group has got this pretty much right, and I know Mr Ramsay and Mr Morris will have more to say about this. But it is not just happening in those areas of Geelong; it is also in areas such as Boroondara. With a number of the municipalities across the metropolitan area at the moment I am being briefed by their CEOs and planners on the impact that is likely on their particular municipality as they unpick many of the announcements in *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*. I am going to pick on the area of Boroondara, and I am going to read some notes here and quote some notes that come from that series of briefings. The notes read:

The minister has announced the following key changes to the neighbourhood residential zone:

increasing the mandatory height limit from 8 metres to 9 metres with a maximum of two storeys;

removing the existing limit of TWO dwellings to a lot;

introducing a new mandatory minimum garden area requirement applicable to properties of 400 square metres or larger which requires a minimum percentage of the property to be set aside ...

allowing for the maximum building height to be exceeded on land that is subject to flooding.

Council, in the notes that were given to me, is deeply concerned with the minister's decision to change the residential zones so soon after they were introduced by the former government in 2014. The changes, which include the general residential zone, will fundamentally change how residential development is managed in Melbourne. More specifically, the reform zones shift the balance in favour of increased density and more intensity of development while substantially weakening the protection of neighbourhood character and residential amenity.

I want to quote some notes that were provided to me:

These changes will have long-lasting negative impacts on the streetscapes of the City of Boroondara.

Importantly, the removal of the dwelling density requirement will have a significant impact on potential development outcomes in the NRZ. The fact that the properties within the NRZ can now be developed for more than two dwellings means that the NRZ is going to experience more intensive infill development in areas that were previously identified for minimal change.

Councils across the metropolitan area and beyond did huge constructive work to develop the various areas of their municipality to have significant change, modest change and limited change. My notes on Boroondara continue:

Coupled with the increase in building height, multi-unit development and apartment-style development proposals are likely to be the inevitable consequence of the reformed zone.

The garden requirement is still a little unclear, but I note that in the council area of Boroondara there are already requirements that are significant in this respect in any event. The notes continue:

... it is unclear how this ... relates to the already existing requirement for the provision of private open space. Council is therefore concerned that this new requirement will have little positive impact on the design of developments beyond what can already be achieved under current ResCode requirements.

As I have pointed out, there is no specific date for these changes. They are coming very soon, we are told, but I think everyone is waiting to see what they actually are and what process the government might go through in terms of public consultation on these new and changed arrangements. If the government does not go through that consultation process, it will be an entirely unilateral decision to fundamentally change the residential zone framework. I think there is a real question about the accountability of the government here, and there is a real question about its justification for these specific changes.

I do not believe the minister specifically engaged with Boroondara council, but he may have engaged with other councils. I cannot answer that. Over the coming weeks as I go around and talk to a number of councils in detail about the impact of these unrequested changes on their municipality I will make the house and community aware of the impacts in different local government areas.

Business interrupted pursuant to sessional orders.

MEMBER CONDUCT

The PRESIDENT — Order! I just want to make a short statement before we go to questions without notice. I wish to remind members of an important aspect of practice in this house and in the Westminster tradition generally. It is not in order for any member, either in their contribution or question or by interjection, to refer to people in the gallery. This practice is long established and important for very important reasons, including the avoidance of any provocation or interruptions to the proceedings of the house by visitors in the gallery.

Members will also be aware that questions and answers are to be directed through the Chair and not directly to the member on the other side. Again this is a process that ensures the good order of the house.

Whilst the practice applies at times for us to recognise, as I indicated yesterday, visitors from other jurisdictions and former members, that practice is done by the Chair and in the context of the courtesy of the house being extended to those people. Members are generally not to refer to people in the gallery, as I have indicated, particularly in a way that might invite participation by members of the gallery, which would not be in order. I think it is of even greater importance during question time, when debate and issues may be at their most politically heated and sometimes emotional level.

If members do refer to visitors in the gallery, the Chair may use discretion to rule their question out of order. Furthermore, if any member has arranged for a guest to be in the lower gallery and then refers to them as part of a question or debate in what I consider to be a premeditated fashion — in other words, to construct an opportunity to develop their question or to emphasise an issue — I may well consider further action at that point.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Member for Melton

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Special Minister of State as minister responsible for the Electoral Act 2002 and the Victorian Electoral Commission. Minister, has the government received or sought any advice on the enrolment eligibility of the member for Melton at the 2014 Victorian state election?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I thank Ms Wooldridge for her question. On the issue of the status of the requirement in relation to the Electoral Act, I have received advice about the way in which it is defined in terms of the definition that is contained in the act about the way in which a person is connected to their principle place of residence. So I am aware of that piece of advice. I also, because I have received that advice, know that the definition is consistent with the application in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918. It is also actually being used as a template for the guidance that is associated with the regulations that are related to the second residence allowance. So they are in keeping with that in relation to the way that they are defined, and I have received advice to that effect.

In relation to the individual circumstances of the member for Melton, I have not received any specific advice relating to the information that is contained in the Audit Committee's report tabled today, nor have I received advice whether that complies or does not comply with the requirement in the Electoral Act or indeed with the requirements of the allowances, for that matter. In fact the Audit Committee does not necessarily make comment on that, except to say that the advice that has come to it suggests that additional rigour is required to prevent this lack of clarity and certainty in relation to how the principle place of residence provisions apply in terms of the allowances as far as the Parliament is concerned.

In relation to the Electoral Act 2002 I would welcome the scrutiny of the Victorian Electoral Commission in relation to this matter and would hope that they would undertake their investigations of these matters independently and appropriately within their responsibilities in providing a report to the community, more importantly than their report to me, in relation to their ascertainment of the compliance with the Electoral Act.

Supplementary question

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the Special Minister of State for his response. Minister, as you know, there is a very serious nature to the evidence that has been tabled in the PwC Audit Committee report today, which does show that the only evidence of the member for Melton's principal place of residence was his drivers licence and electoral roll record. In question time in the Legislative Assembly today the Premier indicated support for an investigation by the electoral commission. You have just welcomed that as well. So my question is: will the government join the coalition in seeking that the Victorian Electoral Commission conduct an eligibility audit into the

member's enrolment at both the 2014 state election and the 2016 local government elections, or are you just going to hope that that occurs?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — I would expect, in these circumstances, that to occur. There have been a number of occasions, including in the last sitting week, when members have spoken about the expectation of the opposition in terms of the direction or requests or demands or advice that I might provide the Presiding Officers in relation to acquitting their responsibilities. I understand how this is understood in the political context and that in fact I may have been seen to be avoiding my responsibilities in this matter. I am very mindful of what the appropriate limits of intervention should be for a minister who is responsible for various acts that relate to independent bodies that acquit their responsibilities independently and for giving them direction. That is the issue that I —

Honourable members interjecting.

Mr JENNINGS — I would be expecting them to make their own determination in that fashion and pursue it themselves. That is what I would be expecting to occur. I will certainly be no impediment to that investigation. Actually I would think it would be useful for all members to reflect on these circumstances in the months to come.

Family violence

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Special Minister of State. Minister, the government has committed to releasing a funding plan for family violence by March 2017. Last week you met with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and you expressed concerns over the inability of the Minister for Families and Children to meet deadlines for child protection-related family violence recommendations. Can you confirm that the minister failed to submit final funding submissions for child protection by the deadline?

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — The nature of the question does not warrant an answer, but I will give an answer. I will give an answer to refute what is asserted in terms of a meeting that I actually had with the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. The question was factually incorrect in relation to a meeting that I may or may not have had with the secretary of the department, and it was factually incorrect in relation to budget timing decisions that have been made by the government.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Fascinating. Thank you, Minister. Minister, as the secretary may have informed you, Minister Mikakos has overseen a 46 per cent increase in child protection assaults, a 142 per cent increase in behaviour issues in child protection and a 60 per cent increase in category 1 notifications in child protection. Given the minister's delays in funding submissions for child protection-related family violence recommendations, along with other portfolio failures, I ask: has the Department of Premier and Cabinet considered a capability review into the minister and her office?

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Is the rest of the house finding this enlightening? No? Nor am I. Can I just indicate that I did have some concerns about how apposite this supplementary question was to the substantive question, but I will allow the minister to deal with it.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — Thank you, President, and I will deal with it in this way: the only thing that made the supplementary question apposite was an assertion as a fact by Ms Crozier that I actively and positively refuted in responding to her substantive question. I refute her construction of these matters, I refute that she has any knowledge of any matter relating to a conversation I may or may not have had with the secretary of the department and I refute her assertion in relation to the time lines of budget consideration.

Wyndham youth justice facility

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. The site selection criteria for Victoria's new youth justice facility asks:

Is the option likely to have significant regulatory issues to address, is there likely to be planning permit issues?

I therefore ask: can the minister confirm that at the new youth justice prison location at Little River under current planning regulations no private individual would be able to build anything on that site due to environmental impacts?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Mr Finn for his question in relation to our plans, our government's commitment, to build a new fit-for-purpose youth justice facility — one that should have been built a long time ago. But we

know that Ms Wooldridge shelved a master plan that she refused to put out publicly. She sat on an Ombudsman's report for four years, but our government is getting on with the task.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms MIKAKOS — Our government is getting on with the task of making sure that we can build an appropriate fit-for-purpose youth justice facility that meets the needs of the Victorian community and ensuring that we can provide for community safety going forward. Despite the fact that Mr Finn has come into this house on previous occasions and claimed that our government was not committed in any genuine way to community consultation, what in fact we did see right from the outset was that I indicated a preferred site — —

Mr Finn — On a point of order, President, this question is very clear; it is very straightforward. It refers to the environmental impacts and if indeed those environmental impacts would allow private individuals to develop this land. It has nothing to do with the matters that the minister is referring to or has referred to.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Mr Finn, I would have a great deal of sympathy for you as the person who posed that question and your assertion that the minister has perhaps not addressed the question were it not for the fact that the minister has been subject to a barrage of interjections on a whole range of matters, which in fact from my point of view in the Chair entitle her to stray as much as she likes right at this moment.

Mr Ondarchie — On a point of order and on your response, President, I remind the house that 20 seconds into her answer her first response was to blame the former government, and if she is subject to interjections as a result of that we might remind her, as we often do every sitting week and every sitting day in this chamber, that her first response should not be to debate the matter and blame the former government but to come back to the substantive question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Thank you, Mr Ondarchie. I might have also observed that the minister was not 5 seconds into her answer when in fact she was subjected to interjections. The minister to continue. Minister, I ask you to be mindful of the question itself and to be apposite to that.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you very much, President. As I indicated, we did have a genuine commitment to community consultation. I indicated, as did the Premier when we made the announcement in

early February, that we had a preferred site in terms of Werribee South and then we had a process of having discussions with Wyndham council as well as community representatives, where we indicated a preparedness to consider alternatives. Wyndham council did put forward to government an alternative. It was a site that was unsuitable. It was land owned by Melbourne Water that was required by Melbourne Water in a continued sense, but Melbourne Water themselves identified an alternative site, which is the site in the vicinity of Cherry Creek which has been announced as the new location for this facility.

In terms of the process that has been embarked upon in terms of planning, environmental effects and other such considerations, what I can say to Mr Finn is that the government did have a rigorous process in terms of site selection. A range of issues were considered. We have in fact released a summary of the business case that does go to issues around selection criteria and does touch upon these matters, and we have explained both to this house in terms of a letter from the Attorney-General yesterday as well as to local community representatives the reason why the business case cannot be released in full. But what I can assure the member is that planning and environmental considerations of course are requisite parts of the process in progressing forward with this particular site.

We are in the process now of formally acquiring the site through a transfer from Melbourne Water — —

Mr Finn — On a point of order, President, we have been listening now to the minister for 3½ minutes. She has 31 seconds left. I would ask you to direct her to at least make some attempt to answer the question, as she is avoiding it like the plague just at the minute.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I did not think she was. I think that the minister actually has addressed it. She explained the change of the site. She explained that Melbourne Water had actually identified that there was an opportunity, and I think she did indicate that yes, there had — —

Mr Leane interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The minister has another 31 seconds. I cannot direct a minister on how they should answer, but I was mindful of the fact that I thought the minister's remarks after I sought her to provide an answer to the specific question were from that point on apposite to the question. The minister to finalise her answer.

Ms MIKAKOS — To conclude, President, the question that Mr Finn has posed to me is around private residential housing being built on this site. That is not in fact what is being proposed here; we are building a youth justice facility. In terms of private residential housing, that would be a matter better directed to the Minister for Planning. What I can advise the member and the house is that of course all the relevant and appropriate planning and environmental requirements will be undertaken as we go forward with the construction of this new facility.

Supplementary question

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — Will the minister give a guarantee to this house that a full environment effects statement will be undertaken at the Little River site to enable a complete examination of the environmental impacts of this site?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — In fact I have just addressed that matter.

Honourable members interjecting.

Ms MIKAKOS — Those opposite just do not listen. I concluded my response by saying that of course all the appropriate environmental and planning requirements will be undertaken as we go forward with this project. We are in the process now of having a transfer of this land from Melbourne Water to the Department of Justice and Regulation, and we will continue to engage with the local community about this project. I am in the process at the moment of calling for expressions of interest from community representatives to be part of a community advisory committee as part of an ongoing consultation process so we can continue to keep the local community engaged with this project as we go forward.

Wyndham youth justice facility

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is also to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, can you confirm that Aboriginal Victoria has identified that the location for the new Little River youth justice prison is located in the heart of Wathaurung culturally sensitive land?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — We are very well aware of the location of the facility being on Wathaurung land, and of course there is a process by which the traditional owners are consulted in relation to any project that the state is involved in where there are some issues around cultural heritage issues. Of course there will be discussions with the traditional owners in relation to these matters. We

are at a very early process in terms of these matters. As the member would be aware, we have made an announcement in relation to the new location of this much-needed facility in the vicinity of Cherry Creek. I look forward to working and engaging with the Aboriginal community around this particular project, as well as other stakeholders in respect of this project.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Minister, as you will be aware, Aboriginal Victoria have indicated that a cultural heritage report is required to be undertaken at that site due to cultural sensitivities. Furthermore, detailed underground works on the Aboriginal land would need to be undertaken to carry out works for electricity, gas, water, sewerage, drainage and telecommunication services. Minister, as per the Aboriginal heritage regulations, can you advise what assessment has or will be undertaken at the Little River site and what implications this assessment would have on the suitability of the site?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I can advise the member and the house that all appropriate requirements, whether they go to cultural heritage, environmental impacts or the planning processes of course will be undertaken as we go forward with this much-needed project. What we are seeing here from Ms Crozier is a member and an opposition that are yet to indicate where they believe a new facility should go. We have had the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Mr Guy, say he would keep it at Parkville; we have had Mr Guy say he would expand the Malmsbury facility; we have had different positions every day of the week in relation to these issues. We will continue to engage with the community and with affected stakeholders in relation to this much-needed project.

Port Phillip Prison

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — My question is to the Minister for Corrections. I refer to the reported multiple stabbings that have taken place at Port Phillip Prison this morning. Media reports indicate that a major incident broke out in the gym involving several prisoners. There have been previous reports of prison management failing to properly segregate dangerous prisoners, leading to violence and injury. Minister, can you confirm that the incident this morning involved prisoners who should not have been allowed to be in the same place at the same time?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — I thank the member for his question. The fact of the matter is that two prisoners have been taken to hospital with minor injuries — that is my understanding — following an altercation involving a small number of prisoners at the privately operated Port Phillip Prison. No staff, fortunately, were injured. Police have been notified, and it is all subject to a police investigation.

Supplementary question

Mr O'DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — Minister, yesterday you said in question time that we should have a new program to extend 'love and care' to prisoners in the corrections system. Do you intend to roll out this program at the Port Phillip Prison as a method of addressing the ongoing violence at that location?

Ms TIERNEY (Minister for Corrections) — That is nothing but a pathetic cheap shot. I used those words in the context of recidivism in our Indigenous prison population. Shame on you!

Heyfield timber mill

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Agriculture. With the announcement by Australian Sustainable Hardwoods that it will be conducting a staged closure of the Heyfield mill due to an insufficient supply of logs from VicForests, can the minister confirm that the 80 000 cubic metres and subsequent 60 000 and 60 000 cubic metres of timber-grade logs offered by VicForests will not be cut?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Ms Dunn for her question, and I cannot help but find the apparent celebration a bit distasteful. There is a community at Heyfield with around 250 people who are deeply, deeply concerned about their future, given the announcement that has been made by the company. As I have indicated on previous occasions, it is our very strong desire and our intention to find a viable future for this mill. We want the owners of this business to make it available for sale. We know that there is interest in the market, and as the Premier has indicated and I indicated in this place on Tuesday, the government is prepared to be a buyer of last resort if that is what it takes to provide a future for this mill. The amount of timber that VicForests have indicated to the company — the 80 000 cubic metres and 60 000 in the following two years — is a resource that is available. We want that resource to be available to the mill at Heyfield, and that is the focus of our efforts.

Supplementary question

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — Thank you, Minister, for your answer. Minister, if you cannot commit to preserving the forest that was destined to be logged to supply Heyfield mill, can you confirm to whom these logs will be sold? Will these high-grade logs be sold at pulp log prices to Australian Paper, sold at D-grade prices to Dormit to manufacture pallets or exported overseas as woodchips for a fraction of their value?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — This is extraordinarily distasteful, I have to say. The union that represents the people who work at Heyfield has been here at Parliament this week, and I can only hope that the people who work in the mill at Heyfield who have union delegates that I spoke to earlier in the week — and I ran into them in the vestibule this morning — have not heard this appalling line of questioning. It is our intention that that timber allocation will be made available for the mill at Heyfield.

Child protection

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Families and Children. Data published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare last week showed that over the course of the 2015–16 financial year 4115 children were admitted to out-of-home care, which is more than in any other jurisdiction in Australia. By the end of the financial year Victoria had 9705 children in care, which is more than Western Australia, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania combined. Victoria continues to lose more foster carers than it recruits, despite a net gain at the national level. More than two years into the Andrews government's term, why are these appalling trends not being reversed?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank Ms Springle for her question. I can advise the member that our government, as I have spoken about in this house on numerous occasions, has embarked upon a very significant reform of our child protection and out-of-home care system. The member would be aware that I have spoken in the past about the doubling in the number of child protection reports in Victoria in the last five years and the drivers for that — the fact that family violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol issues continue to be very significant factors as to why more children are coming into the child protection system in terms of reports but then are ultimately finding their way into the out-of-home care system, where a decision is made by the Children's

Court that a child is best placed not to be living with their parents or their carers.

We as a government have embarked upon significant reforms through the *Roadmap for Reform*, that is looking at how we address these causal factors to move away from a crisis response and towards putting more focus on early intervention and prevention and providing more support to families through the very significant reforms that our government has already embarked upon in relation to family violence by implementing the first family violence royal commission recommendations — something that the opposition is yet to do of course in making that similar commitment — and putting in significant reforms that we are going to be rolling out through the support and safety hubs to provide wraparound services for families in need. In terms of out-of-home care specifically what I can say to the member is of course ultimately we hope to achieve a situation where these numbers can be stabilised over time and in fact reduced, but that is an enormous challenge that all of us as a community share.

We need to think about how we can better support families who are in crisis so that children do not need to be removed, and that is why we are putting in these early intervention strategies and rolling out the funding that we announced last year for a statewide intensive in-home visiting program, for example, and other early intervention strategies such as our dedicated Aboriginal maternal and child health service, and many other reforms.

In terms of out-of-home care we are looking at recruiting more foster carers and increasing opportunities to provide more home-based care placements for children. We launched the Fostering Connections campaign with a dedicated website and call centre, bringing all 26 foster care agencies in Victoria together, and this has led to more foster carers being registered in our state, which is something that we continue to strive for in encouraging more people to come forward and be carers.

So what I can say to the member is I can assure her that we have a very wideranging strategy to address reforms in our out-of-home care system. It is something that in fact all members in this house should be supporting right across the political divide because these issues cut across politics and we should all be working to achieve the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable children in our community, and those are in particular children who end up in our out-of-home care system.

Supplementary question

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I thank the minister for her answer and fully acknowledge that widespread systemic reform will take time to see results; however, the unmet demand for out-of-home care represents a crisis in Victoria, frankly. If we are not seeing tangible improvements after two years of engagement with the sector and substantial investment, which I acknowledge has been made, when do you expect this to happen?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I can assure the member and the house that we have embarked upon a very detailed process of engagement with the social services sector and system right across Victoria about the necessary reforms that we need to put in place. These are issues that cannot be turned around overnight. These are very complex issues. We have seen more people going into being carers — whether kinship carers or foster carers — and receiving further financial support from our government, and we will continue to work with the sector to address these issues.

Ms Springle — When are you expecting the results?

Ms MIKAKOS — Ms Springle, I know that in the Greens party land everything of course is able to be fixed with a magic pudding, but we take these issues very seriously and we will continue to work to address these issues that sadly have been neglected for a very long time. I think it is important to acknowledge what work has been done to date.

Duck season

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — My question today is for the Minister for Agriculture. Minister, over the weekend we saw endless convoys of people travelling across the state to regional areas that harbour hunting opportunities. From what I saw the 2017 duck season opening weekend was the most participated in for many years. I, with hundreds of others, chose to travel to and hunt at Boort for the weekend.

In the former Department of Environment and Primary Industries report that you are familiar with which estimates the economic impact of hunting in 2013, figures show that areas such as Gannawarra, Greater Bendigo and Greater Shepparton benefited from tens of millions of dollars in expenditure, whilst Benalla, also in Northern Victoria Region, could barely break \$2 million. It is obvious that this trend has continued this year due to the unavailability of the Winton Wetlands to hunters. Minister, what is the government

doing to promote and drive hunting opportunities in the Benalla area?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Young for his question and his interest in the work the government is doing to promote opportunities for hunters. The government, as Mr Young is perhaps more aware than most, has provided significant funding in support of the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* in our last budget. The plan, with a number of measurable outcomes for hunters, was released in December of last year.

We recognise that whilst there are greatly divergent views in the community on hunting — and we have seen some of that this week following the opening weekend for duck hunting — for many people, for tens of thousands of Victorians, this is an important recreational pursuit and we support its continuation. Our focus is of course always on making sure that hunting activity is undertaken in a safe and sustainable manner.

We had a debate yesterday at Mr Bourman's instigation on the economic value of hunting and the role of and range of activities that Victorian hunters participate in. In reflecting on that debate there was some discussion of the economic value, and there are a number of communities in regional Victoria that particularly benefit from this at particular times of year, as well as of course in metropolitan Melbourne.

In speaking in that debate yesterday I made reference to the evaluation of Victoria's state game reserves and the report that has provided I think a very clear road map for us all to be moving forward to improve those areas with signage and other improvements. So I certainly reassure Mr Young that our desire to provide hunting opportunities is backed by funding from the last budget and a clear plan that charts the way forward for not just the Game Management Authority (GMA) and my own department but other government agencies that have a role in this. Of course we will continue to work closely with hunting groups on the delivery of these initiatives.

Supplementary question

Mr YOUNG (Northern Victoria) — I thank the minister for her answer and continued reminders about that particular report on state game reserves and the dire state that they are in. My supplementary question for the minister is: is Winton Wetlands' availability to hunters a priority of the GMA or the government?

Ms PULFORD (Minister for Agriculture) — I thank Mr Young for his further question specifically about the Winton Wetlands. As I recall, the Winton

Wetlands have a unique governance arrangement where the local community have control over these questions, but this arrangement dates back some time. I do preface this by saying that this is to the best of my recollection, but the local community, in their management of the Winton Wetlands, have preferred to not make this area available to hunting. Mr Young is shaking his head, but to the best of my recollection the local community that manage this area have preferred not to make it available to hunting.

Child protection

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Families and Children. Minister, recently a team manager with the department's child protection case management unit fled Victoria after allegations of child pornography offences. Luckily he was apprehended in South Australia. Has the department satisfied itself that no children under Department of Health and Human Services care have been subject to any child pornography abuses?

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — I thank the member for her question. It appears that she needed the whole of question time to get a staff member to send her the question, right at the conclusion there.

Honourable members interjecting.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I suggest that after a term that I think I heard, Ms Wooldridge, it would be better if you refrained from further comment. Can I indicate to the minister that the provocation was not fair either because, as the minister might have observed, I actually called Ms Patten, who according to a roster that I have had promulgated was entitled to a question today. The crossbench was working off a previous roster, and therefore there was some confusion as to whether Ms Patten actually had a question today. Therefore, as there was no question prepared, the question was transferred to Ms Crozier. It was me who made the decision as to when that question would be asked; it was not due to any factors within the control of Ms Crozier or the opposition. The remark was provocative, but not so provocative that it required a particular term that I may have heard.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you, President, for your advice on this matter. Ms Wooldridge says this is a serious matter, and it is, despite her potty-mouthed comments from opposite. I can advise the member that I am aware of recent media reports in relation to this issue, and I can confirm that my department acted

immediately to address any potential safety risks to any children, carers, community agencies or staff members who may have been affected by the behaviour of this individual.

Given that this matter involves criminal charges, I am unable to comment on it other than to confirm that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) terminated this individual's employment as soon as the matter was brought to its attention by police. His working with children check was also cancelled by the Department of Justice and Regulation. Of course our government is committed to ensuring the safety of vulnerable children and young people. All child protection practitioners employed by DHHS are subject to a detailed screening process. Applicants are required to have a recognised degree or diploma in social work or similar area of study, and they are also subject to rigorous reference checks, a working with children check, a national police history check and, where applicable, an international police check.

There is an ongoing police investigation in relation to this matter. The matter is currently before the courts. Of course the police are still — —

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, while the context was about the case, the question was actually about children under DHHS care being subject to child pornography abuses. This is not specific to the court case and it is not relevant to the court case. I ask you to bring the minister back to answering the question rather than hiding behind the court case, which is not relevant to the question asked.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I actually heard the minister respond in the context of checks and so forth for people who were involved in the care of young people, and I would have thought that that was an apposite response to the question.

Ms MIKAKOS — Thank you very much, President. I will conclude by saying that these are very serious matters. There has been an appropriate response by the department in relation to these matters. My understanding is that this individual was actually not in the employ of the department for a very long period of time. Whilst it is still a matter that is before the courts, there is still an ongoing police investigation. That is my understanding of where the matter is up to, and that of course would involve going through a lot of material, given the nature of the charges, in terms of identifying the source of those particular photographs and images.

The advice that I have is that nothing has become apparent to date that would suggest any connection

with any client of the department, but of course this matter is still subject to an ongoing police investigation and is now before the courts. It would be very prudent for me to be wary of treading into this matter in any more detail, given the implications that it might have for the court proceedings that are currently underway.

Supplementary question

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — Minister, has the department found any instances of child pornography on any DHHS computers, phones or other IT products during the past two years?

Ms Mikakos — On a point of order, President, we have gone from a substantive question that related to one individual and one case to a supplementary question that relates to the entire departmental workforce. I make the point that the supplementary question is not apposite to the substantive question, given that it has now become a very broad ranging question.

The PRESIDENT — Order! When the question was posed and the point of order raised, I asked Mr Rich-Phillips as a courtesy for a copy of the question. I have had the opportunity to look at the question and the supplementary question. I must say that when I looked at the substantive question I formed the view that the minister was entitled to answer the way she did in referring only to matters relating to the individual who had been mentioned in the preamble. But at the same time the member posing the question, with the question itself, had a question that really could be across the department, because the question was, 'Has the department satisfied itself that no children under Department of Health and Human Services care have been subject to any pornography abuses?'. The question itself did not refer to the individual, albeit that was mentioned in the preamble, but was a broader question.

I took the view that the minister was entitled to narrow that question given the preamble. However, I am mindful that the supplementary question asked is apposite to the specific question that was asked as the substantive question. Therefore I allow the supplementary question to stand.

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — Thank you very much for your guidance, President. The member has asked me about an entire departmental workforce, including a workforce that relates to the portfolios of other ministers as well. What I can say is that other than this particular instance that has been referred to in the substantive question in

relation to one former child protection worker, I am not personally aware of other such instances involving departmental staff. But I am happy to seek some further advice in relation to this particular issue.

Written responses

The PRESIDENT — Order! In regard to today's questions, on Mr Finn's supplementary question to Ms Mikakos, I ask for a written response on that. However, I am actually ordering this one for two days rather than one, because it is my understanding of the process that the minister will be the proponent for this particular development but actually does not determine whether or not there will be an environment effects statement (EES). That will be a decision made by another minister — the Minister for Planning in fact. From that point of view I am allowing two days on the answer to that question because the EES is not necessarily the minister's decision to make. That is just the supplementary question, which I think picks up the matter of the substantive anyway.

On Ms Crozier's first question to Ms Mikakos, again just the supplementary question, and again because that may well involve reference to another minister in another place as it was a matter that the minister does not have sole election on, I am making that two days. On Ms Crozier's third question, the last question in question time, on the supplementary question the minister undertook to obtain some further information, and I make that one day.

On Mr Young's question to Ms Pulford, whilst Ms Pulford gave quite a comprehensive answer, Mr Young's question was about a very specific area. The minister gave an answer to the best of her ability at this time, but I invite a written response to just follow up on the specific area that was raised in the supplementary question for further response; that is one day.

Ms Wooldridge — On a point of order, President, I am wondering if you could provide some clarification. On a Thursday of a sitting week, when you say two days, given that there is sometimes a week or in this case five weeks until the next sitting day, does that actually constitute the next day of sitting even though it is a two-day ruling?

The PRESIDENT — Order! It is sitting days. However, when there is a long break ministers very often provide the courtesy of an earlier response. But it is technically sitting days.

Mr O'Donohue — On a point of order, President, I submit to you that the minister should provide a written response to my substantive question to clarify whether prisoners who should not have been in the same location at the same time were indeed in the same location at the same time. The minister did address the general issue, but she did not address the specific issue.

Ms Tierney — On the point of order, President, this is, as I said, subject to a police investigation. Indeed Mr O'Donohue in his question said that he relied on a newspaper report in terms of this matter. I think we just need to leave the entire matter to the police investigation.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Again I have had the courtesy of being given the draft of the question, and there is no mention of media reports. The question mentions that the incident happened this morning, but there is no mention of the source of Mr O'Donohue's information. I have had the courtesy of receiving this question, and I am prepared to seek a written response for Mr O'Donohue in respect of his substantive question, and that is one day.

Ms Pennicuik — On a point of order, President, yesterday I asked the Minister for Agriculture a question about children on the wetlands during the duck shooting season. The minister was good enough to supply an answer as required by you, and that answer implies that children under 12 years old should not be on the wetlands. My supplementary question was: what advice was given to authorised officers with regard to children on the water? The minister did not address that in her written response, and I request that she provide a further response addressing this issue.

Ms Pulford — On the point of order, President, Ms Pennicuik raised this with me earlier today. I think we agree this is a very serious matter. The member is requiring some further information, and I am happy to provide a further written response to the supplementary question from yesterday.

The PRESIDENT — Order! In that case, I ask for a further written response in respect of Ms Pennicuik's supplementary question as defined, and that is one day.

CONSTITUENCY QUESTIONS

Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is for the Minister for Police, and the question I ask is: what new measures and additional resources will be directed to the Nillumbik and Banyule

police to help them combat the alarming change in crime under the Andrews Labor government? The latest crime statistics show that crime in Nillumbik has soared by nearly 48 per cent over the last two years, one of the highest local government areas increases. This represents over 1000 new crimes each and every year, and these are very unsettling experiences for local residents who are becoming concerned about law and order issues. These statistics record disturbing rises in theft, property damage, abuse and breaches of orders such as bail and apprehended violence orders.

Also in Banyule the figures have risen more than 14 per cent in the last two years, including over 900 extra thefts per year. Across Victoria crime has risen 20 per cent under this government, with serious offences such as assaults, robbery and theft and breaking and entering all having double-digit growth. This is unacceptable, and the minister needs to reassure Eltham residents that they are safe in their homes and allocate the additional resources.

Western Metropolitan Region

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My question today is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The government claims that the western distributor will get trucks off residential streets in the inner west; however, so far we have no guarantee that trucks will not just be allowed to avoid the tolls and continue to rat-run through our community when the CityLink tolls go up in a fortnight. Can the government promise that they will introduce a 24-hour truck curfew on residential streets so that trucks headed to and from the port will actually have to use the western distributor if it is built?

Western Victoria Region

Mr PURCELL (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Treasurer. I commence by congratulating the Treasurer on his recently announced Homes for Victorians initiative and its extensive support for first home buyers, in particular first home buyers in rural Victoria. In western Victoria and in many small towns throughout Victoria people are facing hardship in regard to property pricing. Given the difficulty accessing employment and transport and other services it seems unfair that they also are slapped with the same stamp duty on properties as are their counterparts in metropolitan areas. So my question is: will the Treasurer remove stamp duty for regional areas to increase affordability and to help them attract young people, jobs and growth?

Eastern Victoria Region

Ms SHING (Eastern Victoria) — The question I have today is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it relates to the provision of improved rail and bus services throughout Gippsland. In particular, and noting the improvements that have recently been made to bus services' connectivity and the availability of a better timetable throughout west Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley, I would ask the minister to provide updates on how we can continue to improve the number of rail services which are provided from Pakenham right throughout the Latrobe Valley and how we can then further continue to implement the recommendations of the regional network development plan and the feedback from communities, which has been loud and clear in relation to the need for more services, more frequency and more reliability on this important part of infrastructure in Gippsland.

Southern Metropolitan Region

Ms CROZIER (Southern Metropolitan) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Education, and it is in relation to the needs in the Bentleigh area. I note that the Mr Staikos, the member for Bentleigh in the Legislative Assembly, has raised this issue in the other place in relation to a secondary campus for McKinnon Secondary College. He has also gone on Facebook and said, on a video stating that he wanted people to hear it from him first, that he thinks there needs to be a new site and a new school. Whilst one can acknowledge the need for future education requirements in this area, my question to the minister is: can he provide the projections of enrolments for the second campus site that Mr Staikos has indicated would be at Virginia Park or what is known as East Village?

Northern Metropolitan Region

Ms PATTEN (Northern Metropolitan) — My question is to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, and it is an issue that has been raised with me by a number of legal businesses in Melbourne. A ministerial advisory committee is established under section 67 of the Victorian Sex Work Act 1994 to advise the minister and assist with regulation and control of the sex work industry; liaison with Victoria Police; referring investigations to WorkSafe, the tax office, immigration et cetera; and developing educational programs and sex health information. However, despite these incredibly important functions of the Sex Work Ministerial Advisory Committee, it has not met in this term of government, a chair has not been appointed, and the terms of all the members lapsed in November 2016.

Given the rising number of illegal brothels in Melbourne, when will the minister reappoint members and reconvene the committee?

The PRESIDENT — Order! Ms Patten, can you bring that back to your own electorate, please?

Ms PATTEN — This was raised by legal businesses in Melbourne. I can give you the names of those businesses; they are in my electorate.

The PRESIDENT — Can you give me a locality, at least, to hang my hat on?

Ms PATTEN — Yes; North Melbourne.

The PRESIDENT — Thank you. I will not be checking it out!

South Eastern Metropolitan Region

Ms SPRINGLE (South Eastern Metropolitan) — My question is for the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. As part of the level crossing removal project the government promised a bike path from Caulfield railway station to Dandenong. Now they are stopping short at the EastLink trail, just past Yarraman railway station. This means that despite the government's rhetoric about revitalising central Dandenong, they have missed a vital opportunity to provide a bike path to central Dandenong. At the moment there is an on-road path between Bennet Street and Dandenong railway station, one of those narrow lanes painted onto the road, but between Yarraman railway station and Bennet Street there is no option. What plans are in place to construct the missing link to improve cycling opportunities for central Dandenong?

Northern Victoria Region

Mr O'SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Industrial Relations. One of my constituents, in the north-west part of Victoria, has a 15-year-old daughter who has recently started part-time work at a supermarket. Upon starting work at the supermarket somebody approached her and asked her to sign a form, which the 15-year-old thought she was obliged to do at the time. As it worked out, that was a membership form for the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association. What I am seeking is: what protections are in place for under-age people to be protected from joining a union without the full consent of their parents?

Mr Finn interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Yes, but it is not a constituency question; it is a broad issue — —

Ms Pulford — And about commonwealth legislation.

The PRESIDENT — True, too.

Mr O'Sullivan — It was from a constituent within my electorate.

The PRESIDENT — Yes, I know, but — —

Mr Finn — I think we have already set a precedent today, haven't we?

The PRESIDENT — No.

Mr Finn — I think we have.

The PRESIDENT — No. Well, yes, Mr Finn, on reflection you might be right. I will let it stand today, but frankly it does not meet the test for a constituency question. It is not sufficient — —

Ms Pennicuik interjected.

The PRESIDENT — I am being punished now by Ms Pennicuik, and she is right. Hit from all sides — I cannot win! It does not meet the test of constituency questions, and Mr Finn is right that I also had difficulty with Ms Patten's, which I raised. They were asking for the minister to comment on issues that were broadly affecting industry sectors, if you like, rather than a specific issue in the constituency. From that point of view it does not meet the test of that part of our proceedings. I am mindful also that the industrial relations situation is covered by federal legislation.

Ms Pulford — On a point of order, President, and perhaps you just went to it, I seek your clarification around whether constituency questions need to be directed to areas of state government administration or whether federal government administration is fair game too — just for all of our assistance.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Essentially it should be about the state jurisdiction — it should be something that a minister at a state level can address. That is the distinction, Mr Finn, that I make between Ms Patten's constituency question and Mr O'Sullivan's.

Western Victoria Region

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety, and it is in regard to the diabolical traffic congestion on the Geelong–Barwon Heads road. The

road itself is in a disgraceful state, as I have raised in this house before, but the condition and the high usage of the road is made all the more woeful by the terrible development of Armstrong Creek, which is proposed to bring 60 000 new residents to the area. In Barwon Heads, Golf Links Road is under a tourist traffic siege and the town desperately needs a new bridge connector to Ocean Grove. I ask the minister to instruct VicRoads to prioritise plans for a new bridge between Barwon Heads and Ocean Grove to help relieve traffic congestion on Barwon Heads Road and in the township itself and provide for the contributing heavy traffic use in the Armstrong Creek development for those commuters seeking access to the Bellarine Peninsula.

Western Victoria Region

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My constituency question is directed to the Minister for Health. The question I ask is: will the Minister for Health ensure that \$2.1 million in health funding is made available to the Ballan District Health and Care hospital to fund their urgently required two new day procedure theatres?

The member for Buninyong in the Assembly, Mr Geoff Howard, was recently in Ballan announcing funding for new kitchen equipment when he really should have been there delivering funding for the two new day procedure theatres that the hospital desperately requires. Ballan is growing with regard to population, as are the communities surrounding Ballan, and this is placing significant pressure on healthcare facilities in the area. This funding would provide the capacity for the Ballan hospital to better cater to the needs of its community. I do note that the former government did commit to the \$2.1 million prior to the 2014 election, but unfortunately we were not re-elected.

Sitting suspended 1.07 p.m. until 2.13 p.m.

VICTORIAN PLANNING AUTHORITY BILL 2016

Second reading

Debate resumed.

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) — As I was saying before the break, the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016 establishes the Victorian Planning Authority, with essentially very little difference from the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) other than a different name. Both work across the state, both do essentially the same work and both perform an

important role, and we are obviously not opposing the changes.

In the broader context the sort of work that the VPA will do will be governed by the overarching planning framework, and the government has flagged in recent days some significant changes to Melbourne and Victoria's planning frameworks. Before the break I laid out a number of the key changes that the government has flagged, some of which are yet to be actually fully implemented. I had talked at length about the neighbourhood residential zones. I want to now talk about the general residential zones.

I was discussing the briefings that I had had from a number of councils, in recent days from Boroondara. There are probably some very useful points that can be made in respect of this. It is interesting. There have been criticisms of some of the inner-eastern councils, but they have actually had very significant value of development occurring, and Boroondara in particular has had the highest level of development in the state save for the City of Melbourne.

So make no mistake, there is huge development occurring there, and the finger-pointing and wagging by the minister and others in no way undermines those important facts — that in fact there is really very significant activity occurring in a number of these municipalities under the current arrangements and the decision to tear up the neighbourhood zones, in effect gutting them, is one step, but even the general residential zones will suffer under the government's proposals.

The notes I have from my discussions with Boroondara suggest that in their area the impact will see the replacement of the existing discretionary 9-metre height limit with a mandatory 11-metre height limit with a maximum of three storeys. I think this will be a licence for three-storey dogboxes across the suburbs. These will come quite quickly; the pressure will be there for these to occur. These will not be a pretty sight across many of our suburbs.

The impact will also see the introduction of the so-called new mandatory minimum garden requirement — although in many of the areas like Boroondara this changes little and in fact may be less significant than what is in place in many positions already — and an allowance for the maximum building height to be exceeded on land that is subject to flooding.

The council made it clear to me that it is concerned about the minister's decision to change the zoning so

quickly following the changes in 2014. The changes will alter the balance, as they indicated:

The existing mandatory height limits in Boroondara's GRZ1 (9 metres), GRZ2 (10.5 metres) and GRZ3 (10.5 metres) will continue to apply for the present time. However, the existing discretionary 9-metre height limit in the GRZ4 and GRZ5 will be replaced by the mandatory 11-metre height limit of the new GRZ.

The council also points to the fact that the government has announced it will review all local variations to the zone, and this should chill municipalities across Melbourne and our large regional cities. Those variations were specific and carefully tailored to individual municipalities. Councils with building height variations in zone schedules that are inconsistent with the reformed zones will have three years to comply with the new requirements. The council points out:

It is therefore likely that current height limits in the GRZ1, GRZ2 and GRZ3 will come under scrutiny. The reformed zones only allow for schedules to set a mandatory height limit that is higher than the default 11 metres set out in the new GRZ ...

In all of those variations of zones there is going to be pressure for more height. According to the council, the zone can become:

... a location for apartment-style developments irrespective of the established character of these areas. The setting of a mandatory 11-metre height limit means that the development industry —

and nobody points at developers negatively, because they are operating within the rules and frameworks that are set by the Parliament and in this case planning minister —

will take this as an appropriate outcome for any site irrespective of the established neighbourhood character.

The council also points out that it is unclear about the operation of the new garden area requirement, given the lack of information available at this stage. I understand some councils will be briefed this week by the minister and others, but certainly in our briefing — and I thank the minister for the briefing that we received on these matters — I was not assuaged or calmed in the sense of feeling that the government's decisions on garden requirements would make much difference at all.

I have already made the point that for the more than 62 000 dwellings in Boroondara being created in this period through to 2031 capacity for them already exists, and Boroondara has the second-highest spend on building projects in the state. Those are the significant points that are made by Boroondara.

I could move on to other municipalities, because there are going to be significant impacts. I know the VPA will put its head into a number of larger projects around the metropolitan area, as it should do in certain locations. This needs to be done cautiously. We have already indicated the opposition's cautions and concerns about Development Victoria, the new body, and its enthusiastic embrace of densification as its objective and its decision to chase yield and financial outcomes over and above making sure that projects match local areas and that they integrate properly with local communities and existing local structures and landscapes.

There are of course a number of municipalities that do not have neighbourhood zones, and some of those do deserve them. I think Moonee Valley has a significant case for it, and it has not been provided with zones, although the current minister could have provided Moonee Valley with neighbourhood zones in the recent period. He also could have provided neighbourhood zones in places like Monash but chose not to do so. I know that at its council meetings in recent days Monash signed off its applications for neighbourhood zones, and I welcome its step in doing that. It has undertaken a significant amount of work, but unfortunately I am the bearer of bad news for the people in the City of Monash.

Whilst there have been meetings with several councils and they have put together a plausible and logical set of changes that will provide greater protections to certain areas of the municipality through a neighbourhood zone system — which they have now formally signed off on — at the same time the government in the state is moving apace to weaken neighbourhood zones and general residential zones around the state. With one hand the minister will probably sign off a version or a variation of their neighbourhood zones, but at the same time the minister will be weakening the neighbourhood zones by providing for greater height and the complete removal of any restriction on the number of properties on each and every lot within those neighbourhoods zones. Currently in a neighbourhood zone the restriction is two.

In Monash that restriction does not apply, but if neighbourhood zones were implemented, it would apply, unless of course the minister, consistent with his decisions and announcements in recent days, strips away that requirement from Monash so that there is no genuine neighbourhood zone. A gutted neighbourhood zone is gazetted, if I can use that alliteration. The people in Monash deserve better than that. I think the council will need to stand up on its hind legs and fight for its community and say, 'We are entitled to these

neighbourhood zones'. It should fight for them and say to the minister, 'We want them, and we want proper neighbourhood zones, not half-baked neighbourhood zones with all of the protections and the requirements that are currently in neighbourhood zones being stripped out and removed and a faux neighbourhood zone being declared in the City of Monash in certain zones'.

In terms of the general residential zones, which make up most of the City of Monash — other than obviously the industrial and commercial areas — they will go backwards too. They will lose many of the protections that are there now, such as a height limit of 11 metres, as we have just heard, as result of a decision to allow and enforce greater density in those general residential zones.

Some people might think greater density is a good thing. I think in certain places, in sensible locations, there are obviously cases to be made for more intense and dense development, but with a broad brush across the metropolitan area that actually sweeps away protections that have been carefully and methodically put in place to protect neighbourhood character, to protect amenity, to protect heritage and to protect vegetation, we will end up with a shocking situation with people crammed in like sardines in Melbourne — crammed like in a can of sardines.

Goodness knows, when you look at *Plan Melbourne* and see all these changes — such as the Melbourne Planning Authority (MPA) being rebadged as the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) in the context of the work it will do within the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* — have a think about what there is about genuine infrastructure. There is nothing really about schools. There is nothing really that makes sure that many of the services that are required if you are going to pack people in like sardines in towers and mini-towers — high-density, high-intensity development — are provided. You pack them in, you squeeze them in, you ram them in and then where do they go to school? Where do the kids go to school? Well, let me tell you. There are no plans here for this; this is the part that is half-baked.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS — Ms Shing, I have got to tell you about the planning for activity centres. You look at the action book — the 'five-year implementation plan' that has got the teeth of much of the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* — and you will start to get equally as concerned as I am about how this is going to operate. If you start at action 1 — Ms Shing will appreciate this —

entitled 'Land use framework plans for each of the metropolitan regions', it states:

In consultation with the metropolitan partnerships, the metropolitan regional planning groups will prepare a land use framework plan for each of the six metropolitan regions.

Let me explain what that means. It is all in planning-ese or in bureaucratic speak, but what that actually means is that the metropolitan partnerships — bodies that are not well acquainted with the community — are composed of government appointees, tame cats that do what the government tells them with the CEOs of the councils on those boards. But none of the local councillors are on the boards — not a single elected councillor. I thought we were a democracy, but not under this government. Then these will work with newly established metropolitan regional planning groups. These are shadowy groups that have not yet been defined. It is not clear how they will operate, and it is not clear who will be on them. Will these be elected councillors running these planning forums, if I can call them that, or will they be hand-picked patsies who will do what Daniel Andrews and his government tell them? Well, we do not know, but I have got to say I would be very concerned about how this is going to operate.

This risks being a handover of planning powers to unelected people and away from the elected officials at council level. So, councillors who have recently been elected, good luck to you; some of your planning powers are likely to be stripped away by this government. I think the community deserves to know much more about how these will operate — and the same with regional housing plans. They are going to use some of these same bodies to develop regional housing plans.

There is obviously greater use of code assess. There is clearly a place for sensible code assess options; there clearly is a place. And there are clearly aspects of the planning policy that can be successfully codified to strip out bureaucracy and to give people, as of right, ability to proceed to apply for planning permits, and there should be more sensible incremental growth in what is done through those planning procedures. But at the same time a wholesale approach to code assess will effectively strip away a lot of democratic control and will strip away the ability of the councils to shape the future of their own municipalities, and I think there is a genuine fear as to how this will be implemented.

I was struck by points around noise impact, and I thought, 'Well, it's interesting they're going to do that now after they've built the sky rail'.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr DAVIS — I noticed the failure to really, I think, engage, and this should concern you, Ms Shing. At page 33, outcome 7 is headed ‘Regional Victoria is productive, sustainable and supports jobs and economic growth’, but there are just two pages devoted to that. At least the peri-urban areas made it into this document, and I welcome the reflection of the importance of the peri-urban councils in here, but I do think that this is very light on. I think there is a lack of focus on regional, rural and country Victoria in this *Plan Melbourne* document, which is a document that is more than Melbourne’s planning. It is really a Victorian planning document, but it does not feel like it when you read it, because the government has not focused in the way it should have.

There is also significant focus, I notice, in the action plan — the implementation plan — on value capture and the creation of certain opportunities. I think that means new taxes and the successful scooping out of additional financial impacts.

I want to also put on the record my concerns about how this document will be implemented in terms of engagement with councils. Many councillors have not had the full opportunity to engage on some of these points, particularly the matters around changes in planning zones, and there is a need to not proceed with these planning zones until they have been properly exhibited and the opportunity for comment has been provided. The government seems to, in a high-handed way, believe that it can just step forward without that discussion, and there is I think genuine concern about how that will apply in these particular areas.

I notice also in the action document, the so-called implementation plan, a focus on golf courses, and they are going to do a review. Action 67, headed ‘Golf statewide facilities plan’, states:

Work with the golf industry and local government to develop a strategic metropolitan-wide facilities plan that will meet the future needs of the sport, given the increasing pressures for some golf courses to be rezoned for residential use.

Well, I think what this is truly about is snaffling those golf courses for residential development. I think there is going to be a sweep across the city. The government is going to try to find ways to merge, close and shift golf courses. There are some models that can work and there are cases where sensible outcomes can be achieved, and I do not in any way resile from that, but I think this is an Orwellian set of words. I think what this is about is working to close those golf courses that are very much a part of Melbourne’s suburbs.

It is very important to recognise that golf courses are obviously centres where golf is the primary aim, but they do much more than that. The huge vegetation that is involved and the access that people have to many of these courses — not to all of them but to parts of them — for public recreation is also an important aspect. We need to be thinking about the shape of our city. We need to make sure that we do not lose enormous amounts of vegetation and large tracts of vegetation that have great significance for particular suburbs and particular localities.

The loss of a huge tranche of trees and the vegetation associated with a golf course in a particular area and their replacement with intense housing development is a model that needs to be applied very carefully and sparingly across the city. I would be very concerned if this saw a wholesale closure of golf courses across the city and a wind back of the important vegetation contributions that are made by those golf courses.

I want to indicate that while there are some things we agree with in *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* there are also some things where the government has stepped out on the wild side. It has done this on its own. Yes, it had the advisory committee with Roz Hansen giving it advice. I am sure it has not taken all of that advice; I would be surprised if it had. But I equally know that the government has put as its number one target densification, and Density Dan is going to be pushing very hard for densification across all of the municipalities. To be very clear, I think people are going to see that if this is implemented in the way that the minister and his advisers have indicated publicly and the way that the councils across the municipalities assess it, there will be a real concern that in three to five years time there will be a massive loss of quality of life and livability in many of our key suburbs in Melbourne and some of our regional areas.

This is Geelong, but it is also Ballarat. There are significant areas in Ballarat that have neighbourhood residential zones, and I think people should be concerned about what occurs in those regional cities too. They have got to play a greater role, as the opposition has pointed out, in managing our population growth and in providing opportunities for growth where people can have employment and a good quality of life, so those regional cities are very important. To destroy, weaken or damage key parts of those regional cities through a short-sighted policy would be a mistake. In conclusion, we are not opposing this bill but we do put on record a number of concerns that we have about the so-called *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*, which is not very refreshing at all.

Mr SOMYUREK (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise in support of the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. The purposes of the bill are to establish the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA); to confer the necessary powers, duties and functions on the VPA; and to make necessary related and machinery amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the Subdivision Act 1988, the Taxation Administration Act 1997 and the Transport Integration Act 2010. The legislation enables the VPA to undertake integrated land use and infrastructure planning across Victoria. Its primary focus is that of planning for the whole of the state.

Melbourne's Metropolitan Planning Authority has been expanded Victoria-wide to boost planning support for regional cities and towns. The new Victorian Planning Authority will work on the long-term plans needed to cope with the state's growing population, set to reach 10 million people by 2051.

The Victorian government promised to create the VPA and expand on the metro-focused body set up under the previous government. The powers, duties and functions of the Victorian Planning Authority will provide the minister with advice and assistance in relation to planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria; when approved by the minister, provide councils and public sector bodies with advice and assistance in relation to planning the use, development and protection of land in Victoria; in areas designated by the minister, undertake integrated land use and infrastructure planning; and coordinate state government action in relation to planning the use, development and protection of land.

The VPA will work with councils to design new suburbs, identify new development opportunities and increase housing in regional areas. Around Melbourne, the VPA will design new suburbs and urban renewal sites, encourage different housing options and boost affordability through consistent land supply. Consequently the VPA will facilitate a holistic approach to growing Victoria, not just Melbourne and not just the growth corridors. With our population forecast to reach 10 million by 2051, Victorians need to be distributed throughout the state and not simply limited to a few areas that will not have the infrastructure to accommodate them.

The VPA is going to be a valuable authority for growing our regions, rural areas and in particular regions that are experiencing industry transition. The VPA will plan for new suburbs and transform existing suburbs and sites in metropolitan and regional areas to create more diverse housing options, land for

employment and new communities. In undertaking this planning the VPA will be informed by research, community input and government policy in order to ensure that new suburbs, precincts and areas are innovative, make the best use of existing infrastructure and incorporate all the features and infrastructure appropriate to accommodate Melbourne's and Victoria's growing population.

One of the fastest growing municipalities in Victoria is in my electorate. The City of Casey has the second-largest growth rate, with an additional 176 000 people expected to move in by 2031. The neighbouring Shire of Cardinia is the fourth-fastest growing municipality with a growth rate of 3.9 per cent. The VPA will work with councils in these regions to develop localised economic participation opportunities so that residents can work locally, thereby making regional areas even more attractive.

The bill makes amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to abolish the Growth Areas Authority, as its function will be replaced and increased under the new legislation. Many current projects being undertaken by the VPA include urban renewal projects critical to the livability and the health of residents in existing communities, greenfield projects throughout our growth corridors and regional developments.

Another important function of the VPA is its Streamlining for Growth program that helps councils streamline subdivision processes, unlock sites and speed up applications for residential and employment land. The recent announcement of the rezoning of 100 000 lots within the next two years in key growth areas is an example of the VPA unlocking new communities and creating affordable housing. The VPA will also work in collaboration with local agencies to ensure that appropriate, responsible and healthy planning becomes the key to successful developments and the health of its residents. I commend the bill to the house.

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — I rise to speak on the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. When it comes to addressing our housing crisis I must say that successive governments have too frequently looked to urban sprawl as the answer. The opening up of agricultural land for new residential developments on the urban fringe brings with it a number of challenges that have not been adequately addressed. We have seen an ongoing loss of green wedge land and an ongoing loss of very important agricultural land. It is the land on the fringe of the Melbourne metropolitan area that provides very close access to fresh food for our city.

However, if you put houses on it, you certainly cannot use it for agricultural purposes.

Of course the focus on urban sprawl impacts threatened species as well in those areas on Melbourne's fringe. What we see in those interface and peri-urban areas is that these communities are usually very far from jobs and economic opportunity. They do not have adequate public transport and have to wait years for services to catch up, if they ever catch up at all. Car dependency and long commutes are the norm, and we have seen in the past in some of those suburbs that the road network is such that buses cannot even manage the curvature of the roads. Public transport has not even been in the thinking of the design of those new suburbs of Melbourne. We would hope in the future that those sorts of issues are addressed. There are sometimes insufficient schools and medical clinics, supermarkets and shopping districts, and some new suburbs have lacked basic infrastructure such as footpaths and bicycle lanes.

All of these planning issues of course ignore the other major issue with new suburbs. While it is outside the scope of this bill or the responsibilities of the Victorian Planning Authority, there are far too many instances of very poor build quality in these new suburbs. Foundations have been particularly poorly constructed, such that there is a burgeoning industry in structural repairs to houses that are only a few years old. A great deal more must be done to aid new homebuyers to avoid these pitfalls in the construction industry in Victoria.

I turn now to the bill, which sees the third renaming of an entity that started its life as the Growth Areas Authority. The Growth Areas Authority was established in 2006 to provide greater strategic planning for the development of these new communities on the urban fringe. That seemed a good idea but of course the test would always be in the implementation, and in that respect, if you consider the issues that have been faced by residents in these new suburbs, it has been a failure for them in terms of the impacts on their lifestyle, their quality of life, the amount of free time they have to dedicate to their families and the amount of time they spend commuting to get to jobs, health services and education. Those communities have really been designed, in a way, to be so dependent on cars that it pervades every area of their lives.

For a moment I want to turn to a recent Auditor-General's report — so recent that in fact it was tabled yesterday — entitled *Managing Victoria's Planning System for Land Use and Development*. This is a critical issue for our city because the strategic

planning associated with the activities of the VPA flows down to the statutory planning outcomes for our city and really that is the way we see strategic planning being implemented throughout our city. It was a bit concerning to read some of the Auditor-General's conclusions in relation to managing our planning system for land use and development.

The report highlights that planning schemes remain overly complex. They are difficult to use and apply consistently to meet the intent of state planning objectives, and there is limited assurance that planning decisions deliver the net community benefit and sustainable outcomes that they should. The Auditor-General's examination shows that planning schemes have mixed success in achieving the intent of state policy across the three areas the Auditor-General examined — developing activity centres; increasing housing density, diversity and affordability; and protecting valuable agricultural land.

In terms of the findings of the audit into land use planning, the Auditor-General found that past reforms have had little impact on fixing other systemic problems impeding the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of planning schemes. As a result many of the issues prevalent before the 1996 overhaul of the planning system have re-emerged. These include vague and competing state planning policy objectives and strategies with limited guidance for their implementation, which reduces the clarity of the planning system's direction in meeting state planning objectives; a lack of specific guidance to address key planning challenges, such as social and affordable housing, climate change and environmentally sustainable development; an overly complex system of planning controls in local planning schemes as councils add and amend policies and controls to try to provide clarity and certainty to their schemes in the absence of clear guidance at a state level; the department's — that is, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning — and councils' performance measurement frameworks being unable to measure whether the objectives of the act or state planning policies are being achieved; and lengthy delays in the processing of planning proposals, leading to set time frames not being met and unnecessary costs for applicants.

The Auditor-General's report highlights that these systemic weaknesses exist because of the poor uptake and implementation of review recommendations. It notes that this is due to a lack of clear prioritisation, time frames, actions or resources to support the implementation of recommendations by planning departments or government; a lack of continuity in reform processes and commitment to their

implementation due to changes in government or government policy; and poor project governance and oversight, with frequent machinery of government changes to the planning department and its systems, and the absence of a good project management structure to oversee the implementation of recommendations.

I must say that one of the things that is highlighted in the Auditor-General's report tabled yesterday relates to the statutory time frames for planning application decisions. What was alarming to me was that of the applications that were being considered by the Minister for Planning in the other place there was only a 30 per cent compliance with the 60-day statutory time frame on decisions. The Auditor-General highlighted that one of the core issues around this is the transparency of that decision-making process. It was not that there was no decision but that there was no information as to how the minister arrived at the decision they did. Conversely, that was quite different for local government authorities, who of course have extensive reporting by way of council reports, online planning application systems and planning application assessment processes. However, the assessments of reporting decisions in the case of the Minister for Planning were not transparent, and that remains a concern.

Also of concern is that it is very hard in relation to those particular decisions to test one of the core objectives of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, which is the net community benefit and the long-term sustainability for the municipality to which the application relates.

The decision-making process of developing new suburbs became focused on ensuring streamlined access to land for developers, releasing developments as quickly as possible, and too little attention has been paid to the long-term needs of the community. There are a number of matters that the Greens think are very important in relation to this. It is important to limit the spread of urban areas and protect productive agricultural land by encouraging mixed and medium-density development in established areas and renewal sites within existing urban areas. It is also important that transport infrastructure and land use planning are integrated and respect major service industries.

Planning must include discrete diverse centres of activity and prioritise the efficient use of Victoria's limited resources — economic opportunity, public transport, ecological sustainability, social equity and representative decision-making — at all levels. Any Victorian planning policy must lead authorities to whom local or designated decision-making devolves by setting mandatory and guideline standards and

allocating support funding for their climate adaptation and carbon emissions mitigation planning. One of the core issues even at a strategic planning level for this state has been the lack of focus on climate change mitigation and environmentally or ecologically sustainable development as part of that. Although it is pleasing to see local governments in some areas are trying to lead the charge in relation to those particular areas of strategic planning, it has been a difficult road for them to travel in terms of getting those things embedded into their planning schemes.

If we were going to have a strategic planning system that truly met the needs of this state, those things would be embedded at a state planning policy level, and of course the other thing that is really important in all of that is that there is certainty in the planning scheme. As the planning schemes sit at the moment there is an extraordinary amount of grey space in there that leads to an interpretation of those schemes and the clauses within those schemes that really could go any way. They have been written in a way that does not provide certainty to communities, and I can understand why we see so much activity in VCAT in relation to communities fighting against inappropriate developments. The reality is that the planning schemes do not have the sorts of certainties that communities require, and in fact it is very difficult sometimes to even interpret what those planning schemes are trying to say.

In terms of the Victorian Planning Authority and its strategic role in this state and what we have seen in the past in the development of new suburbs that fringe around Melbourne, one of the core issues in relation to that was the over-representation of developers on the board of the Growth Areas Authority, which of course was replaced with the Metropolitan Planning Authority. The bill before us is welcomed in that it ensures that there is greater diversity on the board; however, the representation of a person with extensive local government experience is set at a minimum of one. We would think that, considering the infrastructure challenges and social challenges faced in new suburbs, it would be good to see this minimum exceeded through the judicious nominations by the planning minister to the Governor in Council.

The reality is that local governments really have to wear the consequences of bad strategic planning in their suburbs. It all comes back to the local government authority. I think it is incredibly important to get appropriate representation at the highest level to ensure that those issues are raised at this level and we can start to see a properly integrated approach in terms of strategic planning for Melbourne and for Victoria. The Greens will be supporting this bill.

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — I rise to make a contribution on the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. As has been said by our lead speaker on this side of the house, Mr David Davis, the bill provides for the creation of the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) by detailing provisions for the establishment, function and powers of the Victorian Planning Authority; the composition and operating arrangements of the board; the appointment of the chief executive officer and employment of staff; the management of conflicts of interest; general and transitional directions, including enabling the delegation of powers; and the necessary consequential amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the Subdivision Act 1988, the Taxation and Administration Act 1997 and the Transport Integration Act 2010. However, what it really does is abolish the Growth Areas Authority and replace it with a new authority, the Victorian Planning Authority, which is really just an advisory committee to the Minister for Planning.

Interestingly, in the background notes the government uses as a reason or excuse to abolish the Growth Areas Authority is the explosion and potential explosion of population growth and the need to have a new authority which replaces the Metropolitan Planning Authority that will work in all areas of the state, but as we know and have seen, in fact the Metropolitan Planning Authority did work in regional Victoria and was one of a number of planning authorities that provided assistance to local councils. Certainly I want to acknowledge the work that then Minister Guy did in relation to providing appropriate zones, farming zones, in regional Victoria to safeguard particularly those in the farming industry and those who wished to live in regional Victoria alongside those farming pursuits in rural activity zones and other zones, and also to provide the environmental security of those areas.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT — Order! I advise members of the gallery that they are not allowed to take photographs.

Mr RAMSAY — I have some concerns, even though as has been said we do not oppose this bill, regarding the work that the VPA will do in relation to the recently announced *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*, which was done I might add with little consultation with the communities that will be impacted on by the plans to increase density — both height and density — those areas that had been protected under the previous government, particularly in neighbourhood residential zones.

In my area of Geelong I want to acknowledge the work of the Newtown Action Group, which was led by Vicki

Baensch. During the consultation period that the previous coalition government undertook that group identified, along with the City of Greater Geelong, those areas in Geelong that the community was seeking protection status for so as to keep the character of the neighbourhood and also the livability that those communities enjoyed as a result of the planning zones that were applied, particularly the neighbourhood residential zones that had protected status in their particular areas. A lot of work was done by the city at the time through its planning department but also through then Minister Guy's office in relation to applying those zones.

I might add that the general residential zone area took up over 40 per cent and the neighbourhood residential zone took up only 1.3 per cent, but it was very important to those people to have that protection. It seems to me the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* is actually going to dilute the protection status of those neighbourhood residential zones, and Minister Wynne through his new planning authority is looking to respond to the increase in population growth by increasing both the density and height of both those neighbourhood and general zones, which will have a significant impact on the people who live in those communities. He is going to do this on the basis of absolutely no community consultation in relation to the proposed increases in the height — to 9 metres in neighbourhood residential zones and 11 metres in general residential zones — and density of those suburbs.

It is very strange that the government would take this strategy, given the angst that was created by the proposed youth jail in Werribee South, where in fact even the Labor mayor of Wyndham was unaware that the Andrews government was going to locate a prison, or a youth jail, next to a proposed development of residential homes. You would think they would learn their lesson, would you not, and that they would consult with the community about the impact any future development might have on people living in those communities, but again we see a classic example of a government going full bore into changes to the residential zones without any consultation with the community and without any understanding of what impact this might have on both the livability and the character of those suburbs.

I will quote from an email from one of my constituents about the zones that were previously in place and those that are proposed now:

The residential zones introduced by the Liberal government in 2014 were designed to direct growth to certain areas and

provide certainty to residents and developers alike about where greater densification is allowed.

It also allowed protection to the areas identified for urban preservation.

These reformed residential zones introduced over the long weekend by the state government dramatically weakened the strength/protection of the two biggest zones, neighbourhood residential zone (NRZ) and general residential zone (GRZ).

The email continues:

The state government wrongfully claim they are introducing mandatory height limits in each zone. In fact they have increased the height limit in NRZ/GRZ.

The email quotes the Newtown Action Group (NAG) as saying:

There are already height limits in each zone! The City of Greater Geelong schedule identifies the heights as follows: NRZ 'must not exceed 8 metres'. It has now been increased to 9 metres. GRZ 'must not exceed 9 metres'. It has now been increased to 11 metres!

The email continues:

The state government have removed the default limit of two dwellings per block for NRZ. There is no cap on the number of dwellings you can cram onto a site! NAG says: This is the most worrying aspect of the changes. Hits at the heart of the purpose of the NRZ. So much for restricting housing growth in areas of recognised neighbourhood character. Sadly bad news for residents and great news for developers.

The state government have introduced a minimum garden area requirement in both NRZ/GRZ. The intent is to protect the open garden character of our suburbs. NAG says: The sizes mentioned according to the size of block are smaller than the rule now in many areas.

Not only are we losing the green space in our suburbs through this proposed change in planning rules but we are also going to increase both the height and density of the general and residential zones. The email from my constituent continues:

The state government have misled the public with the media coverage in terms of what these changes mean. It is an outright attempt to densify the middle suburbs without any regard to existing infrastructure, neighbourhood character and amenity.

The NRZ has effectively ceased to exist. The removal of the cap on 'number of houses on block' opens the way for medium-density and middle-rise housing everywhere.

With the latest reforms, there's been no public exhibition of the final version and no opportunity for formal community consultation. As Stephen Rowley has argued: 'Community have some right to feel concerned about the bait and switch here. The promise of NRZ has been reversed very, very quickly'.

The impact for the neighbourhood residential zones is a mandatory height of 9 metres and a maximum of two storeys, and the default of two dwellings on a lot has been removed and replaced with a new mandatory minimum garden area requirement. In the general residential zone the mandatory height has now increased to 11 metres with a maximum of three storeys, raised from the discretionary 9 metres and no storey limit, so we could go from no storeys to three storeys in the general residential zone, which will particularly cause higher density for character-held buildings and areas within our suburbs. In the residential growth zone the discretionary 13.5 metre height limit is retained. Councils can set an alternative mandatory height limit, but this must be at least 13.5 metres. I could go on and on.

What is interesting is the hypocrisy of the Andrews government and particularly the now member for Geelong in the Legislative Assembly, Christine Couzens, because just prior to the election in 2014 she was a member of the Geelong West Residents Action Group and she was running this fear-and-smear campaign about potential skyscrapers being built in Geelong West without the protection status of neighbourhood residential zones. She was talking about highly densified buildings and blaming the previous government for potentially ruining the character and amenity of suburbs that wish to be protected. Now that very person is a member of a government that is actually going to do that very thing — remove and dilute the protections that were put in place by the coalition government to preserve the character and amenity of neighbourhoods by not allowing any significant increase in densification or height that would impact on the livability, not only in the neighbourhood residential zones but also in the general residential zones. We are now seeing the government moving to increase both height and densification limits for those suburbs, which will have a significant impact on the livability and amenity for those who chose to live there before these protections were removed by the Andrews government.

This bill talks about merely a change from the Growth Areas Authority. I might add that we have plenty of planning authorities in this state and why the government would see fit to just change the name of the authority is beyond me, because they are all basically advisory committees to the minister. I refer to Regional Development Victoria, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and the regional partnerships that are scattered over the state. In my case we have the Barwon Regional Partnership which provides planning advice to the minister. We now have the metropolitan partnerships, which provide planning

and infrastructure priorities to the minister, and we have the Geelong Authority, which used to be the Geelong Planning Authority and which is supposed to provide planning advice to the minister. So there are plenty of planning advisory committees across Victoria to provide advice.

With the increase in population we have seen an increase in crime across Victoria and the devastation of what was a reasonably good public transport system. Obviously the significantly higher use of our public transport system means that it is not able to cope and ferry those commuters around the state. Yes, we have a problem with population growth and we have a problem with where to identify new housing opportunities and opportunities to intensify or infill spaces within our suburbs. But this should not come at the cost of losing the livability, amenity and character of many of those suburbs and many of those communities that have fought long and hard, like Vicki Baensch and her Newtown Action Group, to preserve and have the government provide protection status to those suburbs so the communities can enjoy the amenity of where they choose to live and know that they are not going to be overdeveloped or surrounded by the impacts of densification, increased height limits and loss of green space.

While we do not oppose this bill, I certainly raise on behalf of concerned community groups the impact that the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* will have and the way that the new Victorian Planning Authority will go about implementing the minister's wishes of intensifying development, increasing height and developing infill sites that will greatly impact on those who have made the decision to live in areas where there was protected status — and we thank Matthew Guy, now in the Legislative Assembly, for that when he was the Minister for Planning — and where they could enjoy the amenity and character of those particular neighbourhoods, the things they chose to live there for.

Mr EIDEH (Western Metropolitan) — I rise to speak briefly on the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. This bill is an important part of the Andrews Labor government's election commitment to focus on boosting job creation, enhancing and consolidating planning and infrastructure development processes and creating a long-term plan for Victoria's future growth. It is one of the most essential reforms to Victoria's planning capacity ever initiated.

Proper strategic planning is the key to the success of any city, suburb, town or region, and the Victorian Planning Authority, as a newly created entity, will ensure that urban and regional population growth will

be accompanied by greater amenity, consolidated infrastructure development and much better affordability. The new authority will also deliver greater capacity for urban renewal sites and numerous new housing options and, through the provision of consistent land supply, will be able to boost housing affordability. This will build upon the reputation Victoria already has for significant national leadership in planning systems and infrastructure assessment, the coherence of decision-making processes and a broad focus on innovation and sustainability.

The authority will have a solid foundation from which to ensure that Victoria continues to lead the way in critical planning and infrastructure development. Through greater consultation with local councils, the authority will be better placed to make accurate determinations about new development opportunities and increase housing availability in regional areas. This translates into more jobs in our metropolitan areas and, importantly, more jobs in Victoria's regional areas.

As I mentioned earlier, Victoria is the national leader in planning. Other states and territories have languished for decades with ad hoc approaches to planning and infrastructure. Victoria has consolidated its approach, and it has thrived as a result. Melbourne's reputation and status as the most livable city in the world has been mentioned on numerous occasions in this place. This bill provides us with the opportunity to strive to make Victoria the most livable state in the world. This is what the Victorian Planning Authority Bill will help deliver for all Victorians. With a principal focus on consolidated and enhanced planning practices for Victoria's many regional cities and towns and long-term strategic planning for regional areas, all Victorians, and those wanting to move to Victoria, will have the choice and the opportunity to reside and work in a state which offers unique housing, work and livability options unmatched by any other state in Australia.

It is this sort of strategic thinking which characterises the Andrews Labor government. By focusing on a statewide boost in planning, jobs, growth and livability we are providing many parts of Victoria, otherwise isolated from this process, with the capacity to become thriving economic and investment options within Australia and also internationally. Not only will the implementation of this bill streamline the governance arrangements in Victoria's planning system but it will also assist local government in speeding up and removing deadlocks in its planning and approval systems.

The Victorian Planning Authority's Streamlining for Growth initiative is designed to do precisely that. In 2016–17 the Streamlining for Growth program will provide support and capacity building for Victorian councils. It has a budget of \$4.1 million. It will focus on funding and staff resources for targeted projects in specific councils and will help build capacity in councils to unblock strategic planning system delays and will significantly speed up projects. By providing direct assistance to councils and unblocking existing delays and preventing future delays, the Streamlining for Growth program will promote employment growth and much increased housing choice and affordability.

This bill is not just about improving the mechanisms within state and local governments. This bill is about the overt interests of the Victorian people and consulting with and informing all Victorians about important planning issues which directly impact their lives. The Victorian Planning Authority has developed Shape Victoria to provide an additional, online way for Victorians to understand and contribute to the decisions that shape Victoria's future. Victorians will have direct access to the decision-making processes impacting housing affordability and land access, measures which contribute to economic growth and job creation across the state. This will provide Victorians with the capacity to more effectively plan where they choose to live and work in the future.

Infrastructure development must keep up with population growth, and for the many thousands of people moving to the outer growth fringes of Melbourne, such as in my electorate of Western Metropolitan Region, or into the many regional areas of Victoria, there must be a whole-of-government approach to planning and development. This bill encompasses a whole-of-government approach and includes local government and the wider community as an essential part of its focus. It is the multifaceted and streamlined focus of this bill, with its whole-of-government approach and decision-making improvements, which makes the Victorian Planning Authority Bill one of the most significant reforms to Victoria's planning capacity ever. I commend the bill to the house.

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — I rise to make my contribution to the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. The bill provides for the creation of the Victorian Planning Authority by detailing provisions for the establishment, function and powers of the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA); the composition and operating arrangements of the board of the authority; the appointment of a chief executive officer and the employment of staff at the authority itself;

managing conflicts of interest within the authority; and general and transitional directions, including enabling the delegation of powers and the necessary consequential amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the Subdivision Act 1988, the Taxation Administration Act 1997 and the Transport Integration Act 2010.

It has been claimed by the government that this particular bill provides for the authority to have as its objective to provide advice and assistance that is in accordance with the objectives of planning here in the great state of Victoria. The bill does indeed require the VPA to do this in collaboration with both government and local councils, and of course local councils do play an exceptionally important role in planning in our state and do deal with the vast majority of planning applications and planning matters in our state.

The functions and powers provisions enable the Victorian Planning Authority to work anywhere in Victoria that is designated by the minister; this has not just been limited to growth areas. It is also claimed this bill will enable the creation of plans that respond to the opportunities and challenges faced by communities across Victoria and will also allow for economic opportunities to be shared from a planning perspective. The VPA will be governed by a board, which, as I indicated, is set out in this bill as well, and that will bring a range of skills and also areas of knowledge and expertise that may not have previously been evident, such as management of business or commercial ventures and infrastructure planning.

What we essentially see from this bill of course is that the Victorian Planning Authority replaces the Metropolitan Planning Authority. The Metropolitan Planning Authority was really just the Metropolitan Planning Authority in name only, as this authority did of course work across the width and breadth of Victoria and did not just work within the metropolitan area of Melbourne, which is the only part of Victoria Daniel Andrews really cares about.

If we were to extrapolate a little further about some of the issues we are seeing at the moment, we have heard about the announcement of the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*. There have been some disappointing announcements with respect to changes within that particular refresh about the impact it will have upon neighbourhood zones. Neighbourhood zones were of course introduced under the previous Liberal government by the then planning minister, Matthew Guy, now in the Legislative Assembly. These zones were in response to community concern about overdevelopment within their communities. Certainly

from my history in local government I have seen that there are concerns in communities about overdevelopment. Instituting these zones was an important response by the former government to facilitate greater certainty in the stipulated communities and meant that overdevelopment would not be allowed as these neighbourhood zones would not facilitate such development. There was regulation of how many new sites could be subdivided within a given housing block. This was reduced to two.

I know that particularly within the City of Ballarat the township of Buninyong certainly had a significant amount of engagement with Ballarat council — —

Ms Shing — Good bakery in Buninyong.

Mr MORRIS — There are many exceptional facilities for the purchasing of food in Buninyong, Ms Shing. I recognise that. I think Buninyong is probably one of the best communities I have seen in terms of engagement with their local representatives. They do continually engage with both myself and with other MPs, such as Mr Howard, the supposed member for Buninyong in the Legislative Assembly, and they do raise concerns and issues they have. There was a concern about a pedestrian crossing that was going to be placed in Buninyong just recently. There was strong advocacy on that issue.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr MORRIS — There is an exceptional cycling race in Buninyong as well, Ms Shing. The Australian national championships actually occur in Buninyong each year. Generally it is during January — normally mid to late January — and it is a phenomenally successful event and one that I am pleased the City of Ballarat has supported for such a long period of time. I certainly hope they do into the future, because Adelaide is trying to steal it. Adelaide is trying to steal the national cycling championships. I think their rightful home is in Buninyong, and let us hope that does continue well into the future.

Ms Shing — Good pub in Buninyong.

Mr MORRIS — There is a good pub in Buninyong indeed, Ms Shing. Going back to the substance of the bill and planning, Buninyong did advocate strongly with the City of Ballarat about the need for additional protections due to concerns about overdevelopment within the beautiful village of Buninyong. What was instituted was a limit on block sizes of 800 square metres. So if you were looking to subdivide a block within the precinct of Buninyong designated as a neighbourhood residential zone, then the smallest size

you could subdivide a block to would be 800 square metres.

This certainly gave a large degree of certainty to the community that there would not be overdevelopment within the village itself and that that would be there for the future protection of appropriate planning within the village. However, the concern I certainly have, as well as many within the Buninyong community, is that with the watering down of the neighbourhood residential zones as part of the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* this stipulation about the 800 square metres has certainly got a very big question mark over it. That is something there has been no certainty about as there has been a severe lack of detail given by the government about the impact that their watering down of these neighbourhood residential zones would have on the planning scheme.

I note that Minister Wynne, the Minister for Planning, promised that these changes would ‘protect the much-loved backyard’. I think that it is a rather disingenuous statement to say that that is the case when what in effect is happening is that we are seeing a reduction, a watering down, of these important neighbourhood residential zones that communities fought for. The previous government listened and responded to these communities by delivering these neighbourhood residential zones. The government is saying ‘We’re going to protect backyards’ when in effect what they are doing is allowing for overdevelopment of these precincts that have been identified by local councils and local communities as areas where such development would be inappropriate.

The government is again at war with local communities in saying, ‘Well, we recognise that you stood up and you told your local council that you wanted this protection. The previous Liberal government understood and responded to that by delivering these new neighbourhood residential zones. But what we are going to do is strip away the fundamentals of the zones and facilitate overdevelopment, not only in terms of the number of subdivisions allowed per block but also in terms of an increase in the height to which new buildings can be built’. I continually hear from local residents that they are concerned about overdevelopment in their neighbourhoods. They are concerned about the height of certain developments and the overshadowing of their properties and neighbouring properties. Why the government would seek to do this is beyond the comprehension of a normal person.

It is not just Buninyong, within Western Victoria Region, that has these types of protections; I note that the City of Greater Geelong also has these protections.

Ms Fitzherbert interjected.

Mr MORRIS — There are some magnificent historic and heritage neighbourhoods within Geelong that I know Ms Fitzherbert knows well. These are currently subject to the protections of neighbourhood residential zones. What this government is seeking to do is to strip away those protections from these Geelong neighbourhoods and facilitate overdevelopment within these suburbs against the wishes of the local community. I note that Melton also has the protection of neighbourhood residential zones. I wonder what the opinion of the member for Melton might be about the watering down of these important protections for the neighbourhoods and communities within the City of Melton that had been provided with the protection of these zones by the former government.

Planning is an incredibly important issue that cannot be taken lightly. My concern is that the past practice of this government has been to not consult with communities but just ride roughshod over them and do as they see fit. There was a strong message sent by the good people of Werribee when the government attempted to impose a youth jail on that community. They stood up and said to the government, ‘Not this time. We’re not going to accept the absurd decision that you’ve made’. Their voices were heard and counted. I certainly acknowledge that Mr Finn was a very strong supporter of the community there, despite the fact that the Treasurer, who is the member for Werribee in the other place, was supposed to be representing his community when he said, ‘No, no, no, it’s all okay. We’re going to impose this upon you and it’ll all be fine’. Well, it was not fine, the community did not want it and the government backflipped on that particular issue. It is not too dissimilar to what we are seeing in Ballarat at the moment with the railway precinct and Lydiard Street North, Mr O’Sullivan. Lydiard Street North is a magnificent heritage street. It currently houses dozens of buses each day that should not be there.

Ms Shing — You should ask for more speaking time, because this is amazing!

Mr MORRIS — Indeed. The buses should not be there. It was the government that decided to put them there, riding roughshod over the community.

Ms Shing interjected.

Mr MORRIS — It did not provide the appropriate consultation, Ms Shing, about whether this was an appropriate use of this site. It is a magnificent heritage residential street that should have been afforded the

appropriate protections and not have diesel fumes spewing from buses at all hours of the day.

Mr O’Sullivan — What about the car park?

Mr MORRIS — The car park, Mr O’Sullivan, is going to be reduced by over 130 car parking spaces. There are over 400 spaces presently available to commuters in the Ballarat railway precinct, and that number will be reduced to just 270. Not only that, there is no clarity about how it is that the land at the Ballarat railway precinct is being given or indeed gifted to the local developer. On the weekend I attended a meeting of SOS — Save Our Station — at the Provincial Hotel. There were over 60 concerned residents there who raised very legitimate concerns about what is happening in the railway precinct. It was just in the last sitting week that Ms Pulford, by way of interjection during one of my contributions, said she was happy to debate the issue of the railway precinct with me at any time. There was a perfect opportunity at 10.00 a.m. last Saturday at the Provincial Hotel to do such a thing with me and over 60 concerned residents, and Ms Pulford was not there, despite an invitation being issued. An invitation was also issued to local members in the other place Mr Howard and Ms Knight, and neither of them attended the Provincial Hotel for that session.

I commend the work of the Save Our Station group. I think they are doing an exceptional job in ensuring that the views of the Ballarat community — —

Mr Dalidakis interjected.

Mr MORRIS — Indeed I think you would be a great cheerleader for them, Mr Dalidakis. I am sure they would appreciate your attendance. The SOS signs, very similar to the *Y.M.C.A.* action you are doing there, are something that I have not seen in the chamber before. Ms Shing is now doing the *Y.M.C.A.*, along with Ms Symes. I would like to see Mr Leane join in, but no, he is a little busy.

Mr MULINO (Eastern Victoria) — It is going to be very difficult to top the excitement of that last portion of the previous contribution. Can I just start by saying that it is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. This is a bill that deals with some of the biggest challenges facing our state, and I will, by way of context, outline some figures that were released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Some might consider these to be dry numbers, but in fact the document sets out exactly why it is that this bill is so important. The demographic statistics for the end of the September 2016 quarter indicate that the population in

Victoria increased by 2.1 per cent over the previous year — an extra 127 500 people, which is significantly higher than the national average and significantly higher than any other state. Indeed our growth rate, at 2.1 per cent, is more than half a per cent higher than any other state or territory. In addition to that the absolute growth is well over one-third of Australia's total population growth, and indeed it is significantly higher than New South Wales growth, which is coming off a significantly higher base.

This extra 127 500 people coming to our great state is exactly why it is that we need a more coherent, more linked up and more strategic planning vision for this state. This important bill improves the governance of those arrangements. That population growth is something that has been occurring for some time, and while it is difficult to project these kinds of trends over the long run, there is every reason to believe that Victoria will continue to lead the nation in population growth for some time. We have considerable available land. There is every reason to believe this will continue.

As many have said in this chamber, this is a good thing for the state. It is people voting with their feet. It is people from overseas and people from interstate choosing to come here because of the lifestyle we offer and because of the jobs that we have, but it is also a challenge to provide the appropriate services for these people. It is a challenge to provide the appropriate infrastructure for these people. So it is very much a double-edged sword. It does not matter who is on the Treasury benches over the next 20, 30 or 40 years, these challenges will be there. That is why we need to put in place governance arrangements that will stand the test of time.

It is also worth noting that *Plan Melbourne: 2017–2050* has been released, and this also is an important contextual document that sets out a vision for how this state can cope with rapid change, including a significant increase in population. That document looks at this issue from a holistic perspective. It looks at it from the perspective of housing affordability, jobs growth, where people live, where people work and other issues as well. That is exactly the kind of approach we need.

So what does this bill deal with? This bill deals with the creation of the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA). It calls for planned growth, the right housing and the right jobs in the right locations. It calls for partnerships with local communities so that new suburbs reflect the special values of place, and it calls for partnerships with infrastructure providers so that services are rolled out where they are needed. That could be thought of as a mission statement for this new organisation.

The Victorian Planning Authority was officially launched in August 2016, growing out of two existing bodies — the Metropolitan Planning Authority (MPA) and the Growth Areas Authority (GAA). As I will allude to later on in this contribution, the governance arrangements for this new VPA are going to improve on previous arrangements by allowing this new body to deal with a much broader set of areas and thereby deal with growth in a much more holistic way. As I said, the VPA has grown out of existing bodies — the MPA and the GAA — and they both did a considerable amount of good work. I was a councillor in the City of Casey some time ago, and I can speak from firsthand experience about how significant contributions were made by those bodies in very challenging circumstances in areas experiencing very rapid population growth. However, we need to strengthen the arrangements that are in place and, as this bill will provide, we need to move to an arrangement where a statewide body can plan for future growth in a way that is not limited in ways that those two bodies were.

This bill will give the VPA a strong legislative basis to continue doing the important work that those two previous bodies were doing but, as I mentioned, with a strengthened governance arrangement. This new body, the VPA, will be able to undertake its work in relation to 'designated areas'. The designated areas will include urban renewal areas. These will include places such as Arden, Broadmeadows and the Monash employment cluster, and I think everybody in this place would agree that we need to support the development of urban renewal areas given that we cannot just allow all growth to occur at the fringes of the city. Indeed many of these urban renewal areas will offer some of the most exciting opportunities for development in this city.

In areas like Arden we are seeing a significant investment in transport infrastructure; and in areas like the Monash employment cluster we can see the confluence of transport, jobs creation and employment clusters. These urban renewal areas are going to be absolutely critical for the vitality of our city and indeed will allow for significant advantage both socially and economically by allowing jobs and population growth to occur around existing transport infrastructure and other infrastructure.

Of course the VPA will also look at growth areas such as Wyndham, Casey, Hume and Whittlesea. As I mentioned, I was a councillor in Casey for a couple of years way back in ancient history, and even back then Casey was experiencing population growth in the order of thousands of people every year. In my current role as a member for Eastern Victoria Region my electorate covers part of Casey and the entirety of Cardinia, and

both of those council areas continue to grow in population at an extremely rapid rate. They are two of the fastest growing councils in the country. Then of course in other parts of our state there are other councils growing at a rapid rate as well. When you look at the top 10 council growth rates around the country many are Victorian, so it is absolutely critical that the VPA includes all of the growth occurring in these growth areas in its strategic operations.

Then of course there are designated areas within regional cities such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and the great regional cities of the Latrobe Valley. It is absolutely critical that these areas also are taken into consideration. Again, everybody in this place would agree that we cannot have all of the growth occurring in the Melbourne CBD. What we need is balanced growth around the state and balanced development around the state, and regional cities are going to be absolutely critical in that.

This bill, as I said, provides for a much stronger organisational structure and a much stronger legislative basis for the VPA, and also for much better governance arrangements. The GAA and the MPA previously operated under legislation that only allowed them to operate in growth areas, but there is so much more to growth in this state.

As I mentioned, so much of what is going to happen in terms of jobs creation and where people are moving is occurring in urban renewal areas and also in designated areas within regional cities, so it is absolutely critical that any overarching development planning authority is able to look at all of those three different types of areas. The VPA bill 2016 that we are considering now formalises the VPA's role in coordinating land use and infrastructure in designated areas across all of those three categories.

The VPA bill of course also strengthens the capacity of the VPA to engage in partnerships with other entities. As I mentioned earlier, planned growth is one of the items that one would include in an overarching mission statement of the VPA, but partnerships with local communities and partnerships with infrastructure providers — so that the services are rolled out where they are needed — are also critical. These partnerships — the VPA's relationships with other entities — are also provided for in this bill. A key benefit of the bill is that it provides much greater clarity around the role and responsibilities of the VPA. Allowing the VPA to have stronger relationships with other entities, with local communities, with infrastructure providers and with others will enable the

VPA to provide a more complementary and supporting role to other land and infrastructure entities in this state.

Again, this is a very important change in the governance structure of that organisation, and it is very important that this be provided for through legislation so that these changes survive the government of the day and that they are here for the long term, because what we are dealing with are very long term trends. We are dealing with long-term trends and long-term challenges for our state but also long-term benefits, as I mentioned before. I personally see this very much from a glass-half-full perspective. I see population growth as a great benefit for this state that brings in huge amounts of energy, vitality and creativity from all of the people who choose to come here. However, one cannot look at those benefits without also acknowledging the challenges that they create.

In concluding my comments on this bill I would just like to say that today is an appropriate day for us to consider this bill, given that today we have the quarterly release of demographic statistics. What we see today are numbers that come in right at the top end of anybody's expectations and that show we continue to grow very rapidly, and that is exactly the challenge and the opportunity that this bill addresses. It is exactly that population growth that says so much about what is great about this state, but it also says so much about why we need to get long-term governance arrangements right.

Because this bill will provide for the VPA to act right throughout this state — designated areas are defined much more broadly — and because it provides governance arrangements that allow for much stronger partnerships with external agencies, it is a critical step forward in providing the right planning framework for this state. I commend this bill to the house and recommend all that it contains.

Ms FITZHERBERT (Southern Metropolitan) — I am very pleased to rise and speak on the Victorian Planning Authority Bill 2016. I know that Ms Shing has been looking forward to hearing my words today, and I am glad to be able to speak for her and for others. The bill of course provides for the creation of the Victorian Planning Authority and details a number of provisions for that authority beyond its establishment in the first instance. They include the composition and operating arrangements of the board; the appointment of a chief executive officer; the employment of staff; the management of conflicts of interest; general and transitional directions, including enabling the delegation of powers; and the necessary consequential amendments to the Planning and Environment Act

1987, the Taxation Administration Act 1997 and the Transport Integration Act 2010. The government has indicated that the primary objective of the Victorian Planning Authority bill is for the authority to provide advice and assistance that are in accordance with the objectives of planning in Victoria. The bill requires the new authority to do so in collaboration with government and councils, and I would trust also with people — with ordinary Victorians — who will live with the consequences of the decisions and advice that are offered by this new organisation.

I take up the argument that was made earlier by Mr Mulino in relation to population growth. That is something that we need to be very mindful of. We need to accommodate that and plan for that within our planning schemes. I acknowledge that that is part of the intended focus of this bill, although I would argue that it leaves a great deal unsaid, because what is at the heart of this is how people live and how they want to live in their communities and in their homes. Mr Davis has been particularly vocal on this front and has drawn the house's attention on a number of occasions to the implications of the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh*, which was announced fairly recently. His argument of course is that this is not a refreshing new plan at all but that it is a plan for densification — a plan, as he says, to destroy the nature of our suburbs and a plan to damage the livability of Melbourne.

There has been quite a deal of conversation in and around the Parliament today about density of living and indeed people's living circumstances. We have seen of course the report that has been tabled today in relation to a review of members' second residence allowances. I cannot resist referring to the comment from Mr Nardella that his St Kilda property was 'not spacious enough' for him — that there was not sufficient room there and he therefore made the decision to live in a caravan park in a temporary facility there and to take that as his permanent home. I find that quite extraordinary. In addition though, in one of his other places of residence he has been able to provide couch surfing activities through Couchsurfing.com. This was mentioned today by Lauren Hilbert. I have been provided with screenshots of the profile on this Couchsurfing website, and it shows that during the period of 2013 several people stayed with Don and his partner. One of the comments read:

Was great to start my couch surfing experience with Jan and Don.

And another:

Jan is an amazing host. Both her and Don were right in the middle of election fever and yet Jan opened her house to me arriving ...

This is extraordinary generosity, and in relation to this bill and the density issues that Mr Davis has spoken of it shows an ability to share and to indeed increase the density of one's own dwelling. This was done, I believe, in Ballarat, and the second residence was in Melbourne, but of course nowhere near the electorate of Melton — a very confusing sort of situation.

Returning to the bill more specifically, some of the changes that have been indicated through *Plan Melbourne* are concerning, and we are already seeing the impact of this concern and manifestation of this concern play out in the electorate of Southern Metropolitan Region. The government intends to lift height limits to 11 metres in the general residential zone, which will also contribute to massively increasing density in activity areas. It intends to increase density all along transport routes and to tear up the neighbourhood zones that were put in place largely by Mr Guy in 2013–14, although a couple were put in place by this government in 2015.

There is further change that is planned for those areas. It includes removing the cap on the number of premises on each property. At the moment in neighbourhood zones it is one or two — usually two — and that cap would be removed; so it could be two, it could be four, but it is not clear. This is an issue of enormous concern for people, particularly those in residential areas. This is being done largely without consultation with local communities, and it is part of the government's attempt to override councils and communities throughout Melbourne.

One of the manifestations of opposition to this was seen recently in Hampton, when several hundred people attended a public meeting called on very, very short notice in relation to yet another very large development that was planned for Hampton Street, Hampton. There has already been a great build-up of density in that area, and I can see that in many instances this is appropriate because that should be happening around activity centres and around train stations and so on. The issue is the quantum of that density and the ability for neighbourhood communities to be consulted in relation to this. That community was making its views very, very clear, that it is simply not interested in having that level of density and, in particular, that height, given that, as I understand it, there is currently no height restriction along Hampton Street. That community is making it very clear that it has a firm view that significantly greater heights are just not acceptable.

In many ways this is a reaction to the great Australian tradition of the backyard and streets that have sufficient areas for recreational play, for children to do what kids need to do in gardens and for the sorts of activities that Australian families have participated in and treasured

for many, many years. It would be a mistake to lose this. It would be a mistake to force change on neighbourhoods that obviously reject such change. With those words, I conclude my comments on the bill.

Motion agreed to.

Read second time; by leave, proceeded to third reading.

Third reading

Motion agreed to.

Read third time.

VALEDICTORY STATEMENT

Mr Herbert

Mr HERBERT (Northern Victoria) (*By leave*) — I thank all members here for indulging me and allowing me, for the second time this week, to say a few words. I know it is Thursday afternoon and people are keen to get on with the business and get home to their families and loved ones, but I just want to say a few words, the reason for which will become obvious.

I want to talk a little bit about my place here in this Parliament. I was elected as the member for Eltham in the other place in 2002 and then elected as a member for Northern Victoria Region in 2014, a place my wife and I had long discussed moving to once the kids were old enough. My long-time very good friend Vicki Ward was elected to replace me in Eltham in 2014. She is a dedicated, passionate and effective local member who is very popular with caucus colleagues. She has a great future in politics, and the people of Eltham are well served to have her as a dedicated, hardworking MP. In fact many say she is much better than I was, and I would have to agree with that in many ways.

Over my 12 years as the member for Eltham, each year I would run a health campaign on issues that impacted the community most. Out of all those campaigns — and every year we would run one — I must say that the one I am the proudest of was the formation of the local Eltham prostate cancer group, which worked in raising awareness locally and helping men cope with the trauma of prostate cancer. It was good for me. I, like every man in this chamber should, have a regular check-up every year. Rare Cancers Australia came to me one year and asked me to promote their cause as very little is known about many types of cancers, the symptoms of the cancers and the devastating impact they can have on families. When I ran that campaign

little did I know that I would be a victim of a rare cancer myself some years later.

My adult life has been dedicated to education, originally as a teacher at Glenroy Technical School. Then I had the good fortune to influence policy as chief of staff to the late Lynne Kosky. I also acknowledge, when it comes to education and friendship, Senator Kim Carr, who has been a very good friend of mine since our teaching days at Glenroy Tech and has always been a source of inspiration and great ideas for improving educational outcomes. In opposition I had the honour of being Labor's shadow minister for higher education, TAFE and training, being a portfolio that I loved, and I gave my all.

In mid-2013 I was diagnosed with a rare stomach cancer and underwent significant surgery to save my life. I do not speak much about that, but that is the case. Labor was gearing up for a tough election campaign and it was clear that under Dan Andrews's leadership we had a chance of forming government after only one term in opposition. Unfortunately my health was very poor — something, as I say, I have been reluctant to discuss publicly — and I realised that running for the ultra-marginal seat of Eltham and selling our TAFE message was too much. With Daniel's blessing I transferred to become a candidate for Northern Victoria Region at a time when there were many struggling TAFEs there, so it kind of worked well for me. Like Mary Wooldridge over there, I have had the benefit and the blessing of being in both houses of this Parliament, and it has been good.

Labor was elected, as you know, in 2014, and I was given the honour of becoming the Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for International Education. I was lucky enough to be immediately across my portfolio, and I got straight to work. After two incredibly tough years we had laid the foundation for reforming our TAFE and training system to a position where once again we are Australia's leader. The government as well has consolidated Victoria as Australia's number one destination for education services, which are worth well over \$6 billion in exports to our state.

My wife and I chose Trentham as a place to live, and what a wonderful community it is. The friendships and community we have experienced over the past two and a half years are heartwarming. The support they have shown me is staggering.

As we all know, being a politician is immensely rewarding, but the hours and pressure can be gruelling. To be a politician in the spotlight can be tough,

particularly on your family and friends. It requires 100 per cent to do this job and no less, and I am sorry to say that I no longer have 100 per cent to give. Unfortunately my health challenges, while not life threatening, continue, and I do need to spend more time looking after myself — something probably quite a few people here also need to do. And so it is now time for me to hand over the baton of representation for Northern Victoria Region to someone else. I have given notice to the Premier and the President and long before the next sitting week I will formally advise the Governor of my resignation and will not be returning to this place to speak.

I cannot leave, however, without acknowledging the exceptional work of Premier Andrews and his team. I believe this state is better with Daniel as Premier, and I look forward to attending the unveiling of the bronze statue for his three terms as Premier. I pay tribute to Minister Gayle Tierney in her roles as Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Corrections, and offer my support whenever needed. I also pay tribute to my good friend Phil Dalidakis in his role as Minister for International Education and offer him my ongoing service. I thank my colleagues for their friendship and for their dedication to Victoria. Their friendship has had a big influence on me, and I think I am a better person for knowing them.

I thank the parliamentary staff and attendants. You are a fantastic group of people, a fantastic group of professionals, and in my mind you are the true custodians of this Parliament. I thank you for the support you have given me and the much-valued advice that you have given me, and I hope I can continue to be your friend in the future.

Lastly, I acknowledge my family. I am incredibly proud of my son, Jack, and my daughter, Eliza, and also my stepkids, Ellie, Georgia and Jarod, who I have watched grow into respectful, decent adults. Our five kids have spent their entire lives in the shadow of politics, which they have handled with grace and patience, as do many of the children of members in this place.

The job I have had over the last 15 years has been an honour, and I thank the people of Victoria for electing me and for giving me the opportunity to play my part in this state's great present and future. But right now, with a smile on my face, I intend enjoying renovating my cottage in Trentham and spending more time with my wife, Lisa, who is not only the brains of our family but also my best friend. I am very much looking forward to being the husband that she deserves. Thank you, and goodbye.

Honourable members applauded.

The PRESIDENT — Order! Can I just make one remark as we go forward. I have noticed that in a couple of instances over the last two days a habit has crept into proceedings where members have referred to other members by their first names. No, it was not just you, Mr Herbert, and yours was in a context that I understand. It is the practice of the house to refer to members by their title or by their family name rather than their first name. It has happened a few times in the past few days, and I have not pulled anyone up.

Mr JENNINGS (Special Minister of State) — On behalf of the government I would like to say a few words in recognition of the outstanding contribution to the labour movement and to the people of Victoria that Mr Steven Herbert has provided for us all. I have known Mr Herbert for nearly 30 years, and I have known him as an ardent supporter of Labor values and progressive policy and as someone with an unswerving determination in relation to educational opportunity for the citizens of this state and indeed the citizens of the nation. He has exercised that determination in a variety of roles and responsibilities while working for senators and working for ministers of the Crown, eventually coming to this place as a local member of outstanding energy and determination and ultimately becoming a minister for an area of public policy that he was totally committed to all of his working life. That is a remarkable achievement of perseverance, of commitment and of delivery, and we as part of the Labor government greatly appreciate his lifelong commitment to those tasks.

We understand that it has not always been an easy trajectory — he himself referred to his health condition — and in many instances I have vicariously lived through his pain and suffering as he has risen to speak in this place, obviously with some degree of pain and suffering in terms of being able to effectively communicate those passions and those issues he is committed to. I do not underestimate that challenge, his challenge in relation to cancer and his challenge in relation to keeping body and mind together and acquitting his obligations as a spouse, as a father and as a member of his community. We all know how difficult that can be, and if you have to endure additional difficulties with your health, that is testament to your perseverance and your commitment.

We are greatly appreciative of the way in which Mr Herbert has exercised his ministerial responsibilities and his obligations to the Parliament and the way in which he has chosen to leave this Parliament at a time of his choosing to acquit his obligations to his family

and to himself. We thank him for his commitment to the labour movement. I know that he is a man of great loyalty, not only to the party but to those he is close to within the labour movement. Oddly enough, sometimes his loyalty has led to some degree of interest between us, but he is unswervingly a loyal person and I identify that as a badge of honour as I say farewell to him and thank him for his contribution to the Parliament and the people of Victoria.

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — I am pleased to be able to join the Leader of the Government in saying a few words about Steve Herbert. I have been very fortunate with Mr Herbert to share houses over my 10 years in Parliament, for some eight years in the lower house and for the last two and a bit years in the upper house. I made that transition and in some ways have a little bit of empathy in relation to the transition we were both making through that process.

Interestingly, as you left Eltham, Mr Herbert, in my new role in the upper house I have actually been spending a lot more time in Eltham in recent years, and I have to say that you are consistently held in very high respect by everyone I talk to for the work that you did, the contributions you made and the community relationships you formed, and that holds to this day. I have seen that, experienced that and heard that in my travels right up to today.

As Mr Jennings said, there is no doubt that going through a very significant illness and trying to juggle and balance the demands of this place, the demands of being a shadow minister and ministerial responsibilities as well as family and everything else is a daunting and unenviable task. It is something that you have managed to do very well, obviously persisting and managing through that time to become a minister, which I know was always an important aspiration and career objective for you.

On behalf of the coalition I congratulate you on the work that you have done and the contribution you have made, particularly in the light of some very challenging personal circumstances.

I have no doubt your wife and children will be exceptionally happy to spend more time with you. I suspect Patch and Ted will be pretty excited as well. On behalf of the coalition I say farewell and thank you for your service to the Victorian community. We wish you all the best — both in health, happiness and in your family time for the years to come.

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) — Congratulations and thank you, Mr Herbert. We will call you by your first name when we see you around; I am sure you will not completely disappear off the political landscape.

I know that you have had a lot to do with the Greens party over many, many years, in fact going all the way back to the federal Parliament and your work there as an adviser, but it has only been since you made that quite appropriate move from the lower house to the upper house that we started to deal with you. Of course you were taking on the very important portfolio of higher education which, as you know, is for many, many people a crucial step in their life, in their personal development and in opening up for them new doors to opportunities.

That area had been through many, many ups and downs in the most recent years before you took over the portfolio, but in the year or so that you were representing that portfolio in this chamber you had the opportunity to make some really important changes. Of course during that time my Greens colleagues and I were also pursuing that issue, and we had many occasions in the house to ask you questions on notice and also raise issues during the debate on legislation. My colleagues want to say that we found you to be a most responsive minister, that you were genuine in your answers and also quite diligent in providing those answers. What that says about you is that not only are you diligent in your portfolio — an issue that you care quite passionately about — but also that you are respectful to Parliament and its role in scrutinising ministers and the government.

We want to pass on our particular appreciation in relation to that, as well as the fact that we find you to be a good bloke. We congratulate you and thank you for your many, many years of public service. We wish you well in whatever comes next for you.

The PRESIDENT — Order! I would also like to make some remarks in respect of this announcement today. It came as a great surprise to me when Mr Herbert informed me earlier in the day that he was intending to advise the house this afternoon of his intention to visit the Governor at an appropriate time to tender his resignation as a member of this house. It was a surprise, and it was news that I was saddened in many ways to receive. Other members in this chamber in leadership positions have spoken about the contribution made by Mr Herbert, and I share with them the appreciation of the work that he has done in this house as well as previously in the other house as a member representing the seat of Eltham in that place. Of course

Eltham is also an area that I am familiar with, given that the upper house seat that I share with Ms Wooldridge, Mr Dalla-Riva, Ms Dunn and Mr Leane covers the area of Eltham.

Interestingly enough just last Sunday I was at Melbourne Polytechnic. The new facilities at Melbourne Polytechnic's Greensborough campus were opened by the Minister, the Honourable Gayle Tierney. The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Colin Brooks, and Assembly members Vicki Ward, Anthony Carbines and Danielle Greene — I think that is all — were all in attendance at that particular event. All of us were most impressed with the work that had been done by the board of Melbourne Polytechnic, led by a former Leader of the Opposition in this house, Bill Forwood.

Obviously it cannot go without comment that we would not have been there last Sunday had it not been for the determination and the vision that Steve Herbert had shown in insisting that there needed to be such a facility for tertiary training in that northern corridor. Whilst there have been quite a range of difficulties with that particular institution, Steve Herbert, as the minister, saw that it was imperative to have a facility there and that it could be structured in such a way that it would be financially viable and would meet the needs of students in that area. In some ways initially he took up that cause almost single-handedly. Obviously he then had great support from some of his colleagues and from the broader community, particularly the education community in the northern suburbs.

Whilst it is sad to be saying goodbye, I think that in many ways Mr Herbert leaves on a high note in the sense that he can look back at that particular facility as one of the real achievements of his period in office. It is a very significant achievement, one that I think will inspire and encourage many, many young people to take up the opportunities offered so that they can develop a range of vocational choices.

It is a pretty exciting model that you envisaged, Mr Herbert, and I am pleased that the government continued to honour that vision. As Ms Tierney said the other day, it is going to play a very important role in the northern suburbs. For that achievement within your political career, I think you can drive through the Greensborough area on your way to Trentham — I know it is a different road, but sometimes it does not hurt to meander — go past that Melbourne Polytechnic campus and wear a very big smile and take a lot of pride in the decisions that you made to ensure that that occurred.

I also indicate that Mr Herbert has played a very significant role in the north-eastern suburbs in terms of promoting men's health. Part of that might well have come from some of the areas that he has had to encounter with his own health, but he has run a number of programs over a period in the Eltham area in particular focusing on men's health and encouraging men to go to the doctor and perhaps on occasion, with some issues, experience a little bit of discomfort for the sake of both their welfare and that of their loved ones. I think that on-the-ground work — not just talking about an issue but being prepared to get up and do something about it — is very much a hallmark of Mr Herbert's service to this Parliament and this community, and I have observed that it has been very important in men's health in particular.

I believe the real reason why he is leaving Parliament is because his partner, Lisa, believes that he has been rather distracted at times when he should have been at Melbourne Victory games — and I would tend to agree. They are great supporters of our local football team.

Mr Herbert interjected.

The PRESIDENT — Order! There you are: he has got the lanyard and all. But I am sure that going forward you and Lisa deserve every happiness, good health, a very long retirement, albeit I am sure that both of you will continue in one form or another in some sort of public service or assistance to the people of Victoria, perhaps through different roles that you might play. The Trentham community's gain is our loss, but I do wish you well on behalf of all the members of Parliament. Thank you, Mr Herbert.

ADJOURNMENT

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

That the house do now adjourn.

Shepparton rail services

Ms LOVELL (Northern Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Public Transport, and it is regarding funding for the business case for Shepparton line passenger rail service improvements as well as a commitment to additional services on the Shepparton line. My request of the minister is that she ensures the \$750 000 requested by the Greater Shepparton City Council to cover the costs of the preparation of a business case for infrastructure upgrades to the passenger rail services on the Shepparton line is included in the 2017–18 state budget

along with a commitment to increase Shepparton's rail services to five return services seven days per week.

As I have detailed in this place on many, many previous occasions, the Shepparton passenger rail line, both for services and for infrastructure, is in an appalling condition and needs immediate and significant state government investment to bring it up to 21st century standards. The Shepparton region has long been disadvantaged compared to other major regional centres like Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo when it comes to a modern passenger rail service. Yet Shepparton is a fast-growing and thriving regional city with potential for further growth as a regional service and economic centre, which would be enhanced by a modern passenger rail service.

Shepparton is one of the five largest regional cities in Victoria and serves a catchment of more than 200 000 people, stretching up into the southern New South Wales area. The community will continue to grow and develop, yet the current passenger rail service is woefully inadequate to meet even current needs, and it is a serious impediment to accessing the full potential of growth and development locally as well as tapping into wider state or nationwide growth.

To bring Shepparton into line with other comparable regional cities, Greater Shepparton City Council would like to see significant improvements to the line into the future, including more services, reduced travel times and modern carriages. Indeed a study currently being undertaken suggests that these improvements are feasible in the short to medium term, and a concurrent economic impact study indicates that the benefits to the local area and wider northern Victoria area will be significant.

To start the ball rolling, in a recent prebudget submission to the minister council has requested a number of initial improvements be committed to by this government in the upcoming 2017–18 budget. The first of these is that council is seeking a budget allocation through Public Transport Victoria of \$750 000, which is the cost of a business case to look into the delivery of eight daily return services between Shepparton and Melbourne. The second is that council is seeking a statement in the budget committing to an additional weekday service in each direction, bringing them to a total of five services on weekdays. The third is that council is seeking that weekend services be increased to five each way.

My request of the minister is that she ensures the \$750 000 requested by the Greater Shepparton City Council to cover the costs of the preparation of a

business case for infrastructure upgrades to the passenger rail services on the Shepparton line is included in the 2017–18 state budget along with a commitment to increase Shepparton's rail services to five return services seven days per week.

Assisted Suicide: The Musical

Dr CARLING-JENKINS (Western Metropolitan) — I rise this afternoon to call on the Premier to accept the invitation issued to his office yesterday by Liz Carr to attend her show, *Assisted Suicide: The Musical*, which presents an important perspective, a disability perspective, against legalising assisted suicide. In her briefing to MPs yesterday Liz urged that we need to get the national disability insurance scheme right first. She urged that we first ensure universal access to palliative care and mental health care before any legislative changes are made. She urged the Parliament to listen to the needs of vulnerable Victorians. She also urged the implementation of the 48 recommendations of the end-of-life care inquiry prior to looking at number 49, which she felt was about 10 years in the future. I encourage the Premier to have some conversations with people with disabilities and to hear their stories and hear their fears, and the best way to start doing that is to attend *Assisted Suicide: The Musical*, which is a very creative way of getting the message across.

Victorian Heart Hospital

Ms WOOLDRIDGE (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Health in the other place, and the action I seek is that she give a commitment that no further funds from the state government be provided beyond the \$150 million already committed to deliver the new Victorian Heart Hospital. Labor promised the Victorian Heart Hospital in November 2014, saying they will:

... contribute \$150 million to transform our health system and help fund the Victorian Heart Hospital — a 195-bed standalone cardiac facility at Monash University, Clayton.

They went on to say:

Project partners will contribute the remainder of the \$300 to 350 million total cost.

A promise was made at the time that the hospital would open by 2018. Well, how wrong the government is on so many fronts. First of all the numbers are wrong. My understanding is that it is going to cost around \$400 million to deliver 195 points of care — not beds, but points of care. That means less inpatient beds and less ICU beds. If they want to deliver the 195 beds that

were promised, it is actually going to cost over \$500 million.

Of course \$150 million is all that has been allocated in the budget, although there is no line item for it. It is waiting on the business case, and there is no allocation to any time frame. Secondly there has been no progress on it as well, and interestingly at the inquiry into the 2015–16 financial and performance outcomes by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services said that they have deferred early works on the site to enable further discussions and that there is actually an underspend of \$2 million on the very meagre amounts that have already been committed.

Thirdly the government does not have funding partners on this front. I understand that Monash University has made a commitment of the land and probably somewhere in the order of \$50 million to \$70 million, but the government is still hundreds of millions of dollars short of the funding that will be required.

I understand discussions are continuing. Ms Peake, when asked in relation to funding partners, sought in a manner very consistent with her political masters to blame it on the commonwealth, saying:

... there has not been a funding commitment from the commonwealth, who is the obvious other partner in this project.

When that was tested it was found that the minister has actually never asked the commonwealth for any funding. There has been no formal letter of request, and in fact only officials have raised it at the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council and other places — raised it, not even formally asked for it.

What we are seeing is that there is limited support from cardiac specialists for this standalone hospital. There are limited other funders. There has been no approach to the commonwealth. There are deferred early works on a whole range of fronts. This is a project that is not progressing and is failing under this government. There should not be a commitment of further state government funds to this project, which was ill thought through and not promised appropriately by the Premier in the lead-up to the election.

Mildura passenger rail service

Ms DUNN (Eastern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter tonight is for the Minister for Public Transport, Jacinta Allan. The NorthWest Rail Alliance has collected over 7000 signatures in six weeks in Mildura in support of reinstating passenger

rail services to that city. With the Rural City of Mildura's population at 55 000, Sunraysia's population at over 65 000 and Mildura's tristate catchment at 130 000, the Mildura region's population is large and steadily growing. Passenger rail services are the only viable public transport option for many people in the region, particularly the elderly, people with disabilities and people with low incomes. The existing bus services between Mildura and Melbourne are too cramped and leave and return in the dead of the night. Yes, there are commercial passenger flights, but they are too expensive and are often full if required at short notice. Service provision is patchy — for example, there are no flights on a Saturday afternoon.

It is not good enough that the Rural City of Mildura, with over 50 000 people, is not provided with passenger rail services. The Andrews Labor government has not listened to the community and instead is focusing solely on upgrading the airport. This investment will not meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the community. The NorthWest Rail Alliance has commissioned a credible benefit-cost analysis of reinstating and running Mildura rail services. This report should feed into the infrastructure planning for the state's north-west. The action I seek is that Minister Allan include in the upcoming budget funds for a feasibility study for reopening passenger rail services between Maryborough and Mildura.

Sunbury–Broadmeadows bus service

Mr FINN (Western Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Public Transport. The history behind this request goes back some two decades to when I represented Sunbury in another place. I thought at that time that there was a very strong need for a bus service between Sunbury and Broadmeadows which would also service the Tullamarine area. I spoke to the Sikavitsas family, who own Tullamarine Bus Lines, and we spoke to the then Minister for Public Transport, Alan Brown, and we actually organised that bus service, which ran very successfully for many years.

In the last few years the service was discontinued for reasons that are not entirely clear to me. But given the fact that under Labor's watch Sunbury lost its university campus, there is now a very strong need for a link to Broadmeadows as the Kangan Institute is in Broadie and a lot of students from Sunbury wish to attend that facility. Indeed the general need of the community would be best served by the return of that bus service between Broadmeadows and Sunbury. As we know, again as a result of the actions of this government and the lies told to the people of Sunbury

prior to the last election by Labor, Sunbury is still in the City of Hume. The City of Hume is based in Broadmeadows; in fact there are a lot of people in Sunbury in particular who say that the City of Hume is entirely comprised of Broadmeadows as far as the councillors and so forth believe.

Mr Morris interjected.

Mr FINN — Frank would not know about much at all, as a matter of fact. It is crucial from that point of view that people be able to travel from Sunbury to Broadmeadows just to meet with those who are in the Hume council's head offices in Broadmeadows. That is another reason to re-establish the bus service. I ask the minister to do just that — to ensure that that bus service between Broadmeadows and Sunbury is returned. I believe that the demand is most certainly there now, and it mystifies me why it was chopped in the first place. I urge the minister to do whatever is necessary to ensure that that bus service is reinstated as soon as possible.

Problem gambling

Ms HARTLAND (Western Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter today is for the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation. Pokies suck money out of poor communities, where the biggest net losses happen. They are designed to profit from people with problems, drawing a solid 35 per cent of their revenue directly from problem gamblers, yet it is not just the people with gambling problems who pay the price. With the average problem gambler losing \$21 000 a year, often from far from impressive incomes, it is the children and families who are left to go without.

The Victorian government attempted to address this by introducing YourPlay in 2015, a voluntary precommitment scheme where pokies players can set limits and track time and losses. However, the scheme is voluntary and does not require players to stick to their limits, and preliminary results suggest the scheme is not working, with only a tiny percentage of pokies players activating YourPlay cards. The scheme is being evaluated by the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies. In 2016 at a Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing the then Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gambling and Liquor Regulation, Jane Garrett, said she was expecting to receive an interim report on YourPlay towards the end of 2016 and a final report in 2017. I ask the minister to make the interim report available to the public so the public can see if voluntary precommitment is really the solution to pokies preying on disadvantaged communities.

Coburg High School

Mr ONDARCHIE (Northern Metropolitan) — My adjournment matter this afternoon is for the Minister for Education, and it concerns Coburg High School, which was reopened under the leadership of the former Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, when we were in government because it had been neglected for such a long time by former Labor governments. It opened for years 7 to 9 after some redevelopment was funded by the former Baillieu-Napthine governments. Since then enrolments have increased by approximately 325 per cent. It is estimated that at this rate the school will have between 1000 and 1200 students by 2020, yet the current facilities will only accommodate 850 students.

The Andrews Labor government have really dropped the ball on support for Coburg High School. Maybe that is because they treat it as just a safe Labor seat that needs no support. The Department of Education and Training calculated that \$5.3 million at least is needed to bring Coburg High School up to scratch, and clearly the \$3.5 million provided by the government is not enough. As a result this school, which has been surrounded by so much community support and goodwill, is already very clearly under pressure. Not only is the school too small to cope with forecast student numbers, it is not finished. One building is only partially renovated, and there is no library. Student lounges and meeting rooms have not been constructed, the planned extension of the gym has not happened, there is no bike shed and the list goes on and on. It is typical Labor neglect of what they call a safe Labor seat. The government needs to fix this, and fix this now, because Labor government support to make things happen should come forward in the next budget. Unless there is a significant cash injection for Coburg High School in the next state budget the school will lose momentum and struggle and lose out to other better funded but very crowded schools in the area.

I want to take the time to thank parent Lisa, parent Katrina and parent Cate, who have been informing my office and me about this process for a long time. The matter I have for the Minister for Education is for him to provide adequate funding, at least \$5.3 million, for Coburg High School in the 2017–18 budget. It will be out and ready on the next sitting date.

Anakie Youang heritage listing

Mr RICH-PHILLIPS (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the other place regarding a listing of the Anakie Youang site on the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register and

the review of that listing which is currently underway. I am concerned that in reviewing this listing Aboriginal Victoria is seeking to use evidence on a selective basis to support the original listing, while ignoring evidence that is unfavourable to that listing. This has led to experts in the field expressing concerns at the conclusions being proposed by Aboriginal Victoria. It is important to note that any conclusion has to have a solid evidentiary basis and be able to withstand expert and legal scrutiny, noting that this review has originated following Supreme Court action, and the possibility exists of renewed Supreme Court action.

This morning I gave notice of a documents motion requiring all relevant documents to be tabled in the Legislative Council, and I reserve the option of referring this matter to a parliamentary committee for inquiry. In the intervening period before Parliament resumes on budget day I ask the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to review the matter to ensure that an appropriate evidence base is being used for the review of this listing and to ensure that procedural fairness is being accorded to the affected party.

Casey community crime forum

Mrs PEULICH (South Eastern Metropolitan) — I wish to raise a matter for the attention of Mr Foley in his capacity as the Minister for Mental Health; I am not sure exactly why this issue sits exclusively with the Minister for Mental Health. It is in relation to the motion relating to the establishment of drug injecting facilities that was debated here and then referred to the Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues, on which I serve. I would have thought the matter would probably sit more aptly in the health portfolio, but certainly there are other, overlapping responsibilities, including the Minister for Police and so forth — —

Ms Mikakos — Drugs and alcohol is under mental health.

Mrs PEULICH — Yes. I would have thought there was a range of portfolios to which this policy idea was relevant. Nonetheless, notwithstanding the fact that Ms Patten moved that motion here and it was carried with the support of the government — to inquire further into the viability of establishing the drug injecting facility — the Australian Sex Party has been campaigning very, very vigorously for the establishment of drug injecting facilities, including in Cranbourne. Indeed they tweeted from Kelly's Motor Club Hotel, where I understand they had spoken to a patron who was in support. I have actually been to Kelly's Motor Club Hotel; it is a very good establishment, and they are very good people. That one

patron is certainly not necessarily reflective of the broader views of the Casey and Cranbourne community in particular.

Recently Mr O'Donohue and a number of other opposition frontbenchers were involved in a community safety forum where there was a strong call for increased police resources and increased access to drug rehabilitation beds. Similarly the City of Casey has waged a very strong campaign for increased police powers and police resources in order to address what is a tsunami of crime across the south-east. Most recently there were figures released comparing the December 2015 statistics with those of 2016, and whilst the drug offences have remained stable, a range of other offences related to drug use have actually increased. Assault and related offences increased by 20.9 per cent, abduction and related offences by 15.6 per cent, robbery by 11.8 per cent, dangerous and negligent acts endangering people by 46.4 per cent, arson by 82.9 per cent, burglary and breaking and entering by 31.3 per cent, theft by 17.8 per cent and public nuisance offences by 43.1 per cent. The overall increase was 15.5 per cent in the City of Casey.

What I am asking is for Minister Foley to assist me in helping him and his ministerial colleagues who have an interest in this particular policy initiative to convene a community meeting involving some of the key stakeholders at the City of Casey, law enforcement agencies in the area and interested members of the community to discuss the best way forward for the Casey community and the Assembly Cranbourne electorate in particular to get on top of its drug problem and its crime problem, something which does not include the establishment of drug injecting facilities.

Western Highway road safety

Mr MORRIS (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the attention of the Minister for Roads and Road Safety. The issue relates to the Western Highway and particularly the Western Highway between Ballarat and Melbourne. Of late there appears to have been a significant increase in the number of truck rollovers on this particular stretch of the Western Highway between Ballarat and Melbourne. Obviously there are very significant safety concerns for not only the truck drivers but also the other road users on that road that need to be taken into consideration. There is also the issue of the significant delays that truck rollovers on the Western Highway cause. The action I seek from the minister is that he undertake to investigate the cause of this apparent rise in the number of truck rollovers on the Western Highway between

Ballarat and Melbourne and investigate what may be done to address this very serious issue.

Plan Melbourne: Refresh

Mr RAMSAY (Western Victoria) — My adjournment matter is for the Minister for Planning, the Honourable Richard Wynne, and the action I seek is for him to clarify if the *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* will destroy the neighbourhood protection zones around Highton and Newtown in Geelong that were protected from large-scale development by the previous Minister for Planning, the Honourable Matthew Guy, now in the Legislative Assembly, in the last Parliament.

The previous government clearly understood the anxiety created by planning schemes that fail to acknowledge, reflect and protect the character of many established suburbs. The three residential zones created by Matthew Guy reflected this understanding. There was the residential growth zone, which enabled new housing and diversity; the general residential zone, which enabled the preservation of urban character while making possible modest housing growth and diversity; and the all-important neighbourhood residential zone, which restricted housing growth in areas identified for urban preservation.

Earlier this month the Minister for Planning spoke about ‘saving the backyard and boosting livability’ when he announced changes to suburban residential zones emanating from the revised *Plan Melbourne* document. As part of this he said:

There will no longer be a cap on how many dwellings can be built on a block ...

Groups such as the Newtown Action Group are right to be very, very anxious about what this really means. The minister’s announcement failed to reveal the detail of this comment. What does the minister really have planned? Locals, especially those fighting to retain the essence of the neighbourhood residential zone, such as the Newtown Action Group, are waiting for the details. And they should be anxious about their rights given the manner in which this government has dealt with the rights of many others, including taxidrivers and Country Fire Authority volunteers.

Middle suburbs that have developed their character through decades of hard work and desire also have a right to maintain their integrity and value. They fear this minister is about to force them to bear the weight of population growth. I ask the minister to provide details and clarity about changes to the neighbourhood protection zones that were rightly put in place by the previous government. As part of the action that I am

seeking I ask that the minister confirm which suburbs and towns are about to be stripped of their development protections to make way for higher density housing.

Sheep and goat electronic identification

Mr O’SULLIVAN (Northern Victoria) — The adjournment matter I wish to raise tonight is for the Minister for Agriculture, and it is in relation to the mandatory electronic identification (e-ID) of sheep and goats. The action I am seeking from the minister is that this government and the Minister for Agriculture make increased funds available for e-ID producers into the 2018 year in terms of the electronic tag subsidies.

As of 1 January 2017 it has been mandatory that all lambs born — and goats as well — were electronically tagged so that they could be traced if there were to be an outbreak of any disease. While that is a reasonable proposition, this government has decided it will go it alone rather than doing it as part of a national approach, which would mean all the other states getting involved as well. Be that as it may, farmers have had to go through the process in somewhat of a rushed fashion in terms of the implementation of this program to put mandatory tags in the ears of lambs and goats. The subsidies that were provided for them in 2017 equated to about \$35 per farmer. There are about 20 000 sheep farmers in Victoria, and they each have \$35 to assist them with the tagging. While that seems reasonable, the cost of setting up the processes to undertake that electronic tagging is somewhere between \$3000 and \$10 000 for each of those farmers.

We are looking for the minister to make more funds available and provide a bit more assistance in 2018 and potentially into 2019 so that sheep farmers can undertake what is a mandatory process in terms of the eartagging. If we are going to set this process up and make it mandatory, we need to get it done properly, where everyone is involved and on board. Farmers are very resourceful people, and they will find a way to make this work, but this government has made it quite complicated because of the way it is implementing the process. Some extra funds for 2018 would certainly help this cause.

Trade Union Joint Police Task Force

Mr O’DONOHUE (Eastern Victoria) — I raise a matter for the attention of the Minister for Police, and it relates to the very surprising news that Victoria Police has withdrawn from the Trade Union Joint Police Task Force. Victoria Police joined that task force with other law enforcement agencies, including federal law enforcement agencies, following the Royal

Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption. Commissioner Heydon said in his report that the royal commission's report represents 'the small tip of an enormous iceberg'. Of course he was referring to illegal activity on building sites — unlawful activity in the building industry.

Following the royal commission the task force was established. I understand that in other jurisdictions a number of people have either been arrested or are facing charges flowing from investigations relating to the evidence that was led at the royal commission. I am extremely surprised that Victoria Police has withdrawn from the task force. Perhaps it is a sign of the extreme pressure that Victoria Police is under from a resourcing perspective. Despite all the talk, the reality is that the new resources the government has announced do not actually start flowing until 1 July and crime is up 20 per cent under Daniel Andrews and the Labor government, so there is enormous pressure on Victoria Police. But I am speculating there.

The action I seek from the Minister for Police is that she raise with the Chief Commissioner of Police the rationale for withdrawing from this important task force, given the recommendations made and given the royal commissioners' finding that the activity uncovered in the royal commission was the small tip of an enormous iceberg, and report back to me and to the house about that advice.

Responses

Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children) — Tonight I have received adjournment matters from Ms Lovell addressed to the Minister for Public Transport, although Ms Lovell has departed; from Dr Carling-Jenkins directed to the Premier; from Ms Wooldridge directed to the Minister for Health, but Ms Wooldridge has also departed; from Ms Dunn directed to the Minister for Public Transport — it looks like everyone has got on the tram early tonight; from Mr Finn directed to the Minister for Public Transport; from Ms Hartland directed to the Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation; from Mr Ondarchie directed to the Minister for Education; from Mr Rich-Phillips directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; from Mrs Peulich directed to the Minister for Mental Health; from Mr Morris directed to the Minister for Roads and Road Safety; from Mr Ramsay directed to the Minister for Planning; from Mr O'Sullivan directed to the Minister for Agriculture; and from Mr O'Donohue directed to the Minister for Police. I will refer all those matters to the appropriate ministers for response.

Can I just say in concluding that the events today in London have been harrowing for all of us as legislators reflecting on those events. I want to express my condolences to the people of London and everyone working in Westminster. I also take this opportunity to thank our security people here, who look after us every sitting week. We are very grateful for their efforts.

The PRESIDENT — Order! The final comments by Ms Mikakos are certainly apposite in today's circumstances. We did increase our security alert during the day as a result of what happened in the UK. Our thoughts and prayers are with the people there. The minister's remarks are, I think, most appreciated by our staff for the effort they do put in. On that basis the house stands adjourned.

House adjourned 4.52 p.m. until Tuesday, 2 May.